

Australians at War Film Archive

William Guest (Bill) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 13th August 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/588>

Tape 1

00:30 **Bill, will you give us a wrap up of your life?**

I was born at St Kilda in Melbourne on the

01:00 24 January 1921. My father went through the First World War, landed at Gallipoli and went through that campaign, then later went to France and he was gassed on the Somme and wounded at Passchendaele and he came back to Australia. My mother was a Tasmanian girl and he

01:30 met her I think in 1919 or 1920. I was the first one to appear on the 24th January and then later on my sister, who was eighteen months younger than me, and my brother Bob who is in Sydney is three and a half years younger. We had three children in the family and strangely enough the three of us are still alive. My early childhood,

02:00 and it was the Depression days and things weren't plentiful. My father, when he first started off after the First World War, he went to work for a government sculptor and his name was Web Gilbert, in Canberra you have 'Mont St. Quentin', 'Over the Top' and these famous sculptures from the First World War. They called my father Abdul and the reason he got that name

02:30 was on Gallipoli and he was a signaller and he was up a tree and a patrol came along and grabbed him and because he was very, very dark they reckoned he was a Turkish spy. It took some talking and getting through on a field telephone to ascertain that he wasn't a Turkish spy, but a member of the Australian forces, and the name Abdul has stuck with him

03:00 ever since. He was always a military man and always in the militia, went away with the 2nd AIF [Australian Imperial Force] on the first day again, even though he had all those things the first time. He went away to the Middle-East with the 2/5th and everybody knew Abdul. After he left Web Gilbert, he was the model, have you been to Melbourne, do you know St Paul's Cathedral? Outside St Paul's Cathedral was a statue of Flinders standing in a boat

03:30 and on either side of him was a seaman pushing the boat, Abdul modelled for the seaman, he couldn't do Flinders because he was too big in stature. After he left Web Gilbert's he went on the old cable trams in Melbourne and he became well known throughout Melbourne because the driver used to play tunes on his bell. We grew up in Brunswick,

04:00 a suburb in Melbourne, we rented houses in those days, twelve and six a week, fifteen bob and we shifted about four times because two and six meant a lot to the family for rent. I went to school at Moreland State School, which Moreland isn't far away but it's a fair walk but in those days you didn't think twice about walking long distances to school.

04:30 At the age of fifteen I had to leave school to go to work. First of all I went to a timber mill in Brunswick as a clerk and I didn't stay there all that long. Then I went to a place called the Liverpool Electric Cable Company at 586 Bourke Street Melbourne, which doesn't exist now because there is one gigantic car park there. They were a English company

05:00 and they stopped winding wires and cables coming out from England because in Australia it wasn't being produced so in Liverpool in Sydney they put a factory and started to make their own. But in those days, and I'm talking about 1936 mark, it all came from England and I started off as a messenger boy, then I graduated onto the counter.

05:30 My father, he was never without any sort of army setup so he was in the Victorian Scottish Regiment and that's his kilts up there, that's what he wore, the kilts and sporran and all that sort of stuff. That was the pre-war militia. I can never forget, I couldn't wait until I got old enough to join it. In those days

06:00 they had one night of the week which was drill night and he would go to drill that night, go to the Scottish one on a Wednesday night down in South Melbourne. When it was over they'd all go into the sergeants' mess and drink beer, then he'd come home whistling up the sideway and we'd say, "There's

his guilty whistle." That's all past. When I was sixteen, one night

- 06:30 he said, "I'm going to take you tonight to the 3rd Div Sigs in Carlton," and he said, "Do you want to come down with me?" and I said, "Yes." I went down with him and they had their parade and they all adjourned to the sergeants' mess. The RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] was there, and Abdul, and they were all drinking beer and I was sitting there drinking what they called a 'Barmaid's Blush' in those days, which was lemonade and raspberry.
- 07:00 The cadets were going into camp at Broadmeadows on the Saturday. This RSM said, "Bill, we could sign you up," and I said, "No, I have to wait until I am sixteen." He said, "We can sign you up for the cadets, and do you want to go into the camp with them on Saturday?" This was about half past nine at night and all the beer was flying and they were having the time of their lives. I said, "Very good," and I said,
- 07:30 "I'm not sixteen just yet," and he said, "We can arrange that." Into the Q Store [Quartermaster's store], I was issued with the long puttees, which were the riding boots in those days, and a hat and rifle and kitbag. Abdul and I got into the taxi and we headed home to Brunswick. As we went to go into the front door my mother appeared and she looked at me with all my regalia
- 08:00 and she said, "What's this?" and then she said to my father, "You haven't got him in have you?" The next morning at nine o'clock a taxi pulled up outside our house in Brunswick, my mother loaded me and all my equipment into it and took me back to where I got it and I was out of the army. So first attempt in the army was from half past ten one night to nine in the morning and I was out, that was the cadets.
- 08:30 When I became seventeen I became a cadet in the Royal Melbourne Regiment, which was headquarters for the 6th Battalion which is in Victoria Street in Melbourne. In those days in the militia you did night drills and ours was Monday night and then you'd do a weekend bivouac at Broadmeadows and at the present moment you couldn't even see a blade of grass
- 09:00 in Broadmeadows but then it was wide open, and there would be an annual camp, that was what the militia was. In the meantime I was still working at the Liverpool Cable Company and did this part time training as a cadet. When I was eighteen in 1939 I became a fully blown private from cadets into the militia itself.
- 09:30 At that time the war had broken out, we all went to camp at Mount Martha which is out of Frankston and we had to build Mount Martha first of all, we had to clear the ground and make the camp, all the young people. My father went across the road to the Victorian Scottish and I was on this side with the Royal Melbourne. This particular day,
- 10:00 and it was 1940 and we were both still in camp because we had both been called up for full time duty, this fellow came down to me and said, "Bill, your father wants you up on the road." There was a road that separated the Victorian Scottish and Royal Melbourne and it was called Mount Martha Road. I went up there and here was this vehicle, a utility truck. The officer turned out to be a Colonel Cook who was sitting in the front with the driver and these five
- 10:30 or six sergeants in the back. Abdul was one of them and he was a signalling sergeant and he said to me, "Son, you are going home on leave at the weekend?" and I said, "Yes, where are you going?" He said, "We are going into Melbourne to join up in the AIF." I remember I said to him, "They can't take you." He said, "Well I'm going," and he said, "When you go home at the weekend you can tell your mother," and I wasn't looking forward to doing this at all.
- 11:00 Away goes the Victorian Scottish Regiment to join the 2/5th Battalion to go away and fight and I went back to the lines. When I went home on the Saturday I didn't know how to tell my mother. We were all sitting down to tea and she said, "I wonder where your father is. He said he was coming home this weekend and he is always home by now." I said, "Well mother, it's like this, he won't be here," and she said, "What do you mean?" and then I had to tell her.
- 11:30 I said, "He's joined the AIF and he's in Puckapunyal." Then she started. Then she said, "Gassed, he got a shrapnel in the wrist." To cut a long story short Abdul went across to the Middle-East and I went back to Mount Martha on full-time duties. I became a corporal and then a land sergeant. The camp had finished
- 12:00 at Mount Martha and this would about February 1941 and we had to go up to Balcombe which was the camp on top. In those days instead of it being a regular army it was a permanent army. A permanent army consists mainly of warrant officers, very rigid old soldiers who were strict
- 12:30 to the letter of the law. When we got up there, this fellow's name was Ken Raid and he wasn't a RSM but he was attached to the Royal Melbourne as warrant officer instructor, that was his job. The only NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] are only corporals and sergeants, and all the privates were marched out of camp and we went up to Balcombe. When we got up there, there was a small hut there
- 13:00 and Warrant Officer Ken Raid said, "Inside that hut is a prisoner and his name is McDonald and he's on a charge and he is going to go before the colonel." He said to me, "You will be the sergeant of the guard, I am going to make the corporals members because we don't have any private soldiers."
- 13:30 There were two of them, one was named Holiday and the other one was Johnson. They became the

guards on the hut and I was the sergeant. We didn't like this at all because we thought we were in the army for other reasons, other than guarding somebody in a hut. Ken Raid disappeared for a while and then came back and he said to me, "I want to talk to the prisoner." I said, "Okay," and Holiday and Johnson were standing each side and they opened the door

- 14:00 and this McDonald stepped forward and stood in front of Ken Raid. Ken Raid said to him, "Why did you go AWL [Absent Without Leave]?" and McDonald said, "Because I heard the news that my wife was messing around with a Yank," that's the words that he said. Then Ken Raid said, "That will teach you to pick your women better in future."
- 14:30 As he said that, McDonald went forward and Holiday and Johnson grabbed him by the arms and pulled him back and his right foot shot out and completely missed Ken Raid by about a foot. Ken Raid grabbed his stomach and staggered back and said, "He kicked me." This happened. The next morning was the court martial and they brought McDonald up, and the colonel, first of all he asked Corporal Taverner,
- 15:00 "Tell me the story Corporal Taverner." and Corporal Taverner explained exactly what had happened and he, Colonel, said, "In your opinion, did the foot of the accused make contact with Ken Raid in any way?" He said, "No sir," and Johnson said the same. "And Sergeant Guest, your version?" I said, "My version is the same." So the colonel dismissed the charge of attempting to kick Ken Raid. McDonald went back in the hut because he was on a charge of being AWL anyway. Shortly after that had happened,
- 15:30 Ken Raid came up to me and said, "I will suggest that you get out of the real regiment very, very quickly," and I thought, "Good God, what if I don't?" The next day we went back to Mount Martha and outside the company headquarters was a big sign on the board: 'Volunteers wanted for 39th Battalion, NCOs and other ranks'.
- 16:00 The 39th got past the sergeant further than they ever got. They had Johnson, Holiday and Guest on the list. That was the start of the formation of the 39th. Every infantry battalion in Melbourne had to supply a certain amount of
- 16:30 NCOs and other soldiers to make up the 39th Battalion. All we knew about it was tropical service, the Japs hadn't come into it because this was early in 1941. We went back to our normal training and then we went back to, and I went to Liverpool Cables and we resumed our normal life until the next time we got called to the camp which was about three months later on for full-time duty again. Everybody was called in
- 17:00 to touch back again on what we used to do before the war. Our life in those days, the young fellows like myself, our life all centred on Saturday afternoon, all the rest of the week for the six and a half days, but Saturday afternoon was Australian Rules Football and I was a Carlton man. We used to go up and watch them train, watch everything, it was totally different in those days compared to now.
- 17:30 They got three pound a week and they had their own jobs, they got three pound a week to play on Saturday and they got ten shillings for Tuesday and Thursday training. Some of them had jobs and I remember a Carlton centre man and his name was Mickey Crisp and he was a parking inspector at Flinders Lane in Melbourne. We used to go up there and stand and look in all worrying. He went around putting marks on motor cars, that was Mickey Crisp, God in other words,
- 18:00 and that was our life. Also I had an interest in greyhounds and I think that's what kept us so fit because we were fitter than what the dogs were. Before the war and before any hostilities had started, life consisted of going to work, going and watching Carlton train on Saturday afternoon, no way in the world would you miss seeing Carlton play, and then the dogs, walking around the streets
- 18:30 and going out to the tracks. My sister used to bring these film stars home. I used to kick them out of the kitchen because I was cutting up the dogs' meat, she often talks about it now. She said, "All the beautiful girls I brought home and you regarded them as..." And that was a lie. October 1941,
- 19:00 all the different units were putting in their names for the 39th and all those members were order to report to Caulfield. Now Caulfield was a race course, with the onset of war it changed to a general draft detail, what they call a 'GDD'. That's where all the troops going backwards and forwards, and units, if anybody had to go from point A to point B they went to Caulfield first, it
- 19:30 was a draft detail. When we assembled there I think it was early October 1941. The AIF had straight khaki and they regarded us as Choccos chocolate soldiers - derogatory term], I can see the point. Because the poor unfortunate Scottish had that dress, they had the kilts, the sporrans and they had the glengarries. We had
- 20:00 khaki tunic and trousers with a big blue stripe down the side, with big blue cuffs and a thick blue collar and we wore a cap with a big blue band around it, with a gold band with 'Royal Melbourne Regiment' and that was us. The other units had much the same sort of uniform with red piping, others had green piping but, all in all, all these units turned up at Caulfield in all
- 20:30 their different brigadiers. Our senior officers strangely enough were First World War veterans. I remember the first one was Lieutenant Colonel Conneron, he stood up on the dais and he picked up the microphone and he said the magical words, "Irrespective of where you people came from,

- 21:00 as from this moment you are the 39th Battalion." We got on the train and we headed up to Bacchus Marsh, out to Darley camp. Something happened on the train that I did that disturbed the eye of one of the officers. I think the order was we weren't allowed to eat anything and I think somebody gave me a pie or something like that or I offended somebody.
- 21:30 When we got up to Darley, all the sergeants from A Company were called into the office. this major's name was Badger and he was a First World War veteran. He said, "As from now, Sergeant Akhurst, you are Temporary Sergeant Akhurst, Sergeant Smith, you are Temporary Sergeant Smith,
- 22:00 Sergeant Guest, you are a very temporary sergeant," so I didn't start off too well. We gradually welded together and this was before the 7th December, I'm talking about October, November. We had it a bit hard because at Bacchus Marsh the AIF used to wait for us and bash us up if we went in there because we just had different uniforms. Then the great day
- 22:30 arrived when they took our multi-coloured uniforms from us and we were dressed the same as the AIF. The training, I think there were four trees, there was no such thing as jungle training, it was just unquestionable to think of that. We did training on the hills, we did normal arms drill, we did a mythical battle called the Battle of Corangamite,
- 23:00 which stirred up the people of Geelong but it didn't do anybody else any harm, but we took part in that because it was all training. Then on the 7th December, the Japanese decided to do something about the war and they entered it. Up until then we had no idea where we were going, we were in effect a special militia unit raised for tropical service and did not specify
- 23:30 anywhere, the popular place was Darwin, that's where we thought that we were going because the officers had been told to, "Take your tennis racquets and your golf sticks." The lower ranks, they didn't take anything. After Pearl Harbour the order came out that officers could not take golf sticks and tennis racquets. We waited for developments, rumour upon rumour of what
- 24:00 was going to happen to us. Then later on in December, towards the 20th of December, a battalion went on what they call 'final leave'. I stayed behind at Bacchus Marsh as rear guard and when they came back I went on a couple of days' leave. Then we took off on the train for Sydney, that photo up there is me when I was on final leave.
- 24:30 We went up to Sydney and we went onboard the Aquitania. The Aquitania had A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and A to H decks, with H right down the bottom and A on the top. We were standing on the top deck looking down on the Sydney wharf and on the Sydney wharf were these big iron gates.
- 25:00 As we watched, the gates swung open and along came these troops in uniform khakis, not marching, just straggling, carrying rifles and hats. We didn't know who they were but we did find out later on. They marched them on and they shut the gates immediately and then as we looked we saw women and kids hanging on calling out through the gates. What we didn't realise was we were watching one of the worst things that had ever happened in
- 25:30 the Australian Army. The Sangalang was the forceful departure of what was the 53rd Battalion. It transcribed later on that these particular young fellows were called to a drill hall and bring a certain amount of gear with them, but they weren't told they were going away, you couldn't believe the Australian Army. With the Aquitania and the convoy and there were two other smaller ships, between the Aquitania
- 26:00 and these smaller ships, the 53rd Battalion went onboard. I know the ones that came onboard the Aquitania, we told them that we were going to Port Moresby. They were on the deck learning how to slope arms and learning how to handle their rifles. It was pitiful, it really was, and the morale was rock bottom. In those days you were never told anything.
- 26:30 The 53rd were bewildered after seeing all the women and kids and all the relatives at the gates that never even get to chance to say goodbye to them, it's in the history books now. We sailed through the Tropical Sea and on the 3rd of January we pulled into Port Moresby. But the Aquitania was too large a ship to pull into the wharf so we had to go ashore
- 27:00 coming down off the Aquitania onto two sloops, the Yarra and Swan and they both were sunk during the war. We came onto the Swan and Yarra and they took us into the wharf. When we got on the wharf, we all formed up as a battalion and not only unexpected but we weren't even expected, no one knew we were coming. The colonel made a speech and said, "We have to go to the Seven Mile Aerodrome."
- 27:30 He said, "We have to go out there," he said, "no transport is available so you walk." Natives came in their thousands, it was the first time they'd ever seen troops like us, walking, white men never walked they drove. Before I go on to the 39th in Moresby, at the time
- 28:00 was the 49th Battalion and what was left of them, they were sent a year earlier and they were the garrison force but they had withered away over the months and a lot of them got malaria and other disease and there were that many of them in Port Moresby but they were residents there, there were the only signs of army life, of what was left of the 49th. When we arrived, it was about a thousand strong off the Aquitania and the other ships.

- 28:30 We got out to Jackson's Airstrip, there was A Company, B Company and C Company, D Company and E Company: there were five companies. A Company, and that was our company, our job was to guard the airstrip because at the time no information was going as to what the Japanese were doing except whatever they were doing was bad,
- 29:00 we didn't even know about Malaya, we didn't know anything. All we knew was the Japanese had hit Pearl Harbour and they were coming down through the Pacific, and we were to protect the airstrip. The other companies were sent around the coast in positions, later on to dig the defensive positions around Port Moresby. Our life from the start of Jackson was
- 29:30 digging holes. We had no mosquito nets, the mosquitoes were driving us crazy, the food, and it was not the sort of food you would eat in the tropics, it was tins of meat and things like that that were very unpalatable. We found our job was working parties on the wharf because the two ships that came with us had to be unloaded and the only people who could unload it was us.
- 30:00 We'd get on the trucks in the morning to go to Port Moresby and unload the ships, the cargoes would be unloaded at various ovals and places like that in Port Moresby itself. This was early in January. In those days at Jackson Airport it consisted of a mile of
- 30:30 runway and then up the end of it we used to go shooting wallabies and things like that with a twenty two rifle and we used to go out there shooting wallabies and things like that. We'd dig defences, holes in the ground, and we had to put in a water tank and things like that so you could make your camp out of it. On the night of the 3rd of February it happened,
- 31:00 without any warning at all, at three o'clock in the morning, three Japanese flying boats appeared. We knew on the grapevine about it and not long after we got to Port Moresby [omission?] came in and landed on the strip and we went down to have a look. The people got out and one of them was the governor, in my diary I have got the governor but actually it was the administrator.
- 31:30 In those days Rabaul was the capital of PNG [Papua New Guinea], it went to Port Moresby later on but in those days Rabaul was, and he said, "The Japanese bombed Rabaul this morning," then we heard on the grapevine and also Tokyo Rose used to come and tell us on the radio that the troops had landed and had captured Rabaul. We knew that it wouldn't be long before we copped it.
- 32:00 On the morning of the 3rd of January, we heard overhead on this beautiful moonlit night in the tropics and these three planes came over, they were sea planes. They bombed Port Moresby and the last one they had left they must've dropped on the Seven Mile because of the great unearthly explosion and tents went over and we realised that the war had come. That was the start of
- 32:30 the continuous air raids. The air force when we got there consisted of what was left of the squadron of Hudson bombers and I think we had three Hudsons and two Wirraways, that was all it was. They were operating on and off Jackson's Airstrip. It was called 'Seven Mile' because Jackson hadn't turned up. Our life was digging holes and unloading ships,
- 33:00 killing mosquitoes and whining about the conditions, not so much whining about the conditions but wishing for something better. Malaria was rife, the hospital hadn't arrived from Australia. I write for a magazine called the Good Guts which is the 39th in Melbourne. I used to do my Queensland version here and send it down but they decided to do a
- 33:30 bigger job in Melbourne and my contribution every now and then goes down to the Good Guts and I put a story into it from my diary. This is rather humorous. After one of the trips into Port Moresby someone had appeared, as Australian soldiers always appear with something, this big jar of boiled lollies. At the same time the platoon commander arrived with a
- 34:00 big green bottle marked 'Quino', liquid Quino and a spoon. He didn't say what he was going to do, he said, "Sergeant Guest, call Corporal Taverner's section down please." I called out to them and they were sitting on the side of the hill and I yelled out, "Corporal Taverner, report down here with your section." Taverner's section lined up very apprehensive,
- 34:30 and on the other side of the gully, we were 8th Platoon, and on the other side of the gully was 9th Platoon, they took great delight in any reverses that happened to us. They all sat on their side watching what was going to happen. Phil Gartlett stood there and had a boiled lolly on a tree trunk and he said,
- 35:00 "This is what will happen." He said, "This is Quinine and this is the anti-malaria treatment." He said, "The orders are you each take a spoonful every morning and the roll book will be marked to the effect that you have been issued with it." He said, "I will do that." He said, "Fortunately one of our mates in Port Moresby has provided us with these boiled lollies." He said, "What we will do
- 35:30 is, if the taste of the Quinine is going to worry you, we will have a spoonful of Quinine and you will then take a boiled lolly." Then he spoke the magical words which I didn't expect, he said, "Sergeant Guest will take the first spoonful." He stood there with the spoon and poured it out and Sergeant Guest stood there and unknowingly I opened my mouth, he put the spoonful in and popped the boiled lolly
- 36:00 in and then I got the taste and spewed, the whole lot, including breakfast, everything went. So Taverner's section, bravery didn't come into it and as soon as they saw me they all took off up the hill

and the 9th Platoon on that side started to barrack, "You beauty!" Talk about funny, there were funny things like that. Here was Gardner roaring for Taverner's section to come back and the 9th Platoon were urging them on and the Japanese were advancing down to the Pacific.

- 36:30 That was our life, just little funny things. The raids increased and the Japanese gave the night bombing away in favour of the eleven o'clock attack in Port Moresby,
- 37:00 mainly the wharf and sometimes they'd come onto the aerodrome but at that stage there wasn't much to go for because the Wirraways had been shot away and the Hudsons had sort of faded out, they did a mighty job, the Hudsons. Until there was only one Hudson left, we were getting machine gunned by the Zeros, we had nothing to fight back with. One day the
- 37:30 signal came out and an Allied aircraft, we didn't know we had any allies, "An Allied aircraft will be arriving tomorrow morning and the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] will give it air cover." The RAAF consisted of one Hudson bomber which went up about fifteen thousand feet and circled. We all watched and we saw this huge monster of a thing come in from the coast and land on the end of the Seven Mile Strip
- 38:00 and slowly taxi out, it had big stars all over it, guns coming out of it, four big engines. We just stared at it, we didn't know. It turned around and came to rest in front of us and I was twenty one then and I was the oldest, we came down and stood and stared. A hatch opened on the side and a head popped out with a baseball cap on backwards and this voice
- 38:30 said, "Hey you guys, you can go home now, we are here," this was our first American. We were staring at the American Air Force and then our lives changed. We suddenly realised we had some help. More came in during the night, B17s during the afternoon, then they went across and attacked the Japanese at Rabaul, then our morale
- 39:00 rose greatly because we realised we had something on our side. Then in March 1942, we had been listening for a long time for reports that an Australian squadron was coming to Port Moresby, an Australian Squadron of fighters, they were called Kittyhawks and they were an American aircraft but with Australian crews. We waited
- 39:30 and waited so the Kittyhawks became the 'tomorrow hawks', and the tomorrow hawks became the 'never hawks', they weren't coming. While we were there at Jackson's, we dug a machine gun, we had what they called the Lewis gun, which was from the First World War, and we had never seen a Bren gun. The Lewis guns which they had in the First World War which had a pan air on the top with forty seven rounds on it and a big muzzle, and we had that mounted on a
- 40:00 pipe pointing up in the air. That was on the top of this little feature and underneath it we lived under tent flies and we had stuff from Port Moresby which could be a table or chair. The RAAF had the air alarm, the raid impending, 'peep, peep, peep', and as soon as we heard that we knew that you had ten minutes from the time
- 40:30 that that went until you got hit. The spotters up on the Owen Stanleys sent the signal and the nearest was ten minutes out from Port Moresby. This particular morning this happened, so the blokes and myself and a bloke called Jumbo Hudson, I don't know how Jumbo Hudson got mixed up in the army because he had very little between the ears
- 41:00 and we all reckoned he shouldn't've be in the army but he was with us, we ran up to our position and we just [got] down into it. Jumbo got down to the foot of it and crouched into a heap like that and he had a pair of shorts on and nothing else. I got on the Lewis gun and Downs had the magazines. You could look down on the Jackson and I saw these four aircraft zooming down like that and then they fanned out and the next
- 41:30 minute there was engine going past our ear so we ducked down and as they flashed over I saw the RAAF roundels, but then I saw a big 'J'. I didn't know what to do and Downs yelled out, "They're from Japan!" and that settled it. So I put a magazine into him, they disappeared over the back of the hill. If they had gone away they would have been right but they didn't. They went right around and they came in for the second run.

Tape 2

- 00:30 **If you can start off when the planes were coming in?**

The second run I looked up and I had been thinking about the roundel, we'd been told by somebody that the Japanese in Malaya, I meant to mention that earlier, we had the attack on Darwin which came through second-hand and we had no details of it, it's in my diary of what we got of it. Then we heard about

- 01:00 Malaya falling, no full details of what essentially happened. We were told that the Japanese were using all sorts of tricks, calling out and false colours and things like that. I remember thinking at the time all

the shooting that was going on but the letter that was going past my ear. I was convinced that the Kittyhawks were shooting at us and I will tell you in a minute what was happening. The second time we came in

- 01:30 I looked up and I saw for the first time this long spherological thing, the aircraft, and Downs, he caused it all, if he hadn't've opened his mouth I'd have been all right. He yelled out, "They have got bombs!" so I put another burst into them. The next time they went away and they came in and they all landed. At the same time, before that happened there was a screeching roar from
- 02:00 underneath us and Downs yelled, "They shot Jumbo," and I thought, "God, no," so I put another burst into them. When they landed down below, they disappeared and all of a sudden I heard a voice from outside the pit, it was an old captain, one of our First World War ones, and he was saying in a loud voice, I can still remember it to this day,
- 02:30 "Stop shooting you bloody fool, they are ours," and that was his bloody words. Then the sudden thought struck us, "Squadron 75, the 'never hawks' are here." We looked down to see how Jumbo was. He wasn't shot at all but all that was happening was the red hot cartridge cases from my gun was landing on his back and we found out later on that the lead whistling past our ear was coming from our machine guns on the other side of the Jackson Airstrip,
- 03:00 who opened up too, but instead of shooting at Squadron 75 they were too low and they were going past our ears. When quietness reigned, some of our blokes went down the strip and one came back and he said to me, "Bill, don't go down," and I said, "Why?" He said, "Squadron Leader Jeffries, see 'J' for Jeffries we didn't know, got out of his P40
- 03:30 and they had a head pad and right beside his left ear was a hole, he got out and had his pistol in his hand and he said, "I will shoot the first person I see with a rifle," and I said, "I'm not going there," so I stayed up there. It turned out that out of the four our shooting had made two of the four out of commission and the other two,
- 04:00 Whacket and Cox their names were, pilot officers, were both killed later on. But however, there used to be a Japanese wrecking plane come across every morning and it would be up at about that eleven o'clock time, floating leisurely through the air not very high, only about eight thousand feet, because it knew it had no other opposition, there was no other aircraft out with it. If the air raid siren went and this Japanese appeared slowing floating above Jackson's not knowing what had happened.
- 04:30 Whacket and Cox took off after it and they shot it down at (UNCLEAR) Inlet and Port Moresby went mad, we were on a winning side at last. That afternoon the rest of the 75th Squadron came in, then we had aircraft. It will be next month at
- 05:00 the Irish Club in Brisbane, Squadron 75 and another squadron have got an association, it has always been my desire to go to one of their association meetings. This fellow rang me up and said, "Do you want to come?" and I said, "Yes." So three of us from the 39th are invited and when I got there I said, "Can I say something sir?" and he said, "Yes." I got up and I said, "Gentlemen, on behalf of the 39th Battalion
- 05:30 I would like to wish you a formal apology for shooting at your airplanes in March 1942." There was silence. Then this old fellow got up and he must have been an old wing commander and he said, "Trifle late old fellow, but apology accepted." Typical RAAF, and now we are part of it, bloody beautiful. Next month I will get a letter inviting me to go to it and we are all part of it, but those were the days.
- 06:00 To get back to it, the 75th Squadron arrived, our lives changed with planes at last, we had something to help us. The Japanese, realising that the 75th Squadron had arrived and they increased their attacks. Life went on in Port Moresby for the 39th, unloading ships, digging holes, not much training. About the 18th July, our
- 06:30 D Company had a function and I was one of the umpires, I was A Company, there were about five or six umpires who attended D Company manoeuvres or operations. When it was over Colonel Owen got us all together he said, "We will now discuss the operation." Before we got into it a despatch rider arrived on a motorbike from Port Moresby
- 07:00 and handed him the despatch. Colonel Owen opened it and then he said, "Gentlemen, the Japanese have landed at Gona," he said, "you will return to your companies and be prepared to move in twenty four hours," and that was the end of that. Away we go back to A Company and we started to get ready.
- 07:30 It didn't take much to get ready because all we owned was a khaki shirt and a pair of shorts plus a spare, we didn't have long pants at all, khaki not green. We had our bush hats that are our felt hats, we didn't take steel helmets. We took a haversack on our back with half towel, half a blanket, two tins
- 08:00 of bully beef, two packets of biscuits and our weapons. There were our First World War rifles which we had; First World War machine guns, the Lewis, and the Vickers, they didn't go over. We set sail to go across the Owen Stanleys to do battle. We didn't realise what we were up against, we didn't know how many Japanese there were
- 08:30 but the feeling amongst the troops were, 'At last.' I sent the diary back to my father who had come back

from the Middle-East and was in Australia. One of our fellows was coming back to do a course, Ray Johnson, and in my diary I've got the notation: 'It's on at last Abdul, giving you this diary to take back with Ray Johnson.' I couldn't use it because I was in action.

- 09:00 We started off to go across the mountains. Our B Company had gone across earlier, their mission was to try and start an airstrip off somewhere over there and they were the first ones to contact the Japanese in the first action at a place called Waiwa,
- 09:30 but they retreated because they didn't have much to fight with. The Japanese were pouring in their thousands into Gona and coming across the track. The 39th Company got across there, it took about seven days, it was an awful bloody track. We got to this village called Deniki. Deniki is on the heights and you look down to the valley and you could see the Kokoda
- 10:00 airstrip running away from you, running north and south and that's where Kokoda was. We didn't know what Kokoda was, none of us had heard the word before, it just didn't come into it. It was just a place amongst the other villages and we didn't go away from Port Moresby all the time we were there, this happened in July and we had been there since January. We hadn't moved anywhere else apart from Port Moresby and as far as native villages,
- 10:30 and Lae and Rabaul we had heard of but we were in complete ignorance with the rest of New Guinea, and we certainly didn't know what Kokoda meant. We were all there, as we assembled the companies came in, A Company and then C Company arrived then D Company, those three companies all around this village Deniki looking down on the
- 11:00 Kokoda airstrip. A decision was made to attack Kokoda. To this day, and I've got it in my diary, we don't know why they did it, to start off we had no backup, there was no backup aircraft in Port Moresby, there was no backup troops, there was only the 53rd Militia where morale was rock bottom and they
- 11:30 didn't commit them at all. The 49th had more or less disappeared because of malaria and they didn't reinforce them and we were the only ones, there was nobody else. There was no question of anybody coming. They decided to attack Kokoda, the attack was to be on the 8th August. The idea was that D Company would go around by a track to try and cut off the Japanese from reinforcing the
- 12:00 Kokoda itself. C Company would go around the other way and they would cut off the track to stop the Japanese coming from that way, and A Company, which was us, would do the actual attack. On the 8th August we started off, I didn't see D and C Company take off but I personally, the morning before we moved off, my company commander's name was Semington, he said,
- 12:30 "Come with me Sergeant Guest," and I went with him and we went up to where our lieutenant, who was a bloke called Dave Shields, and he was lying on the ground sheet shivering and Semington said to me, "Lieutenant Shields is obviously ill," he said, "he won't be going into Kokoda. You will take 8th Platoon." There are three platoons to a company. We took off and we had a well-known
- 13:00 native corporal by the name of Sanopa and he was a policeman. It was a funny thing, this Sanopa was out of this world because while we were waiting up there at Deniki, Sanopa would take off on his own down towards the Kokoda airstrip where the Japs were and the next thing you knew about Sanopa is you'd hear a noise and a figure would appear beside you. He would have a piece of jungle vine
- 13:30 with ears on it. Two ears represented one Japanese, you divided the number by two and that's how many Japanese that he had killed. He hated them and we had him going down into the Kokoda to lead us in. We got down through the jungle and we had to wade up the river to the back of Kokoda, everything was quiet and all, you could hear bird calls, there was no
- 14:00 fighting or shooting going on. We laid outside Kokoda and one of our Kittyhawks came in and flew over it and disappeared and then the company commander said, "Advance in." I was on the extreme right hand side, if you can image a big rubber plantation, the troops attacked Kokoda in one straight line, and I was on the extreme right.
- 14:30 As I looked down there was a track, a plateau, you looked down on the plateau onto the bottom level and we were on the top. I saw this Japanese standing there like that, staring up with his mouth opened, so I got my rifle up, bang, and I kicked the dirt up between his feet. Of all the greyhounds I had, none of them went faster and he just took off for the jungle.
- 15:00 The funny thing about it was, and it would only happen in the Australian Army, the war had stopped and a voice said, "Who fired that shot?" and I didn't say it was me. They said, "Okay, away we go." We did the final charge in Kokoda and there was no-one there, there was absolutely no-one there. I went past and I reported it and it was a newly dug grave between two huts
- 15:30 and it had a little container on it filled with sweets and things and it was sort of decorated and we worked out later on it could have been our Colonel Owen who was killed there with B Company. There was action before we got there and Colonel Owen was killed at Kokoda. B Company had to get out of there and there was no chance of getting him out
- 16:00 so they had to leave him there, we worked it out later on that this could well have been Colonel Owen's grave. They were the insignia rank in those days, seeing that he was a lieutenant colonel and because of

his rank they decorated his grave. We saw another heap of rice on a plate and human excreta beside it and we walked further on and there was no Japs.

- 16:30 That night, Semington put nine platoons across the rubber the way we came in, and their positions were in a big ditch across the rubber. The 8th Platoon, and that was me, we were on the top of the plateau, looking down on a road, and 7th Platoon was on the left flank, that's the way that we were disposed. It was ridiculous to think of, the signal, we never had a radio because it wasn't invented. All we had was
- 17:00 telephone wires, we didn't have any contact. The signal was to be varied lights, red and green varied lights fired from the airstrip up to the observers at Deniki that would observe that we had captured the place, that was the signal. That was all that happened, plus as we went in somebody found a lot of Japanese notebooks in
- 17:30 a hut and Semington sent one of the natives back up to Deniki for intelligence purposes. We were assigned to these holes, the Japanese had dug them. An Australian digs them as a rectangular pig the Japanese dug a round hole, and we finished up two to a hole around the top of the plateau looking down on the road.
- 18:00 At the bottom of the pit was excreta, they were filthy people to be there, we stayed there that night, the Suno action, and the next morning dawn it was a beautiful atmosphere, it was like eternal spring, like a spring day, the birds were singing nowhere, nothing. We got out and walked around and found some Japanese rice at the cookhouse. At about eleven o'clock
- 18:30 we heard a shot and then we heard somebody yelling out from the rubber trees and then more shots. What had happened was the Japanese had come in through the rubber afterwards, after the attack was on. We took off for our holes around the top of the embankment and the 9th Platoon was already down the rubber. It was on the morning of the 9th and that was a Sunday.
- 19:00 Then the Japanese attacked us, they mortared us, they shelled us and they did everything. They attacked through the rubber but the 9th Platoon held them back, the 9th Platoon were the only ones but we weren't engaged in an actual battle, we were around the top of the escarpment and if we heard a noise we would roll a grenade down because there was no other troops except the Japanese. The night wore on and there were night attacks, every now and then some would creep around and take ammunition off us.
- 19:30 The morning of the 10th and the position had been unchanged and the fighting was still going under the rubber, then Captain Semington got someone to get me to crawl around to where he was. There was a government house, it was a rubber plantation with a patrol post. When I say a patrol post, that was what was in New Guinea and they are called war patrol posts.
- 20:00 But an ADO, Assistant District Officer, which was a step above a patrol officer, and he was resident there in this European-type house and underneath it they had dug out a drain and that's where the wounded were, as the wounded were coming in from the rubber they were putting them in the dug-out.
- 20:30 He said to me, "I want you to crawl around the parameter and try and contact the 9th Platoon and tell them we are getting out at seven o'clock tonight," because we had no food or anything. I did that and I crawled around and I was undercover more or less until I got to the corner, later on I will show you the photo I took last August when I was there, I found it. When I looked down on the road,
- 21:00 I saw three figures standing beside an old bridge. One of them was pointing up, obviously at me because I would have been in full view. Then the next minute the lead started to go past my ears because they didn't like me so they started to shoot. I went down to the ground and I crawled up on my hands and knees to where the rubber started and I called out, "Can anybody hear me?" and a voice said, "Yes. I said, "We are getting out at seven o'clock
- 21:30 tonight, pass the word along," and the voice said, "Okay." I turned around and crawled back around to my hole. They started to shell the plateau, a big clear plateau, away from where the huts were, and you couldn't walk across there. The Japanese fire was coming up through the rubber, across this clear space, and you couldn't stand up so you had to lay down because you would have been shot.
- 22:00 Night came and at seven o'clock the boys in my platoon there were around the holes, crept around and laid down underneath the ADO's hut. The house was big broad heavy timber supports and then the house is built on top with European-type materials but the supports were native material and the
- 22:30 Japanese fire, you could hear it thudding into the other side of the wood, we were just laying down here and that's how close it was to us. Behind me down the dug-out was the wounded with 8th Platoon, which was my boys, who were laying flat out around the outside and they couldn't get down under the cover. Semington was behind one of these supports and I was behind another and Lieutenant Sorenson was behind another.
- 23:00 The ADO who owned the house, and his name was Peter Brewer and he wasn't army he was what they called an ANGAU, that's an Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit, they looked after the native affairs, but he was with us and he was part of us and Sanopa, the corporal, he was behind another one.

- 23:30 Where I was, I saw a box with bullets in it, Tommy gun bullets. I had a haversack with nothing in it because we had eaten all the tins of meat and I ate that so I filled up the haversack with all of these rounds and I put it on my back
- 24:00 and fortunately, which I will tell you in a moment why, I didn't clip them in I just slipped it on my back. Semington said to Sorenson, "You go up and try and get 9th Platoon out," and he said, "If you can't stay there with them - , " and I'm telling you the truth because this is why I'm here now with you telling you the facts. He said, "Stay there with them," and he said to me, "You get the wounded and follow, we are going."
- 24:30 For years after the image is up here of me watching in pouring rain, because it started to rain heavily, Semington, Sanopa and Brewery taking off down the track out of our sight and getting away. We had five bullets left and I had the lot, they had taken all the rest to send up to the rubber and we had nothing.
- 25:00 We had Bren guns with nothing in them and the rifles with nothing in them but they still kept them. I said to the boys, "Go down and see what you can do with the wounded," we had a bloke by the name of Stallmont and somebody called out from behind me, "We can't do anything to Stallmont, he's just about dead." And the other fellow's name was Les Skinner and they pulled him out on a blanket stretcher.
- 25:30 It consisted of two pieces of bush timber of the trees and a blanket tied around with jungle vines, there were no proper stretchers, that's all they had. We started off down this awful wet and slippery track with the bullets flying around our heads from the rubber, because the 9th Platoon was still fighting, and we didn't know what was going on except there was shooting going on, it was just jungle. It was about seven o'clock
- 26:00 and darkness had set in. Sergeant Cook, by the name of Ted Mitchell, he had the front of the stretcher and I had the back with Skinner in it. The rest of the wounded who had leg wounds and they were coming down behind me. Down the bottom of the track was what they called a Marty creek it was swollen with the rain.
- 26:30 As we went across in the water I slipped, the weight of the water got me and I had to let go of the stretcher and I went down under the water and I found myself lying on the bottom of the creek pinned down by the weight of these bullets. But fortunately I hadn't clipped them so I quickly slipped it off and I remember getting up and when I got across to the other side of the creek Les Skinner had somebody else who had grabbed the stretcher
- 27:00 and Ted Mitchell said, "Les Skinner is dead," so we had to leave him here. We stayed there all night on the other side of the creek, the shooting had stopped, there were no sounds of anything going on from the plateau, it was too dark and it was raining. The next morning as dawn started to come through
- 27:30 I thought, "We have got to get out of here." These wounded blokes were terrific all night, there was a bloke called McCorkle and he had a big hole in his back and he just laid there in the mud without making a noise. I looked to my left and I saw somebody laying there and I called him over and I said, "Pass the word along to the left and find out how many of our fellows are to the left," and the bloke on the right I said, "Pass the word along as far
- 28:00 as you can about how many," and when the two figures came back I found out that there were twenty one of us, I was the sergeant and I was the senior, that included the wounded and that made twenty one of us. I said, "We will try and get out." I'm not a great leader of men but I tried to lead them out and it was starting to get light and we were getting a bit worried. We must have gone around in a circle because we ended up back at the same place that we started from. Then this fellow up here
- 28:30 he came to see me and his name is Ted Murray and he said, "Bill, I think I can get us to the airstrip," and I said, "Try to." We followed him, crawling along dragging the wounded blokes with us, some had leg and arm wounds. All of a sudden I'm beside the Kokoda strip right out of the jungle and there's this big broad, it was only grass.
- 29:00 I remember looking back up at the Kokoda plateau and it was covered in a mist and I remember thinking to myself, "We are out so far and if we can get across the strip we might be lucky." Just down to the left I saw a native hut and we found out later on that it was used as, by the air travellers on the light aircraft, that they used
- 29:30 waiting for planes, it was just native material. Alan Smith, he was the lance corporal and he had the Tommy gun and it had twenty rounds in it and that's all the ammunition that we had and he said, "I'll go out and check out the hut," and I said, "Yes." He checked out the hut and came back and he said, "There's nothing there," and I said, "Right." All this time it was getting lighter but the mist was still over Kokoda and I said, "It's no good
- 30:00 trying to go across one or two at a time, when I say, 'Go,' grab all these wounded blokes and go across as fast as you can on the other side of the strip," and that's what we did and I said, "Go." We took off and I expected to be mowed down, we were in full view, the airstrip was in full view of Kokoda and nothing happened. We laid there panting on the side and then one of our boys said, "There's a bit of a track leading up to the grass,"

- 30:30 so we followed that and we started to climb. We were dragging these wounded blokes or helping them along and I had my corporal with me and he had a field dressing on his shoulder and he was a very brave man. He carried his rifle and it was still on his shoulder, you can't believe it. We kept going and going and going and then all of a sudden we came to this bit of a road, which widened out
- 31:00 and it was in a native village. Alan Smith went ahead again with the Tommy gun and checked out all the huts and there was no one there so we all just collapsed under the huts and laid there. I remember thinking to myself at the time, 'The Japs have got to follow us because they must've captured the place.' We knew that but we didn't know for sure that they had. We knew that we had gone but we didn't know what happened to the 9th Platoon but we knew that the Japs must have it
- 31:30 because we knew that they would be after us because they knew that we got out, but nothing happened. We sat around and we had these two Bren guns, the boys were only young fellows like myself and they said, "What's the good of the Brens because we can't shoot them?" and I said, "Right, take the grease box out and hide the Brens under a hut, under some banana leaves,"
- 32:00 which we did and then we said, "There's no good going on the way that we are." I don't know if I made the suggestion or if one of them made it but they said, "We will break into two parties," and they said, "Bill, you take McCorkal, he's the worst wounded one, and you go ahead and take any married men." One of them got married in Darley camp, I had about seven and the idea was for us to go ahead and follow the track out of the village and
- 32:30 cutting trees as we went to let the mob coming back behind to know which way we went. The cook, Mitchell, had a haversack full of Jap rice so we divided it up before we left and we took a certain portion and they took a certain portion. What would happen was at about four o'clock every afternoon while we were on the move Ted Mitchell would cook up the
- 33:00 rice and that's all we had just one spoonful of rice and water. We had to leave the other boys and try and get out. That was on the 11th and the 12th, 13th we were still trying to get out. On the afternoon of the 13th we got up on a hill and we looked back and I found myself looking down at the Kokoda airstrip, trying to get back to Deniki, the village we just left, we didn't know what had happened
- 33:30 in our absence, fortunately we didn't and I will tell you in a minute. We looked down at the airstrip but as soon as you looked north and south, it was looking out from the west, in other words it was on the wrong feature. We decided then to change track and we found another path leading away to our left and we followed that. Then I heard a roaring, then all of a sudden we came out of the jungle into the open
- 34:00 and it was the most amazing sight, this huge waterfall was coming down over a cliff with tons and tons of water crashing down into a deep gorge and you couldn't see the bottom of it. Across it was a swinging native bridge made from native materials which consisted of two ropes that went across on either side to hold onto and the base of it was just wooden slats.
- 34:30 I remember we stood there and looked and I remember thinking to myself, "This is the end of it." We were hungry and starving, and then McCorkle, he said, "I didn't come this far to die here," and he stepped on the bridge and as he stepped on the bridge his rifle fell off
- 35:00 and it disappeared and it's still there, it disappeared right down into the depths somewhere, we don't know. He had a big hole in his shoulder and he started very slowly to get across this swinging bridge. I remember saying to myself, "Here's this man the way he is and here's me," and I said to the others, "Come on, let's get across." Eventually we got across and we laid on the other side.
- 35:30 We only had a field dressing and that's all we could do for McCorkle was change the dressing, we couldn't do anything else for him. Jock McCorkle, I don't know what happened to him because I never saw him after that. We struggled on that day and we came to a big palisade, the wall of a native village, with logs
- 36:00 leading up to cross it to get to the top. I said, "I'll go up and have a look." I had a look over the top and I saw an Australian soldier standing there trembling with his rifle and bayonet pointing up. He was a bloke called Bernie Fleming and we found out later on that he got out of Kokoda and got lost and he got to this village and heard us coming and thought that we were Japs. So we took Bernie Fleming under our wing. We started off on what was
- 36:30 going to be the second last day, the 15th. All of a sudden we heard voices so we stopped, it could only be the Japanese or the natives. I said to the boys, "You wait here," there was a bit of a gully, "and I'll go across the gully and see what this is." So I crawled across the gully and I crawled to have a look over the top and there were all these native kids, it was a village.
- 37:00 As soon as they saw me they panicked and they started to run and I yelled after them, "Australia, Australia," and they came back and they pulled me in. The natives come up with 'cow cow', the first feed in bloody days, and I started to eat it and there was a voice floated from the gully, "Bill what are you bloody doing?" I said, "Come over boys, we are in good hands." They struggled across
- 37:30 into the village and they sat down and had a big feed. Then I saw what I took to be the chief of the village, he seemed to be in authority. He couldn't talk English and I couldn't communicate, I put my hand up and point away like that, pointing to us and put my finger up

- 38:00 and pointed to the natives, two to go, he got the message that I was asking for guides. We watched him call two of the native boys across and 'yakka, yakka, yakka' in their dialect. Then these two natives started to move and they went like that and I said, "Right, follow them and don't let them out of your sight," so away we went behind them.
- 38:30 We followed them and went over the mountains and then we heard the shooting start, and I thought, "They are leading us into a trap," and I pushed my rifle into one of their backs which I didn't want to but just to give them the right idea and they changed direction and started to go the other way and the shooting was the other way. What we didn't know was the Japanese had attacked Deniki and if we had of gone down there we would have been gone. We continued on for the rest of
- 39:00 that day and then all of a sudden we found ourselves coming down through a native garden and we followed these two natives down and the next minute we were on the Kokoda track. It must have been this big broad track and I remember thinking, "God, where are we?" The two natives turned around and went straight back up through the garden, they disappeared and there we were panting on the track. Almost immediately around the corner came this
- 39:30 patrol who were PIB, Papua Infantry Brigade. They were native troops and they wore a jacket and a lap flap with blue piping on it and rifles and fuzzy hair and they had a white man with them. He was an Australian lieutenant and he said, "What happened, where did you blokes come from?" and I told him the story. He got two of his fellows, a sergeant and one other, to
- 40:00 go back and follow our track back up to try and see what happened to the rest of our blokes and I said, "Where are we?" and he said, "You are half an hour out of Isurava, the 39th are back at Isurava," and he said, "we have got kicked out of Deniki and they are back there," and I said, "Good." We struggled on back down for half an hour and all of a sudden
- 40:30 we are back amongst our boys, back home, and they came up and shook us by the hand and were glad to see us because we were coming in in dribs and drabs and then we learnt what had happened.

Tape 3

- 00:30 We found out that while we were trying to get out from Kokoda the Japanese had attacked Deniki and we started off wrong and forced what was left of the 39th out of there and they had fallen back to Isurava which was the next village back across the Owen Stanleys, and the 39th were about one hundred and fifty strong
- 01:00 and it was sort of a thin red line down one mountain and across the track and up the other. I got back on the 16th August and no word was forthcoming as to what was going to happen so we were just waiting for an attack. We knew full well by the numbers that we struck in Kokoda that there were more than just a few Japs around, we didn't expect it to last very
- 01:30 long if they did put in an attack. They didn't do it and there was just no action and patrols were going out and weren't coming up against anything. That was the situation right through Isurava until the 25th of the month, that was the 16th to the 25th that was just inactive. I happened to be on the Kokoda track,
- 02:00 and the sole communication was a field telephone, which consisted of a telephone wire which stretched right across the Owen Stanleys from the top of Port Moresby, and the telephones were hooking into villages and things like that. This chap's name was Barry Harper and I happened to be on the track and he was talking to somebody and then he turned around to me and said,
- 02:30 "Bill, there is somebody coming," and I remember saying to him, "Who?" I remember his reply, "I'm bugged if I know," he said, "but there is somebody coming," and I said, "How close are they?" and I said, "I don't know." That was as far as we got, so I went down and I told my boys back in the hole and I said, "There seems to be somebody coming but we don't know who it is." The next morning, which would be around about the 24th August,
- 03:00 and I was with about five others in a hole that we dug out and behind us was a creek and I said, "Give us a water bottle," we each had a water bottle and I said, "I will go back down to the creek and fill them." So I crept down the track and the descent from the track itself down to the creek was pretty muddy and slippery
- 03:30 and I slipped most of the way down there. I filled one water bottle and I was just about to start to fill the other and I heard a noise and I looked up to the other side of the creek, there was a soldier standing with his feet apart and he was in green shirt and green trousers, he had a steel helmet on and he had a Tommy gun under his right arm pointed down at me and in his left hand he had a grenade with his teeth on the pin
- 04:00 and looking down at me. I remember the conversation and I said to him, "Who are you?" and then the magic words, "Forward scout 2/14th," and I remember what I said, "You bloody beaut, you come here." He slithered down and the 2/14th were coming in and I said, "Who are they?" and he said, "C Company,

the 2/14th, they are here." I said, "Good, come with me." So we filled the water bottles and I went back to where we were and of course our fellows came down on

- 04:30 the track and immediately the scene changed, everybody was shaking hands. I knew the RSM's name was Tipton, he was with the Royal Melbourne where I was before and I hadn't seen him since those days, and Les Tipton said to me, "Bill, Tom Blamey," that is, General Blamey, "told us that if we recaptured Kokoda in fourteen days we go back on leave," and I remember thinking to myself at the time, "Oh God, they don't know what they are up against."
- 05:00 The 14th all came in and they took over the forward positions because they were fresh, and what was left of us came behind them. That's the way we were up to about the 27th of the month, which was a few days later on, and then it happened. The 2/14th went to capture Kokoda and at the same time the Japanese launched a big attack,
- 05:30 I think at Port Moresby, and it was horrendous. The fighting went on 26th, 27th 28th, 29th. On the day of the 30th, what was left of the 39th, I was at A Company and there weren't many of us left, and I was on the right hand side, we didn't know where the 2/14th were, those in front of us they were in action. As a matter of fact on this particular day Kingsley got his VC [Victoria Cross]
- 06:00 in front of me somewhere and I could hear the shooting but I didn't know what the circumstances were. Then somebody said, "A Company, get across on the other side of the flank, the Japanese are coming down through the high ground." I had a bloke called McCaleb and he's still alive in Melbourne, Johnny McCaleb. We ran across the track and up the other slope and I had a Tommy gun and we laid down on the ground and we looked up the hill and we saw some little legs appear and I fired a little burst at the little legs
- 06:30 and then they disappeared and then there was silence. The whole thing suddenly went silent, all the shooting had stopped. We couldn't see the track because it was up the hill and we were down the bottom. We had a Major called Bill Mirror who floated up from down the track. He said, "The 2/14th mortar has arrived and it's being assembled," then we heard clank and that would have been the barrel going into the base plate.
- 07:00 Then a voice said, "They are about to fire the ranging shot," and there was 'plop' from down the track. Then the next minute, just up from where McCaleb and I were, there was a great explosion. He got a piece of his right arm disappeared, I got blown down the hill a bit and that's where it landed. I slapped a field dressing on Johnny McCaleb's arm and sent him down the track. He
- 07:30 disappeared and he was out of it and I was left on my own on the side. The others were in front of me somewhere but I just happened to be on my own on this spot. The hours dragged on and the shooting wasn't going on, there was nothing but silence. Then I heard a voice float up from the track, "Is there anybody up there?" and I said, "Yes," and they said, "Who?" and I said, "Bill Guest," and he said, "You better bloody well get out of there, they are all gone." I thought, "Here's
- 08:00 me and the Japanese army." I slithered down the slope to the track and as I went across the track I remember looking down to the left to see if they were coming, which they weren't. Down the other side was going down to the creek. There was a bloke called Harry Mortimer trying to get the survivors together to get them into one party to get down the creek, which I found out later on this is what it was. On the way down there is something that I've never forgotten was
- 08:30 across from my left to the top of the Kokoda track, there was a stretcher lying on the ground, it would have been about thirty yards away, lying on this stretcher was this soldier obviously wounded. On each side of the stretcher was an Australian soldier, it must have been the 2/14th because that's all they wore, the tin hats. They were kneeling on each side of the stretcher with their rifles in the ground pointing up to Kokoda track.
- 09:00 I remember looking at them and then Harry Mortimer, he was the lieutenant, he said, "Come on Bill we have got to get out of here." So I had to leave this scene and go down and we got down to the track and got to the creek, what was left of us, the 39th. Then firing started again. What I was looking at was two Victoria Crosses because the Japanese would've killed the three of them and years later on,
- 09:30 when the war was over and I got back, I contacted the 2/14th. It was too late and they couldn't find out who it would have been. I tried to find out who those two fellows would have been on the stretcher because it was just chaotic, it was just bloody terrible the Battle of Isurava. They went backwards, there was dragging wounded men, we didn't know what was coming up behind us.
- 10:00 The decision was made, Colonel Honour, and it's in the book, the 2/14th were supposed to relieve the 39th but Colonel Honour said to the 2/14th, "We are going to stay," so we stayed with them until the Japanese attacked and then the 2/14th had to get out because there were too many for them.
- 10:30 Colonel Honour decided that the 39th would stay there with the 2/14th but when they were forced back the 2/27th Battalion had moved across the mountains and were behind us. When that happened the decision was made to send what was left
- 11:00 of the 39th back to Port Moresby. The 2/16th 2/14th and the 2/27th continued holding up the Japs at the Owen Stanleys so we went back to Moresby. We were reinforced back there and we were rested. There

was no training and a lot of them went to the hospital of course, there were a lot of casualties who had suffered.

- 11:30 All the unloading of ships had finished so we didn't do anything like that and we were out of Moresby itself, we didn't go back to the Seven Mile drome, when we left Seven Mile to go to Kokoda, that was the last that we saw of that. The next action was in the December of 1942 and they sent us across the mountains to the coastal area of Buna, Gona and Salamaua and I won't go into details about the battles themselves
- 12:00 but the 39th was in the big battle that captured Gona. Then we went to Salamaua which was an awful bloody place, worse than the Owen Stanleys, the battle on the coast, the conditions and the mud, the lack of food and the mosquitoes, that was terrible down there.
- 12:30 We did that and then I was flown out with malaria, back to Port Moresby. Then shortly after I went out, the rest of the 39th came back and I spent the rest of January in 1943 that this was happening, so towards the end of January, twice I went back into hospital and the second time with dengue fever. What they were doing was filling us full
- 13:00 with drugs to keep us in the line because there was nobody else. Eventually in the March of 1943 I was put on the hospital ship the Manunda and I came home from New Guinea on the Manunda and the rest of the 39th came back on another ship. The rest of 1943 I became
- 13:30 B Class, which meant I wouldn't be going away to any fighting areas. I spent most of 1943 either in the military hospital in Heidelberg or the general draft details, doing jobs here.
- 14:00 Early in 1944 I decided I didn't want any more of this B Class business so I was upgraded to A again and they sent me to Canungra up in Queensland where I came on the staff of the jungle training battalion up at Canungra and I was there all of 1944.
- 14:30 At the start of 1945, the 9th Division had come back from the Middle-East up to the Tablelands and the NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] and the sergeants came to Canungra to take the place of the current staff, who were mainly the armored division fellows. I found myself drafted back up the Pacific to a place called Morotai, it was an awful place. While I was there,
- 15:00 and this was early in June 1945, I got sent across to the 2/10th Battalion with five others, about six days before they took off for Borneo. On the 1st July 1945 I landed on the beach of Balikpapan in Borneo with the 2/10th. That was not to be compared to the New Guinea campaign because we had everything, they blew the hell out of the place,
- 15:30 it was out of this world to be on the winning side for once. I stayed at Balik [Balikpapan], we captured oil tanks and the road and another unit came in and took over and we didn't do anything more actively as far as the war was concerned until right up to
- 16:00 when the atom bomb was dropped to finish the war. Then an invitation was given to anybody who wanted to join the occupation force in Japan, the 67th Battalion could go across there or just wait there until they sent you home. I decided to do that but in the interim a force was sent across to Macassar
- 16:30 because the Japanese were set up in the hills and somebody had to be there to receive them as they came in. There was no fighting or anything like that but they had to take hold of them when they came in so I went across to Macassar. I was in that area for the rest of 1945 up to the February of 1946, when I was the last shipload out of Macassar, the Australian troops to come home.
- 17:00 I came home and was discharged from the AIF in March 1946. Although I said that I would never go back to Liverpool, they were very, very good while I was away, they sent me parcels and they wrote letters. When I went in to see them
- 17:30 the boss, he said, "Are you going to come back?" I hadn't decided to do anything at the time because I was still recovering from the war and I said, "I will come back for a while and see what it is like." The scene had changed and, as I said before, all the wires and cables used to come from England but in the interim they started the factories in Sydney and anything that was being produced in the United Kingdom
- 18:00 was kept over there, so in other words there was nothing coming out to Australia. The post-war reconstruction, they needed all the stuff over there and I found myself with the job of outside representative for a company that had nothing to sell. I got back interested into the football again, my live became football, 39th reunions,
- 18:30 Liverpool Cables where I went back to work. In this job as an outside representative it got that monotonous and boring. There was a hotel in Collins Street called Fears and we used to gather up there of an afternoon for a few beers and talk about old times. On the wall above the bar was a big beautiful photo of
- 19:00 one of the islands from New Guinea. We used to stand there and stare at it and think, "We saw it during the wartime and we didn't think it was very impressive, it must be a beautiful place to be in peacetime." We used to look at that and talk about it. Then one day when we were up there one of the fellows said,

"I wonder what it is like in the army these days?" He said, "The recruiting depot is just down Grove Street, just down from Fears,

- 19:30 what say we all go down and have a look just for something to do?" Away we went and we went in there and there was this building and the army recruiting and they were doing all sorts of things. I was introduced to an officer, Lieutenant Monty Taylor, I didn't know at the time what a trap it was. He said, "Boys, have a beer." There was a big fridge full of beer so we drank beer and started talking about old times. Time got away and I woke up
- 20:00 and I was wondering where I was and I was staring ahead and there was a newsreel and I found out that subsequently that I was in the Century Newsreel Theatre in Swanson Street in Melbourne. In those days it was continuous newsreels and I thought, "God, I've drunk all this beer and I haven't been home," and how I got in the newsreel I didn't know. Along the side of the aisle were these lights and the first thing you do is put your hand in your pocket to see if you have got any money,
- 20:30 but I found a bit of paper and it had '9 a.m. Royal Park' on it, and I had read that leaning against the lights and I didn't think any more about it. I went home and my mother upped and she went for me and I made some sort of an explanation. The next morning I went back to work and I didn't go out that day, I had to work inside on the counter, and at half past nine the phone rang inside the office,
- 21:00 and they called me William John, it was Bill in the army and John in civvies. So the girl said, "John it's for you." I picked up the phone and Monty said, "It's Monty Taylor here, Bill," I said, "Yes Monty?" and he said, "Why weren't you out at Royal Park this morning?" and I said, "What do you mean, what for?" and he said, "You were supposed to be at Royal Park at nine o'clock," and I said, "What for?" and he said, "You are in the regular army."
- 21:30 I said, "Why?" and he said, "I've got your signature yesterday and as soon as I saw you I said to the other boys, 'We are going to get this bloke,' and I did," and he said, "as of this moment you are a member of the regular army and you are supposed to report out at Royal Park this morning to the GGD [?]." I was stunned to say the least of it. Mr Dukes was sitting in his office and I thought,
- 22:00 "I better go and tell him." I knocked on the door and I said, "Mr Dukes, I've got something to tell you," and he said, "Yes John?" and I said, "I'm in the army, Mr Dukes," and Mr Dukes said, "John, that's very, very good." He said, "With your experience, what you will be able to pass on to these younger ones," he was thinking it was militia. I said, "It's not exactly like that, I'm in for six years." So there I was back in the regular army and this was February 1951.
- 22:30 I went up to Puckapunyal and they were all getting ready for National Service, and they were running in all directions. All they had to give me was one shirt and one pair of trousers and a hat which I had at Royal Park. I arrived up at Puckapunyal this night and we were all training to get ready for National Service. The National Service hadn't been called up, they hadn't been called in but they had been warned and I think it was
- 23:00 May 1951 and that was the first intake for National Service. I settled down and I was back in the army and we started to train, getting ready for National Service. I started to like it, we worked hard during the day and down the sergeants' mess during the night, talking about old times and drinking beer. What had happened if you were a sergeant during the war
- 23:30 in an infantry unit, if you went back in the regular army they took you back as a temporary sergeant as a National Service instructor and you had to sign up for six years so you went back at the rank of sergeant, not as a private. All through these months leading up to the actual National Service coming in, these fellows like myself who got out and
- 24:00 had another life, they were starting to trickle back into the army. One day I was in the sergeants' mess drinking a beer and this fellow walked in and I looked at him and he looked at me and he went to the bar to order a beer and I was drinking mine. I said, "My name's Bill Guest," and he said, "My name is Lindsay Webb," and I shook hands with him and I said, "Who were you with Lindsay?" and he said, "The 2/14th," and I said, "What?"
- 24:30 and then I said, "Am I pleased to see you," and he said, "Who were you with?" and I said, "The 39th," and I said, "I will never forget the first time I saw your blokes, I was filling the water bottles at Isurava." I looked up and described this bloke and he said to me, "Was that you filling the water bottles?" and I said, "Yes," he said, "I was the forward bloody scout!" You wouldn't believe it, and here we are the two of us. Needless to say we got to bed pretty late.
- 25:00 National service came in, our lives went on and we had the first intake came in and they went home. Then when the second intake came in one day the orderly sergeant came up to me and he said, "Bill, your new posting has come through." I was enjoying myself at Puckapunyal, it was terrific. I said, "What's that?" and he said,
- 25:30 "You are going to a place called PIR [Pacific Islands Regiment], it's a native regiment," and I said, "Where?" and he said, "Up in New Guinea," and I said, "Oh no, not me," and he said, "You are, you volunteered for it," and I said, "I didn't," and he said, "Yes you did," and I said, "I want to see the colonel," Colonel George Wharf who was with my father during the war, old Abdul up there on the wall. So I got myself fronted up to the colonel and he said, "What's wrong Sergeant Guest?" That was the way that he spoke.

- 26:00 I said, "I've been told by the orderly sergeant that I have been reposted to this unit called PIR which is up in the islands somewhere," and I said, "I'm quite happy here and I most certainly didn't volunteer." So Wharf said, "Now just a moment Sergeant Guest, you might recall about a month ago you had a formal mess and you were invited down," he said, "I went down there and I distinctly remember the orderly sergeant
- 26:30 calling out, 'We want a volunteer to go to PIR,' and you definitely put your hand up Sergeant Guest and I saw you do it, so you will do it. You're dismissed." I found myself going again. I said goodbye to all the boys at Puckapunyal and I headed off for Brisbane. I went to the barracks in Brisbane and I had to see a Brigadier Long.
- 27:00 While I was in the office waiting for him, on the wall beside me I saw 'Pacific Island Regiment Taurama Port Moresby', this was 1952. 'Major HL Saving, Commander, 2IC Major Cook,
- 27:30 Adjutant, and the OSM' and then 'Orderly Sergeant, then Temporary Sergeant Guest'. When the Brigadier came in, he interview me and I said, "Sir, I see on posters the orderly sergeants in this unit in New Guinea, does that entail typing?" and he said, "It most certainly does,"
- 28:00 and he said, "What is your typing rate?" and I said, "Sir, I have never touched a typewriter in my life," fully expecting him to say, 'That's no good to us, go back to Puckapunyal.' He didn't say that, he said, "Right, that's no problem," he said, "Before you go up to New Guinea you will start a six weeks' typing course here in the office." So Bill Guest did a six weeks' typing course and I finished up going to PIR. I got there on a Sunday and I got picked up by an old-type jeep.
- 28:30 This was May of 1942. I found the Pacific Island Regiment had been a unit during the war and when the war had finished in 1945 nothing more was done about it. But in 1951, which was the year before I got to it,
- 29:00 it consisted of white officers and warrant officers, and a platoon commander and the platoon was thirty men, in other words the senior ranks were all white. The ranks themselves came from Papua New Guinea. They had a mixture of as much as they could get to keep harmony, different tribes and districts, they got recruits from all these different areas.
- 29:30 I found myself in charge of thirty as a platoon commander. We had to learn pidgin English, all the instructions were given in pidgin, and the commands were in English. I soon found out what beautiful people they were to work with, with the odd ruckus but mainly providing you treated them fairly and
- 30:00 were straight with them they did what they were told. We had the odd fights which we soon sorted out. That was 1952, it was all around Port Moresby training and lots of things happening there with them. Getting towards the end of 1952, it was decided to open an outstation at a place called Vaimo which was just down from the Dutch New Guinea border.
- 30:30 It was getting near Christmas and there had to be two warrant officers who had to go up there to Vaimo which was an outpost. A bloke called Graeme Taylor who was the ADO, he was a part of
- 31:00 ANGAU [The Australia New Guinea Administration Unit], but there were patrol officers out at these different posts. A bloke called Jack and I took off, it was decided it was getting near Christmas, that it was unthinkable for any married blokes to go up there so they sent Jack and myself who were both unmarried
- 31:30 up to start it off at Vaimo. When we got up there we found, amongst all these thousands of natives that were in the area up to the New Guinea border, there was only one patrol officer, Graeme Turner, who was a Catholic priest who was on the other side of the
- 32:00 Gulf, and then there was a native hospital and it was run by a medical assistant, but we found out that he was an alcoholic. Back in Wewak was the District Commissioner
- 32:30 and he had an order that any cargo that went up to Vaimo, be it by air or by sea, would be searched and any liquor that was marked for the medical assistant be removed. When he was sober there wouldn't've been a more better runned or disciplined hospital. When the booze came in he used to get stuck
- 33:00 into it, and the boys got frightened and we found this out when we got there. The patrol officer, Graeme Taylor, he was in charge of that whole area of natives stretching from Vaimo to Dutch New Guinea border and going back a hell of a lot the other way, thousands of natives lived in there.
- 33:30 They brought the engineers up and the idea was for us to go there and get it established. The army ship Tarri, which was an army ship, was going to bring thirty engineers up from Brisbane to construct a proper camp and that's what happened. So just before Christmas the army ship came in with all these engineers on it and we started to build the camp. In the meantime the PIR company, which was
- 34:00 A Company, they came in and occupied the newly built barracks that the engineers had built. We used to go out on patrols up to the border and inland and that was our life in Vaimo, there to about June of 1953. Then we were relieved by another company and I went back to Port Moresby

- 34:30 and did normal training around Moresby. Until the end of 1954, getting towards Christmas again, it was decided that PIR would open another station on Mardas Island. So once again it was unthinkable for married people to go away for Christmas so I finished up in the chair with an unmarried
- 35:00 officer and we went across to Mardas Island to place called Nut Point to start off another outpost there. The difference was between Morotai and Nut Point, at Nut Point the Americans had been there and they had built this immense hut, it wasn't a hut, it was a building which would house four thousand people.
- 35:30 They lived in a rounded hut and you could put two men in it and that was your living quarters. The heat was out of this world and by eight o'clock in the morning if you put your finger up inside the hut and touched the roof you would burn your finger off, it was really hot. The navy was there, HMAS Tarangau, and they lived a different life to what we lived, we felt sorry for them.
- 36:00 With the navy, if they got posted to a place for a year, three hundred and sixty five days, on the three hundred and sixty fifth day if an airplane or ship was leaving, they were on it and they knew it. They couldn't understand us when they came across to see us and they said, "How long are you here for Bill?" and I said, "We don't know, it's not until somebody comes and tells us to go,"
- 36:30 that was the sort of life you lead over there but it was good. We used to visit the navy. They lived an envied life really, they got around in a pair of shorts and a big straw hat and no shirt, we had to get around in a proper uniform. Their discipline was very, very strong and
- 37:00 'men for punishment'. We used to go to the pictures over at the navy at night time and someone would call out 'men for punishment' the people watching the films, there would be a stream of men go down. If it was a good film they'd rush down and get their names ticked off and rush back up again. If the film wasn't any good they'd just trickle down to get their names ticked off. Whatever offences they had committed, and it wasn't much,
- 37:30 but they got punished. We didn't, we just went our normal army life. I was there at Mardas and then we got relieved, another company came in 1955. I went back to Port Moresby and the company commander was an Englishman.
- 38:00 He said to me, "Bill, we are going for a walk," and I said, "Where are we going sir?" and he said, "We are going to walk from Kokoda and back," and I said, "I did it the hard way in 1942, I don't want to go back," and he said, "I've got news for you," he said, "I'm a major, you're a warrant officer, and a major tells a warrant officer what to do and you are going, that's it,"
- 38:30 and I said, "Sir, do you mind if I'm last all the way?" I was then thirty five and I was twenty one the first time. Away we started off for Kokoda again, no other troops had been across there since after the war. This was the PIR, just the major and myself. When we got back to Kokoda,
- 39:00 going back to a place that you were in in 1942, the first thing I thought of was to find out where I was in 1942. All these round holes that we had been in, they had made them into flowerbeds, there was a new ADO there and a new house and it had changed completely. Then we walked back to Moresby again and then it was getting
- 39:30 into 1956. I was due for reposting, I'd been with them since 1952 and this was halfway through 1956 and I'd intimated that I wanted to go back down to Adelaide, not back to Melbourne but back to Adelaide. I got posted back to Adelaide, to the cadets.

Tape 4

- 00:30 An important piece of history which I missed out on. Going back to 1942 again, when we were in Port Moresby. We had a task of digging defensive positions on the coast, out from the extension from the Seven Mile down from the coast. We shifted away from the airstrip down to this new position and every morning we'd go out digging these positions and then coming back to this new camp.
- 01:00 The Japanese were coming in every day, machine gunning the drome and then the word came out that there was a big sea battle taking place somewhere in the Pacific, there were no details but that's what it was. On this particular day I had what the doctor said was
- 01:30 yellow jaundice back at the camp which was an hour's drive away to the coast. I couldn't go to hospital because they had evacuated because the sea battle was going on. They evacuated the hospital back to Australia but their medical officer said there was no doubt that I had jaundice because I was going all yellow. Then the word came through that what was happening was the
- 02:00 Battle of the Coral Sea but we were being told that a big sea battle was going on. If the Japanese were successful we could expect a landing, if the Japanese landed we couldn't expect any more than ten minutes' resistance, the way we were, and then it was 'every man for himself', they were the very words about the Coral Sea. All the rest of them got into trucks and took off to the coast into these positions and I was left behind at

02:30 the camp, on my own, lying on the bed. I couldn't stand it any longer, so I crawled down to the track and there was a water cart that came along and I said to the driver, I said, "Can you take me down to where the other boys are?" I got in beside him and we got down to the coast and the lieutenant said to me, "You shouldn't be here Bill." I said, "I can't stay there on my own." He said, "I will tell you what to do." From where we were,

03:00 there was a sharp rise through the kunai grass and you couldn't see over the top of the raise of ground going up very, very sharply. He said, "You should carry everything you can and put on all the equipment and run until you drop." I found out later what he meant and I ran until I just collapsed into a great lather of spurting sweat, and in Port Moresby the humidity was out of this world.

03:30 Then I gradually started to feel better. What he had done to me was right, he had sweated the fever out of me. So I joined the others and we waited that night with no news except there was a battle going on and we didn't even know who was in it except that the Japanese were expected to land. Then the next day the order came through to stand down. The word was,

04:00 'The battle is over and the Japanese had been defeated in the sea battle,' and we were going back to the camp, so that was the Battle of the Coral Sea. By then I had recovered from the jaundice and was back to my normal duties. I thought that I'd bring that in because it was a very important part. The one that I will continue on with will be the cadets. Before I went to Adelaide I went on leave in Melbourne and

04:30 I went down to see a friend of mine who was in the 39th who was back in the regular army and he was down at Mornington. While I was down there I met Pat, my wife, she had been in the WRAAC [Women's Royal Australian Army Corps], she had been discharged and that's where I met her. She was going across to Adelaide

05:00 and I went across with the cadets and married her over in Adelaide and instead of being a single man I became a married one. We went to an army quarters and then Bubby was born in

05:30 1958, she was born in Adelaide and Pat's mum came from Sydney. I was in Adelaide until 1958.

06:00 After Bubby was born they were calling for volunteers to go to a PNGVR, which was the Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, which was the militia type of thing back in New Guinea. I said to Pat, "Do you want to go back there?" and in the interim before this

06:30 cropped up there was a posting that came to Rockhampton, they called it job exchange. In other words, if you were in a certain position in the army at a certain place, and it was agreed that you could change your job with anybody who wanted to go to your place. To cut a long story short, my job in Adelaide with the cadets I exchanged with a fellow up in Rockhampton, I never saw him, we criss-crossed, he went his way and we went ours.

07:00 I went up to Rockhampton first in 1959 to settle myself in and then Pat and Bubby came up on the train and I finished back in the cadets in a different unit up in Rockhampton. One day while I was there I was in the latrines and I heard two officers talking and one said to the other, "We have got to get somebody to go up to PNG to Lae." When they came

07:30 out and went up to the officers' mess, I said, "Excuse me for being rude but I heard a conversation and you said you are looking for someone to go back to Lae and I was with the PIR for four and a half years. My wife and I have decided, if it is available, we will take on this posting back in Lae." In 1960 I took off for Lae and then Pat followed with Bubby later on. The situation in New Guinea then

08:00 was in all the capitals like Rabaul, Madang, Lae, Mount Hagen, all the towns, there was one regular army warrant officer in Lae and I was the only one and in the headquarters at Port Moresby there was quite a few of them, PNGVR. It consisted of a company, about thirty or forty

08:30 people, who had jobs in Lae and they did part-time training. They'd go into a camp on the weekend, to a bivouac out of Lae a bit, and they would go down to the drill hall which was in Lae, and we lived in an old wartime house above the drill hall. I stayed with PNGVR in Lae and Pat came up and got a job in Lae with an insurance company to do a bit

09:00 of insurance and she worked with them. Bubby would have been about five and went to the school there in Lae and we lived quite happily there. My job was meeting dignitaries and senior army people who were on tours and take them around Lae and to the cemetery during

09:30 the wartime interests. The local commander was a Captain Harvey Hall who was a mechanic with Trans Australia Airlines down there and I had to take them down to meet him and that was my main job, supervising the training of the night exercises and the bivouacs. I saw out 1960, 1961 and 1962

10:00 and then 1963 I was due for discharge and I was thinking about what I was going to do, I had twelve years' army again. I was getting a bit old and they sent me back across to Moresby, the umpire a PIR, at Tamara, one of their exercises. I had finished with them but I was back there as an umpire and, mind you, I was shooting a Bren gun into the

10:30 ground as a simulated enemy. While I was up on that hill doing it, the thought stuck me, "I'm going to

finish to the end, I'm getting out, I'm due out," and I went back to Lae and I said to Captain Harvey Hall, and this was the January of 1963, I said, "I want take discharge."

11:00 He accepted that and I came down for a discharge in Adelaide, so Pat, Bubby and I boarded the Malata and that was the ship and we sailed from Lae on my birthday on 24th January 1963. I came back to Adelaide and unfortunately before I got discharged I got malaria again and finished up in hospital. I took discharge in Adelaide and I was out of the army in 1963 and that was it,

11:30 that was the end of the army story.

We will go back and get closer to some of your army times, like when did you find out what had happened to 9th Platoon in Kokoda?

12:00 They managed to get out and for some reason the Japanese in the rubber went into a cessation, they just disappeared and they didn't operate. The 9th Platoon crept out and they got onto a track and they got away from Deniki and they could hear the shooting going on at Deniki and they got on another track and they finished up at Isurava.

12:30 We didn't know at the time what had happened to them but they got out. The ones that were left behind, I think the War Graves helped them later on. The 7th Platoon got out with the 9th Platoon. The result of the Kokoda battle was that, apart from the ones that were actually killed, I got the wounded out and the majority of them managed to get back to Isurava for the second battle.

13:00 **Going back to when you first signed up for the cadets and you got home and mum had other ideas, what were your feelings about that at the time?**

I didn't blame her, when Abdul

13:30 came back from the war, the tramways were very good, they kept his job. Anybody from the Melbourne tramways that went away for the war, they got a war savings certificate, sixteen shillings certificate monthly was put to their credit and they didn't finished their job,

14:00 it was left open until they came out of the army if they decided, if they wanted to return to the tramways employer or go somewhere else. When Abdul came out after the war he was getting on in years, he was born in 1895 and we are talking about 1946, he was in his fifties.

14:30 His nerves were such that there was no question of him going back on driving trams, so he went out to the workshops at Preston as a labourer. He used to laugh about it because his first job was a labourer's labourer and then he came home and said he had been promoted as a labourer and then he took on white metalling. For a man with his background to be doing things like this was out of this world. He happened to be at the Preston workshops

15:00 at the time, he was Victorian Scottish and, as I said, I went out with him to the sergeants' mess. They used to go to a different sergeants' mess every week, just to go into the sergeants' mess to just drink the beer after the parade was over. This particular morning he took off for work and he didn't know that my mother was going to take me in to take the uniform back. When he came home that night from work he

15:30 probably thought I was in the cadets but I was well and truly out of it, and there was a side argument. I could see my mother's point of view, she had had the army.

How did your mum react when you went home that day and told her that dad wasn't coming home, he had already left for the war?

I will never forget her words she said, "They must be scraping the bottom of the barrel if they have to take him,"

16:00 She said, "Wounded and gassed and they still take him." She was bitter. He came home the next week on leave and being his old self laughing, singing and joking and my mother, we used to call her Hilda, she had become reconciled to the fact he was going away again and it wasn't very long after that they went away on the Queen Mary that left Australia to go across to the Middle East.

16:30 At that time I was with the Royal Melbourne.

Did you get any correspondence from him?

He kept in touch.

What sorts of things?

Before you go I will show you my scrap book with all the letters that I've kept. When my mother died, she never threw anything out, under the bed was all the stuff that had been accumulated over the years,

17:00 I'm talking about the letters and photos. A very unique letter and I will show you. When I got back to Isurava, typical Australian Army, there wasn't much to eat but the mail arrived and there is a letter from my sister and I remember reading the letter, a one pager, and on the back of it I wrote this letter back

to my mother to tell her that I was safe.

- 17:30 There was no stamps so I put it on a piece of cardboard and posted it. It got back to her all the way back down to Melbourne and it had pieces cut out of it from where they had censored it. When she died, amongst all the stuff under the bed was this letter which I have got up there in my scrapbook which I will show you, it's amazing.

Did you know personally what

- 18:00 **your dad was up to in the Middle-East, did you get correspondence and in what regard did you know?**

We knew he was with the 2/5th. When he got across the Middle-East, he went to signals then. They realised a First World War soldier like that, he was a signaller, a very efficient one and well known throughout the army, he was a top signaller. In those days it was the flags and the

- 18:30 Morse code and he transferred from the 2/5th to the signals battalion. All the time there was correspondence from the Middle-East back home, he wrote to me and I still have the letters from Abdul. I have everything indexed and I still have the letters from Abdul and we had a very good rapport between us.

- 19:00 He was a very, very good husband but unfortunately he was a victim of the First World War, he drank a lot of beer. When they came back from the First World War it was a bit different to us, the reception was different. After the First World War they came back to absolute nothing

- 19:30 but when we came back and got out of the army you could go and do courses and they looked after you. At the present moment the Department of Veterans Affairs is out of this world, what they do for you. He finally went. When Pat and I were up in Rockhampton with the cadets the word came up from Melbourne on Christmas Day in 1959,

- 20:00 he was sitting in the lounge chair in Brunswick and he had a massive haemorrhage in the chair and died. My mother and my sister were the only ones that were there, it was the gas. As a kid, like seven or eight years old, I have memories and if I wrote a book I'd start with this one. You could hear up in the top bedroom 'breathing heavily' and I'd hear my mother's voice and she used to call him 'Dark'.

- 20:30 I heard my mother say, "It's all right Dark." What it was, as he laid off a night time, the gas would rise from his lungs into his throat and it would choke him but he got over it, but eventually it got to him. He was sixty four when he died, he wasn't very old by today's standards. He died there on Christmas Day 1959 in the chair.

- 21:00 My mother continued living in the house and, when I came out of the army, I used to go across to Melbourne and my brother lived with her, this is in Brunswick in Melbourne,

- 21:30 when I took the discharge in Adelaide and I will tell you that later on.

Can you remember the stories, did your dad tell you stories about the First World War or did he keep it to himself, what can you remember of that?

He used to tell us the one about when he was captured at Gallipoli which is the funniest one, that's when I was telling you his name of 'Abdul'.

- 22:00 He didn't talk that much about the war, I can't recall. He used to get with his friends in the sergeants' mess and they used to joke about things that had happened in their unit, like everything else in Australia, there was nothing about the serious parts, it was always the funny parts.

Can you explain where your eagerness to join the army came from?

I think so: the fact that he was

- 22:30 Victorian Scottish and I just wanted to be in it like everybody else so I joined the Royal Melbourne.

Can you remember the day that war was declared, can you remember where and how you found out?

It was in 1939 and I was eighteen. I was at work with Liverpool Cables and we came home and my mother said that there was an announcement on the

- 23:00 radio that war had been declared. The immediate reaction in Melbourne when war was declared, we got put on the militia or immediately sent out to petrol stations, places that could be the target for the enemy, because there was a lot of panic and I think it was more panic than anything else. I got sent down to the Atlantic Oil Depot

- 23:30 in Melbourne and there was a funny thing that happened there. The militia in those days, it consisted of older and younger fellows. I had a fellow who worked with me by the name of Wally James and he must have been fifty if not a day. When I joined the Royal Melbourne and finished up in my uniform he wanted to be in it too, so I took him down and I got him signed up and he finished up down at the

Atlantic Oil Depot with me the day after war was declared. An oil depot

- 24:00 consists of all the oil tanks in the middle and the office and we were camped in the office. We had a post up on the gates and someone walking around where all the oil tanks were and we were taking it in turns to go onto sentry duty. We weren't on duty, we had done our stretch, and we heard a voice yelling out, "Call out the guard."
- 24:30 When we went out and had a look, there was old Wally and he had his rifle and bayonet with his bayonet pointed at this fellow's throat against the wall with his hands up. This corporal said, "Wait a minute Wally," and Wally said, "I've got one." I said, "Just a moment, Wally." I said, "Give me the rifle Wally," he was getting carried away. I said to this fellow, "Who are you?" He said, "I'm the bloody night-watchman."
- 25:00 So we thought, "This is lovely! The bloody war breaks out and he's trying to shoot the night-watchman!" So we calm Wally down but he didn't last very long, he got a discharge the next day, disappeared, but it was funny. They didn't know, it came so unexpectedly.
- 25:30 We were called up for full time duty shortly after that. That was 1939 but nothing really happened to us until the 1940 mark. In 1940 the Australian Government called up, they never had conscription but they called up an age group into the militia and for short they were called UTs, which was Universal Trainees.
- 26:00 The age group would have been from nineteen to twenty four I think, something like that. They would do the same training as we would except they didn't volunteer, they had been detailed. When they formed the 39th, some of these fellows found themselves in the 39th even though they hadn't volunteered for the militia.
- 26:30 Every unit had to supply a certain number, we had a certain number of volunteers, as I said before in my talk, but the difference between the number of volunteers and what they wanted were these universal trainees. But when we got up to Darley when the 39th was formed, Colonel Tomlin formed the whole battalion out and I remember him saying, "It has come to my ears that in your
- 27:00 ranks there are some of you here against your will. That is not the way that we want it so if there is anyone here who wishes to be returned to their old unit, now is the time to say so, so please step forward," and they were the words that he used. The whole thousand troops, not one stepped forward. He said, "Very well, the 39th is a fully
- 27:30 volunteered unit," which it was. Very often, when you see them writing up about those days they use the word 'conscript'. The word conscript was completely out of order because it wasn't, the 39th was given the chance at Darley that day, if they didn't want to go they didn't have to. That was a point that we made later on and got very, very bitter, when they talked about conscript of the militia
- 28:00 because it was a volunteer unit.

There was a lot of talk about the differences between the militia and the AIF, what were your feelings in that regard?

There was one occasion up in Darley and we were on one side of the road and the AIF reinforcements were on the other. The very unfortunate occurrence was the orderly sergeant, and that was the one that was on duty,

- 28:30 he wore a red sash. Before we had our uniforms, like I told you before, there were Scottish uniforms and the Royal Melbourne uniforms and other uniforms. We were militia but whoever was orderly sergeant had to go across and close the AIF canteen and they came in for a hell of a ribbing when they went across to do that. They gave us a rough time and as a matter of fact there was one particular night
- 29:00 and I was in the sergeants' hut and we heard this ruckus across the road in our huts. We ran across and we opened the door and in the middle of the hut was a AIF man and he had a tin hat, steel helmet clutched in his hand like that, using the edge of it. There is a name in history called Templeton,
- 29:30 Sam Templeton, he was an old First World War officer too and he had this AIF bloke by the arm and this fellow was screaming, "Let me go, you will break my arm." Sam Templeton said, "I will break it all right buddy," he said, "What are you doing over here with these lads?" he said, "They are doing you no harm." This fellow was screaming, "Please let me go!" so Templeton dropped him and let him go,
- 30:00 and this fellow ran out of the hut. That was the feeling between the AIF and the militia. When we got our uniform we were the same as they were, things had changed, but after Isurava, if nobody ever mentioned anything about the 2/14th, about Choccos, it was good luck to them. I am a member of the 2/14th now, I'm an honorary member, I go to their reunions and they come out to
- 30:30 our Kokoda days. The old 'Chocko' emblem disappeared after the war in New Guinea. It was very, very bitter earlier, it was ridiculous to have two armies. Australia didn't own New Guinea because it was mandated, but they owned Papua, it's Australian territory, so the militia could go to Papua which is Port Moresby but they couldn't go to New Guinea or anywhere else because that was legislation and that was law.

31:00 Whereas the AIF, they were recruited to go anywhere and that was the feeling, so that's where this chocolate soldiers business came into it. The battle in Port Moresby soon sorted that out.

During the fighting up there, there was no instances of rubbing each other up the wrong way?

No question of that. Actually, when we were first reinforced in Port Moresby, ironically

31:30 enough our reinforcement officers and warrant officers who came up to replace the sick ones that went back, they were AIF. I have got it in my diary here, reinforcements arrived from Australia, the AIF, some tried to point out the difference but they were soon put into the picture. They were AIF posted to a militia battalion and some of them didn't like it too well.

32:00 But when the battle started for us, all that disappeared, they were very, very proud to be with us and we thought the world of them. When the screws were down the whole thing changed, any militia or AIF feeling just disappeared. In the AIF we had, some of the most decorated officers in our ranks were from the AIF.

32:30 Certain numbers came from the AIF battalion to reinforce us, to bring up our numbers, and this was even before the Japs landed at Gona.

Was there ever any question when your father returned from the Middle-East that he would possibly go to New Guinea?

That's a funny story and I'm glad that you brought that up. He wrote me

33:00 a letter which I got in Port Moresby. He said he had volunteered for New Guinea. Knowing what it was like up there he didn't know the day he died but I did. I wrote a letter from Port Moresby to the general officer commanding the Australian force back here, telling him that my father, and I mentioned his history in the First World War, had wanted to come up to New Guinea. I would

33:30 be extremely pleased if he would see that it didn't happen, or words like that, but I just asked him not to send him. He wrote to me and said that he had been knocked back and he didn't know why, but I knew why. Somebody did something about it and, let's face it, it would have been ridiculous because he wouldn't have lasted. All those First World War officers that went up with us on the Aquitania, there

34:00 was only about three of them that saw it out, and two of them were out of this world and they were in Kokoda with us and they were warrant officers. They were old fellows but when I say old they would have been in their late forties and one of them was named Jim Crowley who was a major during the First World War and he was our quarter marshal and he was in Kokoda with us. As a matter of fact he is in the history books on how he brought the 9th Platoon out.

34:30 Actually, when I told you before in the early part of my talk when Captain Semington asked me to go around and tell them that the 9th Platoon was pulling out. Just before we went down to Kokoda, Semington said to me, "Sergeant Major Crowley will take your platoon." In other words just moments before we stepped off to go down he brought Jim Crowley up. I suppose he thought an old seasoned

35:00 campaigner like Jim Crowley would be able to handle it better than I could, that's okay. When we went into Kokoda, Crowley was the platoon commander instead of me. But when I crawled around the outside on that particular afternoon to warn the 9th Platoon that we were leaving, Jim Crowley was lying in the hole, the same as I had and he was stretched out like that, his words to me were,

35:30 "I'm buggered Bill, take over," and I said, "Righto Jim." After I had passed the message on, I didn't come back around the holes, I just crawled on my hands and knees the shortest two points to get home to my hole. As far as I was concerned I didn't know what had happened to Jim Crowley. What I didn't know, and what the history books told us, that old Jim had recovered and he stayed there in Kokoda

36:00 after we had gone to see if he could help everybody out and he brought them out. It's an amazing story. The other one was a bloke called George Moet who was a CSM [Company Sergeant Major] and they saw it right out, the two of them, right through the Owen Stanleys. The company commanders, the main ones, they didn't last very long in Port Moresby. The climate and the disease

36:30 got to them and the fact that their age was against them being in a place like that. Look at me, I was only twenty one, go back to the First World War, you'd have to put another twenty years onto that. Most of them came back, they didn't fly back, they came back on ships and they were replaced by the AIF fellows that came up. Most of our company commanders in the action were AIF, from the AIF battalion.

Was there a real

37:00 **level of respect for these guys because the guys were so young and these guys were World War I veterans?**

Yes. We found that in the 39th they were very closely knit. When Colonel Honour came to us I didn't see Colonel Honour at Isurava. That's another funny thing that I must tell you about it. In 1992

37:30 I went down to Anzac Day down in Melbourne and I came back and my sister lived in Sydney in Woy Woy and I went up to Gosford to see my niece. When I was in Gosford the phone rang and it was my

sister in Sydney. She said, "Jack, there is something on down at Martin Place to do with Kokoda," and I said,

38:00 "What is it Joyce?" and she said, "I don't know," and this was in the November of 1996, so I thought I'd go down and have a look. I got on the train at Gosford and went down to Sydney and went to Central Station and I got out and I asked the fellow, "How do you get to Martin Place?" He said, "You get that bus." So I got on the bus and I think the bus driver was a Korean and I told him I wanted to go to Martin Place. Away he went and he said, "We are at Martin Place," so I got off and I saw all these

38:30 people lined up in groups and there were other people sitting in chairs up on the road. I joined on the first one and said, "What's going on here?" He said, "The celebration of the recapture of Kokoda in November of 1942 and we are 2/33rd." I said, "Do you mind if I join in?" He said, "No." I was waiting for something to happen, so I looked around and I looked up and I thought that he didn't know what was

39:00 happening so I thought I'd ask one of the fellows up there. So I walked up there and I saw this gentleman sitting in a chair with a collar and tie and I said, "Excuse me sir, I heard this was on today and I have just found out that it is the captured Kokoda." I said, "I was with the 39th in August of 1942." This fellow said to me,

39:30 "My name is Honour," and I thought, "Bloody Colonel Honour, I haven't seen him before." He said, "You were with the 39th?" and I said, "Yes sir." I said, "I got out of Kokoda with the wounded." He said, "You must have come out with Sergeant Guest," and I said, "Sir, I am Sergeant Guest." He had never seen me before and this was years and years after it was over.

40:00 Poor old Colonel Honour, he was a terrific man. He's dead now of course. Although he wasn't my colonel and I hadn't met him because the circumstances in those days we never saw much of each other, we were in our own little backyard, we didn't even know what each other was doing. There is a funny story to be told about Colonel Honour, he is well known and well respected.

Tape 5

00:30 **You talked about how in your basic training, about the Battle of Geelong?**

That was an exercise that was done out of Bacchus Marsh and it was suppose to be a hypothetical attack by enemy on Victoria, coming through Geelong.

01:00 We were supposed to be the force of resistance, the whole of the 39th Battalion. There was a place where you turned off the highway to go down to a place called Skipton, and Skipton won the Melbourne Cup that year. The battalions set off with me in front in a utility and some of our soldiers in the back and I had the map with me and

01:30 I was looking for the turn off to Skipton and to this day I don't know how I missed it. We drove and drove along the highway and I couldn't see Skipton and all of a sudden I found myself in a great metropolis of cars going in all directions. I looked out and I saw Ballarat, I had gone right past Skipton and I led the 39th Battalion into Ballarat. The police come up and stopped the car and I said, "Where is the turn off to Skipton?"

02:00 and the military police were turning up and the 39th car was still coming from behind me. He said, "You have got to go back about ten or twelve miles," and he told me where it was and I said to the driver, "Turn around before they start asking questions." We got out and left the rest of the 39th milling around Ballarat trying to get out so we got to the Skipton turn off. My command commander was an old fellow called

02:30 Badger from the First World War, a major, very, very assertive type, he didn't go for me very much and he was the one that called me a very temporary sergeant. When we got on the turn off to Skipton, there was one aircraft involved in this war and it was a Wirraway and it was dropping bags of flour simulating bombs. While we were getting into our positions down from Skipton, over came this one Wirraway and he dropped one

03:00 bag of flour, and what do you think happened to it? It landed fair and square on top of Major Badger's bonnet of his car, it busted and water went in all directions. That exercise didn't end in very good form. We went through the motions of what we had to do in defensive positions and officially it was declared that we routed the enemy and they had taken off. Nobody thought about the Japanese then

03:30 because they hadn't declared war. That was the only exercise that we did at Darley out of Darley itself. The rest of the training at Darley was just around the area in the open, but certainly no jungle warfare.

Later on you actually met some Americans who spent some time actually at Darley, can you tell us about that?

We are getting back to when we went

- 04:00 across to Gona with the 39th and after we had captured Gona with heavy casualties and we finished up at a place called Huggins' Parameter. The Americans initially had it and then they went out and we took over from them, we were there all through Christmas 1942. Then the Americans came back to relieve us out of Huggins and I was in this
- 04:30 forward post behind a tree. This figure appeared beside me on the track, it was an American GI [General Infantryman]. He had the helmet on, a full pack on his back, and he said, "Hey, my name is Todd, Sergeant Todd," and I said, "Yes, my name is Bill Guest." He said, "I got the guys down the track to come and take over." So I went down the track and you should've seen the guys,
- 05:00 they had full packs and eyes sticking out like that. I said, "Where did you come from?" He said, "We were at a place down there, near Melbourne, called Fort Darley," and I said, "Fort Darley?" They call everything is a fort. He said, "Yes, we did our jungle training there," and I thought, "There were only five trees at Darley and you couldn't do any jungle training there."
- 05:30 I thought this was a funny old thing. Then their captain turned up, he said, "The idea is going to be," he said, "we take over from you." There were about thirty of us and thirty of them. He said, "Tonight one of our guys will go in one of the foxholes with one of you fellows and in the morning
- 06:00 you come out and then we take over." That night that's what happened, they came up and there was an American and an Australian in this position, and it's in history. The Japs were there but they were having a nice quiet war, they didn't start anything and we weren't doing anything so everything was peaceful. We didn't want to start them up and they didn't want to start anything either, they were
- 06:30 trapped and they didn't have any food or nothing and they were just quite contented to stay, we couldn't see them because they were in the jungle. It was funny the next morning, as dawn broke the idea was for us to crawl out back to the track, crawl up the track to the road junction until we were all gathered there and head out to where we were to go to next. We just got out of the holes and everything was peaceful and we just got on the road junction and we were all laying on the ground and then a voice rang out
- 07:00 through the jungle, "There goes one of them." 'Bang', and the next minute every rifle opened up, they were shooting at nothing because there was nothing to see. The Japanese thought that the war had started again, so they started shooting back and we found ourselves clutching mother earth, with American and Japanese bullets were flying in all directions. They said, "Let's get back at those Yanks," and I thought there was going to be a civil war. Then it
- 07:30 quietened down and we left it to them and we got out. I have in my diary that the Japanese must've thought that all their birthdays must've come at once, getting the Yanks back. They didn't show any command sense in action, whereas the Australian would lay quietly for hours and days, if necessary, in the one spot, they would have to fidget around and talk. One thing about the jungle is you never opened your mouth,
- 08:00 you wouldn't even break a twig in case someone heard it. The Americans were different, that's why they had so many heavy casualties because we put it down to common sense. They didn't show the common sense that the Australian showed.

What do you think the reasons are for that?

As far as their troops are concerned, that was the only place where I saw them in action, as far as the organisation is concerned,

- 08:30 if they hadn't've turned up in Port Moresby with all the stuff that they had, I wouldn't've been here now. We had the greatest respect for the way that they did things. They had one good way of looking at life, 'If you can blow the hell out of it, do it and then go in and take it,' and that's what they did. They'd blow a place to pieces then they'd go in with minimum casualties whereas in our army there seemed to be troops and if you had them you'd go, so that's what we thought.

That was the general feeling amongst the Australian troops towards the Americans?

- 09:00 Yes, they were very pro-American except, of course, I might say like instances like we were just in. They didn't put that much confidence in them as fighting soldiers but their organisation and the way that they faced up to things, something that we didn't experience in our army at that time.

Do you think there were feelings of jealousy amongst the Australian soldiers

- 09:30 **that the Americans were so well equipped?**

It wasn't so much up there, it was when we came back to Australia. It wasn't so much jealousy, resentment would be the word. In Australia we had practically nothing and they were walking, but that's another story of course. In those forward areas they gave us their equipment, we had American jeeps, and their equipment became our equipment. The Australian Government

- 10:00 just couldn't match it, the Americans were well known for the way that they produce things. When the jeeps came into it we went across to Gona and those places and you'd take the wounded. Instead of going over there and bring the staggering wounded blokes on stretchers, they'd just put them on the

back of a jeep, on a properly laid out section of the jeep, and latch the stretchers on and took them back to the airstrip and they were lifted back to hospital.

10:30 It was a different situation altogether across the Owen Stanleys where they went for eight and tens with the fuzzy wuzzies, the natives, there were about eight to ten of them allocated to a stretcher and they went across slippery logs and over stones and that, with the greatest of care but they couldn't do it any other way because there was no other way of doing it. When the Americans and their jeeps appeared down at the beach heads, that was a totally

11:00 different war.

Can you tell us more about the fuzzy wuzzies?

Yes. They were a strange race of people, we called them fuzzy wuzzies because of their hair but they were mainly Papuans in New Guinea. After we had been there for a while you could look at a native and you could tell where they came from. It was easy to pick out the Papuans because of their big fuzzy hair and the New Guineans had sort of straighter hair.

11:30 The stretcher bearers and the carriers, they were not caught up in fighting areas. Let's say the fighting was here, they'd be a couple of villages back under white control, the ANGAU. They were in charge of all native affairs and the native carriers and the food carriers and the stretcher carriers.

12:00 If anybody got wounded, we had to get our own wounded back, send them back in a party, say two villages back, and there the native fuzzies would be waiting to take them the rest of the way back across the Owen Stanleys. But at no stage of the game were the natives right in the fighting area. The other native troops, there was a

12:30 Papua Infantry Battalion much the same that I went back to, the PIR was white officers with black troops. It was the same during the war itself, there was a PIB, Papua Infantry Battalion, which were all fuzzy wuzzies with white officers. But they were combat troops, they would never be committed to a combat straight out like we were, because they couldn't stand up to it. Their job would be 'hit and run and move in',

13:00 reconnaissance work, like the guy going away and coming back with a string full of ears. That was the sort of operation that they did, like assault troops but they couldn't use them. Their work was valuable because there was just nobody else to do it. The ANGAU officers, they were especially selected, mainly from the ones that were in Papua New Guinea before the war. When the Japanese

13:30 arrived after Pearl Harbour, they evacuated PNG whites, women, kids and the elderly. The younger ones stayed behind and they became the ANGAU because of their experiences amongst the natives and they became a unit themselves.

When you mentioned earlier when you went out on a patrol with the PIR, what exactly did you expect to find on these patrols, what was the purpose of the patrol?

14:00 It was routine, showing the flag or government support. We had no jurisdiction if we went into a place where there were problems, even a native policeman, I was involved in a couple of occasions when I went back with the PIR.

14:30 There is one occasion, before the administration took control they went their own merry way, they'd have a platform up in a tree and they'd put a body on it and that body would decompose, and it was a bit sordid. Underneath it they would put a big bowl of rice. As the body deteriorated and the

15:00 juices came out of it, it would drip into the rice. The native way of looking at things, the strength of their relative was up on top decomposing and it was going into the rice and then they would eat the rice and the strength of that man would go into them. We were going from Vaimo which I said was up in New Guinea border. I went with a major and thirty boys and right down the bottom

15:30 was a village called Kontari. As we entered Kontari we could smell this awful bloody smell and the major, and he was panting along with me, and he said to me, "What's that bloody stink?" and I said, "I don't know sir." All of a sudden we came out of the village and there were no natives, they were all gone. We had the police boys with us, you called a boy a boy because he was a native, and he might be sixty years old

16:00 but he was still a boy. These two police boys, all they wore was a blue lap-lap with a stripe down it but they were police and we were soldiers. The major said, "We will wait." So the two police boys went in and I said in pidgin English to one of the police boys, "What's it all about?" He said, "It's all the stuff on top, it's against the law," and then he explained

16:30 about the practice of placing bodies up in trees years ago. But because no white men had been around there, in other words they were controverting the law. The major said to me, "What do we do?" and I said, "Nothing sir." In other words, even though he was a lowly police boy, he carried out the law in that particular place on behalf of the government and we supported him if he called for it.

17:00 If he wanted a hand we'd move in but until he did so it was in the hands of the local administration. What did happen in this case, the police boys went through the whole village and all of a sudden we saw

them dragging out this poor old bugger by the scruff of the neck, out in the middle of the triangle. One of the police boys had a whip and he was hitting him with it. I said, "You can't, major," I said, "This is their justice." Then this other fellow

- 17:30 started to yabber. What happened under the Australian administration, every village had two people of power. The government representative was a black man and he was known as a Luluai and his badge of office was peaked cap with a red band that signified to everybody
- 18:00 that he was the government's representative in that village. He in turn was answerable to the white patrol officer, one man for the running of the law. He had an assistant and they called them Tultul and he wore a peaked cap with a blue band. What was happening was the police boys were asking this poor old fellow where the Luluai had gone. As the police boys explained to us,
- 18:30 we could hear the tom-toms going a gamelan drum and the word had gone from village to village that we were coming. If they had done something wrong they would empty, if they hadn't done anything wrong they'd stay there and saw it out. Because they had the bodies up on top and they knew that it was against the law. Away went the police boy out in the bush, so the major said, "We may as well sit down because we can't go anywhere else, we have to wait for the police boys." Back came the police boy
- 19:00 with the Luluai by the scruff of the neck and he gave him a belt, even though he was a government representative, the police still hit him. Then he pointed up on top and then he gave him a great burst in pidgin English and the poor old Luluai was nodding his head admitting the guilt. The patrol went on further. Everywhere we went and in every village there is what's known as the
- 19:30 house kiap and 'kiap' means patrol officer. That was a house that had been built in a village and everybody went inside the house except the visitor, the army could go in, patrol officers were allowed in, if there was someone doing a census they'd live in there. That was kept especially for travelling white people, they wouldn't be natives, it was all whites going through on various duties, it
- 20:00 could be anybody who had a different culture, it was for anybody who had a job to do in the village. We went on from this
- 20:30 place that we were just talking about and we came to another village, on the border of the Dutch New Guinea and the Australian New Guinea and once again it was emptied of people, the tom-toms had got it. But on this occasion they hadn't fled the village they had just moved away from about a couple of houses down and you could see them all sitting in the jungle, all the women, kids and the men.
- 21:00 We were on red coconut trees, with big beautiful coconut up there and poor old Jerry, he shouldn't have started off in the first place because he wasn't fit enough to do the big long trek, so he was puffing and panting. He was looking around and the two police boys sat down and I looked and saw these natives creeping closer and closer and closer, I knew what it was all about. The major said, "What are they doing?"
- 21:30 and I said, "They are starting to get their confidence back." He said, "Great, I'm thirsty, I wouldn't mind one of those coconuts." In those days there was no such thing as money, it was all trade. I carried stick tobacco and my boy with me had it in his pack. Newspaper, razor blades,
- 22:00 stick tobacco and salt and they were the four trade items. The law was, if you took something that belonged to the village you paid for it in kind, no money. The major said, "Any chance you can get me one of those coconuts?" and I said, "Yes, but I will have to leave a stick of tobacco or a razor blade under the tree." I said to one of the PIR boys, "Go up and get the major a coconut."
- 22:30 He went straight up the tree trunk and they were beautiful and he got out his bush knife and brought it down. While this was going on, these natives were getting closer and closer and closer, they were getting more confidence and they realised that we weren't going to hurt them. They had never seen an army before, a black army because all of our boys were in uniform. They got to about the cars, or a bit beyond that, and they stopped and looked. The boy brought the coconut down and he stripped the husk off it
- 23:00 and there was the coconut inside, so he cut the top off and gave it to the major. The major said, "Oh," coconut milk is bloody beautiful and he said, "It's beautiful." Then he said to the boy, "Cut a piece off," so the boy got his bush knife and chopped it in half. Of course all the eyes were staring, they were ready to go but their confidence was getting better. I could see in the corner of my eye and also the sergeant, old Tallick, and I don't know what's happened to him now but he knew what I was thinking and he gave me
- 23:30 a nudge and I said, "I know," and they were getting closer. Then the major dug his teeth into the coconut and started to chew it, and they were still coming closer and closer and then all of a sudden they took off, and the major said, "Where did they go?" and I said, "It was your fault sir." What had happened, he had got a bit of coconut caught in his false teeth and he took them out.
- 24:00 They had never seen a set of false teeth in their life. They thought, 'here's a white man who can take his teeth out and put them back in again.' I said, "It's the end of them, you won't get them back." There was a funny thing on that patrol, a bit of fun and my boys knew it and they were half educated and they

knew our way of thinking. I had a razor, I bought it at Port Moresby before I went on these trips.

- 24:30 It was a wind up one, you could either wind it up and it would go into action or it was a ac dc rope with two prongs in it and I carried a little knife on my belt. So we go into one of these villages and the natives were following me, they were just curious, they weren't frightened they were just curious to see what I was going to do. I deliberately did this, my boys would watch me and laugh. I found a tree and I had the thing wound up and I would get the knife
- 25:00 with two holes in it and there would be silence and you could see these eyes watching. I would plug it in and then get the mirror out and then turn the switch on for the mechanism and start to shave, 'whoosh' that was the end of them. I finished the shave and I said, "Are you ready to go?" and the major said, "Yes," and we'd pack up and the boys would be laughing their heads off. When we got out of the village we'd look back and you'd see these natives
- 25:30 and they would come out of the bush, going like that up and down the tree, it was cruel. Up goes the morale and they were laughing as they jiggled along, gees they were good. But they were some of the things that we used to get up to. We didn't have much food but before we got to this place, Sisano Lagoon, the idea was for us to get to Sisano Lagoon on the coast and then the big canoes would take us up to Vaimo, which was about
- 26:00 two days away, this was the idea. Also there was supposed to be a food drop, which didn't happen, we had no food except the native food as we went through. When we got to Sisano, at the Catholic mission was Father Luke and two Catholic sisters dressed in all their habit, this was in the stinking tropics. They had the white coat on and they had the black and they came out to meet us, and the father came out in all of his gear and this was right out in the wild.
- 26:30 I looked down the beach and I saw all these great sea-going canoes upturned on the beach and the major said, "Where are the canoes father?" and he said, "Why do you want the canoes?" typical bloody army, he knew nothing about it. He said, "The idea of our orders was to come here and see you and get a loan of your canoes
- 27:00 and take the thirty boys," there were only two whites, "and the two police boys back to Vaimo," which was up the coast. Father said, "You won't get them now, this is the time of the year when they pull them out of the water for maintenance." The major said, "Looks like we are going to have to walk all the way," which was two days, so he said to Father Luke, "Is there any chance of getting any rations from you?" He said, "Can we do some trade?"
- 27:30 Father Luke said, "You better stay here for the night and this afternoon the sisters would like you to have afternoon tea with them." We had been out for a month and all we had been eating was the rations we took plus stuff we got from the villages and it wasn't very much. Here we are getting invited to have afternoon tea with the Catholic nuns. The major and I sat down and all we had on was the filthy clothes we started off with and the major said, "I'm not religious,"
- 28:00 but he said, "We can't sit down with these people like this," and I said, "Sir, you can't knock back the hospitality, they want us so we have got to go." We went up to the house and inside was a table beautifully laid, fresh scones, jam and cream and there were the nuns and Father Luke all dressed up in all their habits. I was trying to stop from
- 28:30 laughing because I thought, 'If the boys could see us.' Sergeant Tallick up here, he knew they probably thought, "Poor old Bill Guest and the major are up there." We had afternoon tea and the conversation was a bit stilted because we had nothing to talk about. That night Father Luke said, "You stay here tonight." He said, "The police will be looked after by the Luluai and the boys, my mission will look after them tonight in their huts and in the
- 29:00 house. " He said, "There is a room for you, major," he said, "Just out the back is a little lean-to with a bed in it and Bill can stay there." I climbed into the bed, I had completely had it after we had been walking for thirty days. All of a sudden I heard a noise in the dark and I tried to get through the room to see and there was a pig sitting by the door with its nose in the air. I thought, "Here's me with a pig in the room." Then I heard a noise under the bed
- 29:30 and when I had a look I found a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK sitting on eggs, right down to earth. The next morning the father got us some breakfast. A funny thing, I had lost my boots in the swamp coming in from the jungle and I was walking around in a pair of socks and I had nothing else. They all called me 'Biscuit', so the major said, "Biscuit, don't worry about it, we are going
- 30:00 to get the canoes and we are going to get into Sisano," he said, "don't worry about walking anywhere," because I was worried about walking in bare feet. The scene changed, I got two days walking in a pair of socks. The next day the major said, "We'll make it a bit easier, instead of walking along the jungle track," he said, "we will walk along the sand." There was sand all the way up to Vaimo and it's beautiful sand, it's a glorious bloody country,
- 30:30 the surf bashing downs, the perfect climate. So we staggered along and said, "We will make Cresher the first village and we will see if we can get some food there," because Father couldn't give us much because they didn't have much. When we got to Cresher the police boys went in and it was deserted. There was one old

- 31:00 Mary laying in a hut and the police boys found her, and they questioned her and they found out that the Kiap back at Vaimo was having a special celebration for something, and he had sent the word out to all the villages to all go up to Vaimo for this big celebration, so they did the whole village. The lock, stock and barrel and they took off for Vaimo and just left the old Mary there, with nothing to eat, at Cresher.
- 31:30 Finally I was staggering along the beach and finally we arrived at Vaimo and then the enigma of the whole thing, I couldn't go any further, my feet were starting to bleed. The boys were having the time of their life watching poor old Biscuit and how he couldn't get along. They said to the sergeant, "We have got the answer, carry him." Before I could say anything, they picked me up and put me on some of their shoulders
- 32:00 and all the rest of the troops came out of Vaimo clapping as I went up there. I never saw old Jerry O'Day again. He is still alive and he was in the 2/14th. He doesn't go to the reunions any more because he is that far gone. Sometimes I lay in bed and I think about those funny days, it wasn't very funny then.
- 32:30 Life at Vaimo was something like that. While I'm on that subject, the Queen's Birthday 1952. When a big day like that came up they had a succession of bonfires around the coast and up to the border. Out on a point, or some land around out to sea, they built a great bonfire.
- 33:00 This place here would watch for the next bonfire and they'd start theirs and once you got yours up the next place would start theirs. When it finished there was all these great bonfires, all along the coast of New Guinea, celebrating this particular time. Graeme Taylor had said to me, "Bill, we have about thirty engineers here," and he said, "We are going to have a big sing sing for the Queen's Birthday," and I said, "Yes Graeme,"
- 33:30 and he said, "We are going to have it on the airstrip here, the engineers, what do you think?" and I said, "Well, what about a Vaimo gift?" and he said, "what's that?" and I said, "It's a foot race," and I said, "We have got some singlets here and we can dye them different colours." I told him how they ran a foot race and he said, "Righto." I said, "The engineers have axes so we can have a wood chop." He said, "We will have sports," and, "the PIR boys," there were thirty of them, he said, "we will have a march past, we will make a day of it."
- 34:00 The next morning I went down the airstrip and there was nothing, I went down from our quarters and I stood on this six hundred yard airstrip and I was looking at nothing, just the jungle on each side. Down the track from here came Graeme, dressed up in all his whites, he was always dressed in white, white shirt, long white trousers, white belt and a hat. He said, "Good morning Bill," and I said, "G'day, Graeme, where are they?" and he said, "They're here," and I said, "What?" and he said, "All the people,"
- 34:30 and he said, "you just wait." He said to the police boy with him, "Righto," so the police boy got his rifle and put it on his shoulder and fired a shot in the air and then it happened. From the jungle on both sides of the airstrip all these natives came, four thousand of them, women, kids, old men, young men, no murmurs, no yelling, they silently all
- 35:00 became a terrific group on the airstrip and they stood there. On their shoulders they carried food and they carried firewood, the Marys always carried it, not the men, and the kids sat down and I thought, 'God, this is what you call control.' Graeme had a loud-hailer and he said, "(UNCLEAR)," in other words, "I am telling you now what the government says will happen."
- 35:30 Then he went through with the routine, first of all the PIR was going to march. Then the sports would be on and then the wood chop would be on, then the gifts, which I had arranged. Then he said, "Tonight there will be a sing sing," the natives' sing sings are a big thing. He said, "but when you leave you take all your rubbish with you," all in pidgin English,
- 36:00 and then that was it and he said, "Come on, lets go," and we left them to it. We had a terrific day, I ran the foot races, there was laughing, singing, there was no grog, it was completely grog free. As a matter of fact it was forbidden for the natives to drink, we had it in our mess but no way in the world would we bring anything down. That night, sing sing, you could see what was going on down the airstrip. If you stayed there they wouldn't've done it, you had to go and leave them to it.
- 36:30 As Graeme said, "You give them the food, they had some of their own and we give them what we can afford." They had their own firewood and we would go away and they'd have their own sing sing, "You don't interfere in any way." He went up to the house that he had and the rest of us went back to the sergeants' mess. Around about eleven o'clock that night it started, 'thump, thump, thump' then silence then 'thump, thump' and then 'scream' and then it started.
- 37:00 But for the rest of the night, right through to about five o'clock there was yelling and screaming and we could see the lights down on the airstrip. We stood on the balcony of our hut looking down on it. I went to bed and I woke up at dawn the next morning and I said I would go have a look to see what was down there. When I went down, there was not a person anywhere on the airstrip and there was not even a burnt piece of charcoal. They had finished their sing sing, they had taken every scrap
- 37:30 of evidence that there had been four thousand people there and they all went back into the jungle to go back to their villages. When I went back to the mess I said, "Talk about bloody control." This was under Australian control, this was the law, government. One thing that did happen there, when I first went there Graeme Taylor, there was three of us, there was a captain and two warrant officers and I was one.

- 38:00 One of the warrant officers was a very unfriendly type, Jack Orr was his name, and the boys didn't like him, I got on well with him. The captain had been in Changi during the war and the Japs had him. He and I used to talk but Graeme Taylor, he didn't like Jack Orr very much but I got on all right with him. Graeme said to me, "Come up to my place for dinner." He was one man living on his own in this big
- 38:30 native bungalow. When I went up there we sat down and we had a beer, and he was a white man. He had servants and house boys and the dinner was laid out on the table and he was up one end of the table and I was up the other. All the service and everything was on it and there was only the two of us eating. He said, "You can stay the night, you don't have to go down to your hut," and I said, "Yes, I'll stay up here," and we talked about old time, he was lonely for company too.
- 39:00 He said, "I want to show you something in the morning." The next morning we woke up and we had our wash and our breakfast and he said, "Do you see that down there?" and he pointed to a brick that was down amongst the grassy area and I think it was painted white and I said, "What's that?" and he said, "That's where my predecessor shot himself," and I said, "Why did he do that Graeme?" and he said, "Loneliness, he couldn't take it."
- 39:30 Some of these fellows stayed there for weeks and weeks on end, one person on their own, one white man with no one to talk to and all the rest were natives. This fellow couldn't take it so Graeme told me that he just got to the stage where he just couldn't take it and he just shot himself. Graeme said to me, "You blokes come here and it saved my life." He had a father on the other side of the mission and an old bloke next door, got onto the grog occasionally; there was only three white men in a great vast area.
- 40:00 When we came, the army, he was happy but that's what life was like for those fellows. I often wondered when they came back from these lonely existences and came back to Australia from up there and came back to big cities, I wonder how they accustomed themselves to a big city, it must have been strange after spending years and years of a lonely life out at the outstations. They were something again, but the law
- 40:30 was such that a white man was subjected to a similar law, except the law affecting the local population was harder. Let's put it this way, if you were a white man in PNG, you were supposed to at all times behave yourself in a seemly manner, if you stepped over the traces you got a warning.

Tape 6

- 00:30 **Can you tell us about the law of New Guinea?**
- This particular instance is an indication of what happened. When Pat and I were in Lae in 1960 there was a passenger ship called the Balolo, it was run by Burns Philip. It had a reputation of being crewed by homosexuals. This woman came up from Australia
- 01:00 on it as a passenger and she complained that she had been molested by one of the crew on the Balolo. She arrived in Lae and the District Commissioner, who is known throughout history and is very strict. The case went up before the local court, a white magistrate called Sir Colin Lockley, is still alive and he's still down there, he heard
- 01:30 the charge that this woman had alleged that she had been molested by someone on the Balolo. Sir Colin Lockley had made the statement, he said, "Yes, one would think that by what one hears that the chances of a female being molested by anybody was very remote,"
- 02:00 and we all kept a straight face. She did something else while she was there wrong, and on the Friday I was down at the airport to meet somebody coming in. She was standing there at the terminal with her bags, and I think her name was Eileen, I said, "Where are you going Eileen?" and she said, "I have to go," and I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Two days ago," she said, "I got a phone call from the
- 02:30 District Commissioner and he said, Mr so and so, he said, 'A complaint has been laid against you,' he said, 'I have an air ticket here for Sydney. Will you please collect it, you will be leaving on Friday.'" Something that she had done wrong, backed up by what had happened on the Balolo, in other words he was kicking her out of New Guinea. She had no choice but to get on the airplane and go. That was the way the law was
- 03:00 as far as the whites were concerned, you got a warning. The same would be, I would pick up the phone the next morning and it would be the District Commissioner and he'd say, "Bill, I was walking past your place this morning and it has some form of disrepair, the grass is too long, so will you attend to that please?" and I'd say, "Yes sir." That was the way it was, he was responsible. On the native side it was very, very strict. When we were at Vaimo,
- 03:30 one day we were going out on a patrol and there was a civilian patrol coming towards us and they had the Luluai in handcuffs, he had his red cap on. Barry Ryan was the officer who was coming out and we stopped and I said, "What did he do wrong Barry?" and he said, "In the law, under the Australian law, if a Mary in a village is having a baby,

- 04:00 she is not allowed to have it in the village, she has to come into the native hospital in Vaimo to have it," and I said, "Yes, but what happened here?" He said, "In this village this women died giving birth to twins," and I said, "What's he got to do with it?" he said, "Simple. He is the Luluai and he is in charge. He is answerable and he gets charged," and I said, "What will happen to him?"
- 04:30 he said, "He will get ten years and he will do the lot." It was law. When we trudged on, the major said to me, "God, they are hard." I said, "That's the way it is." That's the control they had. When Australia went, all that sort of stuff went with them.

Talking about the fuzzy wuzzies back during the wartime, do you think they were treated well by the Australian forces?

- 05:00 Yes. Unfortunately after the war they tried to get some recognition for their services and they got a very mild response from the PNG Government and I don't think the Australian Government gave them any either but we couldn't have done it without them. As far as the soldiers themselves was concerned, they thought the world of them, but unfortunately when
- 05:30 the fuzzy wuzzies, the carriers, even the ones carrying the food and the ones carrying the stretchers, when they came to villages there was unfortunately very little in the way of comforts for them. They would be lucky if they got a blanket, and their food would be very miserable food. The wounded had priority of course, the fuzzy wuzzies didn't worry, they were used to that sort of an existence
- 06:00 but the troops themselves, they thought the world of them. They couldn't talk to them because none of them could talk English. In Papua they didn't speak pidgin English, it was always Moto and there is no conversation but they'd give them a cigarette or something to eat or something like that.

You were a witness to the famous speech by Blamey. What can you tell us about that?

I was there at Koitake when it happened.

- 06:30 The 39th, what was left of us, were drawing up behind the 14th, they were in front of us. General Blamey arrived and he climbed up on the dais and he spoke those words, he spoke about only the rabbit that runs gets shot. I was in front of my troops and right in front of me
- 07:00 one of the 2/14th blokes in the rear rank broke and he said, "I will kill the so and so." As he went to come out, one of the sergeants grabbed him and they were wrestling on the ground and the other troops, who couldn't believe what they had heard, were starting to mutter and the officers were getting around amongst them trying to shut them up. Old Tom is up there waffling away, not knowing what he'd done, they just could not believe after what they had been through
- 07:30 what Blamey said. Tom Blamey was never held in any high regard by the troops, it wasn't like General MacArthur. When you talk about General MacArthur tears are running down everyone's eyes. With the Australians, they make a big joke of him, (UNCLEAR) was his wife. He said it, I was there and I heard it. He doesn't know how close he was to having an awful scene on that parade ground.
- 08:00 As I recall, they finished the parade pretty quickly because the word must've got through from the ranks where they were standing that there was going to be trouble. I don't think Tom Blamey even knew what he was saying, he was just saying something that he shouldn't've and he had no knowledge of actually what had happened. You had to be there to understand what they went through, it's still history now, and it was a terrible scene.

Can you explain what that did for the morale of the Australian troops?

- 08:30 The fact that later in the campaign when the 2/14th regrouped and they sent them across to Gona, we went across, but separately, and a lot of them exposed themselves to what was called 'foolhardy things' during the fighting.
- 09:00 They were trying to preserve a reputation which had been taken from them across the Owen Stanleys. They were trying to prove a point that Blamey was wrong, they talked about some of the episodes. The historians since the war have put it down to the fact that the words that Blamey spoke that day got under their skins and made them so determined that they were going to show everybody else that he was incorrect. I can't remember us being that way,
- 09:30 but he wasn't referring to us so much because we were pulled out, it was the 14th and the 16th, they were in the same area, they were the ones that he was referring to. They were the ones that had heavy casualties at Gona and Salamaua. I've got a book about it and they say that they put it down to the fact that they were that upset about what Blamey had said that when they went into action the second time they were determined to
- 10:00 wipe out that stain on their character, because of what Blamey had said.

Do you think that was Blamey's intention, to stir them up, or that he was totally oblivious?

I think that Blamey was just completely ignorant. Blamey never got near the front line at any stage, he sent a General Rowel in. General Rowel came over and Blamey was being pushed by MacArthur to get across to retake Kokoda

- 10:30 and nobody was trying harder than the troops to get back but they couldn't, what was happening to them and the greater numbers of the Japanese. General Rowel got an order from Blamey and I forget what it was but General Rowel sent back a reply, 'If you don't believe it, come up and have a look.' He was immediately relieved from his command and Brigadier Potts, and I'm not talking about the ordinary soldier,
- 11:00 he was sacked and Blamey did all this, he didn't know, he was completely ignorant of the actual struggle of what was happening to these people. At the reunions, someone said, 'old Tom so and so,' and they laughed about it. They start thinking about the actual battle and the fellows that had died up there. That was the story, Blamey was just not conscious
- 11:30 of what actually went on, and he made that statement that was completely false.

Can you recall where you were and how you heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour?

We were in Darley and I had just come back from the sergeants' mess into the sergeant's hut and at that stage we weren't

- 12:00 even sure where we were going, we thought that we were still going to Darwin and the officers were going to take their tennis racquets and golf sticks. John Ackhurst, who is still alive down there in Melbourne and he is a member of the committee, he said, "Bill, we have just heard on the radio that the Japs have just landed at Pearl Harbour." It still didn't make a great impact because we didn't know how big it was until we started to find out what they had done to the fleet. That changed
- 12:30 everything as soon as it was attacked. It must have been decided within hours to send us to Port Moresby. We knew very, very shortly after that, we didn't know whereabouts in New Guinea, and most of us didn't even know where New Guinea was. We knew we were going to New Guinea somewhere but we didn't know that it was Port Moresby. It wasn't until we got to Sydney on the Aquitania that we knew for sure that she was destined for Port Moresby.

Was there any fear on the ship amongst the soldiers?

No. The ship itself, the Aquitania, was still under civilian control. We ate beautifully and slept beautifully, the men were in bunks but we had cabins. When you are twenty years of age it is an adventure. There's no thought about Japs or anything like that, nobody had mentioned them. We didn't even know what we were going up to, except that we were away from Darley camp

- 13:30 and we are going away somewhere to the war, that's all we thought about.

Was there any thoughts of the ship being attacked?

Yes. There was an alert put out and we had three cruisers and two frigates, about two days out of Port Moresby there was an alarm. We had posts around the Aquitania with machine guns in case we were attacked.

- 14:00 We were told to be prepared for it, we were worried about submarines of course. I spent most of the time up on the deck, I wasn't game to go down. It was not a fear, it was just an uncertainty of what was going to happen to us when we went ashore in Port Moresby because the Japanese were still rampaging their way through the Pacific.
- 14:30 There was no radio, we got most of our information from ships that came in, from their old newspapers. I used to go through the newspaper and find out the tit-bits of news and pin it up on a tree and all the troops would come along and have a look. I started what they call the Good Guts, which is our newspaper now, I started it off in 1942, and it was the news. When the news about the attack on Darwin
- 15:00 came through and then there was Sydney, we got news that the submarines had been in Sydney, there was no full account of it, it was just further bad news. We got to the stage in those early days in Port Moresby there was no good news, there was bad news and worse news. Nothing good seemed to happen
- 15:30 and that's why they attacked Squadron 75. We didn't believe that we weren't going to get any help.

What were the reactions of the blokes when they heard Darwin and Sydney had been attacked?

I immediately wrote home to my mother and told her how to dig an air raid shelter, and where to put the sand bags and what to do and what not to do. Because most of us had a fear

- 16:00 that things were going to happen to Australia while we were away and we couldn't do anything about it. We didn't know that the AIF was being brought back from overseas because nobody had told us. We were just lads in a situation where there was no information coming in. When we heard about Darwin we realised how close the war was. As a matter of fact, in my diary I have those words: 'The attack on Darwin brought home to us just how close the war is.' We didn't think they would be coming to Australia,

16:30 we just didn't know.

You also met Damien Parer, can you tell us about that?

Yes. There was a village called Effogi, it was the one before you got to Menari, going from Kokoda it would be after but the way we were going. They brought the 2/27th up

17:00 and they didn't commit the 2/27th immediately, they kept them on this particular village at Effogi dug into the side of a hill while they made up their mind what they were going to do with them or to commit them to the main battle or wait to see what was going to happen to the 2/14th, so we believe, we didn't know. As we filed out we had to hand our weapons and blankets over to the 2/27th and then we went back to Port Moresby. The next

17:30 village which was called Menari, I was one of the last, and we came up out of the river, wet, miserable and hungry and it was getting dark. All I had on was what I started off with which was a ragged pair of shorts, and old shirt and my equipment and hat. All of a sudden I was conscious and suddenly someone had appeared walking beside me on the track. I looked across the track

18:00 and there was this figure dressed in old khaki full shirt, and a full khaki trouser, wet and dirty and muddy and he yelled out to me and his words I've never forgotten, "I was bloody lucky that time?" and I thought, "Who the hell is that?" He wasn't a soldier. He said, "I was filming and the Japs came into the village back there," and he said, "The boy with my camera and spares has just disappeared."

18:30 I still didn't know what he was talking about and who he was, so he disappeared in the mist, and I struggled up. That night we all stayed huddled underneath huts waiting for dawn to come and the next morning this particular officer, who I had never met, turned out to be Colonel Honour. He formed what was left of us in the middle of the square and there was a fellow with a camera beside him

19:00 and when I looked it was the same one that I had come in the night before with and I still didn't know who he was. Colonel Honour then spoke to us, he thanked us for the job that we had done and he told us that we were going back to Port Moresby. All the time this was going on this particular fellow was filming us. He disappeared and we went back to Moresby and then,

19:30 when they started to talk, the name Damien Parer cropped up and I said, "Who was Damien Parer?" and they said, "The war photographer," and I said, "Where was he?" and they said, "He's the one who filmed you blokes at Menari." Then it struck me the figure who appeared next to me was Damien Parer, I never met him and I never talked to him. These things came

20:00 out after it was all over, the same with Colonel Honour, I didn't know who he was because we never got together in the show, we were all separated. Colonel Honour was our colonel and we knew we had a Colonel Honour but you never sighted him.

Earlier you also spoke about when you were watching movies with the navy fellows, were the movies organised by the navy fellows?

20:30 The navy was HMAS Tarangau and they had these troops just in a pair of shorts and a hat on. At the navy quarters they would have a film night and we were invited across from the army, not the troops, just the officers and NCOs, we'd go across to the navy.

21:00 They had these chairs up on a stage and the navy and ourselves would occupy these chairs, this was when they called for men on punishment. That was part of the navy routine, we didn't have any entertainment ourselves except beer, there would be only about eight of us but there would be hundreds of them. It would be about one night a week for film night.

Do you recall during the war, was there ever any entertainment put on for your fellows?

21:30 No, and in New Guinea it most certainly wasn't because there was nowhere to put it on, we were always defensive or running somewhere or doing something. I think it wasn't until the war was over and I was in Borneo and the RAAF, the entertainment units came up from Australia and they used to stay at the RAAF base.

22:00 Any troops, American or Australian, we used to go along. I will never forget I was there one night and Vera Lynn sang and she sang 'We'll Meet Again'. Thousands of troops on sides of hills and valleys looking at the picture screen and you could've heard a pin drop at this beautiful voice

22:30 singing 'We'll Meet Again', with all these troops just waiting to go home. The war was over and we were just waiting to see what was going to happen with us. I wrote home to my mother and said, 'I will never forget the silence, not a voice or a whisper or a cough,' because everybody just sat there transfixed listening to the recording of Vera Lynn. I thought about it later on, about what happened to all of those fellows, Americans, Dutch.

23:00 **In the post-war years again, when you had to go and return to Kokoda and you weren't keen on it, what was that like for you, to retrace your steps?**

When the major told me we were going for a walk, he didn't know what kind of walk he was going for either.

- 23:30 I still had in my mind when we went across the hard way. I wasn't particularly anxious, after walking all the way down through Menari Island and back, to go on any more walks at all. Once we got started and I saw the telephone wire in 1956 was still tied from tree to tree across the Owen Stanleys, isn't that wonderful, I don't know how long it had stayed there but we couldn't believe it.
- 24:00 We saw all these trenches still dug that they had occupied at these places. I found it a bit different going back because I knew the places that I had been too. The PIR had never been there before and the major had never been there before, I was the only one of the whole lot who had been there. A very, very funny thing happened. When we came to this place at Isurava where we had the big fight,
- 24:30 the track had changed and instead of going over the top to Deniki and looking down we went around, a big fourteen hour day, right around the back of Isurava and we came up through the back of the village and all these huts were up from the ground where the natives slept and you could see the fires burning.
- 25:00 They had a hearth inside because it was cold, they had a hearth and they would make a fire and cook their food and they would all sit around that and eat there. I said I was last and I told the major I would be last, and I was, and we had the sticks and I remember going up between the rows of huts and the first hut that we came to was from here up to the top of
- 25:30 the window, steps leading up. I staggered up and I pushed the door and it opened and I was dressed in the old jungle greens and a felt hat, boots and gaiters. When I pushed the door and looked down there was this native family all gathered around this hut around the fire and
- 26:00 seated at the top was a fellow who would have been in his twenties or thirties, he was a native and he was completely naked instead of his lap-lap. I looked at him and he looked at me and to this day I can remember it, his eyes disappeared up that way until I was looking at the whites of them and then he jumped to his feet and he went straight past me and jumped the fire and just disappeared and took off. I thought, "What brought that on?"
- 26:30 and then I realised what it was. He was probably a kid when the war was on and this was 1956 and that was 1942 and he had probably grown up and he probably remembered the war and what the troops looked like and he thought he was looking at a ghost. He didn't realise I was flesh and blood, in his own mind he thought it was a ghost. We talked about it later on and I told the major and I found the patrol after that, they were in another hut. I told the major about it and he said, "Bill, he
- 27:00 probably thought that you were a bloody ghost the way that he took off."

Can you tell us how your nickname came about?

Biscuits. My name is Guest and the natives couldn't get their tongue around it. They had 'Guest Biscuits', that's the biscuit they used to eat. Biscuit is something that they ate and it was difficult

- 27:30 for them to say, biscuit and Guest. There's no lack of respect, it's just the fact that they called me Sergeant Major Biscuit, instead of Sergeant Major Guest and I used to keep a straight face. I've got the list up there of the first PIR officers' mess, they all accepted it except the colonel wouldn't. Wherever I went and when they talked amongst themselves instead of saying Sergeant Guest they'd say Biscuit,
- 28:00 so I became Biscuit. That nickname carried on amongst the whites too, and even now I've got one up in South Australia and he'd say, "Is that you Biscuit?" and I'd say, "Yes."

At the time when you first got to New Guinea and you were fighting did you ever look around you and think to yourself, 'This is actually a beautiful place,'

- 28:30 **or was there too much going on?**

When I first went up there it was tropical paradise but Port Moresby was very underdeveloped in 1942, it's not like what it is today. All we saw of it mainly was the foreshore,

- 29:00 but when we saw the natives in the gaily coloured clothes and the things in their hair, then we looked at the sea coming up and the waves breaking themselves on the golden sand, I remember thinking, 'What a beautiful place this must be to be in,' the minority of people are the Europeans, white people, and there were thousands and thousands of locals. We had no knowledge of controls,
- 29:30 we learnt all this later on, the system of control. We had a way of looking through the native mind, we didn't know that the natives had not ever seen a white man sweat. As a matter of fact the only thing that a white man did in those days was raise his glass to his lips because they did it all. That exotic way of life made us think, "This is another world. This is it," apart
- 30:00 from the busy streets of Melbourne, we suddenly found ourselves in paradise. Of course, when we started to unload ships and dig holes it wasn't such a paradise and then the mosquitoes came and we changed our mind about the place pretty smartly. The initial aspect of it was, "What a beautiful place to be in."

One place that you didn't think was beautiful was Balikpapan, can you tell us more about the conditions there?

- 30:30 I'm the only one from the 39th that went back to that campaign in Borneo. It was totally different in so far as where in the New Guinea campaign we were the poor relations, for supplies and weapons and that. The other way, going back to 1945,
- 31:00 we just couldn't believe the fire power and what was at our disposal when we landed at Balikpapan. I went in on an American destroyer and had to go down over the scramble nets. Before we went over, something happened. My mother wasn't really religious
- 31:30 but she was anti-Catholic and she used to tell us as kids, "The Catholics are this and the Catholics were that and we Protestants are top of the world." That's the way we felt as kids until we grew up and felt differently, through my mother's eyes this was how life was in those early days. The morning of 1st July 1945 across the intercom of this American destroyer a voice said, "Assemble the National Service troops
- 32:00 on such and such a deck," so I thought to myself... I didn't think I was going to get through it, having got through the New Guinea campaign and, "I'm going into another one. This is the end for me." As a matter of fact I didn't write to my mother telling her the same but I wrote back to Liverpool where I used to work, a lady used to write to me and I told her, 'Don't be surprised if this is the last letter you get from me,' because I fully expected to buy it. I was that lucky during the New Guinea campaign that I thought sooner or later it's
- 32:30 going to be it. So I thought I'd go down, I'm not religious and I've never been, I went down to this deck and all these people were down there, there were the Papuans, New Guineas, black and white Americans, Dutch, Chinese and New Zealanders, everybody who was going to be in this operation was down there.
- 33:00 I don't know what denomination the padre was but he gave us all a blessing and wished us the best of luck in the hours ahead. I looked around and I thought to myself, "All these men are down here expecting to die in the next couple of hours," and there was no thought about what religion they were, and I thought, "I don't even know who he is." I can't understand why people should be worried about what religion you are, if
- 33:30 you believe in something, that's it, and I kept it. Up here I never forgot that particular morning when we went over the scramble nets. Later on it's another story, when I went back I said to her, "Mum, please never talk to me again about religion, I've been through a certain episode," and that was it. To get back to Balikpapan. It was an amazing sight, the Japanese
- 34:00 were at Balikpapan and the oil tanks and we could see those going in, we went in the barges. They had an immense attack from the sea, heavy cruisers and battleships, most of them American. Then the air force came in, squadron after squadron hammering the place. In other words, what they were doing was they were doing their usual softening up
- 34:30 of a place before hitting it. Instead of Americans doing it, they were Australians, we came in and hit the beach. I was in the third wave and the first wave had gone in, the Japanese had retreated from the beach because they had been blown off it and they were up on the heights. The first wave had gone through and attacked the heights and
- 35:00 we came through behind them and the Japanese retreated back inland. You wouldn't call it a real battle, there was only a couple of them and we dug in around the place as best we could to save the night, the first and second, then another mob came in and relieved us and that was the end of the fighting as far as we were concerned at Balikpapan. The stink of the place. I remember one spot on the road, on each side of the road
- 35:30 was an oil pipe. It would have been busted and it was up like that with the oil gushing out of it. The answer to that was that the Japanese would run the length of these pipes under the main road with the idea of flooding the sea with oil when we landed and setting it on fire, that was the idea of it. The Australian Liberators, what they called precision bombing, they landed these five hundred pound
- 36:00 bombs right on the spot where the pipe was and blew it to smithereens. When the Japanese turned the oil on, instead of it going out to sea it was gushing all over the sand and creating an awful smell. That was what it was and the place was just blown to pieces.
- 36:30 The war from my point of view, as I said in my diary, the battle for Balikpapan was a walk over compared to slugging it across the Owen Stanleys. We had all the backups, we had planes coming in and helping you, the rations, there was plenty later on. Then the Japanese retreated inland, but there was no comparison as far as the war was concerned. The war on Borneo was much easier than the one on New Guinea.
- 37:00 **Did the fellows ever think about girls, about sex?**
- Most certainly not in New Guinea, there wasn't even anything attractive in New Guinea. We had two worries there, getting away from the mosquitoes
- 37:30 and getting enough to eat and that was it and news from home. I don't think we talked about girls. My sister and friends used to get girls to write to me, I had never seen them but I'd write a letter from Port Moresby. There was one girl and she sent me a St Christopher's medal and she said to put it around my

neck but this was before the Japs even came.

- 38:00 She came from Parkes in New South Wales and years and years and years after I was on my way down to Melbourne and I was out of the army and this was in the 1980s. I went down on the bus and I pulled into Parkes and I remembered this girl's name and I thought, "Wouldn't it be funny if she still lived here?" While the bus was there for about an hour or so I went to the phone box and I looked up her name.
- 38:30 It wasn't in the book and I met somebody from Parkes subsequently that had told me that the family had shifted, but as far as any other women were concerned, there weren't many married men amongst us, a lot of the fellows were like myself and had knocked around and hadn't got married but some of them were engaged and they wrote back to their girlfriends. Apart from the Marys and that, there wasn't any other women there.
- 39:00 As I said, our worries were something to eat and keeping away from the mosquitoes.

Tape 7

00:30 **I just wanted to ask you about Gona, what happened there?**

We flew across, we didn't walk across the Owen Stanleys, we flew to Popondetta and then we walked from there down to the coast at Gona, on the way down the jeeps coming back bringing the wounded, it was an awful, stinking place. Once you got away from the mountains

- 01:00 the atmosphere changed completely, it was hot and smelly, mud everywhere. The closer we got to the front, to Gona and Buna areas, the smell got worse. The kunai, which grass grew to six or seven feet, seemed to get higher. I will never forget when I arrived down at Gona, we were sitting by the side of the track and I saw
- 01:30 this fellow who was alive and he was just laying in an exhausted condition on the track. I said, "Who is he?" and they said, "One of the 2/25th," they were the ones that had to chase the Japs back to the coast. One thing I always said, "If there was another war, I hope the Japs are on our side." They died hard, they didn't give a yard of ground until they
- 02:00 contested every bit of it. When we got down to Gona, we found that the 2/25th couldn't do any more. We took over their positions and the Japanese were in a confined area within the Gona area itself, up from the beach. We were on the outskirts of it containing them. The decision was made,
- 02:30 on the 8th December the orders came through that there would be an artillery attack on Gona. The 39th would attack from the non-sea end and the 2/14th and the 2/16th would come up the beach, they called them char force. We made the first attack on
- 03:00 the 8th and we got a certain way and then we stopped. That particular night I was behind a tree and I was in company headquarters with the captain, laying down on the ground, and the rest of our troops was spread out on the ground behind other parts of the jungle. There was a bit of a track leading from that tree down towards the beach where the Japs were and we had a
- 03:30 sentry who was posted, laying on the ground in front of the tree. I heard the sentry's voice say, "Who's that?" and a voice floated out of the darkness, "Tojo," and then the sentry said, "I will Tojo you, you bastard." He opened up with his Owen gun and there was a yell and a scream in front of them
- 04:00 and then there was silence. There was silence right through and when dawn came, I came from behind the tree to have a look and I saw these two bodies laying in the grass in front of the tree, two Japanese. I called forward and they had jackets on each of them, had a flag inside their vests, that was one of them, the other one had four holes in each corner where the Owen gun had hit him.
- 04:30 I kept the two flags right through, got them back to Australia on the hospital ship. I still keep one of them now but the other one I was a bit unfortunate. My father, when he was with the Victorian Scottish he had a souvenir night down in Melbourne and he asked me could he take some of my stuff into the souvenir night. I should've known better because I didn't want to let the stuff go but he was my father.
- 05:00 Unfortunately somebody pinched the flag with the holes in it, but I've still retained the other one and it's been up there ever since we've been here.

Can you tell us a bit about Macasa?

Macassar was in the Celebes. The war was over, they had to have Allied troops in these places to receive the Japanese when they came in

- 05:30 from the hills. When the war was finished I was in Borneo. Now Tom Blamey came up and I will never forget the day that he came up and this was the second time that I'd seen him, it was a funny one, this I have got to tell you. They had this big parade of all the troops and Tom Blamey got up on the dais, the 2/14th, this was after it, the war, had finished. Tom Blamey congratulated

- 06:00 the troops on the outcome of the war, the Japanese had now been defeated. He said, "We will have to get you home as soon as we can." He said, "Of course you realise with the shortage of ships etc, it will make the process a bit longer than it normally would." Then all of a sudden and it would only happen on an Australian parade, this voice rang out across the whole thing
- 06:30 saying, "You better hurry up Tom or you will miss the Melbourne Cup." There was silence and then a voice said, "Who said that?" and then it started: Blamey continued on with his talk as if it never happened, you have got to pay him, it went straight past him. Around the ranks there were officers prowling saying, "Who said that?" Some silly bugger said, "Bill Guest," I wouldn't say it but I would have said it. It was a funny episode.
- 07:00 **Some of the Japanese took some convincing that the war was over, can you tell us about that?**
- First of all they had the loud hailer, they dropped leaflets out in the jungle, and they had the loud-hailers trying to get them to come in. I will tell you a very unsavory incident that happened in Borneo. We had been relieved,
- 07:30 we were in the same area but we weren't front line, I think it was the 2/2nd Pioneers, they occupied the holes on the night when the Japanese surrendered, when the word came through that the war was over. They used the loud hailer in the jungle, telling them to come in with their hands up without any weapons. That's what they told them to do. That particular night, with the war being over, the
- 08:00 2/2nd, instead of keeping their eyes open, they slept in the holes. The next morning two of them were, found them with all their throats cut, they had come out during the night and cut all their throats. Then it was hard to get them to come in because when they wanted to bring them in, they took the 2/2nd off the parameter immediately, they were waiting for them. They found it harder because the Japanese: (a) couldn't believe that they had been defeated; and
- 08:30 (b) they didn't know what was going to happen to them when they came in. They were promised by the Japanese interpreters that they would be prisoners of war and they would be looked after and they wouldn't be killed and that the war was over. That happened in Borneo so they got what they could out of Borneo until it was recognised that all the ones that were going to come in came in. There was still talk around the place that they were still out
- 09:00 in the native villages, who decided to stay and live there, whether they did or not I don't know. Everybody went back to Australia after the war on a priority service. First of all it was the five year men, they were the ones that joined up in 1939, and if any of those were still around they became top priority. Then the four year men, the ones that had been in for four years, and if they were still around they were
- 09:30 the next priority, that's the way they came back to Australia when the vessels became available. While this was going on they decided to send some of us from the 2/10th and the other units across to Macassar to receive the Japs surrendering in that area, we went to Macassar on an American destroyer. We went out to a village called Maros
- 10:00 about thirty kilometres out from Macassar. We had to wait there until any Japanese came out from the hills, we would then take them in and get in touch with Macassar and tell them we had them and look after them until someone came up from Macassar to take charge of them. I can't recall, all the time I was in Maros I can't recall any Japs coming in. It took a long time to
- 10:30 convince them that the war was over and that it would be safer if they came in.
- What was the opinion of the Japanese soldier from the Australian soldier's point of view?**
- Very dangerous. You regarded them as brave as anybody, not to be trifled with, didn't take the slightest wisp of them.
- 11:00 The time wouldn't come when you had to go and dig them out of a hole, it was exactly what happened later on. We had the greatest respect of them as fighters. As men, no, because of the stories of their cruelty, but the New Guinea natives were the main hate of them. They had this code, prosperity, in which they spread across the natives of the country
- 11:30 they were in that they would relieve them of the white man's grasp and everybody would be on a par. They would receive extra benefits, and the Japanese tried to spread this amongst them.
- 12:00 The way that they treated them and the way they handled the Marys and the kids was brutal in the villages. They lost a lot of respect from us too, we like the New Guinea natives and we didn't like the stories that were coming through of the way that they were ill-treated by them. But as far as fighting them was concerned we had the greatest respect for them.
- 12:30 **Did the opinion of the Japanese soldier change once you got home and you heard these stories about the POWs [Prisoners of War]?**
- When we found out what had happened to the POWs, we were sorry we hadn't done more. We didn't know about it in those days.

What did you know of the cannibalism that was happening in the Japanese ranks?

This particular thing arose during the 1980s

- 13:00 and someone wrote into a Brisbane newspaper about cannibalism, it happened. But I wrote a letter in, and my letter was to the point of, 'We were hungry but we never got that hungry that we had to eat human flesh.' I said, "My experience over the Owen Stanleys during that war was that if you became desperately hungry you couldn't say if you'd resort
- 13:30 to eating human flesh or not, you had to be in that position." I got a letter from a member of parliament thanking me very much for a very understanding letter. There were corpses found with arms and legs missing, it just got down to the desperation. I don't think they did it for cannibalism, I think they did it as a very, very last resort to stay alive, because there was no food. When we came back
- 14:00 we had a short surf policy. I personally was ordered to stab tins of bully beef and rip open bags of flour and rice so that the contents could be caught up in the mud and the Japanese wouldn't be able to eat it. They would pick up a tin of meat with a bayonet stabbed through it and they would be that ravenous that they'd eat the meat which would result in dysentery and eventually death, which did happen to a lot of them. That's what happened and that's why they had to go back across the Owen Stanleys
- 14:30 because of the sickness brought on by the military strength, because they couldn't keep it up. It wasn't a matter of choice, I'd say that it did happen but it was a matter of survival.

A similar vein to what you were saying about the sickness. How big of an effect was the sickness and the conditions in New Guinea, as big an enemy as what the Japanese soldiers were?

- 15:00 At least we had coming up behind us, as the months went on, there was more and more help was coming into Port Moresby, more medical units were arriving. They weren't in the front line but if we got sick it would only be a couple of days and we'd be in safety. Whereas the Japanese were totally different,
- 15:30 their lines of communication was stretched right across the Owen Stanleys and they were being hammered by the aircraft on the beaches of Gona and Buna, and couldn't ready any supplies or medical supplies. There was no medical assistance for the Japanese because it just wasn't allowed because the communication was that way. That's where we had it over them towards the finish of it. At least help for us wasn't very far away,
- 16:00 whereas help for them was just non-existent. The same conditions existed for both sides except for once we had the best side of it.

I heard some of the Australian soldiers were suffering from sun stroke. When you were fighting in amongst the kunai grass did you know of any cases of that?

Yes. Fatigue and sun stroke, that's right. Especially down at Gona and those places where the jungle had been blown away. There is one particular spot at

- 16:30 Salamaua, it was a terrible place, and the 39th was the last action we were in and we had to go into this particular area at Salamaua and all the jungle had been blown away and the Japanese were on the coast line and we were back where the jungle had been. The holes were in the ground and they had wires leading
- 17:00 from where the jungle was, which hadn't been blown away where we were, right across this area to the various positions, to the defensive holes where we had to go. The way we got in there was at night time. A man in front held the wire and you held onto his bayonet or his shirt and you blindly followed him through the dark until you got to this particular spot, you were out in the open because it had all been blown away.
- 17:30 The holes were all full of water, we had to get down into those in the dark, two to a hole and you stayed there all night. The next morning the sun came up and you had to stay there all that day in that hole full of water under the sun. If you wanted a drink you drank the water, if you had to urinate you urinated in the water, you couldn't get out. I remember, it's in my book there,
- 18:00 someone was in the next hole to me, he put his head up to have a look around and copped one right between the eyes because the sharp-shooters were down on the beach and they weren't contending with jungle any more, they just had a straight view of us. We would stay there all that day and when dusk came that night our relief would come in in the same way. We'd get out and go back to where they came from.
- 18:30 As I've got in my book there, I said, 'Salamaua was the worst'. It was the worst. The Japanese were suffering worse than we were because they had all their dead. When we finally took the place the sight of it, the smell, they couldn't bury them, they just had to leave them to rot where they were.

Did you have time to bury and grieve your dead?

No.

What happened there?

What would happen,

19:00 I'd say they'd probably stay there and, either the Japs, would bury them. When the war graves went back after it was over it was, it was taken over by war graves control, you wore an identity disk around your neck, if they found any bodies they would be able to identify them. The Japs at Gona, I remember they buried them en masse, you'd see a big heap of earth and there'd be a sign up

19:30 'Five Japs', 'Six Japs', you had to do it because of disease, it was just the worst, Salamaua was the worst of it.

Were there any booby traps used during these campaigns?

Yes, but the favorite one was in the jungle. They used to get a grenade and

20:00 take the pin out and you have to leave it, as soon as that lever flew up the plunger went down and exploded the grenade. What they'd do was put a grenade against a tree and tie it on the tree and then put a stick in the ground and run a vine across the track, you couldn't see it in the mud but it would be there. It would be tied onto a lever of the grenade and the pin would be out.

20:30 The only thing holding that lever would be the grenade and there would be a stick with a big of string on it. You'd come along and you'd kick the string and pull the stick out and immediately the lever would fly off and the grenade would explode, that was a typical booby trap. We didn't see that much of it because over there in the Owen Stanleys

21:00 we were going backwards all the time. It was only the track at Kokoda where we did any defensive, this was the time we were trying to stop them from coming over and we were gradually going backwards so we didn't strike anything like booby traps. What I was explaining to you was the most popular one used in the jungle by all the troops, the Japanese would use the same thing.

What about daisy-cutters?

A mortar bomb for instance could be one.

21:30 I don't know how they did it but you could booby trap a mortar bomb which explodes into small, a waist high explosion. I couldn't tell you how they did it but they did do it.

Did the Japs drop daisy-cutter bombs from the aircraft as well?

No, I don't recall that.

What was the

22:00 **primary motivation for the Australians during the war, what was the sense of what they were fighting for, the overriding sense?**

To keep the Japs out of Australia. When we found out what the Japanese were doing we went there we didn't know how many we were against we had no idea. While we were there they

22:30 were steamrolling through the Pacific like they were. When they reached New Guinea and the reports started to come through to us in Port Moresby, 'They'd occupied Lae', 'They had occupied Sumatra'. When they started to bomb us, then the realisation hit us just what we were up against. Until that happened we were just completely in the dark as to what we were up against.

What are your thoughts on National Service, then and now?

23:00 I think it should be here right now. It's a big thing, it's a country that we have got to defend. I'd like to see the return of National Service situation where if anything happened, even the young fellows now, instead of going in and greening, the way we were, at least a bit of background training would help them if the occasion ever arose where they would be called in to defend their country.

23:30 **Would you like to talk to us about your post-war life?**

As I said, Pat and I went back to Adelaide and I took discharge. Bubby was six and she went to school in Adelaide, then I had to get a job. Every job that I wrote away and I was interviewed,

24:00 I ran second. The main reason was that the employer when I went in for an interview said personnel had nothing against me but I had been too long in the army, that was about ninety per cent of all the reasons. I was told once and I was in the pub and this fellow said to me, "Why don't you get a government job and your

24:30 wartime service goes towards your furlough?" he said, "I will tell you what you can do, the mail exchange." I said, "Oh yeah," he said, "mail sorter." I fronted myself up to the Post Office and I got myself recruited to go to a mail sorting school and this was in Adelaide. This was the time when the Beatles came to Australia. I found myself a mail sorter in Rundle Street Post Office in Adelaide.

25:00 What you did was you sat at a table and you had all these boxes and you put them into various piles, you

had three shifts, a night shift, a day shift and you started at six o'clock in the morning. I went to work there. To go back a little bit when Pat and I was in Lae for three years, 1960 to 1963, I became pretty well known because I was the only regular army there and everybody knew Bill Guest.

- 25:30 While I was at my exchange, this letter came for me and it was written by a fellow by the name of Tony Gilmore who was the manager of a New Guinea company in Lae. I remember the New Guinea company in Lae but being army I had nothing to do with them because of the drill hall, but I knew that it existed. I didn't know him and this was 1964 but this letter said,
- 26:00 'New Guinea Company which is a part of WR Carpenter's,' one of the big Australian traders, 'is expanding and we are going to put on an outside representative and I would like to offer you the job and I've been up to the Lae Club and I've spoken to a lot of people who knew you personally and they all gave you a good wrap up, so I'm offering you the job.' I took it home to Pat and we looked at it. Pat said, "Outside representative,
- 26:30 I don't know," but she said, "I like New Guinea," and I said, "I do too." She said, "You couldn't do that," and I said, "No, I better write back and tell him." I wrote back, 'Dear Mr Gilmore, Thank you very much for your offer but my merchandising days are so far back that I don't think at this stage I would be able to resume it.' A couple of weeks later another letter arrived at the mail exchange.
- 27:00 'Dear Mr Guest, I'm not interested whether or not your merchandising days are far away from you, but if you are half as good as your old man you will go across to WR Carpenter's in Sydney and have an interview and come up here and take the job. Best of luck, Tony Gilmore.' I didn't know he knew my father. I said to Pat,
- 27:30 "What do we do?" and she said, "Go over to Sydney." I rang up Carpenter's in Sydney and they said, "We will send you an air ticket." I go across to Sydney, to Pitt Street, and they were a big firm. There are three big firms in New Guinea, there is Burns Philip, Steamships and WR Carpenter and this was Carpenter's. This fellow said, "Bill, you have to go up and see the doctor up at Macquarie Street." So he gave me a letter to go and see this doctor at Macquarie Street.
- 28:00 When I went in, the sister came and said, "Yes Mr Guest, just take a seat," and he was one of the top doctors and she said, "The doctor will see you in a moment." I sat down and she said, "Come in now," and the doctor sat me up on the table. He said, "Guest, that name rings a big bell with me."
- 28:30 He said, "I was in the Middle East," he said, "one of my old comrades and his name was Guest." He said, "It wouldn't mean anything to you of course but during the First World War he was captured at Gallipoli and he said the name of Abdul," and I said, "Doctor, that is my father." He said, "What? Shake my hand," and then he started.
- 29:00 He said, "I'll tell you a couple of stories," and he launched into the old days in the Middle- East, and we were talking away and then there was a knock on the door and the sister said, "Mr so and so," some big socialite, "is waiting to see you." He said, "Tell Mr so and so that I will be there in a minute." He said, "Well Bill, how do you feel?" and I said, "I'm all right," and he said, "Give us that paper." I had passed the medical so I took it back and I flew back to Adelaide that night
- 29:30 and Pat and I were on our way back to New Guinea. I went first and I flew up and Pat was going to follow up later on with Bubby - Bubby was a bit sick so she couldn't go immediately. When I got back to Lae, and this was 1964 no army, and they were all waiting at the airport to greet me, 'Old Bill is back again.' Pat followed on and she came up with Bubby and she got a job.
- 30:00 She was in the insurance game and she went to work with United Insurance and I went to Outside Representative of Carpenter's. We bought a car in Lae and I used to take off from Lae out to the surrounding places. Once a month I'd go to Finschhafen, on another month I'd go to
- 30:30 Popondetta. I had a suitcase with all the samples in it and all the stuff and I was an outside representative. Pat joined the bowling club in Lae, that was her way of sport but I didn't take up bowls until later on. This was 1964, in 1965 much the same went on and we lived our lives in Lae in those positions. In 1966 there was a big blow-up in Carpenter's
- 31:00 and Randolph Carpenter himself came up from Sydney and he was big time. They had started in Lae this WR Carpenter's store, everywhere there was a big 'C' which represented Carpenter's and they started off in Lae. The starting off was all right but nobody had ordered stock for the ongoing of it and it went down the drain.
- 31:30 Carpenter came up to see what it was all about. There was one also up in Goroka and they were discontented, the management up there, so they called me up to the office and said, "Bill, the manager at Goroka is going to be replaced, would you like to go up there and take on the job as manager?"
- 32:00 and I went and told Pat what they told me and she said, "Go up and have a look." I got on a bus and away we headed for the New Guinea highlands and I arrived up in Goroka and spent this awful night in this pub, at the Goroka Hotel, with a wine-o in the other bed, two to a room. The next morning I went around to have a look at this New Guinea company

- 32:30 and it was the most depressing sight you ever saw in your life. You couldn't move for cases and bags and people, refrigerators and lawn mowers. Across the road was a firm called Collins in Lae and they were our main competitors. The next morning I went across to have a look around and I wandered over to Collins in Lae and this fellow said to me, and I forget his name now, "What are you doing here?"
- 33:00 so I told him, I said, "I've come up to have a look at the New Guinea Company and I'm from Lae and I've been offered the manager's job here." This fellow looked at me and said the following words, "Okay, if you come up here, we will have you out of here in thirty days," and then he turned around and walked away.
- 33:30 I got on the bus and went back to Lae. By this time Pat had left the insurance company and she was working as a secretary for Tony Gilmore. Tony Gilmore didn't know shorthand, and Pat was a shorthand typist and he used to dictate his letters, and I'm going right back to the 1960s. His method of getting correspondence was to dictate in long hand to a girl who wrote it down in long hand and she'd go away and type it. When Pat
- 34:00 took over as secretary, she asked him what he was doing writing it out and then she told him that she was a shorthand typist and she had to explain to him how to go about it. When I got back from Goroka and she was in the office and she said, "What happened?" and I told her. "This fellow in Goroka said if we go up there he's going to get us kicked out in thirty days. She said, "That settles it, we go." Away goes Bill and Pat to
- 34:30 Goroka in the old Ford. We went right up the highlands highway, it was beautiful and everywhere we went the natives came out to wave to us. There was no such thing as violence, they loved us and we loved them. If we pulled up at the side of the road a native would come along with a banana or something to give you, it was beautiful. Then we got to Goroka and we had to start with the stores and Pat didn't know anything about merchandising and I was still trying
- 35:00 to go back years ago when I was with the cable company. So we learnt about where to get rice from. Pat organised a clothing section, all these travellers used to come from Hong Kong and Singapore and those places. She took over that side of it, doing the clothes, and I gradually got myself in the other side, where to get the food from.
- 35:30 One of the funniest things that had happened was this traveller came through, I was green and he sat down, 'Campbell Soup'. He gave me a great talk on how good soup was for the natives. I listened to it and by the time he had finished talking I reckoned Campbell Soup must have been good. I said, "What's the minimum ordering quantity?" he said, "Fifty cases."
- 36:00 I said, "All right, no one else has tried to give the natives soup, so we will, so give me fifty cases." When the fifty cases came up and I priced it all and put it on the shelf in the trade store, we had a wholesale section, in the front was the trade store which was a retail outlet and they were all natives and Pat and I were the only whites and all the rest were black, they were working in there, so I put it on the shelf and I waited for the magic, I waited for someone to come and try a tin.
- 36:30 I couldn't see my fifty cases going down, and a whole week went past and no-one touched it. Then somebody who knew about the natives said to me up at the sports club, said, "Bill, I was in the trade store this morning," and he said, "What's all that bloody soup doing up there?" He said, "You will never sell that," and I said, "I was led to believe..." And he said, "No, they don't touch tinned soup." Pat and I lived on tinned soup, we brought it ourselves. Fortunately
- 37:00 the motel on the corner, The Bird of Paradise, I went up to see the manager and I said, "You use a lot of soup, I have lots of it down there, you can have it at cost, no profits, just take it off my hands at cost." So they brought it and that was the end of it. That was the sort of thing that I walked into, I was wet behind the ears and I didn't know much about wines and spirits. We had all the whites coming in, the district commissioners
- 37:30 and the high ranking people, and they like wines. They said to me, "Right Bill, how about getting some decent wines in?" and I said, "What is it?" and they said, "You can get that and that," and I said, "Okay." One fellow came in and he was English and he said, "Need..." I said, "Where do you get that from? England? Right I'll get that." "Dry sack sherry, where's that from?" they said, "Portugal," and I said, "Right I'll get that." I built up the grog department and when the stuff came in the word got
- 38:00 around Goroka that this New Guinea company had all these exotic wines and spirits, it was all cash. There was Pat and myself, and she was over in trade and I was in the grocery side and I was the manager, and we had a girl sitting at a table and all she did all day was to roll silver, the natives wouldn't handle paper money, no time for it. What would happen was when the coffee season was on, which was from
- 38:30 May up to about August, a coffee tree, the berries were green first of all and when they turned red it was called cherry coffee and that was the time to pick it. Some of the whites had plantations and their labour lines of natives and the natives themselves out in the villages, they had their own coffee so they'd carry buckets or tins down to the road and the coffee adviser would come along in their trucks
- 39:00 with a set of scales and set up on the side of the road and they'd buy the native coffee from the natives and paid them. Before decimal currency came in, it was two bobs, shillings and sixpences. That's what

was happening and when they came in to us they paid us this cash, it had changed hands again to us in exchange for the stuff in the store because back in their villages they had these trade stores, they had little native businesses.

- 39:30 In the coffee season, I'd take the girl in my car across to the bank with fourteen bags of silver, all money. In the end we were taking in one million dollars a year with our sales. We got it 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969 and 1970
- 40:00 and I joined the Bowling Club, I became president of the Sports Club, I joined the Rotary Club. I became part of the town and I went on the council and I became a councillor, only white faces. The Goroka Council consisted of twenty four black faces and four white and I was one of them.
- 40:30 We joined in the town life but we'd go on leave ever January and we'd be back halfway through February because Pat had to get ready for the coffee season. Bubby went to school down south.

Tape 8

- 00:30 **Just continue on from where Bubby was about to go to school?**

Bubby went to school down south. Pat's brother was a prisoner of war, they had him in Changi. His wife died and left him and the two boys, the eldest brother, who right now

- 01:00 is a professor in Canberra, and the other boy was the younger one, named Scott. It would have been about 1967 mark and we went down from Goroka on leave and Jim came in and brought the two boys in with him. Jim just couldn't go,
- 01:30 you could see that he was finding it very very hard to live with the two boys and having to look after them and Scott was only two, he was living on the lounge and you won't believe what I'm going to tell you now. Pat said, "Jim, what say we take Scott back to Goroka with us and when we come back down next year we will bring him back," those were the words. Jim agreed, we just got off the airplane and Pat
- 02:00 picked up Scott and away we go and we got on the airplane and got back to Port Moresby. We went through customs there, there was no question about Scott, and Pat held him. We got back to Goroka and Bubby was with us. What was happening, Pat's cousin
- 02:30 was John Walsh who was a district commissioner in New Guinea, I don't know if it is a result of it but at this stage it was not being questioned that he wasn't a part of our family, he just sort of joined in. We couldn't look after him up at Goroka but the house where we used to take him down to the market every morning with her and poor Scott, he was on his own, he was over the south doing some business and he wants to be that way.
- 03:00 Before he could talk English properly, he spoke the native dialect and then he learnt pidgin English, and then he learnt English and this was the way that he grew up. Every morning we'd take him down to the market on the back of one of (UNCLEAR), do you see there is a baby. He grew up there and eventually he went to school in Brisbane and Bubby finished her school down here and when she finished
- 03:30 she went back and then she came to work for us, this was going through the 1970s. While we were up there, and this was going through the 1970s, Pat and I were well and truly part of the operations in Goroka and we had been in all these organisations and I went on the council and I became president of the RSL [Returned and Services League]. It was something that we enjoyed doing and we had good people to be with, we got on very, very well
- 04:00 with the local population. As I said, when independence came there, it was the 1973 mark, and we had a general manager and his name was Mike Bindle and he was in Port Moresby and that's when he wrote up, when we were due to leave in 1970, when he asked me, "Bill, what have you got down south?" and I said, "We have got nothing Mike, because we like living up here." He said, "The word has come through and we have got pretty good information that this time when you go down on leave to
- 04:30 look for some other place." When we came down on leave in 1973, and instead of eating up big in Caloundra we had to go around and look for a place, and this was the last place we looked at before we went back and we got it from this army bloke and his wife, he paid the rent into the estate agent in Redcliffe. In 1974 while we were up there in Goroka this delegation, the United Nations
- 05:00 Delegation, came through and there were three quarters dark skinned. The decision had been made to give Papua New Guinea independence. The words came out that the PNG independence was going to happen and amongst the natives they had a mixed reception. There was very, very few of them regarded it favorably,
- 05:30 they almost when they came to talk to us they wanted to know what was going to happen when independence came and was it going to be good or bad. This was what they were asking us and of course we couldn't tell them except that I had reservations about it, I didn't think they were anywhere

near being left on their own. When these older ones came in, they said, "Master will you stop?" In the year of 1975,

- 06:00 the early part of it, there was as many as thirty and forty families a fortnight taking off for Australia, selling to get out because they were frightened, maybe the bloodbath. They could see that their days had come to an end in PNG with the independence and they were coming down. The worst thing that happened was the police, the Australian police who controlled the PNG police force anyway, they took off to came down here to try and get jobs in the police force.
- 06:30 They realised there were very, very few white positions opened in the PNG force. So that was the end of law and order and the big danger and we saw through the independence. To get back to this flag. That flag flew over Goroka, it was hoisted every morning over the district office and on the morning of the
- 07:00 16th September 1975 the RSL consisted of twenty black and one white and I was the white. I was the president and I was the only one who could read and write. We went down and formed up on the road and there was a formal handover from the white District Commissioner, who was Pat's cousin, and a bloke called Cedric Taboa, who was the PNG Government representative.
- 07:30 Down came that flag and up went the PNG flag and down came the rain and we all stood there soaking wet. They both made speeches and there was clapping of hands and there was sing sings and dances. Then I said to Cedric, "What are you going to do with the flag?" he said, "Why?" and I said, "Can I have it for the RSL?" It was no good giving it to them. He said, "Come and see me in the morning up in my office." So the next morning I went up to the
- 08:00 office and it was on his desk and he said, "Here you are Bill, you take it." Then I took it back to New Guinea Company and then when the time came for us to go I couldn't really see any point leaving it up there, it didn't mean anything to them, so I said, "I'm going to bring it down," so there it is, the Australian flag. 1975 came, and independence without incidence. 1976, 1977 and then
- 08:30 as it got into the 1970s, I don't know if it is right to say this, the people who shouldn't have gone went and the people who should've gone stayed. I didn't like some of these younger fellows who were still in Goroka, the sons of people who had jobs there and that sort of business. We could see the controls were going, natives were allowed to drink
- 09:00 and we had drunkenness and assault and the whole scene was changing. Bubby was in 1977, she was born in 1958, and she was nineteen and Pat said, "I think it is time for us to go." We let Port Moresby know and they fully agreed. Mike Bindle said to me, "We are very, very sorry to see you and Pat go, I
- 09:30 will have to get a replacement for you." We had built that place up from nothing, it was one of the most profitable branches in the whole Carpenter empire, not that they gave us a fortune, but the point was we did it and it was our job. Down we came and taking off from Goroka was another thing. I don't think it was me so much, it was Pat and Bubby.
- 10:00 When the great day arrived, when we were going to get into the airplane at Goroka and come down, the car was out the front and when I went out the Marys were laying down on the ground with their arms around the wheels to stop us from going. It didn't affect me so much but when Pat came out and saw it. They were wailing, and when they wail they do the job by the book
- 10:30 then the boys came out and they, with their boots, were kicking the Marys off the wheels. They took us up to the airport, and when we got up there they had a bag-piper and I don't know where they got him from. They were all lined up out to the aircraft and we had to walk up between two lines of them. Half way up the lines I said, "Right, I'll come back," and I thought there would be great cheering but there wasn't, they still continued to cry. We got on the airplane
- 11:00 and we left New Guinea and we came down in 1979, unfortunately the army fellow had died of something. Then when the cases came in, there were sixteen big and heavy cases filled with all our furniture and stuff that had been backwards and forwards. In 1980 I joined the bowling club here. I went to the Veteran's Affairs
- 11:30 and the ear was a repatriation and it was accepted as a disability from the war. Bubby got a job as a beautician and she had her own circle of friends. Scott continued with school and then when he left school he went into the navy.
- 12:00 That left Pat and me here. Bubby appeared one day and she appeared with Steve, Steve is one of these fellows who doesn't say much and he just sat there and the conversation was, "G'day, Bill," I said "G'day Steve," and that was the end of the conversation. When Bubby came down the next time she said, "What did you think of Stephen?" I used to have a bit of fun with the prices and I said,
- 12:30 "He's a twenty one to one shot, Bub," and she said, "He's the one I'm going to marry," and we sat back in our chairs, and she did. In 1980 the phone rings: "New Guinea," one of the bosses up there, it wasn't Bindle it was somebody else who had taken over, and he said, "What are you doing Bill?" I said, "Nothing," he said, "Do you want to come up?" and I said, "Where?" he said, "Madang,"
- 13:00 and I said to Pat, "They want me to go up to Madang for six months." So I wasn't doing anything and I said to Pat, "Can I go back to Madang?" and she said, "Okay." I got on the airplane and I went to

Madang. What I didn't know, these big firms, if they wanted to sack somebody like the manager, they waited until he went on leave and then sent you in to do his job. I didn't know this had happened in the case with Madang, a bloke

- 13:30 called Walter Goodman, and he was the manager at Madang. He had fallen by the wayside in Port Moresby and they waited until they had sent him on leave, and if they wanted somebody to come into Madang to take over who was experienced and could handle things. Of course when he came back he found out that he had been sacked. I didn't know about this until I got up there. I was quite well received in Madang and I went to the Madang Club and I knew quite a few of them from up in the hills.
- 14:00 The Madang operation was a bit different to the Goroka one but still I took control of it and I had a big office, it was all black and they were very well-educated natives. When Walter Goodman came back, there was a bit of a scene and I expected him to empty out his drawers, which he didn't do. I knew that he had been told that he didn't have a job. I went over to the house and I rang Port Moresby and I said, "He won't go away," and they said, "What do you think you should do?"
- 14:30 I said, "Send me a letter telling me the manager has ceased and my job was to take over until you get another manager," and they said, "Okay," and then I said, "I'll open it and leave it on the desk," which I did and it was enough. Away goes Goodman and I took over. I was in Madang right through the six months and it was getting towards Christmas and they came across and said, "Will you stay Bill?" and I said, "No."
- 15:00 I said, "I've had enough, we are down south now and I want to go back home." They said, "Righto," and they got another bloke to take over, and I came back and that was 1980. 1981 came and went and I just played bowls and Bubby produced more kids and we had dogs and did a bit more on the house and the phone rang, "Port Moresby. What are you doing, Bill?" and I said, "Nothing," they said, "Do you want to come back?"
- 15:30 and I said, "Where this time?" they said, "Back in the hills up to Mount Hagen." He said, "We have a young bloke up there who is the manager," he said, "but we want someone to stay with him for six months to put him on the tracks." I said to Pat, "Do you want me to go back?" and she said, "Where?" and I said, "to Mount Hagen?" and she said, "That's wild up there," and I said, "I know, will I go back?" and she said, "You might as well." I said, "Okay, send an air ticket,"
- 16:00 and back goes Bill to Mount Hagen. I spent six months up there and it was 1982. When I finished up there I came back to Australia and that was the end of it, I decided even if they rang up again I wasn't going to go again. When I was in Mount Hagen I could see what was going to happen. It was becoming lawless and as a matter
- 16:30 of fact the day that I arrived at Mount Hagen somebody walked into the police station and shot dead the sergeant of the police at his desk in the police station, a black sergeant of police, and just shot him dead, that was the state of the lawlessness. At the various little villages we had stalls where we would have to go out and re-supply them and bring the money in and that was part of my job too.
- 17:00 On one occasion I was coming back into Mount Hagen from one of these villages and I was driving along and I looked up in the mirror and I saw a native standing on the street corner and as I watched I saw another native rise behind him with a great rock and brought it down on his head, I couldn't stop. I went back to Carpenter's and I rushed in and I said, "I've just seen what would be a murder up on the corner." This fellow who had been there for a long time said, "You can't do a thing about it,"
- 17:30 and I said, "This is bloody beautiful, PNG has got to this," and he said, "that's right." There was an election for the seat of Mount Hagen amongst the natives and there was a local chief called Rafael Doha. He stood for the seat of Mount Hagen and also another native from Lae on the coast, he stood for Mount Hagen. When the elections were over Rafael Doha had been beaten,
- 18:00 he didn't believe for one moment that he could be beaten but he was. When he found that out, he spread the word around that he was going to destroy Mount Hagen. First of all he would burn the banks, then he would do Carpenter's, Steamships and VPs and this was the talk. That particular day that this came out I had to
- 18:30 go out to one of these villages to bring some stores and money back. On the way back I was driving along and I had six natives in the back of the truck and I saw down in front of me, where the coffee factory was, all these rocks on the road, and when I went to look across to the coffee factory I saw all these natives with bows and arrows and spears, they were all lined up and I realised what it was, it was a road block. I thought, "If I stop I'm gone: if I put my foot down..." And this vehicle had
- 19:00 no brakes and, "I will get through it," which I did. I tore my way through the road block and when I got into Mount Hagen I rushed in and I said to the girl on switch to ring the police and tell them that there is a native road block out at the coffee factory, which she did. That night it was rather humorous. The New Guinea Company at Mount Hagen had roller-doors and you pulled them down and you locked them at the bottom. This young manager that was there, he asked me what to do
- 19:30 and I said, "We can't do much but we will knock the boys off early because of the emergency being on, they didn't know what this Rafael fellow was going to do." I said, "Take the boys out to the compound and we will close up early." I put the boys in the truck and I took them down to the compound and I

came back. The young manager said, "I will close up the front of the store," and I said, "I will close down the side."

- 20:00 I got the door and I pulled it down and I looked between my legs and I saw a foot that big, black, and when I turned around, standing behind me was the biggest, blackest bloke that I ever saw. He had a steel helmet that seemed to be welded into his skull. He had a rifle, he had a tear gas gun, bayonet, revolver, he was riot police.
- 20:30 I said, "Who are you?" and he said, "Riot police," and I remember I said, "Good afternoon." The riot police were in and the whites, they headed for the Bowling Club, everybody goes to the Bowling Club for safety. There were riot police lined up along the streets of Mount Hagen with their bodies and they said, "Off the streets," and the natives fled but I don't know where they got these riot police from.
- 21:00 I could see that things were going from bad to worse because Rafael had disappeared and as soon as they put the riot police in, that was it. It took him out of Mount Hagen and it wasn't going to happen. I did my six months there and then I rang Port Moresby and said, "I would like to go back," and they said, "All right Bill, thanks for your help," and they paid me off. I came back at the end of 1982
- 21:30 and that's it. Pat and I live here, Bubby went and married Steve and they started a business up in Caboolture. Bubby's four boys were all born down here at the Redcliffe Hospital and spent most of their childhood running around here. Every school holidays the two youngest ones come
- 22:00 and stay here, the two bigger ones go and get jobs on holidays. Daniel has finished school now and Timothy, the second oldest one, he is in for the navy, he has been accepted by the navy as to the week before last but they have got their 2003 complement, they have got enough and they have told him they won't be able to take him until next January, so he's right. Anthony and Matthew, the two youngest ones,
- 22:30 they are still at school. As a matter of fact the last school holidays they spent a week here. There is nothing more they love than to take grandma down the road, walk down. They have got two ducks, did you see them up there, one belongs to Matthew and the one belongs to Anthony and every week I put a dollar in each and that's their Christmas money, but when they have school leave they can collect a couple of dollars, it doesn't worry me.
- 23:00 They are only a phone call away. Scott has done a lot of things, he was sick but he likes to be on his own, he has got a bad record with women and he's been married and that fell by the wayside and then he had another and she went by the wayside. He lives on his own and rings up occasionally and Bubby's up there of course, right in our backyard,
- 23:30 it's an air conditioning business and that's the way we are today.

Do you feel that you actually escaped with your life the last time you were up in New Guinea?

We went last August. It was decided that ten Australian veterans would go back, it was 60 years after the battle of the Kokoda Track. So they rang me from

- 24:00 Melbourne, the 39th, and said, "Bill can we put your name in, do you want to go back?" and I said, "Back where?" and they said, "Going back to Isurava," and I said, "No, I would rather not, I don't want to go back and look at that." Then I thought about it and Bubby said, "Dad, it's your job
- 24:30 to go back and represent those boys who were left up there." I spent the whole night worrying in the bed up there and then my mind was made up so I rang the RSL here and they had asked me to let them know so I said, "Yes," and they said, "Come in and fill out an application." Because I was 39th that was what got me on the run, they rang from Canberra and they told me I'd
- 25:00 be going back to New Guinea on the 16th August last year as one of the ten. We all went and had a party but we all assembled in Brisbane at a hotel. The next morning we took off and I looked down and as I looked I saw this beautiful island come into view with the greenest water
- 25:30 coming up onto the sand, the coconut trees. I thought to myself, "The feeling..." And when the plane landed on the airstrip we rose to get out, the fellow I was sitting with who was in the other seat, Stewart Simmons, from the 2/25th, he said, "What do you mean Bill, what you said?" and I said, "What did I say?" He said, "You sat there looking out the window and you said to me, 'I'm home again.' It was beautiful, 'I'm home.'"
- 26:00 And that's the way that I felt, I was home back in New Guinea, and I love the place. It's just a feeling after twenty five years of your life in one place. There were good times and bad times, I didn't think about the lawlessness and things like that. I thought about all the boys up there and the ones that I had the good times with and lived and laughed and joked with, had bad times and good times. Even now, if they
- 26:30 said to me, "Do you want to go back and have a look?" before I say, I'd have to have a little think about it.

Do you think that is a typical thing about Australian soldiers, they always remember the

humorous things?

What's happened here in Brisbane Indooroopilly RSL, they made a resolution

- 27:00 while we are still a unit, still an organisation, while we are still alive, some day nearest to the 8th August which was the attack on Kokoda and will be Kokoda Day and they will host us and that's what happened last Sunday. It took a collection of five dollars a head to help them out because they pay for it out of their own pockets, everybody was happy and they all had a good day. I made a speech with a presentation and with a portrait of Colonel Honour on their wall. All the old fellows sat around
- 27:30 in their chairs and had a beer and talked. Whenever they talked about it they would say, "Bill remember that time...?" and it wouldn't be anything about the fighting, something would've happened to somebody that we laughed at and things like that, like the taking of the Quinine and things like that. The bombers would come over and you would find an extra yard of speed to get to a hole. I remember a chap by the name of Harry Bartlett,
- 28:00 it was just before the Coral Sea battle and there were all these trenches around full of water, we weren't in those of course, that was an emergency in case there was an air raid, we were living in the tents. All of a sudden, out of the blue came the air raid siren and everybody dived for these holes and this fellow and I dived into a little one and I looked over the top and I saw to me, and it wasn't humorous at the time,
- 28:30 Harry Bartlett he tried to get into a hole with four other blokes and it wouldn't take them and he was a big man and he could only get half his body in and as I looked over the top of my hole and I could see the rest of his body that was stuck, out in the open. With the most woebegone look on his face that I'd ever seen in my life. I said to Judge, and he was the other one,
- 29:00 "Poor bloody Harry can't get down the hole." The Japanese didn't attack us, they attacked a ship along there. Even now we talked, "Do you remember old Harry Bartlett?" and they say, "Oh yeah," the good old days.

What are your thoughts on Anzac Day?

To us here it is second to Kokoda Day because on Anzac Day I go in here but next year I have to go to Melbourne. We get no more than about six or eight,

- 29:30 if we can get that many, and if we can get another four or five it would be in vehicles because their legs have gone on them. At the present moment I'm lucky enough to be walking around and that's touching wood. I can march but most of them can't they have got to go in vehicles. When the march is over you have to go home, there is nowhere to go so you have to come home again. The Kokoda Day is different we have the service and then we go across to the club rooms and
- 30:00 sit down and talk about old times. That's what I told them on Sunday, "Anzac Day is a big day in our lives but Kokoda Day is another one."

Was there a specific incident during the war that caused the deafness?

It happened at Port Moresby when we were bombed, that was one occasion when I didn't make it in time and I got blown out a bit.

- 30:30 I think that's what caused it and actually it was a bit belated because I didn't notice it so much in after years, except that after a medical examination the examiner asked me if during my life I had been subjected to loud explosions. When I told him about the bombing in Port Moresby, they later made recommendations to the RSL for it to be accepted as a war disability
- 31:00 which it was. It's the right ear, the left ear is better, the hearing aide that I've got is defective and three times I've been into Redcliffe to see the people and they have returned it to me as being adjusted but it gives a crackling noise, you have to wear these things to know what I'm talking about. I can hear reasonably well out of this ear if people speak clearly. For instance if you take the TV, the news, no trouble because it
- 31:30 is pronounced strongly and they are good talkers but if it is a program where the people talk low, I just get lost and I don't take much an interest in TV.

Do you remember the specific incident with the bomb?

Yes. That particular one was during the early raids. We had been working on the side of Jackson's airstrip

- 32:00 making a water tank up higher. Unexpectedly, these Japanese planes came over and the air raid hadn't sounded. They dropped the two bombs further back down the strip and the other one they dropped was in our position. I was running up from where I was working, up to get into the slit trench,
- 32:30 when it went off. I can remember the awful noise in the head, then it didn't hurt, I got over it just momentarily. That was the occasion that I remember with the bombs. I'm talking about the early days before any help came.

Another gentleman that we talked to about his New Guinea experience in the army, they never gave him toothbrushes or toothpaste, that was

33:00 **their own personal responsibility, do you remember anything like that?**

No.

Did you guys have dental care?

Yes, we had a toothbrush but there was no such thing as toothpaste. In Port Moresby in those early days sometimes the canteen would get toothpaste but it wasn't issued.

33:30 **It was a matter of having to look after yourself. What things did you have to supply or look after yourself that the army wasn't responsible for?**

We relied on parcels from home. In my diary I often referred to parcels that I got from her and, on my 21st birthday, twenty one candles arrived for my birthday and my birthday is in January.

34:00 Then in March twenty two candles arrived by air and I never got the cake until I got back from Kokoda. We got the cake out and I still had the candles and we put the candles on it and we had my twenty first birthday party about eight months after it had happened.

Was there any animals in the jungle that you had to deal with?

No, the only animals that I ever saw besides

34:30 a few snakes was when we first went to Port Moresby and they had the wallabies down the end of the airstrip. As a matter of fact, we often remarked, there were also wild pigs but I never saw any of those. In New Guinea itself that's all there was, wild pigs, wallabies which I don't think there would be any left now. Snakes, especially in Papua it was a very dangerous snake and it's a black snake called the Papuan snake

35:00 which is instant death if you get bitten by it. Birds, a great variety of birds, especially the bird of paradise which is protected and it's a beautiful bird. The male birds have got these glorious plumage. As far as the other animals were concerned, you often wondered why there was no such thing as monkeys, it was a good country for it, there was no such thing as monkeys, rabbits nothing like that.

35:30 **Just going back to your father's story about being captured, do you know the specific story about how that all occurred?**

He just told us he was at Gallipoli and he was up a tree as a signaller and this patrol came along and they grabbed him and accused him of being a spy. It took them a while to get through to his unit and they were sure that he wasn't even an Australian.

36:00 It was an Australian patrol. He was a great character and very, very popular throughout the army. Somebody even made a remark one day, "Even the Turks knew Abdul."

You have led a very full life and if you think you could've gone back and maybe chosen another career in your life do you have any ideas of what you might have done?

What, started something different? No, I'm quiet satisfied.

36:30 I think the reason why I am sitting here talking to you now was because of the twenty five years back in New Guinea. When the war finished I went back with the army and I was the only one to do it, and most of them went back to television sets and sitting in arm chairs, a soft life I call it. I went back, and certainly up in New Guinea we played hard and you also worked hard,

37:00 but you are on the go all the time getting exercise. Whereas these others are no, falling by the wayside and not getting past the eighty mark, some of them. Every week someone rings up from Melbourne and says, "So and so is dead," one of our blokes. When I saw them there on Sunday I stood up on the dais and gave the ode but when I looked around and saw all our fellows sitting back in chairs, if they got up they had to have sticks, that sort of business.

37:30 At this stage of life, if you said to me, "Do you want to start again?" I'd say, "No," I'm quite happy. I've Pat and Cleo and I've got Bubby and the four kids and Scott, we are very, very lucky. Strangely enough, my sister lives in Woy Woy NSW and she's married one of Abdul's battalion, the 2/5th, he's not in a very good way but he's still going. My brother who was in Korea,

38:00 he's living down in Melbourne and he's living in a wheel chair but that was a result of an accident, not when he was in Korea. As a family we are pretty bloody lucky. Pat's family, her father had a distinguished conduct medal which is the second highest award for gallantry to anybody under the rank of an officer. He got DCM [Distinguished Conduct Medal] and bar, he

38:30 got two, plus Mentioned in Despatches. He was a very highly thought of First World War veteran. Her brother, Pat, he joined the AIF when the war broke out and he went through the Middle East. He got his discharge and he was a plasterer and he died. Brother Jim, the Japs got him in Changi, he was with the 2/20th and he went into the cage at Changi for four years. Once the war was over he didn't last that long.

39:00 The other brother, the younger one, he disappeared in Korea, they never found him. He was in a battalion in Korea and he was missing, believed killed, but they don't know what happened to him. Pat had interest in the Red Cross and she's got them up there, the copies of it and they have tried very, very hard to find him after the Korean conflict was over but they could never find out what had happened to him.

That's it.

INTERVIEW ENDS