

Australians at War Film Archive

Lloyd Tann - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/63>

Tape 1

00:32 **Ah first of all. Oh first of all thanks for doing this.**

You're welcome.

But secondly given the background that I've read about you, you've had a fairly huge career in the war in the six years that it was going. So what we'd like to do to start with is to get like a potted history of not just your experience in the war but your actual your life. So if we could hear a little bit about where you were born and where you grew up and then your pre-war experience, joining up and a little bit about

01:00 **what happened at the end.**

Right. Well I was actually born in Fairfield. My family lived at Hurstbridge at the time but when I was only nine months old my family moved here to Ringwood and I've lived here ever since. I went to school at the local state school, Ringwood State School, number 2997, as far as the sixth grade. From there I went on to Box Hill High School to Year 10.

01:30 I left I left school at the age of fifteen and my first job in the city was in a millinery warehouse in Flinders Lane. I was doing packing and dispatch work but they went bust after about eighteen months. I then took on a job at a furniture shop in Glenferrie Road, Glenferrie and I work worked there 'til 1940

02:00 when I enlisted. I enlisted at the age of twenty one in early 1940 and was called up to go into camp in May 1940. My life during the pre-war period was pretty typical of the average tee you youth growing up locally.

02:30 Ringwood at that time was a principally an orchard area. It was all orchards, apples and pears primarily. Cherries, some or oranges, lemons, that type of thing. It was part of a probably the largest fruit growing area or apple and pear growing area in the southern hemisphere, which extended from right 'round Doncaster,

03:00 Templestowe, Warrenwright and out as far as East Burwood and Vermont, Wontama, it was a fairly small community in those days. Ringwood's population at the war time for instance was 'round about two thousand. Nowadays it's around a hundred thousand.

It must have been like a little country town then.

It was a little country town.

Excuse us

03:30 **Just saying that Ringwood must have been like a country town back then.**

Yes it was very much a small country town in those days. Everybody knew everybody and my father originally came to Ringwood my father was took on the job as engineer in charge of the local cool stores so that the fruit from all the orchards was kept in the cool stores so that he became close friends with all of the local orchardists and of course we came to know them all

04:00 also. I was always keen on sports, played a reasonable amount of football and cricket. The main sport I played was tennis and swimming. I was a foundation member of the Ringwood Swimming Club when it was first formed.

Where did you swim?

The original pool in those days was where Eastland Shopping Centre now stands.

04:30 That also covered the old football ground and tennis courts where I played so as I won the local club championship for the first six years that it was going in the swimming and in fact I was told some years ago that I still held the hundred yards freestyle record at the club but that's mainly because they

wrecked the old pool, which was in yards, and built a new pool,

05:00 which was metric, so now they swim a hundred metres they don't swim a hundred yards so my record I presume will never be broke never be broken. So tennis was my main sport other than that. I played that virtually all my life 'til I got a bit too old for it so I think that covers mainly what I did before the war.

05:30 **And where what were you doing just prior to the outbreak of the war?**

I was working at Andersons Furniture Shop in Glenferrie and when war broke out and after a few months I'd been feeling for some time that I probably should enlist and I enlisted I don't remember the date but it was early 1940.

Was that a private decision or was it influenced by anything?

Not really.

06:00 It was a certain amount of patriotism I suppose. Certain amount of feeling seeing other people join up and feeling I should pull my own weight. Certain amount of sense of adventure that I thought well I'd sign up for it and see what happened because in the early stages not long after when the war was first declared nothing seemed to happen.

06:30 The veritable fighting went on for a long time. All the countries involved were building up their armaments and their armies ready for action but that was about all that seemed to happen at the time.

Was there a state of disbelief that it would actually take off?

Almost. Yes, because it seemed the First World War was the war to end all wars and it seemed no time since that had finished and it was

07:00 barely twenty years since the since the end of the First World War and there they were back at war again.

Did you know anyone from the previous war?

Oh yes at several uncles were involved and my father didn't go because he was what they classed as a reserved occupation with the work at cool stores preserving

07:30 fruit and that sort of thing so he didn't go but he had a brother who was in the navy and or the naval reserve, he was a bit young to go away. My mother had several brothers went to the war. I knew quite a lot of local residents who were returned blokes from the First World War and generally speaking I

08:00 I thought "Well if the war's on I probably should pull my weight and go" so I signed up and I eventually got the well at the time I signed up the 6th Division had been formed and was in training and they were not taking anybody else into camp at that time so they had to wait until the 6th Division had sailed for overseas to empty out the camps before they started to form the 7th Division and when they

08:30 they were doing that that's when I got my call up which was in May, 28th of May 1940. I had to present myself to camp and I was officially sworn in on the 29th of May and allocated to the 2/5th Field Ambulance. Went up to Puckapunyal to begin my training. Had three nights or three days at the Caulfield

09:00 Reception Depot. I remember spending the first night in a tent in the car park, the second night I slept in the grand stand and the third night I slept in a horse stall. I always like to think that Phar Lap might have slept in that same horse stall but anyway by then we were out outfitted with our uniforms and basic equipment and then we were

09:30 sent by train up to Puckapunyal where I join joined the 2/5th Field Ambulance, which at that stage was still being formed. Drafts of recruits were arriving virtually every day so that that was the formation of the unit.

Did you have a preference as to what field you went into?

Not really. Except

10:00 that one of my friends here from Ringwood, a returned bloke from the First World War, he had been in a Field Ambulance himself in the First World War and he said to me "Oh with your experience in life saving" because I was in my swimming activities I was also an instructor with the Royal Life Saving Society and this chap said to me "Oh with your experience with the

10:30 the life saving and resuscitation and all that sort of thing" he said "you'd be a shoe in to fit into the medical corps."

Was that a relief to hear that?

Well I felt that if I had some sort of training that could be put to use it could be handy.

You didn't have a thought that that might mean you would have a safer time overseas?

Oh no no no. Not at all. It was just a matter of I might be better equipped for that than some other field so

11:00 I did indicate that I when I enlisted and that could be why I finished up where I did.

Just one second there. So we were up to you'd just enlisted and were, not just enlisted, but you were getting kitted up at Caulfield.

Yes well then we proceeded to Puckapunyal to

11:30 to join the 2/5th Field Ambulance, which was formed there, but we'd trained at Puckapunyal for roughly six months and end of October we sailed for overseas. The training was fairly general in most cases. This the basic training really was based very much

12:00 on lessons learnt from the First World War. In actual practice during the war we found that that was very much outdated and we had to change things as we went along to a large extent but at least that gave us the basic idea of principle of how a Field Ambulance was supposed to operate and we adjusted it as time went on.

So you were on the Mauritania?

Mauritania, Yes.

Mauritania. And where did you sail

12:30 **into?**

Yes we sailed from Port Melbourne on the 21st of October in 1940. We boarded the Mauritania in Melbourne and when we got out into Bass Strait we linked up with the Queen Mary and the Aquitania, who which had both sailed from Sydney. We stopped off at Fremantle for a day on

13:00 on the way over and we sailed as far as Bombay in those boats. They would not take those big ships any nearer to the war zone so we disembarked at Bombay, went into camp and we were spread over the entire convoy was spread over two camps there, Poona and Deolali.

13:30 They were British army camps from the old Raj days of India. I spent the week at Deolali before returning, that was about a hundred mile inland from Bombay, then we returned to Bombay and by that time they'd assembled a fleet of smaller boats which were boats that were regularly on the as British troop ships

14:00 on the British India run before the war. They were I was on the Dilwara from Bombay. We sailed to El Kantara, which was a port about half way along the Suez Canal. We disembarked there on the 25th of November 1940. Boarded a train across to Palestine over the Sinai Desert

14:30 and that was a bit of an eye opener that trip too we travelled in cattle trucks

No seats no

And

no cushions no straw

No. There was some dirty straw on the floor that trucks. No seats and I think the last passengers on those trucks were camels and they hadn't been cleaned out since the camels were there but

15:00 anyway we detrained they used to call it at a place called El Majdal in Palestine which was fairly adjacent to the string of Australian army camps that were there. There was about oh six or eight different camps. We were billeted at a camp by the name of Julis and

15:30 we settled down to a bit of training there to get our land legs again after about five weeks on the boat and we had our first Christmas in Palestine. In many cases, well a majority of the cases, it was our first Christmas ever overseas away from home.

How strange was that, especially being in a Muslim country?

16:00 Well we weren't very much aware of the Muslim traditions except that they where normally we had weekend leave into Tel Aviv or Jerusalem we were not allowed to go on leave to Jerusalem on the Saturday. It's the Jewish Sabbath from

16:30 sunset Friday to sunset Saturday and we had to keep away from it for that reason.

Were there any Jewish believers in your unit?

Ah two or three. Not many, no.

And did they have the same rules or were they able to go to Jerusalem?

Ah I don't think I don't remember them ever having special leave for that reason but

17:00 right through the war on any of the Jewish Sabbath days, the Passover and I forget the name of the.... all they were given official holidays for the day on any special Jewish days. Actually you always found half a dozen Jews that you never knew were Jews when they got a holiday

17:30 but no we found it very, very interesting going into these places on leave and it was really fascinating if you had any religious training at all to see a lot of these sites that you'd read about or heard about at Sunday school and church.

Had you actually studied any of those places in Sunday school?

I hadn't studied them

18:00 specifically but all the things you learnt about you learnt of the Garden of Gethsemane you learnt about the various places the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Church of the Nativity. All these places where there were special places of special historical significance there were churches built on all of them

18:30 so you had cathedrals everywhere there. For instance the Church of the Nativity was built where on supposedly the site of where Christ was born. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built on the site of the cave where Christ was buried after he was crucified and that type of thing went on everywhere you went. So it was

19:00 really fascinating to see all those things and the particularly the old city it stood enclosed by the old wall which was there right back in the biblical times and you see various sites there such as the Jewish Wailing Wall, which is supposedly the last remnants of the

19:30 King Solomon's Temple. All these things they've got great historical significance and it was rather fascinating to see them all.

And I imagine just remarkable on your first experience overseas to encounter that almost first up.

Oh it was yes. Yes. Wonderful. So we also had leave into Tel Aviv. Well that was a more modern city.

20:00 That was only developed I think after the First World War where they were trying to separate the Jews from the Arabs.

How big was that then?

It was quite a fair size town. I'd say perhaps something like Geelong for the sake of argument. Tel Aviv was a Jewish city. Jaffa right alongside was Arab and while we'd get regular leave into Tel Aviv no

20:30 leave was given to Jaffa. That was totally out of bounds.

Had you met any Arabs before you went overseas?

No never.

And did you have an idea of what to expect with them?

Not very much. I suppose in books you read about the Bedouins and this type of thing and you get some sort of mental picture of them but you don't know a great deal about them and I know it's interesting on the ships before we disembarked we had

21:00 our lectures about how you're supposed to behave and what you could do and what you couldn't do.

What did they tell you for example?

Well one thing they told us particularly was that we must never refer to the Arabs as "wogs." We'd never heard the expression before but from then on they were wogs. Supposedly meant Worthy Oriental Gentlemen W-O-G but no that was the, we often laughed about that. We'd never heard the expression until we were told we were not allowed to use it and from on it became the

21:30 regular term.

What else did they tell you?

Primarily just how to behave ourselves. Not to not to disgrace Australia by misbehaving.

Was it special mention of how to behave toward the women?

Oh yes. Yes.

And what did they tell you about that?

Don't touch. You can look you can look, but don't touch but ah

22:00 the Arabs themselves were very possessive of their women folk in that regard but you had to be pretty careful with them all the same. They'd pinch anything that wasn't nailed down and in fact quite a lot of things that were nailed down they pinched.

Did some of the lads in your unit or in your platoon even sort of frequent the brothels in town?

Yes they

22:30 did. Everywhere we went we were near towns there were officially approved brothels.

Oh so it wasn't a penalised

No

objective?

As long as you went to the officially approved ones. Some weren't worried about whether they were officially approved or not they were

23:00 just lost my train of thought there what I was going to say.

I thought you might have been distracted by some of the unofficially approved brothels.

Yes.

So after Palestine how soon did you set down and set up camp?

Well we weren't there for very long. As I mentioned we sailed with the 7th Division and my unit was the

23:30 21st Brigade, which was part of the 7th Division. Now the 6th Division were al had already sailed ahead of us. Most of them were in Palestine but one Brigade, the 18th Brigade, had gone to England instead of Palestine. Now just before Christmas, only a few weeks after we arrived there, the 18th Brigade came out from England to Palestine ready to go into action up in the in the Western Desert and for some

24:00 reason they came without their Field Ambulance, who were left behind in England, but they had to have a Field Ambulance before they went into action so the 2/5th was transferred from the 7th Division to the 6th Division the 18th Brigade and immediately after Christmas we left Palestine and moved over to Egypt to a camp known as Ikingi Mariut.

24:30 We were there for a couple of weeks just getting ready to go into action up in the Western Desert and we were moved up with the 18th Brigade as part of the 6th Division in the first action by the Australians in the war up through Sidi Barrani, Bardia, as far as Tobruk. We stopped at Tobruk for a couple

25:00 of weeks to re reorganise or to rest I suppose primarily and re-equip and re-organise and just at that stage they arranged for the 9th Division to take over from the 6th Division to continue the progress up through the desert. The 6th Division were moved back to Egypt ready to go over to Greece

25:30 because the Germans were threatening to attack Greece and Churchill had promised that if the Greeks were attacked they would send forces over there to help them so they decided to send the 6th Division as being the only division that which had had active service experience so we got all ready to go over to Greece. The other brigades sailed. The 18th Brigade

26:00 went to bed one night expecting a five o'clock reveille the next day to board the ship for Greece but about two o'clock in the morning we got pulled out of bed and sent back up the desert again because the 9th Division had been attacked by the Germans at, oh god my memory's gone on my I'm afraid.

That's alright.

26:30 Yeah.

So did you end up in Greece at all?

No. No but the 9th Division was in retreat because the after the Germans attacked them and they sent the 18th Brigade back up into the desert to meet up with the 9th Division and reinforce them to make a stand at Tobruk, which we did. Tobruk was vitally important because it was the only decent

27:00 deep water harbour between Alexandria in Egypt and Tunis, a distance about twelve hundred miles, and for the Germans to or Italians to attack Egypt, which they were hoping to do, they had to cart their supplies all the way by road

27:30 from Tunis unless they could find a decent a port such as Tobruk to unload.

And it was a huge campaign Tobruk wasn't it and you were there from the very beginning.

Yes.

And how long how long were you actually based there then?

Ah I was there about five months. Five and a half months but the actual siege went on for eight and a half months all told. So when we went back up to meet the 9th Division we met them as they fell back into Tobruk

28:00 we met them there and the Germans closed 'round behind us and encircled Tobruk so that we were trapped in there. It was a town which had been fairly well fortified by the Italians in the first place so we took over their fortifications, which was a line of trenches and pillboxes and so on roughly ten miles

28:30 out from Tobruk itself.

There'd been a massive capture of the Italian POWs [prisoners of war] by that stage.

Yes. When we went up the first time it was all fortified by Italians. There were no Germans there at that time and the Italians apparently didn't want to fight very much. Our troops just sailed into Tobruk and captured it within twenty four

29:00 hours and took something like twenty five thousand prisoners in Tobruk itself and that despite the fact there was only about there'd be about ten or twelve thousand Australians.

I'll definitely come back and ask you more questions about that but did you have to deal with any of the POWs yourself?

Yes, quite a few. The Italians were

29:30 more than willing to surrender really. They came out in their thousands from Tobruk with their hands up but even after the fighting had finished and the town had surrendered there was still thousands of Italians in various spots, dug outs and so on, all 'round the Tobruk area and they would be dribbling

30:00 in for days a dozen or two at a time and we'd put them into POW compounds, which might be just one strand of wire around the area just to keep them localised and they didn't try to get out. They were quite happy just to stay there. I know I had a strange experience one time. I was, we were

30:30 just setting up camp and we were sort of scrounging around looking and anything we could make ourselves comfortable and I went down into a Italian dugout just to find out if there was anything there worth having and got down, it was rather dark, and as I got down there I sort of blinked to get my eyes accustomed to the bad light and I found I found about a dozen

31:00 Italian soldiers in there sitting there drink drinking cognac. So I thought "I'd better back out of here quick." I was on my own.

Didn't fancy asking for a cognac?

Well they invited me in and said "Here have a drink" so.

Could you speak any Italian at that stage?

No. No most of them spoke a little bit of Australian a little bit of English and you managed with signs but anyway then they asked

31:30 me if I'd take them into the prisoner-of-war compound so here I envisioned myself getting a military medal or something for taking a dozen prisoners single handed so I said "Yes I'll take you into the camp" so I'd get them in and marching them back to camp and I get about half way there and I realise I'm the only one not carrying a gun. They're all carrying their rifles and I'm not so I made them dump their rifles and I picked up one of them to ...

How did you get them to actually give up their rifles

32:00 **when you were unarmed?**

Oh I just told them to. They weren't worried, no. They just dropped them put them in a heap and I picked up one and marched them off and then I look around and I see groups coming from everywhere. All walk walking in or either on their own or being guided in by some of our boys.

And why were the Italian troops so ambivalent about fighting and so happy to

32:30 **surrender?**

The majority of them simply didn't want to fight. They were conscripts. The Italian regular army were quite good fighters but ninety per cent of the Italians there were conscripts who were there because they had to be there. They didn't want to fight so at first opportunity they surrendered.

And did they seem at all afraid of the Australians?

No they seemed quite happy. We had a crowd

33:00 we had taken over an old Italian hospital just out of the little township itself at a place called Pilastrino and it was left in shocking condition. Filthy dirty and rather than clean it up ourselves we decided to

use the Italian prisoners. Make them clean it up and we had quite a crowd of them that were working there for oh a couple of weeks.

And were they easy to manage?

Oh yes. No

33:30 trouble at all. They would they'd be working around there and they'd at meal times they'd line up with us to in our mess tent.

It sounds a bit surreal listening to you say that, you know this heavy action was going on all around but you're having quite a nice time with the cosmopolitans.

Yes, yes well even they seemed to enjoy it because I know after we got the place cleaned up we sent all the prisoners off to the POW compound

34:00 and a day or so later half a dozen Italians walk into camp and we recognised them. They'd been some on our working party before. We said "What are you doing here? We took you to the into the POW compound?" They said "Oh yes the food there's no good. Much better here so we came back to the get some decent food."

So how was it so lax the, you know enforcing them to stay in camps didn't sound particularly strong.

34:30 No, well we were probably not really equipped to hold many prisoners at the time but and also they were absolutely swamped with them. I've heard, I'm not sure whether the figures are correct or not, that that in that first desert campaign the fifteen thousand Australians in the 6th Division took something like two hundred and fifty

35:00 thousand prisoners. Well even the moving of those prisoners back into base area was a huge task in itself.

So the British and the Australian operations just weren't prepared for that many?

Not really, no.

And where did they send them eventually?

As far as we were concerned they sent them back to Egypt and other headquarters crowds took over from

35:30 there and they had to establish major POW camps to hold them and they sent them all over all over the place. Some were sent, I don't know, some were sent probably sent back to Australia or anywhere.

Mm. Sorry to waylay you again but I should sort of move this forward just in chronology again so what happened after your Egypt campaign then?

Yes well

36:00 after we came out of Tobruk, which was in end of August beginning of September 1940 [1941] we spent a couple of weeks back in Palestine re-equipping there because when we came out of Tobruk we left all our equipment behind because we came out by sea and cars, trucks, medical equipment, everything was left behind for the people

36:30 who took over from us so we had to be completely reequipped, which they did in Palestine. We then moved up into Syria. This applied to my unit and my brigade particularly the because the 18th Brigade, who were 6th Division, there'd been a bit of reorganising

37:00 took place and we had now been transferred to the 7th Division as a brigade. Now the 7th div Division had done the Syrian Campaign and the powers that be wanted the 18th Brigade to join up with the rest of the division. So we went up to Syria and we spent a bit of time there. We had about a month at a place called Homs and then went from there up to Aleppo

37:30 and we were there for about three months. Aleppo's close to the Turkish border, about ten mile from the Euphrates River there which formed the border but we were there over Christmas and of course during that time the Japanese had come into the war and decided to send the Australians back so we went from Aleppo down to Palestine

38:00 again to get ready to ship I was going to say come back to Australia but that that was not decided immediately. When we sailed we were apparently aimed for Java, Singapore, Malaya, somewhere in that area but things moved so quickly that that even then they didn't know where we

38:30 were going. We got as far as Colombo and we set sail from Colombo, not in a convoy but ships were sailed several hours apart. It turned out the ship ahead of us tied up in Java and walked off into the hands of the Japs. The Japanese had taken Java, which this ship

39:00 did not did not know about until they'd tied up in port and they all finished up prisoners of war and we

were only a matter of

No communication there.

No, very poor. We were only a matter of a few hours sailing behind them. We were to be at night you could see Java on the horizon and we expected to wake up in the morning and walk off in Java. We woke up in the morning and found we were heading about north west instead of due east

39:30 and it turns out that there was big arguments between the Churchill and the Australian government as to where the Australians went. Churchill wanted us to go to Burma to form a barrier to stop the Japs getting through to India. The Australian government wanted us to come home to Australia to help defend Australia.

Did you know that at the time? Did you have

40:00 **any info?**

No.

Did you just have no idea?

No. I found out most of this when I was doing the unit history. I researched quite a lot a number of history books and things and found out what it was and the Churchill diverted the convoy for towards Burma

40:30 hoping to win the argument because if we'd headed for Australia and he won the argument the ships would not have had enough fuel to have reached Burma so he sent us there in the hope of winning the argument. He lost the argument and they decided to go send the ships send the troops back to Australia.

Look on that note Lloyd, we're out of tape here so we'll have

Tape 2

00:30 **Okay, I'm actually going to wind you right back again now to Ringwood when it was full of trees and orchards and so on. Your father was in a restricted occupation for the First World War?**

Mm.

Would that mean things were okay during the Depression if he was in constant employment?

He was in constant employment through the through the Depression, yes. We were lucky in that regard because so many people were

01:00 out of work.

And given that this was a reasonably countrified area, there must have been a lot of food growing so other people did you notice other people who were out of work getting by simply because food was available or....?

Yes, well the majority of people had for instance grew their own vegetables and they were largely self-supporting in that regard

01:30 but there was still a lot of people were out of work. A lot of construction jobs were undertaken to give work to the unemployed. What they called sustenance workers in those days.

Sussos.

Sussos, yes. For instance I mentioned the bars the swimming pool that was built when I started there with

02:00 my swimming. That was built as a job for the sustenance workers. That was in 1933 that was that was built. Probably in 1932 I expect. It opened to the public in time for the 1932, 33-34 season, swimming season, so that it probably started back in 1932 but it was the sustenance workers

02:30 did that.

And from your experience did your father seem at all concerned that he didn't go and fight in the First World War or was he relieved?

Ah I don't know. He never commented on it and quite a number quite a number of his friends went there that on the other hand I'm not sure whether he would have been accepted anyway. He was

03:00 fairly short, only five foot four, and I've just been reading in a book only yesterday about the formation of the first AIF [Australian Imperial Force] and their height minimum was five foot six so I doubt he he'd

have if dad would have passed the medical anyway.

Were you a bit taller than him?

Yes I was I was five foot nine

03:30 all my life so recently a medical examination at the doctor's he measured me as five foot six so I've apparently shrunk about three inches as the years progressed. I've always had a bad back and I think the discs and things must have concertinaed to such an extent that I've

Gravity.

Lost three inches.

And what about your uncles then and the friends that you knew that were World War I veterans. What insight did they

04:00 **give you about what you might experience?**

I would say nothing.

Did you ask?

No.

You didn't think to ask?

No I never just it's strange in a way. It just seemed like history. No different to the Spanish Armada or the Battle of Waterloo. It was something that was just history that had happened

04:30 in the past and none of us seemed terribly interested in details.

Did you learn about it at school?

A little bit, yes. Not a great deal.

And did you meet any returned servicemen who had been badly injured, or even mildly injured?

Yes. Yes several that I knew. One chap that I knew particularly well. I knew he'd had a plate

05:00 in his head. He was badly wounded during the war and apparently they had to replace some of his skull with a metal plate.

And did any of that register with you that you might encounter similar?

Yes it did and that was my main fear. The thought of being killed didn't worry me unduly. The thought of being permanently maimed did.

Did you have a sort of a

05:30 **bizarre preference as to which you would prefer you know an arm, a leg?**

Not really. Well actually during the war itself I was immortal. I never gave a serious thought to anything going to happen to me. I knew I was going to come home alright.

And sorry were you actually injured during the war?

No.

Oh you must have had that prescience.

Yes. No I had a lot of

06:00 remarkable escapes really and including a bomb that landed probably no more than ten yards from me on rock hard ground with no cover.

And you could you actually see it or was it too fast?

No. I saw it coming down so

How far away were you when you sort of first registered it was happening?

06:30 **Like was it you know up in the sky and**

Well I, this was in Tobruk. There was the air raid in progress and I was working in the hospital at the time. I was walking across a parade ground. Big square parade ground. Perfectly plain length of ground. Hard as hard as cement and we didn't take all

07:00 that much interest notice of air raids because they were going almost continually. If you stopped and took shelter you'd never get anything done so you just kept an ear cocked and went ahead as usual. Well

I heard this plane coming down like "Eeeeeee" and I thought "He's coming pretty straight for there." Looked up and he was coming straight at me so when I saw him release his bombs there in a stick of bombs coming down and

How big would it have been? The bomb?

'Bout two hundred and fifty pounders.

07:30 **And sorry in size like....**

Oh I only saw them from a distance really so I you know probably that that size. It I had no cover I could reach at all so I just hit the ground and just hope hoped for the best but that landed probably ten yards behind me and did didn't go off.

So when you were looking up at the plane

08:00 **I've heard other diggers say that they know the bullet that's got their name on it.**

Mm.

Did you have a sense like did you know that you know the pilot could see you?

Mm.

And you knew that he was aiming for you but did you have that sense of "This is it"?

Yes I thought it could be, yes. Yeah I thought "I'm in" I thought "I'm in real trouble here."

And when you hit the ground was there time to think?

Not really just thought

08:30 "Hope for the best."

So that nothing sort of flashed in your mind or....?

No, not really.

And did you wait for the sound or and....?

Yes well I really expect expected a blast. I thought that "This is it. I've had it" and anyway the whole stick of five bombs he dropped right through the hospital grounds and

09:00 none of the five went off. They were all duds so

So what was that thought when you were flat on the ground and it's hit and nothing's happened? Did you think that you were dead and you just hadn't felt it?

No not really because I got peppered with gravel and all that sort of thing. Not enough to do any harm but it took me a moment to realise that it wasn't going to go off.

And did it give you a sense of immortality when you survived?

Not really immortality

09:30 but I just could couldn't believe I was going to be killed.

I mean if

I knew some people were going to, but not me.

And you were right. What about sort of afterwards? Did you treat yourself to a drink or run around and tell everybody that that had happened or was it simply just you know folded into the mix?

Oh no it's just one of those things that happened but I think I think the others probably knew. I

10:00 think I told 'em that I was the bomb nearly hit me and that it was rather strange that I've mentioned this at the other interview too but the at the time I was attached to the 4th AGH [Australian General Hospital] the hospital unit there and I was helping to run the ward that had all the wounded German prisoners

10:30 in and after that plane had dropped the bombs that nearly hit me that plane was shot was shot down. He pulled out of his dive and he was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crash-landed some distance away and the pilot was injured in the crash. He broke his leg and a few other minor things. He was taken prisoner taken to brought into the hospital to be patched up,

11:00 put into the ward with the other wounded Germans and a couple of hours after he dropped that bomb on me at me I was nursing him.

What was the treatment of the enemy in the AGH? Did they go into special wards or did

They had a special ward just for the Germans, yes, but they were treated the same as our own injured.

And were there any surgeons that chose not to operate on

11:30 **the enemy?**

No. Not that I know of they went on they were just treated exactly the same as our own wounded.

And did you find out the name of this German pilot?

Ah yes. I've forgotten it now but he was not very popular with even with the Germans. He was one of these arrogant

12:00 Nazi bastards, if you'll excuse the expression.

Do you know what rank he was?

No. I think our equivalent to pilot officer or flight lieutenant or something like that. He wasn't a high ranking one I don't think but he was an officer and this is one of the things. All the other prisoners were soldiers. He was the only air force bloke

12:30 and as far as he was concerned he was officer in the Luftwaffe [German Air Force] but the rest of them were just dirt under his feet. They were just common soldiers. He wouldn't talk to them.

Did he talk to you?

Yes but no more than necessary.

Did you tell him that he'd tried to kill you?

Yes I did let it tell him.

Can you remember the words that you used to tell him that?

No, no but

13:00 the other Germans hated him or pretty much because they continually bombed the hospital deliberately and the German prisoners did not like being bombed by their own air force.

And do you think did the Luftwaffe know that that there were German POWs inside?

Oh

13:30 I don't know if they knew for certain. They would expect there would be because that was the only hospital there and obviously prisoners quite a few prisoners are going to be taken prisoner because they are wounded.

And I imagine it was anti Geneva Convention to bomb hospitals?

Oh very much so but

So would he have been likely to be tried then?

I don't think so. It was too general.

14:00 They dropped over sixty bombs on the hospital itself during the siege and it was clearly marked with a red cross. Certainly there were legitimate targets not far away and they could claim it as just crooked aiming that landed on the hospital but to drop six sixty-odd bombs on a

14:30 hospital it was a it must be an awful lot of crooked aiming.

So when you

And also they deliberately sunk a hospital ship in the harbour. It was it wasn't accidental.

So when you were back on duty and you heard that this pilot had come in, did you go straight down to see him or did you wait until you were assigned?

15:00 Oh no, no. I was I was just doing normal work in the ward when a fresh patient came in and we found out that was the pilot that had been shot down.

And what nursing duties did you have with him then?

Just routine looking after. His leg had been put into plaster. I don't I think he had a few other minor wounds from memory that

15:30 I would have had to dress regularly and that sort of thing.

So you definitely must have said something to him while you were you know attending to

I don't remember quite what was said particularly but he was just another patient.

I would have given him a mouthful I'm sure.

Yeah. No I think he was just another patient, same as the other Germans.

And in amongst your unit with the ambos there you know what sort of discussion did you have about the patients that you were treating

16:00 **in terms of the POWs? The enemy?**

Ah we just considered them as patients. Most of them were quite nice blokes. We got on quite well with them. Some of them spoke very good English. Others broken English and others none at all so we used to get one bloke to interpret for another one.

And did they give you their views on what they thought of

Yeah.

The ordered chaos that was going on?

Yes a majority of them were

16:30 'course we'd sort of gloat a bit on each other when we had the chance. For instance it was while I was there that we sank the one of their big boats, which was it? I've just forgotten which one it was and of course we told them all about it. They were most upset.

17:00 **Did you exaggerate it?**

Oh no we didn't exaggerate but we just told them and gloated a bit over it that but at the same time the British battleship the Hood was sunk. We didn't tell them about that. We didn't want them to gloat over us.

And how did they guard the POWs in hospital?

They didn't. They were all confined to bed. They couldn't get out, couldn't do anything. So there were no actual

17:30 armed guards there at all.

And what food did the POWs get? Was it different to?

No exactly the same as ours. We had the one cookhouse and each ward would just go and collect the food for their ward.

What was the food like then by the way?

The hospital was probably better than better than the other troops got but it was not good. For instance there was there was no fresh vegetables at all.

18:00 The only meat would be tinned bully beef and they no it was the lack of foodstuffs really that caused most all the Australians to be evacuated out of Tobruk while the siege was still going on because there was our health was deteriorating

18:30 due to the poor food while they bully beef and biscuits and anything the cooks do with them to make it look something different.

I've heard those biscuits can break your teeth.

Yeah. Yeah they they'd often break them up into make a sort of a porridge out of them.

And did you think that the lack of good food made

19:00 **it more difficult for the patients to get well? Could you see like real examples of that I mean?**

Oh not really because it it'd be a gradual process and you wouldn't know whether they'd have got better quicker if they'd have had better food so they just improved or not. Our own patients if they were very bad

19:30 they were being evacuated back to back to Egypt. We used to send them out at night by destroyer what the in the early days they had a hospital ship, Evita, came in but the Germans bomb bombed and sunk that in the harbour so from then on they didn't have use any more hospital ships. Just destroyers came in at night.

And what about the nurses? Had they been

20:00 **evacuated by that stage?**

They were evacuated right at the very within the first few days first week I suppose.

Of your landing at Tobruk?

Of Tobruk being surrounded by the Germans and becoming a siege position.

And how did they get out if you were surrounded?

Destroyers. Tobruk was a port see, and we still had the harbour and we still generally speaking we had naval control of the Mediterranean.

20:30 **And had you met any personally in those few days?**

No because I didn't go in to work at the hospital until after the nurses had gone and that is that is the reason that I went in. I'm not sure just how many nurses the full complement was about sixty nurses. They were not all there I don't know I think there might have been twenty or thirty or forty

21:00 but the authorities realised that we were in a very difficult situation being surrounded entirely and at that time the Germans had never been stopped. The German Army had swept everything before them. They'd never been defeated, never ever been seriously resisted right through and when they'd trapped us there I'm quite sure the powers that be

21:30 never expected us to get out. All they could see was we might hold them up for a few days. A week or two and then we'd all finish up prisoners and while they thought they could probably go along with fifteen thousand Australians have been taken prisoner the thought of thirty or forty or fifty nurses being taken prisoner, that was political suicide.

22:00 They could have lost their seats so they decided to get take all the nurses out.

So from where you were, what sort of a view did you have? I mean what could you see? What was the horizon and what was the beach head like and...

Generally speaking the country was dead flat. It was always referred to as desert but the it's you get a mental

22:30 picture of like the Sahara. It was not a sandy desert like the Sahara. It was just dirt. Loose a lot of loose dust and a lot of rocky shale there and absolute absolutely no growth of any description. It had grass, no bushes. There was one tree, a fig tree, in the entire Tobruk area. The Tobruk area was

23:00 roughly semi-circular with the township in the middle of that and the perimeter was something in the vicinity of ten miles out from the township all around so you had that the total area and this one tree, the fig tree out near the perimeter was the only tree in the entire Tobruk area. So there was little or nothing to see at all really

23:30 and there was no buildings at all outside the actual town of Tobruk, and that was just a small harbour town.

So when you arrived what did you immediately get involved in setting up the AGH?

Yes well

24:00 I'd have been there only I'd say three or four days I suppose before we were sent in. As I mentioned, after they sent the nurses out that that left the hosp hospital unit, the AGH, very short-handed in two angles. Numerically they were short by the number that were evacuated.

24:30 Skill wise they they'd lost probably three quarters of their of their skill because all the nurses were fully trained nurses. The men were I doubt if they had any fully trained male nurses.

How good was your training?

I was trained to be a nursing orderly but

25:00 virtually I'd had no training at all. Theoretical but no practical work at all so it had to learn on the job.

And did you have concerns about that? Did you feel a bit like a shag on a rock in terms of what you knew?

Largely, yes, except you reckon that most of these things, even nursing, is just commonsense. You you've got to have a certain

25:30 amount of knowledge to know what to do and when to do it but it's ninety per cent commonsense, same as anything else, and it was because they were they were so short-handed that they called for help from the Field Ambulances and there was sixteen from my unit went in and we took over three or four of their wards.

So when did you experience your first wounded?

26:00 That would be then.

And what had what had happened to him? What injury had he sustained?

Oh I don't I just walked into a ward full. A ward full of patients.

So it wasn't out on the field? It was actually after they...?

Yes the first ones I struck as actually field casualties would have been after I'd work worked in the hospital then for several weeks.

So how did you go

26:30 **with that the sort of the sight of blood and the stench of illness and injury?**

I found it difficult to get first on the first occasions. When I first struck them on the first day or two I was a bit a bit nauseous, bit squeamish, but after the first day or so I'd get used to it and from then on it had never worried me.

And if they were conscious

27:00 **did you have more difficulty tending to them than if they were unconscious?**

Yes. If they were they screaming in pain and this sort of thing it made it certainly made it harder.

Did it affect your sleep?

No I usually slept alright but it's difficult to remember exactly whether

27:30 the, any problems that I had in that regard but I know if I'd been away from practical experience like that for say six months and then started a fresh campaign the first few cases would turn me up quite a bit yeah, for the first day or two. After that I'd get used to it and it didn't worry me. I've helped at

28:00 operations

Did you....?

In an operating theatre.

Did you have serve on any particularly.... did you serve a surgeon or assist a surgeon during an amputation for example?

Not amputation no. I've I never had a great deal of the operating side of it. The most I did were minor cases but

28:30 I've had a number of cases of clean up bullet wounds and that sort of thing but

Did you ever remove any bullets yourself?

Oh no no. That'd be done by the doctors.

What did they do with the bullets after they took them out of the soldiers?

I guess they'd just throw 'em out in the rubbish unless they put them in a bottle and saved them for the patient

29:00 so to the best of my recollection they were just thrown out.

And what about, I know I'm getting a bit gory, but I wonder sort of under those circumstances what disposal operations they had in place for bits and pieces of people that they had to remove.

Well from a Field Ambulance point of view

29:30 I think they were just buried because we didn't have any incineration facilities. The AGHs had full facilities for them.

They had incinerators did they?

They would have done yes. I didn't have personal experience with them but I'm sure they would have done.

And I imagine the power was knocked out a fair bit from time to time with the air raids and so on?

Yeah.

And that with the climate would have been

30:00 **was it was pretty hot while you were there, was it not?**

Yes the average temperature at Tobruk they say was a hundred and twenty degrees.

You'll have to help me convert that into Celsius.

Oh say around about fifty.

Oh! So under those circumstances how did you maintain both your sanity under the conditions and also how do they maintain the hygiene standards in

Mm.

in the hospital?

Well the

30:30 temperature, though it was very high it was a dry heat, so it was nowhere near as bad as it sounds. Most days were days like about a hundred or thirty eight degrees, that's a hundred. Most days felt around about that but I read where the official the average in the summer time was around about a hundred and twenty

31:00 but it was a very dry heat so it didn't bother you to that all extent.

And so they didn't have I mean how did they cool things for the patients' needs or keep the equipment in good condition?

Well they did have refrigerators.

So there were enough generators operating to cover?

Yes.

And what about disease? That must have been pretty close to outbreak at any given time?

31:30 We didn't have very much disease in the in those areas at all. It was not like the islands where there was probably ten cases of malaria for every battle casualty but we had little or no sickness there at all. It seemed a fairly healthy climate really.

Now apart from the hospitals that you set up yourselves, you took over the Italian hospital?

Mm.

32:00 **What happens under those circumstances? I know you said the POWs came in and helped clean it up but did you just inherit all the equipment that had been left behind?**

Yes because actually that Italian hospital we took over was probably better equipped than we had.

And does that just immediately become property of the AIF or the...

Yeah.

British imperial forces?

Yes. Yes oh there was quite a lot of that sort of thing went on, not only medical equipment in or anything else

32:30 but quite a lot of the Italian weapons were used.

What happens? Do they you know do they get re restamped or rebadged or....?

No, just take them over and use them.

I heard the Italian equipment wasn't very good.

Some was quite good.

And what guns did they use or were they oh you probably wouldn't have known that yourself.

No well I.... the brands on them I wouldn't know but

33:00 the there was light anti-air aircraft guns. I think the Breda I think was one of theirs and the Skoda. I think they had the Bofors too, which we used.

So if there was a lot of official sort of purloining of the of enemy equipment then I imagine

33:30 **there must have been a fair bit of personal purloining and scrounging going on. For example when you rounded up those Italians?**

Yes there was to an extent but you had nothing to do with you couldn't pinch too much because you couldn't cart it with you. Anything you took you had to carry with you and a lot of things you'd help yourself to, but you'd leave them behind when you moved out.

Were there any treasured items? Like were there

34:00 **items that sort of scored well amongst the men if you managed to get your hands on one or**

Oh things like watches, revolvers things like that were or compasses. Those sorts of things were fairly valuable souvenirs for trade purposes but quite a lot of the things that you might get hold of. For instance

34:30 when we went up there the first time in the desert there was cars, trucks, motorbikes, just littered all 'round the countryside and half the troops had their own motorbikes and their own cars and you'd drive off somewhere and run out of petrol all you'd do was find another car.

Sounds very apocalyptic.

It does but yeah you had nothing to do with them anyway afterwards so you'd just go for a joy ride and

35:00 decide. You might want to.

And how was that? How were you able to do that? Like did your warrant officers or sergeants sort of try and keep close tabs on you and were you all allowed to go off and ride a motorbike or was it just turned a blind eye to?

Oh turned a blind eye to it very largely. You would have your spells on duty and your spells off duty. Well what you did when you were off duty was up to you.

Well what did you do off duty?

It was....

35:30 there wasn't a great deal to do. That's one of the reasons why they'd perhaps go for a joy ride on a motorbike or we had to dig ourselves in dugouts in the area and you'd want to make yourself a bit comfortable so you'd scrounge around and go into a few Italian dugouts to see "Is there anything there that I can use?" Might be something to you might find a bed or a mattress and

36:00 they'd be more comfortable than just sleeping on the ground so you'd take that. You might find a for instance there was they had a lot of field telephones all 'round the place and nearly all of our chaps would be linked from one dug out to the next with Italian telephones and you'd ring up your mate and say "Come over for a game of cards" right in the desert. I remember one rather amusing case one time there was

36:30 our company Sergeant Major was you know he was playing cards in a dug out just near me one night with the a few of his friends there and our CO [Commanding Officer] was work working late and he wanted the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] for some reason so he sent the orderly runner after him. "Find the RSM and tell him to report to me." So he eventually found the RSM playing

37:00 cards here so the RSM picks up the phone and rings up to the orderly room to see what he wanted and the CO says "Sergeant Major, when I send the orderly the orderly runner for you to report to me, I want you to report to me personally not to ring me up on the telephone." Slammed the phone down. He got his ear chewed over that.

How did oh the tape's about to run out unfortunately but how did I mean how would they operate that? Was it just generated power generated

37:30 **sorry was the power from a generator that ran the electricity through them or**

The telephones were I think all battery operated.

Ah okay and did they have certain signals or numbers that you knew to go from one dug out to another or did it just ring and anybody would pick it up?

Oh they just worked out their own codes pretty much. You know. One ring for one bloke and two rings for another bloke and

Fantastic.

38:00 'Cause.

I think the tape's about to run out anyway. No, I just also wanted to stay on the line about the telephones but weren't they worried for example that information would be passed onto the Germans who could potentially be listening or was that just absurd?

I don't I'm not technical on that side. I wouldn't know whether anything could occur there

38:30 because they were sort of very limited circuits.

Yeah so just too far away from

Yes.

Yeah.

Yes. There might be a dozen dug outs in a in a couple of hundred yards and the phones'd run around there but there's no linkage to the to the German headquarters or to

And no

anybody else.

no opportunity for them to over to listen in or overhear or

No I wouldn't think so. No.

Okay, we'll take a break I think.

Tape 3

- 00:31 And a certain number were classified as nursing orderlies. Others were classified as stretcher bearers then there'd be cooks, general duties, drivers, all this type of thing so that I was classified as a as a nursing orderly, excuse me, in the early stages and accordingly I did more
- 01:00 of the nursing work and you learned a lot just from experience not from just being actually taught it but you get the experience of doing the nursing and the and dressing station work and that sort of thing and
- And what were the surgeons like?**
- Most of them were very good, particularly the specialist surgeons, they were excellent, but all of our all of our officers were
- 01:30 doctors but as reinforcements joined the war we got a lot of young doctors who were only virtually just qualified out of the college or
- That must have been very confronting for them?**
- Yes well they were nothing like the skill levels that the older, more experienced ones had, but of course they were qualified as doctors. They they'd had some experience and served as interns in
- 02:00 hospitals and
- And the older ones in the earlier days or the early days of Tobruk at least, were they say army career doctors or were they doctors who had joined up?**
- No they were doctors who had joined up, yes. Several of them were First World War men who'd had that experience but our commanding officer was a ex ex-First World War man.
- And what about padres? You must have bumped into a few of those at the hospital?**
- Yes we had a
- 02:30 few of those.
- And were they senior ranking officers to you as well?**
- Padres were all officers. I think they ranked as captain. The any padre ranked as a captain or higher.
- And were there any surgeons that you felt weren't really up to the job?**
- No, well I
- 03:00 they those that I had experience with were very good. One impressed me tremendously was one at Geyton's Post [Geyton's Hill - Shaggy Ridge area, New Guinea]. He was attached to us just for that occasion. He was from a mobile surgical team and he he'd he was an amazing man. He worked for twenty two hours a day.
- How for how many days for example?**
- Oh it'd be for
- 03:30 about a week or no, wouldn't be quite. About five or six days.
- And do you have any idea or of a ball park figure of the number of men that he would have operated on in that period of time?**
- Ah I have got I've just forgotten it off hand but
- Like in a twenty two hour shift?**
- It it's not in a shift but that history book that I gave you I've got a break down of it in
- 04:00 that but no he wouldn't be operating for that twenty two hours. What happened he would operate 'til five o'clock in the morning and then he'd say to me "Call me at seven" and he'd go and lie down for a couple of hours' sleep and I'd call him at seven, we'd do the rounds of the patients, check on them and perhaps do their dressings as may

04:30 be necessary and mark those that are fit for evacuation. Originally we were not going to hold patients at Geyton's Post any length of time, just virtually advanced first aid and then send them back to Guy's Post, the next position but the country was so rugged and so tough that it was only about five miles back to Guy's Post but it was about a

05:00 ten hour stretcher carry and so we had to keep a lot of them there for several days who normally we would have sent back. So we'd mark those who were fit to go back and by that time the boong stretcher team would be there to carry them back and get rid of those and then by the time that was done the

05:30 fresh lot of patients'd be coming down from Shaggy Ridge and he'd then start to operate and go through 'til five o'clock the next morning.

So I get the feeling that despite the air the constant air raid warnings there was a sense that your day-to-day activities would remain the same and that you yourselves would be reasonably safe where you were

Mm.

But were there times when it became very untenable there and you had to move or what do they call it bug out or

06:00 Ah I never had to move because of them, put it that way. Some sometimes it got a bit on the hairy side you might take shelter for a few minutes in most cases you just had to keep on with doing the job whatever it happened to be.

And what was the strategy for

06:30 **an intense air raid? Did you have to move the soldiers the wounded?**

In most cases you couldn't. There were a lot that couldn't be couldn't be moved or it was a major operation to move them and you had you had nowhere to take them to take them to so you just had to hope for the best.

And I read about a situation where during an evacuation you had to go underground? Have I

07:00 **read that incorrectly? Into an old cave or tunnel that was used by the Italians?**

Oh yes, yes sorry. I'm with you there. Oh well in Tobruk they had a they had taken over what was originally an old Italian ammunition tunnel that was in the at the harbour itself. There was a sheer cliff rose up, oh I've forgotten the height, probably a hundred

07:30 feet and this tunnel went into the base of this cliff went in and then sort of horizontal or parallel to the face of the cliff and this was taken over as an evacuation hospital and the soldiers who were listed for evacuation at the AGH would be sent down during the day to this

08:00 tunnel. We'd hold them there 'til night fall and dur during the evening we'd load them onto barges and just before midnight we'd send out the barges and we'd rendezvous somewhere in the harbour with the destroyers that came in overnight. They would arrive at sharp at midnight and each night we'd meet them at a different place in the harbour and

08:30 'cause the Germans knew what was going on and they would bomb the harbour every night trying to catch the destroyers so we had to get different places every night so they wouldn't know where we were.

What sort of conditions did you have down there? Or were you not down there long enough to worry about that?

Oh I spent about a month there and conditions were not too bad except the place had to be fumigated and

09:00 cleaned out. It was lousy with bed bugs it but generally speaking it was it was not too bad.

How did they fumigate for example? What did they send down?

Oh well perhaps I shouldn't have said 'fumigate' but they sprayed with some chemicals. I'm not sure what it was

09:30 to kill off the bed bugs. They were brutes of things they, anywhere particularly where there were, they had electric light cables for instance, they were clamped to the wall, and they'd get in behind those and they'd spray it and then we'd sort of paint it with whitewash something of that sort.

And were you ever down there

10:00 **when it blacked out?**

No I don't think I had it blacked out at all when we were there.

Now earlier you were talking and you mentioned General [Lord] Haw Haw

Mm. Yes.

and you were able to listen in on the German propaganda stations on the radio.

Yes well there's a Lord Haw Haw. He was a renegade Englishman by the name of name of William Joyce who was broadcasting propaganda

- 10:30 for the for the Germans and was known as Lord Haw Haw. I forget I don't know who gave him that name, whether it was the Germans or the British or who it was but his broadcasts were they were meant to damage our morale but it worked the other way around. We used to quite enjoy him. He would give a
- 11:00 a session of his talk virtually every night was devoted to the Tobruk garrison. We didn't have very many radios around but anywhere there was a radio there'd always be a big crowd turned up every night to listen and he'd say things like "And how are the garrisons of Tobruk tonight? Living like rats in holes in the ground?" and they... he came to
- 11:30 speak of us as rats most nights and he'd say "Hello to the rats of Tobruk" but say things like "How's your air force getting on? Oo I forgot you haven't got an air force have you? We'll send you over some planes tonight." Which he would do of course. He'd send over his planes and they'd drop bombs on us. They wouldn't be much help but he always used to refer to us as 'The Rats of Tobruk' and
- 12:00 with comments like that and we used to quite enjoy listening to him just for the amusement. I'm afraid he didn't damage our morale at all.

Do you know if the Australians were broadcasting propaganda in reverse?

I don't know. I have my doubts.

Did you ever receive any propaganda from fly overs? Pieces of paper that were strewn from airplanes?

No. The only thing

- 12:30 we had they dropped surrender leaflets on us on occasion and I have a copy of it reproduced in the history book that I wrote and it just tried to persuade us to surrender but they wanted us to wave white
- 13:00 handkerchiefs as we came out so some somebody got a message that we didn't have any owing to the shortage of water we couldn't do much washing we had no white handkerchiefs left or none of our handkerchiefs were white anymore so we weren't able to.

Now Tobruk or the siege of Tobruk raged backwards and forwards for some time. Did you yourself lose hope at any stage or know anybody that did?

Not really. You would get a bit

- 13:30 despondent at times. The British army made I think it was three attempts to break the siege and relieve us and each attempt failed so you'd get your hopes up knowing there was an attack on and you'd be they attacked from Egypt
- 14:00 and once they got to the point where they were able to attack the German troops on the perimeter the idea was for the troops inside Tobruk to then break out through the perimeter and the Germans would then be attacked from both sides and there was a good chance of breaking through them but in the meantime the
- 14:30 the Germans'd send troops forward away from the perimeter to stop the British before they got that far and we couldn't do anything about breaking out until the British had actually reached the perimeter troops. So we would be all keyed up perhaps in position inside the perimeter ready to make our break out
- 15:00 and just waiting for the British to get far enough to link up with them and you'd wait there for a day or two and just waiting for the signal to move and no signal would come and then you'd get word that the British had been repulsed. They'd fallen back into Egypt again and there'd be no relief. So that was disappointing and you'd feel a bit despondent at the time and wonder
- 15:30 when or if you're ever going to get out of the place.

And did you have like a personal fear that Hitler had every chance of winning?

In the early stage you begin to. You're wondering how he'd ever be stopped because up 'til the time of the Tobruk siege the Germans had not been stopped anywhere. They'd gone right through all of Europe and never been defeated and

- 16:00 virtually never been stopped anywhere and Tobruk was the their first defeat on land in the Second World War.

So how significant do you rank the battle of the siege of Tobruk?

I consider it absolutely vital. One that will be one of the most important battles of the war. From

16:30 several points of view. From a psychological point of view it showed that the Germans could be defeated. Strategically it saved the entire Middle East because if Tobruk had fallen Germany could have used the harbour facilities at Tobruk to get their all their supplies in and they were then only a couple of hundred miles from the

17:00 Egyptian border. They could have attacked Egypt or gone straight through Egypt. Egypt was neutral really. They could have gone straight through there and then there was only Palestine before they linked up to Syria, which was controlled by the Vichy French, who were German supporters, and then Turkey

17:30 who were wavering right through they never did enter the war but they were wavering as to whether they'd come into the war or not and if so whether they'd which side they'd be coming on to and if Germany had gone through the rest of the Middle Eastern countries that would have persuaded Turkey to have gone in on the German side

So at any point

And that would have entirely surrounded the Mediterranean.

18:00 **And at any point did you wish that you weren't part of the Field Ambulance and want to be doing something else in the service?**

Yes there were a couple of times I felt I'd like to do something different. I applied for a transfer on several occasions but got knocked back each time. I applied for a transfer to the

18:30 first one I think was to the commando regiment when they first formed the commandos. My CO knocked me back on that.

Do you know why?

He told me I was too valuable where I was and he

Did you believe him?

Wouldn't let me go. Not altogether. I told him that. I said "Valuable?" I said "I've been in the unit for whatever it was two and a half years

19:00 up to that stage I said "I'm still a private." So I said "Doesn't look as if I'm all that valuable." Anyway whether it was a result of that or not I don't know but within a month I was made a Lance Corporal. Some time afterwards they were forming parachute battalions. I thought "I'll have a go at that." So I put in for an application for that. He knocked me back again and I was made a Corporal and

19:30 **If you kept going like that you would have been made a general soon enough.**

Yes well then I applied for a transfer to the infantry and he said "What do you want to go in there as RAP [Regimental Aid Post] sergeant or something?" I said "No." I said "I want a gun. I want to shoot some Japs" and he said "No." He said "You're not going." Anyway a little while after that I was made a sergeant.

That was working.

Yeah. I was waiting on my commission to come through when the war ended so I never

20:00 did get it.

Never mind.

But I was next in line to be made a lieutenant.

When did you first hear about the Pacific situation? Oh we'll just button off.

Just as a matter of curiosity after you returned and the conflict was over you received your medal from the siege of Tobruk?

The actual medal for the Tobruk siege

20:30 medal was only issued probably ten years ago.

Oh okay well I read actually I didn't read, John told me this, that the colour patches you were able to change your colour patches afterwards?

The 9th Division, who were in control of Tobruk they commanded the whole operation, their colour patch originally was round

21:00 and after the siege of Tobruk they got permission to change the shape of their colour patch to a shape of a 'T'

So that was just

To commemorate the siege of Tobruk.

Just the 9th Division?

Just the 9th Division, yes. My colour patch was not changed because I was part of the 18th Brigade, which at that time was 6th Division [actually part of 7th Division]

21:30 and we were attached to the 9th but we were not 9th Division troops so we our colour patch didn't change.

That's right 'cause when you all went back to the Pacific the 9th stayed.

9th stayed in the Middle East for awhile, yes.

Mm. So I think it might be time to talk about the leaving of the Middle East and what that was like. Had you been serving alongside members of the British forces

22:00 **at all or....?**

Not closely, no. There were British forces in Tobruk but I had no real contact with them at all.

And sorry and just off track again. With the colour patches, did you ever notice any sort of friendly argy bargy and competition between various units and platoons and so on? You know like scraps where one colour patch against another colour patch and so on?

22:30 Oh no, not really. Just good natured jibes a bit. For instance when we first got over to the Middle East the 7th Division colour patches were diamond shaped. The 2nd [6th] Division were rectangular. Now in the 6th Division, who'd been overseas for a couple of months and thought they were real veterans, saw these diamond colour patches coming along and they'd say "Ooh took you a bloody long

23:00 time to hear the bugle" 'cause they were just classed as the reinforcements so but I mean it was not bad natured or anything like that. It was just

Mm and what was there much down time in Tobruk? Were there many opportunities to actually have a rest and regroup?

Not a great deal, no. In my case our, my unit had a sort of a base camp

23:30 we liked to call the Wadi order. Wadi's a dried creek bed. It's just a big gully. We had our base camp there but we operated not as a whole unit but in as light sections. We'd have a section. It might be an officer or half a dozen men or a dozen men would be attached to say the 9th Battalion if when they were on some particular action. Another

24:00 doctor and perhaps a sergeant, a corporal and half a dozen men would man a dressing station or the one that I was at out at the fig tree. Was out there for awhile. We had another team was at this evacuation hospital that we talked about before. Some sometimes you'd just be

24:30 one out. I spent about a fortnight I think it was from memory running a medical station or sick bay attached to a British coastal artillery battery out of the point of the harbour just at the entrance to the harbour but I did that on my own.

Mm.

Just one out.

And given the nature of most

25:00 **Australians or the reputation that we have for being fun loving larrikins and seekers of eternal good times, did you ever encounter any sort of stunts or pranks that some of Australian blokes might have pulled off in less fraught moments? Scrounging something remarkable or coming up with a case of good wine or**

No there's nothing I can think of at the moment. They used to

25:30 no I can't recall anything of that nature.

And what about what about entertainment? Was there any formal or arranged entertainment for you to for morale? How did they keep morale up?

Well the only entertainment was in base areas. Never in a forward area of course. Morale it was

26:00 that was virtually left to the commanding officers of each unit to do the best they could. If they felt morale was slipping they'd have to try and do something to stimulate it but generally speaking I can't recall any cases where morale did slip. I think we all knew we were there

26:30 to do a job and it had to be done. Sometimes it was pretty tough to do it. Other times it wasn't but you knew what you had to do and you did it.

And aside from card games etcetera, what else did you do to amuse yourselves then?

Oh well there's usually games of two up and that sort of thing but that sort of thing was virtually all

27:00 when you were in a forward area. Like Tobruk for the sake of argument there was virtually no distractions at all other than writing letters home and hope hoping you get mail in return.

Did you write many letters home yourself?

Oh yes you'd write letters almost every day.

And did you see the results of them after they'd been censored by your COs?

Some yes.

What was that like? Did they actually cut it out or did they just rub it out or

No they cut it out.

27:30 They'd just go and cut out a little square with you might say "Oh I went on leave to Jerusalem." Well Jerusalem you're allowed to say that but for instance you couldn't say if you said "I'm in Tobruk" they would cut out 'Tobruk.'

Back home and the Australian press must have known that there was a huge Division or two or three in Tobruk?

Oh yes they all knew, yes.

28:00 My family all knew.

So did you come up with a code in your letters?

Yes.

And what was that? How did you do that?

We'd arrange a bit of a code. I've just forgotten how we worked it all. It's to do with the date of writing the letter and I'd write

28:30 the time of day. If I said for instance "quarter past nine." When I when I ended a letter I'd say "So long" if we were going to move. If we weren't going to move it'd just be the usual "Goodbye" or "I'll write again tomorrow" or something of the sort but if we were about to move I'd say "So long" and I'd put the time of day. Nine fifteen. They they'd know then that I'm going

29:00 to move easterly.

Oh okay. Even if you were writing at two in the afternoon for example.

Yeah.

And so how did you know that they could understand your code?

They would comment in their letters back home.

And how did they get through without being you know censored?

Their letters were not censored.

Oh really, at all?

Mm.

So if they had received information themselves back in Australia

Mm.

that was sensitive to your situation that wouldn't be censored or that was just never the case?

No letters from here from

29:30 families were never censored.

And did the COs read the letters coming in?

No.

Aha. You could have received any old thing. Did you receive anything interesting apart from letters?

Oh I had parcels of course but yes now I remember what we'd do. If I thought we were going to when I thought we were going to Greece I remember writing a letter that said "So long" so they

30:00 knew I was going somewhere but I also said "Give my love to Sally on her birthday. I won't get time to write before" and dad said "Who on earth's Sally?" Mum says "Sally on her birthday. Salonika. He's

going to Greece." So that was the way they we sort of passed any information.

And who wrote to you from home?

My mother did virtually all the writing.

30:30 The only time

Dads aren't very good at writing letters

I think the only letter I got from my father was to tell me that my brother had been killed.

Oh. And where was your brother killed?

In Western Australia of all places.

Enlisted?

Yes he was he was in the army.

What was his position?

He was a sergeant in an army service corps and he was killed in a in an accident. He was on a motorbike and

31:00 hit a tree and so. The strange thing was I'd been right through the Middle East, spent six months in Tobruk. My elder brother had been in the Middle East the same time as I was and neither of us got a scratch. This other brother he hadn't left Australia, he was married with a young baby

31:30 and yet he's killed in Perth and the strange thing was when I got that letter it was Christmas 1942. I was in Milne Bay at the time and we hadn't had mail for oh I don't know, five or six weeks probably. Nothing at all. On Christmas Day you got this huge stack of mail and I read that my brother had been killed two days before, the 23rd he died.

What was that like receiving that mail?

32:00 Pretty tough.

Did you talk to your mates about it at the time?

Oh yes. Yes it was a pretty sad time.

Mm and did you do anything in his honour?

I named one of my sons after him and I went over to Perth

32:30 I've seen his grave over there in the Karrakatta War Cemetery. Right next door to Louis Truscott, one of the well known air force blokes.

And did that change your perspective on the war then? Did it bring it stunningly close to you?

It certainly brought it home but it also makes you

33:00 realise that it's sort of rather ironical. Think of it. You can be killed without leaving Australia or without seeing any action yet you can go through lots of other action and not cop it. See I had five and a half years and I never got a scratch.

33:30 **It's just luck of the draw sometimes**

It is, yes. Yes it in many ways I often think that my unit generally saw or my brigade probably saw more action than most others because they seemed to be work as one brigade out. They were sent to various

34:00 trouble spots just as one brigade but they seemed to be on the move more than other units. For instance we did the first campaign at the desert with the 6th Division, Tobruk with the 9th Division. We were in Syria with the 7th Division. We did Milne Bay just as a brigade. We did Shaggy Ridge just as a brigade. We seemed to be always on the go, much

34:30 more than a lot of the others.

Mm.

And yet, I don't say they were bigger campaigns or anything like that than others, but it seemed to be in more battle areas than others and yet to be able to do all that and still come out of in one piece you've got a fairly good sort of a charmed life.

35:00 **Where just it's a bit spurious the question but where would he have ended up your brother if he'd have stayed alive? Where would they have sent him?**

Ah I don't know. He he'd only been sent over to Western Australia with his crowd at that time. It I don't really know what his prospects were after that. Of course the,

35:30 it was all up in the islands from then on. The Middle East phase of the war was over by that time

Mm.

'Cause he didn't join up 'til oh awhile after my eldest brother and I had. Mainly because of the fact he was married with a young baby and he was a bit reluctant to.

Yeah.

To do it and unless it was necessary and then he

36:00 decided it was necessary so he joined up then and he missed out on the Middle East side of it.

Had you lost any mates before him?

Oh I'd lost mates, yes.

And how did how did you cope with that? Well where was say the first main casualty you experienced then?

Ah well I lost quite a quite a number of close friends in other units. They were not closely involved I just heard they'd been killed. Two or three in the air force

36:30 you know and their planes didn't return so they were gone so were as far as friends in my unit are concerned we were a very lucky unit. We only lost oh I don't know about six killed.

Where was that?

One in Tobruk

How did that

37:00 **happen in Tobruk?**

He was, I think it was a bullet or a shell got him but he was out he was a batman to our CO as a matter of fact.

He was what sorry?

He was a batman to our commanding officer and

A batman?

Batman.

And what did what was a batman?

37:30 Sort of a valet.

A butler.

All the officers had their batman. They used to you know wash their clothes and polish their boots and look after them generally so and our CO had to, I know he'd gone out to, I'm not sure I think he was stationed with the 9th Battalion for a week or so

38:00 and his batman had gone out with him and he was killed while he was out with the battalion. I don't remember just what it was that killed him but I think probably just bullets.

And so how did how did that go down with your unit?

Well he was our first casualty. He was it was rather a shock to everybody but still we realised that we weren't immune. Everybody ran the chance of it.

And in those circumstances who writes to the parents?

The

38:30 commanding officer usually, mm.

And was there ever a case where you felt the need to write to someone's parents as well and say "I was there and I saw him"?

I never had that happen to me because none of the ones that were killed in our unit were people that I was closely associated with. I knew them all of course, I knew them quite well, but I wasn't

39:00 closely associated with them nor did I know their families at all but it we lost a couple through illness in while we were in Aleppo and Syria. We'd come out of six months in Tobruk and the heat there and a couple of months later we were up in Aleppo and snow and there was a very virulent type pneumonia

39:30 went around then and we lost two blokes within about two days there.

Mm. That tape has expired and

Tape 4

00:35 ... campaign while we were in Tobruk so it was up there during the fighting that we went up as occupation troops afterwards.

So what was happening when you received the command to pull out of Tobruk and move on to Syria?

Ah I'm not too sure when it was, but it would have been probably early

01:00 early August. The authorities were getting concerned that the health of the Australian troops was failing owing to the harsh conditions and poor food supplies and it was decided after a lot of discussion that they would withdraw the Australian troops from Tobruk and replace

01:30 them with other troops. They'd done most of the replacing I think was done with Poles. Certainly the initial lot were Poles. They brought us out for that reason. All Australians were evacuated by about late Oct excuse

02:00 me by about late October, with the exception of one battalion. The final evacuation for the 2/13th Battalion was to take place on this night in late October and the destroyers were heading up from Alexandria to pick them up and they were attacked by planes and so forth on the way up and were not able to make it.

02:30 That was the last night they could do it for quite some time because they've gotta they had to put their trips in the on the nights when there's no full moon

Mhm.

because it the full moon at night they were too the ships were too visible to the air force and

03:00 it was risky and so they had to do all their trips during the dark spells.

Well on that note did you become sort of well acquainted with the patterns of the of the moon and what you could expect on lighter nights than not and

Yes up to a point. When I was doing the, it didn't worry us normally but when we, were the evacuations of the patients by destroyer we knew that there were certain

03:30 nights they wouldn't come

Mm.

because of the full moon.

Mm. So how would walk me through a kind of a bug out operation when you had to pack down and move on. Were you responsible for packing down the hospital?

No. Each time we moved on somebody else took over and you would leave it fully equipped. They'd walk in walk out.

So you'd just grab your kit and what you had and

Personal gear and move out, yes.

And what's an example of things that

04:00 **guys left behind that they might have scrounged?**

Well anything that was fairly substantial to carry. Somebody had a revolver or something as a souvenir, well they could carry that in their pocket or put it in their pack but if they'd grabbed a dozen bottles of Chianti they had to leave that behind.

Was anything contraband

04:30 **as far as the AIF were concerned?**

Oh strictly speaking I suppose any anything that was not issued to you was contraband but you weren't searched to find out if you had anything you shouldn't have.

What speaking of that what about what about the Provosts? [Provost Marshals - military police] Did you have anything much to do with them?

Not personally. Everybody

05:00 realised they were a very necessary evil, put it that way. They were not popular by any means.

No I've heard they were quite harsh

They were. Some of them were real pigs but they were they claimed themselves there I saw on their banners on Anzac Day 'First in, last out'

05:30 which was often the case, but if they stuck to their normal policing or it wasn't quite so bad but if you were out on if you were away on leave and they could catch you with perhaps all leaves for instance would expire at midnight. Well if somebody was still out and they nailed you at one o'clock in the morning

06:00 they they'd arrest you and charge you with being AWL [Absent Without Leave] or desertion or whatever.

And what would happen? Would you be locked up?

You'd probably be locked up overnight until they returned to your to your unit and charged you with being absent without leave and then you'd go up before your commanding officer and you might be sentenced to seven days CB, Confined to Barracks, no leave

06:30 or you might be fined, something like that. You didn't get locked up as a sentence for anything less than a court martial offence. If you went missing on your way into action, for the sake of argument, or in a spot where you were in action you could be classed with desertion and if they

Had you met any anyone that was classed with desertion?

07:00 I had to give evidence at a court martial on one occasion.

Where was that?

Milne Bay. I was left behind when my unit went to Milne Bay. I was in hospital in Brisbane at the time and I followed a couple of weeks later and I shipped on a stinkin' old Chinese tramp named the Anshun.

07:30 There were about two thousand troops on board. All odds and sods. People left behind on in hospital or reinforcements and this sort of thing and it was a shocking trip on the boat. As I say there were about two thousand troops on board and there was not one toilet on the boat that worked. They rigged up a scaffolding outside the rail on the stern of the ship and if you wanted to go use your bowels you climbed over the rail

08:00 onto this thing. Hang onto the rail, squat down on a plank and let it drop into the ocean. It was as rough as blazes. One minute you'd be sixty feet up in the air, next minute you could just about wash your backside in the water and the food was about on par with everything else. All the troops would file past a one little cookhouse. They'd hand out more often than not it was a tin of bacon. The army tins of bacon were

08:30 about the size of a tin of be beans nowadays. It was a long strip of bacon wrapped up in a sheet of cellophane, sort of rolled into a roll inside the tin and they they'd heat it up and by the time you got it was probably cold again with this sort of congealed fat mixed with

09:00 it. You'd take one look at it "Bloody bacon" straight over the side of the boat and other times it might be bully beef and biscuits, a cup of tea and that'd be all you'd get and anyway we sailed from Brisbane there. We pulled in at Townsville, stopped there for awhile, we didn't know how long, and I was a lance corporal at that time and I was in charge of oh about

09:30 eight of my unit going up and I was in charge of the group and a couple of them came to me and said "Hey Lloyd any chance of getting leave? Get ashore and get a decent feed of steak." I said "Oh" I said "I'll see what I can do" and I went and saw the OC [Officer Commanding] of the troops and said "Any chance of leave?" and he said "No. No leave at all." He said "We're pulling out at four o'clock sharp. No leave being given." So this is first thing in the morning so I went back and I said "No leave at all." I said "We're pulling out at four

10:00 o'clock." They said "Oh bugger it we're going" and I said "If you're going be bloody sure you're back before four o'clock otherwise you'll get left." Anyway several of them went. They all got back with the exception of two and as we pulled out sharp on the dot of four o'clock, they cast off the ropes and pulled out, and I saw these blokes walking down the road they were nailed by the Provosts

10:30 on the docks.

They were in deep trouble, yeah?

They were in deep trouble then because we were going into action.

Yeah.

In Milne Bay. Well they were arrested. They were sent on to us later on but they were court martialled and I had to give evidence at the court martial and they were convicted of desertion in the face of the enemy and they were sentenced to nine months imprisonment at Holsworthy, which

11:00 was the military prison during the war. New South

Where

New South Wales.

They definitely made an error there but do you think that's an extreme punishment given that they were basically two men that were just a bit tardy?

I think so too. I did my best to try and, well not justify them but excuse them, point out the conditions on the boat and

11:30 how bad they were and they'd gone ashore for a for a feed.

Mm.

And that was all and they were just late getting back.

So

But they said "We can't accept that evidence. It's hearsay that they went ashore for a feed." They sort of questioned me "Did they ask you for leave?" I said "Yes." "What did you tell them?" I said "No leave." "And they went?" "Yes." That's it. That's all the evidence they'd accept from me.

Can you walk us through what a court martial looks like in a situation like that?

12:00 Well it was the court martial was set up within our own our own unit. It was not like a courthouse or any of that nature. It was just held in one of the army tents presided over by the commanding officer.

What was the highest ranking officer there at the time?

Lieutenant colonel.

12:30 Prosecuting officer was a lieutenant I think from memory.

Would he be a lawyer in civilian life or

No. No we didn't have any officers who were lawyers. We did have one chap who was a sergeant who was a, he was a solicitor.

13:00 Actually he finished up (UNCLEAR) at the Supreme Court but I they didn't utilise him I think perhaps because all the, I'm not sure, but I think perhaps all the whole court martial panel had to be officers, I would think and

13:30 wouldn't I don't think they'd accept anybody below their below an officer's rank.

And are the men present? The two privates. Were they present?

Yes. Yeah.

Could you read anything on the look of their faces during proceedings?

Well they were a bit shocked when they got nine months but they were two of the type that went AWL quite frequently.

14:00 They'd go off on leave and get back perhaps have a few too many beers and decide not to come back until tomorrow and they were in trouble every now and again. They weren't particularly worried about blotting their copybook.

And did it blot your copybook as their senior officer?

No it didn't. Didn't have any effect on me. It was wasn't held against me or anything like that.

Well this conversation

14:30 **started because I was asking about the Provos back in the Middle East but**

Yes.

Have you heard the expression 'the Jerusalem screws'?

Yes. Not commonly but I have heard it.

And I understand they were particularly difficult Provosts to deal with.

Yes well in those some of those base areas they were sort of base Provosts as distinct from

15:00 Divisional Provosts. The Divisional Provosts went into forward areas. They directed traffic in and out of the battle areas and things like that. They did quite a good job themselves. It was the Provosts that policed the towns where you went into on leave, like Jerusalem. Some of them were far too big for their boots. They were always looking for somebody to pick up for the for the slightest

15:30 breach.

And did you ever see any activity that was well that that was basically corrupt? Never mind.

Alright, I'd like to talk about your experience in Syria and first of all how you got there.

Yes we travelled up by truck in convoy.

Cattle trucks again?

No no. These were just motor trucks.

16:00 Usual army trucks. We saw a number of quite interesting places on the way up. We spent one night at Damascus or camped just outside the town itself at it was a very famous city from many years ago. We dropped one of our companies off at Baalbek

16:30 and Baalbek and Ras Baalbek. They're both very old places right from the ancient Roman days there. We stopped for about a month at Homs where we ran a small hospital, or main dressing station we classed it as, but it was a small hospital and Homs was

17:00 a base for the French Foreign Legion. They had they had a barracks there. We saw quite a lot of the Foreign Foreign Legionnaires around. Another nearby place there we saw quite a bit of was a place called Hama and I've got some photographs of some big waterwheels there with

17:30 viaducts dating back to the Roman days, I believe.

'Cause I understand you took your camera with you?

Yes.

Which was it army issue or army approved?

Ah it had been disapproved.

How did

Strongly strongly.

How did you keep it hidden all those all those years?

They didn't mind us having them in base camps and on leave you were, that was quite okay. You were not allowed to take them into forward areas. I did.

18:00 Against the rules.

What did you, how did you manage that? Taking them into forward areas and how did you work out when you could take a shot and when you couldn't?

I just kept it covered from anybody who I thought might disapprove. I took a number of photographs around with officers there and they didn't worry.

Because I imagine it wasn't the smallest camera in the world was it?

No. It was the old folding bellows type so

18:30 I've got several albums of photos.

And did you ever run into

As souvenirs.

Sorry. Did you ever run into any scrapes with the camera? Like did you take a photo of something that could have landed you in an awful lot of trouble?

Yes I finished up being arrested by Egyptian Military Police in Cairo and finished up being hauled off to the barracks there but it was a rather a I suppose misunderstanding in a way but

19:00 I'd had leave I was camped in Egypt at the time at a place called Amiriya and they would not give us leave into Cairo. See we could leave into Alexandria no trouble at all but no leave to Cairo.

Why not Cairo?

The New Zealanders were camped out of Cairo and they didn't want the New Zealanders and Australians to get together. They reckoned they'd take the town apart

19:30 so New Zealanders had got leave into Cairo but not Alexandria. Australians got leave into Alexandria but not to Cairo. So a mate and I who had leave into Alexandria one weekend decided to change trains at one of the stations and catch the train back to Cairo and have a weekend there, which we did, and went out to the pyramids on the on the Sunday and I climbed

20:00 to the top of Cheops pyramid and on the way back there was a big bridge over the Nile River, quite a

famous bridge, with lions rampant at the approaches on both sides and it was a lovely view down the river, lawns running down to the water on both sides and white brick government buildings. There's a couple

20:30 of Arab dhows floating on the river so we were travelling down in a taxi so I stopped the taxi and it was a tourer with the roof down and I stopped him. I stood up in the back of the taxi and took a photograph down the river. Before I'd sat down there were half a dozen Gyppo [Egyptian] MPs [Military Police] landed on us and commandeered the taxi and hauled us off to the barracks and I'm accused of photographing prohibited object. You were not allowed to photograph

21:00 the bridge so I had to try and persuade them I did not photograph the bridge. I was on the bridge and took a photograph of the river and I said how beautiful I thought their river and I wanted to take photographs to send home to my family to show what a lovely town Cairo was and all the rest of the stuff I could think of to and finished up they didn't even confiscate my film. They eventually released us just in time to catch the

21:30 the train and otherwise we'd have been AWL for a day but

What would have happened in that circumstance if you had been detained and couldn't make it back? Would your CO have understood?

No, because I'd have been AWL.

Even though there was not much you could do about that?

No but the very fact that I was in Cairo I

Oh of course.

I did not have leave to Cairo

Of course

And I could have been in trouble for that.

And

22:00 **and what were the Egyptian Provos like? Did they you know could you communicate well with them or did they how quickly did they understand that you weren't a threat?**

Ah very limited but the officer in charge of the guard, I'm not when I say Provo I'm not sure I've just forgotten now whether they were Provos or military guards but anyway the officer in charge of the guard house spoke quite good English and he was fairly reasonable. It's once he'd managed to sort of assert his authority

22:30 and make nice. I saluted him and he'd never been saluted by an Australian in his life before I'll bet that.

So the way you tell the story I get the feeling that you felt reasonably sure of your circumstances and it sounds like more fun than it was a concern to you but were you worried at the time that you were in deep

Yes well I didn't really think we'd be in all that much trouble. I thought the worst that might happen might they might confiscate the film.

23:00 I was a bit concerned at being delayed too much because we knew there was only the one train that afternoon back up to Alexandria and if we didn't catch that we'd be a day late getting back to camp. I had a clean record up to that stage and by I was only a private at that time so I couldn't be demoted but my mate was a sergeant and he could have lost a stripe

23:30 quite easily so neither of us wanted to get into trouble in that way so we were just afraid if we were took us too long to talk our way out of it we could finish up being late back but as it was we only just made it. Got on the train as it was pulling out of the station.

Did you finish the war with a clean record?

Yes.

And when getting into Syria then what was

24:00 **the action plan?**

Oh yes well we were just to rejoin the 7th Division there. As I mentioned before we got as far as Hommes, spent about a month there and then we moved from there up to Aleppo. Aleppo is right on the northern end of Syria only about ten miles from the Turkish border and

And quite a different climate too.

Yes. Yes it's moderately high up.

24:30 We had a my one and only white Christmas there. The town was blanketed in snow for oh several weeks.

What was that Christmas like? What, how did you spend that?

Well we were at our hospital there so we had reg regular duties the whole time. Certain irregular hours on duty and off and off duty. When you're off duty you can what you like. Go to the town

25:00 look around, go to the pictures, anything like that. The actual Christmas itself went off quite well. There was a orphanage right nearby and we threw a big party for all the or orphanage kids and had a a quite a good party there with them.

How did you manage that?

Well I was not involved

25:30 with that myself because I was working in the hospital but I'm not sure how the organisation came about but it was it was run there and it went off like a house on fire. The kids had the time of their lives and I think most of our blokes had a good time looking after the kids.

Did someone play Father Christmas?

Yeah.

And what about toys and things? How did you get your hands on those or how did how did they get their hands on them?

I'm not sure what they did. I

26:00 don't think they had much in the way of toys. I think it was more sweets, which they probably just bought down the street.

Mm.

At we spent about three months in Aleppo and during that time I got away for a week's leave down to Jerusalem so prior to that while we were in Palestine the longest I'd ever had in Jerusalem was weekend leave,

26:30 in one day and out the next, so it didn't give you time to see very much but having a week's leave it was quite good.

And how did you spend your time?

Touring all over the place. I wrote to, I went down with two mates and I wrote to my brother, who was in Palestine, and told him that I'd be down in Jerusalem on these set dates and said if he could get off for a day or two

27:00 try and do so 'cause I hadn't seen I hadn't seen much of him over there so he got three or four days off and came and stayed with us so we toured all around the place. We went into Amman in Jordan or Trans Jordania as they called it in those days. Had lunch at the Hotel Philadelphia there I know and it which was crowded and a couple of

27:30 British officers were wandering around looking for a seat so I said "Come and join us. Sit down" and it turned out one of them was Major Glubb, commonly known as Glubb Pasha. He was 2IC [Second in Command] to Lawrence of Arabia in the first war so it was quite an interesting experience.

Did he tell you about that?

Oh generally, yes. Well then other things we

28:00 I travelled the Via Dolorosa, which is the way of sadness they call it. It's the path that Christ walked carried the cross to the Calvary there. On the Sunday my brother and I went to seven different church services in seven different religions

So would you say

And seven different languages.

You seem to be a fan

28:30 **of the church then**

Well over there I think everybody was a bit but I always have been a churchgoer. I still go to church every Sunday.

And what about alcohol on leave? Was that difficult to get your hands on or was it prohibited or

No no, it was available. It was not prohibited at all. If you if you'd drank the local brews in some cases you could get into trouble because

29:00 in Syria for instance one of the big drinks there was arak.

Mm.

Which is the same thing as Ouzo they have here. It's colourless. I never tried drinking it neat but I'm not sure what the taste is neat but the correct way is a bit like cordial. You put a bit in a glass, top it up with water and it turns a milky white and it tastes like aniseed. It's a lovely drink

29:30 but a lot of them just drank it neat.

Would you have trusted the water?

Yes well we had water a reticulated water service of course and we used it normally. We didn't have any troubles.

And what about beer? Did you find any Aussie beer?

Yes they usually had an Australian club in leave centres in Jerusalem they'd taken over a hotel there, the Hotel

30:00 Fast, and that was that was the Australian Services Club and you could buy Australian beer there.

And what were the locals' attitudes to you lot? Did could they differentiate between Australians and British, New Zealanders etcetera?

I think so. It we were always quite welcome. There was no animosity at all.

And what about say in Syria? The attitude to the Vichy French. That was a an unusual

30:30 **circumstance there in many ways.**

Yes, well I can't comment very much on that because by the time we went up there as I said the actual fighting side was done while we were in Tobruk. The 7th Division were virtually occupational troops

31:00 while we were there and we didn't have a great deal to do with the French at all.

So if there wasn't an awful lot of say casualties coming through what was the bulk of your work as a Field Ambulance unit then?

We would all always run hospitals for sickness or anything like that. Where you've got a brigade of say five thousand troops you're always going to get sickness,

31:30 accident, that sort of thing so

So were you. I'm sorry. I've interrupted you.

I was gonna say we would always have to run a dressing station or hospital of some description.

And did you have fellows coming from all over who needed to rest and recoup before either being evacuated home or going back?

No. They would have established convalescent camps in various places, which were

32:00 we didn't have anything to do with really. Separate groups were running those and if they needed convalescence or anything of that type they could go to a convalescent camp.

So you weren't likely to run into any chaps who'd experienced shell shock or mental trauma?

Only in the early stages. In Tobruk we came across quite a few who cracked up under the strain, but they would be evacuated and

What was that like

32:30 **nursing a fellow in that condition?**

Rather difficult really. They the guy seemed perfectly normal and then an air raid would come on and they'd be just they were climbing the walls so they unreasonable, you couldn't reason with them and tell them there was nothing going on. You had to almost wrestle them to keep them in bed

33:00 or keep them under control.

And what did you say to them? Even if they were a bit delirious?

Oh you just tell them to there's no danger this is a hospital. They're not going to bomb the hospital you know

Did they

It was all on the outside.

And did they make did they make you feel a certain panic of any kind?

They make you a feel a little uneasy at times

33:30 but of course there's always that little bit of anxiety as to whether that next bomb was gonna hit you or not but it generally speaking you just sort of assume it it's not going to hit ya.

So we're about to finish up here but perhaps a few words on the end of your Middle Eastern campaign then when you pulled out and were sent back. Had your heard about the Japanese invasion of Malaya and

34:00 **the Pacific?**

Well we heard in dribs and drabs. Now the Japs come into the war in early December '41 and in early January '42 they decided to move us back to wherever. We then left Syria, travelled back down to Palestine again and from there

34:30 down to Port Tewfik at Suez in Egypt and we boarded the New Amsterdam, a South Africa, South African ship there.

And was that about the time it was you decided you wanted to pick up a rifle and give up the Field Ambulance?

No. That was later on after when we were back here in the islands. So anyway we'd

35:00 travelled as far as Bombay, no Colombo we went to then, and we stayed at Colombo for a few days and before setting off and the ships set off a few hours sail apart from there on and we didn't know quite where we were we were going. We anticipated we

35:30 were going to reinforce the 8th Division, who we knew were in trouble in Malaysia [Malaya] and Singapore and those places but we didn't know quite where so we'd heard snippets of news on the way that the 8th Division were in real trouble. The Japanese were sort of overrunning everything.

And what about rumours that later proved themselves to be just ridiculous. Did you hear anything extreme?

No, most of what we heard was true

36:00 so it was it was the information that the I suppose the army was putting it out officially to let us know.

And did you notice any sort of change amongst the Australians? That the war had shifted from being over there to in the backyard?

Yes there was quite a bit, a lot more anxiety. Over there you were fighting somebody else's war really. It was getting awfully close to home and heading toward Australia.

36:30 **And had you felt like a British subject before you left or an Australian citizen?**

Well in my youth even though I've my parents were several generations had been Australian, not English, both my mother's and father's families were of English heritage and England was still referred to as 'home.' People would go home for their trip.

37:00 Not going to England, going home. Might have been the first time they'd ever been there but it was still home. You still had that sort of feeling of relationship with England and it was a lot stronger. Nowadays that feeling is gone, I'd say almost completely, but in those days we were still we were still part of the British Empire. The Empire was still going in those days.

And what about when you got back? Not just from the Middle East but after the conflict had finished

37:30 **totally? Was that still how you felt?**

There was still some of that feeling there but you realised that Britain was no longer a sort of a parent to Australia, put it that way. They were in trouble themselves. We had to stand on our feet more and we'd

38:00 really asserted our independence by fighting our own way. Our, the years we fought spent fighting the Japs, the British didn't come into that at all. The Americans were our only help there so we'd begun to realise that we'd sort of outgrown the British Empire side of it. England was a, no longer a sort of a parent country.

38:30 We had to make our own way so the old feeling of almost family with England had gone by the board.

Mm and on that note Lloyd I'd like to say thanks 'cause we've

00:31 **Lloyd if I might take you back to when you first left Australia**

Mmm.

Had you been overseas before?

No.

So when you arrived in, say Bombay what did it feel like for an Aussie boy from Melbourne to be landing in a bizarre country like that?

Well it was quite a culture shock for us. We did get ashore in Bombay and had

01:00 a day's leave in there and really it was almost unbelievable the sights we saw and the way the beggars just lived on the pavements, slept on there and everything there. I suppose they put on a show for the troops but the old Indian snake charmers were on the job there. I know there was this one chap he's a typical old bushie

01:30 among the soldiers and they had the snake charmer there and all the crowd were gathered around to have a look at it and the old bushie bloke said "Oh" he said "the snake's just doped." He said "It's not dangerous" and the Indian "Said oh yes, yes very very dangerous." He said "I'll show you how dangerous it is." He bent over and picked it up by the tail whirled it 'round his head and cracked it like a whip. Broke its back of course. Threw it back down and said "That's how dangerous they are." Poor old Indian just about tore his hair.

02:00 **I bet he did. That would have been his livelihood.**

That's his livelihood, yeah. Yeah.

What about the smells and it would have been very heady smells I dare say.

It is. Yes, yes, yes. A very exotic sort of a country there but there's some beautiful buildings there and I've got a number of photographs, yeah.

And on the way over on the Mauritania I guess all you fellows were getting to know each other

Mm.

Did you have any World War I guys who'd signed up again in your bunch?

Oh yes, yes. Quite a few.

And what were they able to tell you? Or were

02:30 **they able to tell you anything about war?**

Most of what they told us it was if you'll excuse the expression, plain bullshit.

Tell us about their, the plain bullshit.

Well they were telling us how dangerous everything was and all that they'd exaggerated everything you know just trying to scare us. We were nearly all kids and in early twenties and still wet behind the ears and they were in their forties

03:00 and they're I think they got quite a bit of pleasure out of trying to scare the daylights out of us.

It seems to me as all the stories you hear of World War I are horror stories basically

Mm.

And it seems to me a very strange thing for a man to have gone through that and to sign up again. Were they are particular breed of man do you think or were they had they forgotten it?

Oh after awhile you sort of forget about it. You remember the good times and forget about the bad times but

03:30 no we had quite a number of First World War ones. In fact we had one father and son

In the same

With us with us yes.

In the ambos?

Yeah. The father was in the in the British army in the First World War and he signed up when he was only sixteen for the First World War. Migrated out here after the war and he was a blockie up at Mildura

04:00 and anyway he and his son both joined up and finished in our unit and he finished up our RSM and his son was a sergeant in my in my company with me.

Did they both make it through?

Yes, yes. The father was boarded out some time before it would have been about '44 I think before he left us. He just cracked up he couldn't when I say cracked he up, physically. He sort of couldn't keep

04:30 stand the pace so he had to drop out but yes he died oh a few years ago now but he lasted quite a long time after the war and the son, Vic, he died at the end of last year.

It must have been a terrible time for that young fellow's mother with a husband and her son away for nigh on six years?

Yes it wasn't much fun. As I say my parents they had four sons, no daughters, and all four of us were in the army and one died,

05:00 one was killed he didn't come back.

And were you all in it for pretty much most of the war?

My eldest brother joined up the same time as I did. I didn't know he was joining up and he didn't know I was. We both signed up independently and we both sailed at pretty much the same time. He actually left Australia a month or two before me and but my youngest brother was like Joy, he was

05:30 only fifteen when I joined up. Well as soon as he joined eighteen he signed up and he was in for the end of it would have been about '43 I think that he joined up. He never left Australia. He was posted up to Darwin on two occasions.

And how did mum and dad cope with having the four boys away? Terrible strain.

It must have been yeah.

Okay let's move to Bardia again.

06:00 **These fellows who were World War I veterans did they were they able to perform as well or did they perform better than the new soldiers on the front or were they all pretty much the same?**

No, pretty much the same except that it wasn't long before their age started to catch up with them and they found they couldn't maintain the pace physically.

And

So nearly every one had to finish up doing jobs like the cool room store or cooks

06:30 and that type of thing. They couldn't stand up to the more physical side.

Do you think they might have regretted coming back for a second dose?

Probably regretted they were no longer as capable as they thought they were. I don't think they regretted the fact of joining up but we had one bloke who finished up as a cook or a cook's offsider. He was boarded out in Milne Bay, would have been 1942,

07:00 and I believe his correct age when he was boarded out was sixty five.

That's incredible. He must have been a very young looking sixty five.

Well when he enlisted they nearly all nearly all claimed to be thirty eight and he must have said he was thirty eight when he must have been in his early sixties

Crikey.

but he was just a cook's offsider. He never had to go on route marches, he never had to dig ditches and that sort of thing. All he had to do was peel spuds and light fires and

07:30 brew pots of dixies of tea and

And eat peeled potatoes.

Yeah.

Now speaking of signing up, you were a fairly religious kind of fellow or a churchgoer at least?

Churchgoer, yes.

Did being a Christian conflict with going to war very much for you?

No no. I didn't feel conflicted at all.

08:00 I don't think I don't recall really considering any conflict of interest that way. I just felt it was my duty to go.

You thought it was a just war?

Yes.

And being a churchgoer did you spend much time with padres and so forth in the army?

Not a great deal. We did we didn't have a padre attached to our unit in itself. When I was working at the hospital I met up with a number of padres

08:30 who I got on quite well with and spent a bit of time talking with them just not necessarily on church structures or anything of that sort but general conditions around the place and what they were doing and how they were operating.

What about visiting the holy land? As someone who's obviously done a little bit of bible study to see these places first hand

09:00 **must have been a real thrill.**

Oh that was absolutely fascinating yes. Yes. No the to see all those places that you read about in the bible, learnt about at church or at Sunday school and heard referred to in church and then to act actually be there and to see all these places it was a it was a very moving experience really.

I'm sure it would be

09:30 **and another question on religion. That old saying "There's no atheists in fox holes" do you think that applies from I guess when you were in a Tobruk siege perhaps and there was constant fire?**

Yes well I hadn't heard the expression really but

Yeah no atheists in fox holes. What do you what do you reckon Lloyd?

Well I quite believe it. A lot of so-called atheists I think

10:00 it's a pose. I think anybody that thinks about things has got to realise that things didn't just happen. The world didn't just didn't appear from nowhere. Somebody had to create everything and even the most rabid atheists must recognise that fact and I think when they were in a

10:30 foxhole under fire a lot of them decided to play safe and have a bit each way if you like put it that way.

Yeah two bob each way.

Yeah.

What do you reckon?

If there is a God he might help me.

Of course. I think everyone would do that. If say if someone did have a question about their religious beliefs versus being in a war and they would have a chat say to a padre. How would they put the point of view of Jesus if

11:00 **would they have said Jesus would have said about being in a war do you think?**

I don't quite know but even Jesus got rough on one or two occasions. I remember one occasion where he went into one of the temples and all the money lenders and things were there and he was most annoyed with that and from what I can remember of that he

11:30 upended the tables and threw the blokes out and said "This is no place in my father's house" this sort of thing. So if he could do that and turf them out there's not very much difference to what we were doing with rifles and guns and ammunition.

Very good. Thanks Lloyd. Almost finished with my Middle East questions. Just one or two. When you were in Tobruk when you moved through Bardia to Tobruk initially

12:00 Mm.

Did you encounter many Italian civilians living there in Libya?

There was no civilian population there at all when we went through. They'd all been evacuated.

No Arabs at all either?

Oh Arabs but they were on the move the Arabs. It was rather strange. As the Italians had had huge supply dumps everywhere. Food stuffs, ammunition, guns, all sorts of things. Huge dumps and as we were going up through there

12:30 the Arabs were coming through with their camel trains loading up with guns and ammunition and we said "Whacko after the war." The Arabs are well loaded up ready to have a go at the Jews.

God that turned out to be the case didn't it?

Yes but that's virtually the only sort of Arabs we saw. They were on the move.

So there were none of them stuck in Tobruk with you guys?

No.

Okay and you mentioned yesterday too that men

13:00 **and I think yourself as well were more fearful of being maimed than killed.**

That's right, yes.

What was the most feared maiming injury that they were worried about?

Anything that would really incapacitate them I think. I mean you could lose a leg and you can still get around but particularly if you were blinded extreme extremely difficult or injured in such a way that you were bedridden.

13:30 **And obviously you must have come across fellows that had that kind of injury?**

Mm.

Would there would they be saying to themselves "Well I'm useless now. I'm finished."

There was a lot of that to start off with. That's where the padres particularly were of great help and yes well the I think anybody in the initial stages took a long time to settle

14:00 down to the fact that they were going to be crippled or maimed in any way like that. In with time they would realise that they're not totally useless. They can do something and that's where they might have lost a leg. They can't run around like they used to but they can get around on crutches or in a wheelchair. Do something.

I guess a lot of them would have been worried about their wives or their girlfriends at home

Yes.

Thinking they're not going to want a guy with only one leg to

14:30 **come back**

Yes well there's that's all part of the job of accepting their disabilities and then to live with and

And you would have had a role in I guess keeping up their morale too? Just generally on the wards making sure that their spirits were kept up.

Yes we had that any time we were nursing them and they were badly injured. They always wanted to know how well they'd recover, what they're going to do if they can't recover and

15:00 you just had to try and jolly them along and say "Well give it time. Give it time. Wait and see how well it turns out."

Let's talk about you coming back now. I think I've asked the questions I wanted to ask about the Middle East. Coming back to you didn't know where did you really on the boat?

No we didn't know where when we boarded the boat. As I mentioned earlier we were we were headed for Java to reinforce

15:30 the 8th Division but things had moved a bit too fast for everybody really and by the time we actually got there their 8th Division were just completely overrun and all the Indonesian islands were virtually captured without us knowing about them. The ship ahead of us tied up at somewhere in Java, I think it might have been Batavia, and they walked off into the hands of the Japs.

16:00 **How did you hear about that?**

I think it must have come by radio back to our ship and

And what did you fellas think when you heard that?

Well we didn't know at the time. We just went to bed at night and we could see Java on the horizon. We could see the land and said "Well that's Java. By the time we wake up in the morning we'll probably be tied up at the wharf and all ready to get off." We woke up the next morning to find instead of sailing due east to Java

16:30 we were heading north west in the general direction of India, Burma. It turned out to be Burma that we were headed for.

And did you know did you guys know at that stage that it was Churchill sending you there against Curtin's wishes?

No. No I didn't know that 'til I was writing the unit history and I was researching lots of history books and they gave details of that

17:00 and also copies of the cables going backwards and forwards between Churchill and Curtin and I got

more information out of those than I ever did during the war. We didn't know what happened. All we knew that we were heading in one direction then we're heading in another direction and then instead of going north west we finish up travelling south west.

It was a soldier's lot just to do as he was told wasn't it?

That's right, yeah.

Did you

17:30 **or did anyone you know find that at times really frustrating and you just wanted to know "Where am I going?"**

It was frustrating. It was very frustrating. That is a very good case in point. We were sailing north west, we didn't know where we were going. We thought "Well it's heading in the general direction of India or Burma or somewhere around that area" and then before we knew it we were travelling south west. We'd think "Well where the hell are we going now?" but it turned out Curtin had won the argument

18:00 and we had to put back to Colombo to refuel the convoy before we could go home and we got into Colombo Harbour and I'm not sure how many boats there were in the convoy but we pulled into there and the Colombo Harbour was absolutely chocka block with shipping of all descriptions. Everything from little Chinese tramp ships to refugee boats from Singapore or those places,

18:30 submarines, there was battle ships, there was cruisers, there were aircraft carriers

Must have been a very impressive sight.

Oh tremendous sight and we were there for six days. We were not given any leave not allowed at shore at all but we had six days there while they refuelled the convoy and then we headed for Australia.

Where did you make port in Australia?

Adelaide. We did

19:00 call briefly at Fremantle but we disembarked in Adelaide.

Were you allowed to Melbourne at all?

Shortly afterwards. We disembarked in Adelaide and went into a camp at a place called Sandy Creek, near Gawler. We had about a week there and then they sent us on home on seven days leave.

19:30 That was a pretty unpopular the fact that they only gave us seven days leave after being away for eight eighteen months.

I'm sure it was.

We left Gawler, got on the train, went home for leave and had to report back to the camp at Royal Park and

Did any fellows take a tad more than seven days?

Quite a few, yes. Quite a number of them did. Quite a number of the blokes for instance who got married when they got back from the Middle East and they wanted

20:00 to have a decent honeymoon.

Well it's understandable isn't it? You don't want to leave your wife

Yes.

Of six days all of a sudden?

Yes some of the officers were very apologetic. They said the conditions at that time with the Japs heading south it was a time when there simply wasn't time to give you any leave.

How

There were all sorts of promises made about the leave we were going to get in the future but I think that was all done with your fingers crossed.

20:30 **How aware were the population of Melbourne, and were you as well, of the Japanese threat at time. Did you think "Well they're going to be on our doorstep any time."**

Yes we were afraid of that. Information was rather scarce sparse and unreliable. You heard all sorts all sorts of stories but what we did know was that they were moving very fast, the Japs, right down through the Malaysia

21:00 and Malaysia [Malaya] and Singapore had fallen and all the other islands and just trying to think. Yes they had they had raided Darwin by that time so it began to look as if they were getting ready to invade Australia and things looked very, very grim so that those of us who thought a bit realised that we can't be expect to go home on leave when

21:30 the Japs were on the point of landing.

Do you think there were any fellas who thought who got home to Melbourne and thought "I've done my bit. I don't want to go back. I'm not gonna go back." Was there that feeling amongst many men?

I don't think so. I never came across that at all. There could have been in other areas other units but we all felt we'd done the right thing by coming home from the Middle East.

22:00 We were over there sort of fighting England's war and the Japs come into it we had to come back and fight Australia's war so that I think those that thought about it realised that things were grim and you couldn't expect to be home enjoying leave when it appeared the Japs were on the point of invading Australia.

And were you at this stage were you still determined to get a transfer

22:30 **from the ambos to a rifle company?**

That came along a little bit little bit later. Not after when we first arrived. I'd been quite happy to stay there at that time.

And was it around that time that you received that, for want of a better word, a 'Dear John' letter? [letter informing that a relationship is over]

Not very long afterwards yes.

And what did that do for the morale of a soldier that's been away for eighteen months?

Not very good. It kicked my tail in completely for awhile.

23:00 **Did that change your attitude to war and or life in general?**

Probably made you maybe a bit more cynical about things because up to that stage I'd been very happy in the relationship and I'd felt that I saw as much as I could of my fiancée during the few days I was home on leave and I'd felt everything was quite okay.

23:30 Found out afterwards well I'd had letters from her saying that a cousin of hers had been in camp with the air force out at Park Orchards, which is just nearby here, and she'd been out once or twice with him and you might hear from somebody that I mean going out with an air force bloke but this

24:00 was a cousin you know from Western Australia. I took her at her word. I wasn't worried about that so but whether when I got home on leave she sort of then compared me to him and decided that made a decision as to which one she preferred. She must have decided in favour of him because I hadn't been back for been back in camp for more than a couple of weeks before I got the 'Dear John' letter.

24:30 **You wouldn't have been Pat Malone though would you? I guess a lot of blokes**

Oh lots of this went on. Not only at that time but right through the war.

And what did you do? Did you did you get would your mates get together and buy you a beer or what would they do to cheer you up?

Oh they sympathised but a lot of them had their own problems and nobody gives you any counselling or anything like that. Just

25:00 **Just a pat on the back and on you go.**

Yeah. Stiff luck chum. You you're just one of many.

More fish in the sea.

Yeah.

Well you got a good fish.

Oh yes.

So from there you went up did you go up to Queensland for training?

Not immediately. Not immediately. From leave we went reported back to Royal Park. We were put on the train then you went up to Tenterfield in New South Wales and camped there for oh I suppose about a

25:30 month or six weeks and this I don't remember the length of time we were there. From there we moved up to Kilcoy in Queensland, just near the Glasshouse Mountains, and we were camped there for a couple of months and actually it was there that I got the 'Dear John' letter and we were just doing general manoeuvres, general

26:00 training there keeping up to date with things. It was at that stage I got a crop of boils on my knee and it was crippled me up a bit and I was running the RAP at the time and so I was dressing it myself and showed them to the doctors on a couple of occasions. They said "Oh keep going the way you are. That's okay." So anyway

26:30 eventually the knee wasn't getting any better. As fast as one boil cleared up another one developed. They said "Oh well we'll put you into hospital and treat it properly" so they evacuated me to hospital, into Toowoomba the hospital was and actually the day after I got to Toowoomba there was another bloke from our unit came along and followed me. I said "What's

27:00 doing in camp?" "Oh" he said "We've got movement orders." That's when they headed off to Milne Bay and I got left behind.

Were you is that a disappointing thing for a soldier or a pleasing thing. You think "Oh well I can sit this out" or you'd rather be there with your mates?

Oh no. You you're just champing at the bit to get back and be with it.

Now so you would have been in Brisbane at that time wouldn't you or around Brisbane?

Near Brisbane. Yes.

That was probably the most exciting time in Brisbane's history wouldn't you say? When it was the base for South West Pacific operations?

27:30 Yes yes. MacArthur had taken over the (UNCLEAR) Hotel there as a headquarters and that was the headquarters of the entire south west Pacific south west Pacific area.

And what sort of town was Brisbane in those days? Was it full of soldiers and

Yes. Full of soldiers. More Americans than Australians really. Most of the Australian camps were up on the Atherton Tableland. We were camped

28:00 not far from Brisbane for on a couple of occasions but only for brief periods so the majority of the troops were Americans.

And what did they tell you while you were in training for your for your islands campaign about the Japanese? Did they tell you the truth or were they telling you some porkies? [pork pies - lies]

Didn't tell us a great deal about what the how the Japanese behaved and what they did. Just the fact that

28:30 we concentrate on our side of it, any casualties how you treat them and under the conditions that we were liable to strike and that's the islands, we'd been used to the deserts in the Middle East and the islands are so totally different with the jungle, mud and slush and rain and that sort of thing. We had to just learn to adapt to that.

29:00 **So would they have you running through rivers or charging through swamps or that kind of thing? Is that how they would make you adjust to the....?**

No not so much in training. We just had to adapt to that when the occasion arose but we had to realise for instance the army issue stretchers, they were the normal folding stretchers the same as the St Johns Ambulance use today but in the rough territory very hilly and that sort of thing they were useless. We

29:30 virtually never used those.

What would you use instead?

We made up our own. Long saplings and a palliasse bag and because when the patient laid on that that sagged and the patient wouldn't fall off. You could go up a slope and you could tilt it like that, he stayed on it. With the ordinary army stretcher you'd tilt that and your patient's on the ground.

30:00 So that a lot of things that we had to adapt to and make our own innovations in many cases, like with the stretchers. You simply couldn't use the issued equipment.

Can you tell me of any other equipment that you found that wasn't suitable?

That was the main thing as far as we were concerned.

30:30 **How about keeping equipment and supplies clean and sterile in those hot humid sweaty swampy conditions?**

That was extremely difficult because in more settled situations like the bigger hospitals they had the equipment they could handle it. We worked mainly in makeshift conditions

31:00 and we had to do things as best we could. For instance sterilising equipment. We didn't have autoclaves and that sort of thing. Simply couldn't use those. We just had to boil stuff in water, in many cases it was river water, and once you got them sterile you had to keep them perhaps in methylated spirits or

something like that just to try and keep them sterile so they were

31:30 available for use when you needed them.

And while you were stuck in Toowoomba with boils on the knee, were you literally just busting a gut to get out of there? Were you trying to say "I'm better doc" and he's gone "No you're not."

Yeah.

Tell me about that.

Yes well a funny thing about it too because before I went to the hospital I'd said to the doctor "Can I have some sulphanilamide for it, which was the big treatment for it in those days.

32:00 He said "No no" he said "I don't want you to go onto that" he said "You keep going the way you are." Soon as I got into hospital the doctor there took one look at me. He said "Right sulphanilamide" and strangely enough I never had another boil once I got on to those.

Sulphanilamide's what they used for ulcers as well wasn't it?

Yes. There was a group of what they called the sulphur drugs. Sulphanilamide was a general antiseptic type of

32:30 thing and or things you used as a power. We used to use it as a powder as a dressing on wounds but you they're also in tablet form for things like boils now. Then they also had Sulphaguanidine, which was a treatment for dysentery, Sulphadiazine, Sulphathiazole oh I forget about there were eight or nine.

Oh you're doing well.

I

33:00 used to know them all. I can't remember them all now but there there's quite a family group of what they call the sulphur drugs. M&B 693 was one of them. May and Baker was used to produce them. That's where they got the MB and 693 was the formula number.

And up to this point as an ambo had most of the treatment you've had to give to guys was mainly for battle wounds as opposed to disease?

Up

33:30 'til this stage yes

Yes.

Yes they were virtually all battle wounds. We had very little sickness in the in the Middle East. Certainly not in the deserts. It was a healthy climate the desert.

Would it mainly be sand fly and a little bit of dysentery perhaps as the main disease things you would get there?

Yes probably was, yes.

And what does a sand fly do to you? What does that bite give you or what does that

Apart from lumps and rashes

34:00 and that sort of thing and from them you could get you can get sand fly fever, which was well a little bit like malaria so the type of sickness. It was not a recurrent thing I don't think. I didn't have a great deal to do with it but it's not recurrent to the extent malaria is for instance.

And how strict were they about malaria? Did you start taking your malaria tablets in Brisbane in preparation for going?

I don't think so. I don't

34:30 think we started taking them until we got to the islands. I just can't remember the for certain.

They were very strict about taking tablets though weren't they?

They were very strict. You were not allowed to wear shorts for instance in the islands. Long trousers with your gaiters on to which kept them. The gaiters we had there were right to the knee and they used to be put on over the trousers so that

35:00 there's no avenue for the mosquitoes to get to any skin there at all. You had to wear long sleeved shirts buttoned at the wrist, sleeves not rolled up, and we apart from taking preventive Quinine for a long time and then they switched to Atebrin for it you also had the

35:30 lotion to rub onto your hands and face and neck and that sort of the parts that were exposed and even so the number of malarial casualties in places like Milne Bay were probably ten with malaria for every

battle casualty.

Really?

Mm. The hospitals were just full of that. We were running what's called Main Dressing Station. Normally you might cater for perhaps up to sixty or eighty patients.

36:00 We were holding over three hundred there and I'd say two hundred and fifty of those were malaria.

And were the red caps the brass they were they would they be annoyed at a soldier for getting malaria because they were so strict? Or was that just part of what you'd expect?

Well it was a thing they couldn't control really. It but they did it was controlled fairly well if a lot of the people took their tablets, Atebrin or Quinine.

36:30 It they did say that if you took it the whole time you were in an in an infected area and for three months after you came out of a malarious area then you were you were right, you wouldn't get it again but I had personal experience there to show they were wrong. We'd kept on with the Atebrin for three months after we came out from New Guinea back in Australia and on one

37:00 day there were fourteen of us all went down with our first attack of malaria, myself included.

And

And on the same day this is. Fourteen of us went into a hospital in an ambulance in one day.

And that's when you came out of the areas?

We'd come out of we'd been in Milne Bay for about nine months before we came out and then we went up to a place called Ravenshoe at the Atherton Tableland and I I'd been feeling quite okay no worries at all and

37:30 we were beautifying the camp a bit and I was out with a crowd quarrying gravel to put down the paths and that. Swinging a pick and shovel all morning and I thought "Oh. Shivery. Don't feel so good." Came back for lunch and I got the shivers the shakes and I thought "I know what this is. It's the RAP" and yeah had a temperature up to about a hundred and four or something of the sort and

38:00 shot me off to hospital together with thirteen others. All our first attacks. None of them had had them before

God.

and this is just three months after we all knocked off taking the Atebrin.

Can you can you compare the effects of malaria? Does it feel like having a really bad flu or something like that or is it different?

Something similar but it's strange, I felt a bit shivery on this morning. Had the shivers and that and I thought

38:30 "Surely not" then it passed off and I went out for the morning on the truck quarrying gravel all morning. Came back to camp for lunchtime. Got the shivers again. That's when I went to the RAP and the doctor said "Yeah you've got it" so we all shot off to hospital and it runs in a cycle like that. Every day your body gets two or three of these shivery

39:00 spells and your temperature go way up a hundred and four, no trouble at all, and then that'd come down but it seemed to go surge and then drop back, then another surge of it and you've got to go through a regular treatment for this and I think around about a fortnight in hospital.

39:30 **Very quickly, 'cause the tape's about to run out, is the treatment basically bed rest and Quinine?**

Yes it's Quinine for the first I forget how many days now. Say about five days then there was a couple of days on Plasmoquin and there was three different treatments. I forget the name of the other one now

That's alright.

but three different tablets you went through one after the other

40:00 and that that seemed to it cured you for the time being. The different types. There's what they call BT, benign tertian, or MT, malignant tertian. The benign BT was the one that is more liable to keep recurring. The MT is sometimes more severe when you get it but it doesn't recur

40:30 quite as much and then if you're really unlucky you might get cerebral malaria. That was really crook. A pal of mine who lives just around the corner from here now matter of fact he got cerebral malaria in Milne Bay and I took his temperature one day at a hundred and eight point four I think it was.

Well Lloyd we'll just have to stop there because we're just about to run out of tape but we'll pick this up when we come

Tape 6

00:30 **Lloyd after Brisbane**

Mm.

You were on an old Chinese tramper was it?

Yes the Anshun. Interesting story with that too. I did mention earlier about the bad conditions on the boat. Poor food, that sort of thing but anyway we eventually got to Milne Bay. We were escorted at the time by the Australian destroyer, the [HMAS] Arunta

01:00 and just as we were approaching Milne Bay, there's an island just off Milne Bay named the Samarai and this destroyer, the Arunta, pulled alongside us and for security reasons they didn't probably didn't want to use their radio. They called out over the loud hailer to the captain "There's a Japanese cruiser in the vicinity and we're going off to look for it. Remain here off Samarai Island overnight.

01:30 Under no circumstances should you enter Milne Bay overnight. So off they go to find the cruiser and the old Anshun just keeps chug chug chugging along into Milne Bay. Tied up at the wharf. All the troops got to get off. It was just sort of getting on dusk at this time and it barely got dark before a sudden big searchlight beam comes in, lights up the Anshun, a couple of broadside and "Bang" over she goes and

02:00 sinks. That was the Japanese cruiser had followed us into the bay and then there was a hospital ship anchored out in Milne Bay, the Manunda, and it was there was all lights blazing the way they did with the they had the red cross showing and everything. They switched the searchlight onto the Manunda. I thought "Oh my god they're going to sink the hospital ship." It had just been loaded up with casualties ready to go back to Australia but they didn't fire at the Manunda.

02:30 They just put the turned the searchlight off, turned around and left the bay.

Lloyd if that cruiser, that Japanese cruiser was able to use a searchlight on your ship, it couldn't have been that far away. Where do you think it was?

Ah no, I was not in a in a position at the time to see just how far it was but I would estimate possibly a mile a couple of miles and see their

03:00 guns will fire, will cover a range of a good many miles and the searchlights are pretty effective up to I would say it's probably three miles.

That's incredible.

Mm.

Now when the captain of the Arunta told your captain over the loud speaker not to move, did you guys all hear that?

Yes you could hear every word.

And when he kept moving what did you say or what did you think?

"What the hell does this silly bugger think he's doing?" Yeah.

03:30 **You would have been pretty scared I reckon.**

Yes well we didn't know just how quite how much danger there was but fortunately all the troops had got off the boat but all the equipment and stores and everything else that was loaded onto the boat went down with it.

And do you know what was lost? What sort of stores and equipment?

No, not really.

And you said that the ship finished up lying on its side.

Yes.

And they built the dock over it.

Yes.

04:00 Yes I've got a photograph of that I can show you.

We'll have a look at that.

Mm.

And so you're in Milne Bay now.

Yes.

Have you missed the action there?

I missed most of it but they were still mopping up but the most dangerous or the most worrying side of it was pretty well finished by the time I got there.

That was the, that was a real turning point in the war wasn't it?

Yes. I'd mentioned earlier that the siege of Tobruk

04:30 was the first time the Germans were defeated during the war. Milne Bay was the first time the Japanese were defeated during the war. On land I'm talking about.

And on both occasions by the Aussie boys.

By the 18th Brigade.

Must have been an enormous sense of achievement?

Yes, it was really. Yes so that stopped the land advance really. They then tried to send naval

05:00 forces around the tip of New Guinea to attack. I'm not sure, there are different views to whether they were aiming to attack Australia or to go around to Port Moresby but that's where the battle of the Coral Sea took place and that was that battle was accredited with sort of finally stopping any attempt by the Japanese to invade Australia.

What was

05:30 **the thinking amongst the men at the time when they finally realised that the Japanese could be stopped on land? You'd stopped them. You'd pushed them back at Milne Bay. Was it a feeling of "Well we might just get out of this"?**

Yes. The 18th Brigade was a very good Brigade right through and I think they had always felt they were pretty well invincible. That

06:00 they could beat anybody given the chance and though they had quite a fight on their hands there I don't think they were altogether surprised. They just reckoned they could beat anybody and they sort of proved that they could.

Quite reasonable losses weren't they? Quite heavy losses.

Oh yes quite a few casualties, yes.

So when you arrived there were you sent straight to an AGH or were you up there at a dressing station?

No there was no AGH there at all. We ran the only hospital that was that was there

06:30 and that was we classed it as an MDS, a Main Dressing Station.

Was it sufficiently well provisioned to cope with all the casualties?

Yes it coped pretty well. Oh I'm perhaps I'm not quite correct there. There were quite a few American troops there and they could easily have had a hospital. I'm not sure about that. I can't remember that but most of the Americans

07:00 that were there were not fighting troops. They were construction gangs. They built road roadways and airfields and that type of thing.

They were pioneers and engineers were they?

Yes.

When you caught up with your guys what were they able to tell you, either the ambos or the riflemen, of their first experience of jungle warfare?

Yes, well conditions there were

07:30 pretty tough. The Milne Bay is generally speaking a fairly flat area and as such even with....we had continual rain you'd get heavy rain storms sometimes two and three times a day and then being fairly flat it didn't drain terribly well and you'd be walking around a lot of the areas there and you'd be up to your knees in mud

08:00 the whole time. The spot where we had our MDS was in a coconut plantation, owned by Lever Brothers as a matter of fact, and that was not as bad as a lot of the area were so that we were able to manage fairly well there but all the rivers or creeks that were there

08:30 they were they would flood with every rain virtually and I know on one occasion there was a one of the big ten wheel trucks tried to ford the river thought they'd be able to get through and finished up there

was not much more than the roof of the cabin above water so

How did you go in country like that? I imagine you're wet all the time or you're wet a lot of the time and if

09:00 **you're going through the jungle there'd be leeches and all sorts of bugs and snakes and so forth? Did you have a lot of that stuff to put up with?**

Ah it goes with the jungle. The leeches were quite a problem.

Where on earth were we? We were on

At Milne Bay.

Milne Bay, that's right.

Yes.

We were talking about the hospitals were we?

We talked about the conditions of the

Oh the conditions.

Yes.

Thank you Lloyd yep.

Yes

09:30 well the flat areas they were extremely muddy. You'd be up to your knees in mud most of the time but we did our best just after the fighting was over did our best to sort of drain it and built roads through. Actually the roads they built were mainly what they called corduroy roads. They'd chop down these coconut palms and lay them just

10:00 one alongside the other and they'd peg them out and the trucks drove over the top of the coconut palms.

Oh 'cause I've heard about corduroy roads before but I wasn't sure what they were.

Yeah. Yes it's just like tree trunks one against the other but it was kind of strange there. The Australians started doing that and of course they'd chop the trees down with an axe and 'bout a dozen blokes would pick up

10:30 this tree bodily and walk over and dump it where it should be and anyway the Yanks took over. They said "Oh yeah we'll fix this" and chainsaw "Brrrrrrrr" and down comes the tree. "Brrrrrrrrrr" off goes the end of the tree and bulldozers'd come down push the tree trunk in where they want it. They wouldn't do anything with their hands or

Did they always have...

Use any effort.

Did they always have better equipment than you guys?

Always, yeah.

And did that give you the S-H-I-T-S?

Not really. We were rather proud of the fact that we

11:00 could do it ourselves. We didn't have to have all the equipment necessary. The Yanks wouldn't do a thing until they had absolutely everything they needed. They wanted equipment everything and actually even the Yanks themselves the one of the senior American officers said to our CO "I just can't understand how you Australians manage everything for yourselves.

11:30 Our men, if they haven't got an officer or an NCO there to tell them what to do they sit down and wait for instructions." He said "The Australians, you can leave a dozen privates there with a job to do and they know exactly what to do and if something goes wrong they improvise." He said "We never do that."

Why do you think that was?

I think it was entirely their upbringing. The Yanks have just got to have everything perfect before they do it

12:00 and if they're not told what to do they don't do anything. This Yank was absolutely amazed that a team of Australians, might be half a dozen blokes with a corporal or a sergeant in charge of them, and they'd just go ahead and do a job and work out how to do it while they were on the job and they'd do it but the Yanks wouldn't know wouldn't know what to do.

Did that translate into their soldiering as well? Were they not as good a soldier?

Pretty much, yes.

12:30 While we were at Milne Bay the 9th battalion was sent with a party to attack Buna, Gona and Sanananda and one of our companies went with them and from what I've heard, I was not there of course myself, but they when they were going to attack Buna that had to be attacked through swampy country. The swamps there

13:00 were practically chest deep, and the Japanese were fairly well entrenched and there was an American brigadier I think he was or he might have been higher than that who was in charge of the attack. He said "It's going to take a about a week to get Buna" and they would have to attack at Brigade strength and Piggy Wootton, our brigadier

13:30 of the 18th Brigade, he was there and he was part of the conference and he said "Brigade be buggered." He said "Get me my 9th battalion and I'll have them by nightfall." They laughed at him but they gave him his [2/] 9th Battalion and he had had Buna by nightfall.

Yeah that's I remember reading about that. The American forces there were just a largely untrained and fairly green and not very productive lot

Yeah.

Were they?

Yes well,

14:00 like on that occasion, they would not consider attacking until they had overwhelming force. Man power, guns, everything and they just laughed at Piggy Wootton when he said "I'll have 'em by nightfall" but he sent his 9th battalion in there and they did it.

What do you think then? In terms of World War II, it's a pretty much everyone says that without the Yanks we probably would have been overrun because of

14:30 **their sheer weight of numbers in the**

Mm.

South West Pacific.

Mm.

Do you think that's true?

Yes I do. The Australians didn't have anywhere near enough men or equipment to have done it on our own but one thing that does gripe me they always say "America came to Australia's aid." America did not come to Australia's aid. We were both fighting the same

15:00 enemy and we were allies. America came into the war, not because Australia needed them but because the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour. America came to Australia, not to help defend them, but Australia was the best base for their headquarters and a launching ground to attack up through the islands.

Do you think alright I'll put that differently, in retrospect there's as many movies as you care to mention

15:30 **about American soldiers fighting in the south Pacific, but there are very few if any movies about Australian soldiers fighting in the south Pacific so history has seen it as largely as largely America's war.**

America, that's correct, yes.

At the time, did you get that same feeling? The Americans were saying "We've done this and you guys helped out"?

Yes, well that was wasn't the case even during the war. The high profile events, attacks in major places MacArthur kept for the Americans. The Americans'd do that.

16:00 The mopping up he used the Australians for that. Minor "It's an island up there with a few Japs." "Oh send a battalion of the Australians up there." They wouldn't be bothered about that but and in all the publicity was "The Americans did this the Americans did that" and the Australians did didn't get much of a mention.

And how did you guys feel at the time? Did you think did you notice this at the very time you were there?

Yeah we did.

And did you grow to resent the Americans

16:30 **at the time?**

We resented the attitude of MacArthur and his crew. We didn't hold it against the Americans themselves quite so much. That was a certain attitude which mainly back in the home town I guess. There's three things wrong with the Americans. They're overpaid, oversexed and over here.

17:00 **I've heard that one a few times, yeah.**

Mm.

While we're on Milne Bay there's a little what's the word? A little signpost or something on there saying "This is as far west as the Japanese went" underneath. Do you.... have you seen that signpost?

I haven't seen it, no.

Oh right. Oh well we won't talk about that then. At this stage, when you're when you're in Milne Bay have you heard or has anybody heard much about the

17:30 **way our boys were faring in the prisoner-of-war camps under the Japanese?**

No we didn't we didn't get very much information at that time, no.

How 'bout the way the Japanese were treating men in battle? Did you think they were a good and I don't know if this is the right word, but a good and fair fighting force or did they seem like a cruel and hard fighting force?

No we knew they were cruel and hard

18:00 to use your own expression there. There were virtually no Japanese prisoners were taken, right through the war. They fought 'til they fought 'til they were killed. To surrender was a token disgrace. They'd rather commit hari kari than be taken prisoner.

Did you guys respect that or did you think that was a bit far?

Thought it bloody stupid to be quite honest.

Did everybody

18:30 **think that?**

I think so, yes. Yes. No, it's a there there's no disgrace in being beaten if no if you've got to no hope. Why die? You can

It must be hard to go into battle against troops though that you know have no fear of death.

That's right. It is too because you know the only way you can beat them is by killing virtually every man.

That must be a very

19:00 **you know there was a lot of the weight on the soldiers that go in to fight an enemy like that.**

Yes.

And at Milne Bay did you try again to transfer to infantry at that stage?

Yes it was while we were at Milne Bay I tried to transfer to the infantry and got knocked back. I think the other two, when I tried for the commandos that was at Kilcoy before we went to Milne Bay and I think it was also at Kilcoy that I tried for the paratroopers.

19:30 **And how frustrated were you?**

Oh I just felt like a change. I sometimes felt that I could do more with a rifle and killing a few Japs than patching up the wounded.

Do you think a lot of ambos felt that way because it's a crucial job but

20:00 **did you feel like you should be doing something?**

Quite a few did. Yes, when they were forming the for instance when they were forming the commandos and again the paratroopers they sent a memo 'round to all units saying these units were being formed and calling for volunteers to transfer to them so it was officially requested that anybody who wanted to could put in and trans for a transfer. A few

20:30 of ours went to the commandos when I was knock knocked back for a transfer. In fact a particular mate of mine was one of them that went. He finished up winning a DCM [Distinguished Conduct Medal] with them and mentioned in despatches both and I don't think any of ours went to the paratroopers. I don't remember any of them.

Okay and how long and you were sorry on a different tack again, you received a promotion

21:00 **every time you applied for a transfer didn't you?**

Well not very long afterwards. I was never quite sure whether the promotion came as a result of applying for the transfer or not.

And you said, and I don't know whether you said it jokingly yesterday, that the last time you applied for a transfer you had a commission coming but you were demobbed [demobilised] before it arrived. Was that true or was that a joke?

That was that was not applying for it then. No I'd been a sergeant for several years and while we were in

21:30 Port Moresby I think it was, the division headquarters was running a officers' pre-selection board and anybody was liable to go able to go before the board if they liked. Well there were quite a few like about thirty or forty went from my unit and I decided to give it a try and they had three classifications.

22:00 Grade C. I think it was A, B, C. Grade C was considered unsuitable. Finish. Grade B was considered suitable after further experience. Grade A was considered suitable and recommended for a commission at the first available opportunity. Well out of the forty or so that went there were four graded A, which were considered as suitable

22:30 and recommended for a commission and I was one of the four. The other three had all got their commissions before the war ended. One only about a week I suppose before the end of the war and I was next in line but with our unit there were very few commissioned officers who were not doctors. There was there were one lieutenant, stretcher bearer, stretcher bearer lieutenants they call them,

23:00 in each of A and B companies and that was all. So apart from oh the quartermaster was a captain, but apart from those three every other officer was a doctor so there were very few avenues for commissions.

Were you disappointed that you missed out on the commission?

Ah getting so close

23:30 I was a little bit but I hadn't really expected it for a long time and it was only in the finish. We'd lost a couple of our lieutenants and the promotions came along and I thought "Ooh boy." You know "Who knows? I might get it after all."

Alright. From Milne Bay you went to Port Moresby didn't you to a base camp?

Well we went back to Australia first.

To Brisbane?

No. Up at the Atherton

24:00 Tablelands.

Right.

We pulled into Townsville and I think we went by army truck from there up to the Atherton Tableland and camped at a place called Ravenshoe. It's a very big army camp covering oh miles of the Tableland. That was considered to be

24:30 the healthiest climate in Australia within reasonable reach of the islands. There might have been better places in Western Australia for instance but they were just too far away so they had a very big training and I suppose recuperation type of thing there. After a spell in the islands you'd come back there for three months, six months.

And recharge and get fit and

Recharge your batteries, get fit and

25:00 retrain, reequip.

And from there you went to Moresby?

From there we went to Moresby.

And were you there a long time?

We were at Moresby about six months.

Was it a good time?

And

Or a dull time?

Oh it was a little bit boring. We were sort of waiting for something to happen and nothing seemed to be happening and we sort of filled in time as best we could a lot of the time

- 25:30 but I know on one occasion we were doing a lot of route marches. Full pack up and off you go and a pretty hot climate and you'd be sweating and I know one time we'd just gone down to the nearest beach and had an afternoon swimming and so I was always a pretty fair swimmer before the war and
- 26:00 our commanding officer at that time, Colonel McIntosh, was not a bad swimmer. One time there I was sitting on a raft and he swam past it past us more or less flat out just as he got past us he sort of stopped, turned over on his back and he said "There you are Tarzan. You couldn't do better yourself could you?" He used to call me 'Tarzan' and I said "Oh if I couldn't do better than that" I said "I'd give up swimming altogether." He said "Why what's wrong?" I said "You've got the lousiest scissors kick
- 26:30 there." I said "You ought to get a more even six beat rather than the scissors" and "Oh right" he said. Nothing more was said for a couple of days and had us all lined up going out for a big route march one day. Hand over to the RSM to take us and he, the CO went off back to his tent and an orderly runner come down just as were about to move off. "Sergeant Tann, report to the CO." I thought "Oh God what
- 27:00 have I done now?" So go up to his office and he said "Oh" he said "Get rid of your pack up to your tent" he said "grab yourself a towel and get a jeep from the transport office." He said "I've got a job for you." I said "Oh what's that?" He said "I want you to try and get rid of my scissors kick." So I got my towel and got the jeep from the transport office and the two of us went down the beach for the day and I was
- 27:30 I coached him doing the into a decent six beat crawl rather than a scissors kick so a lot of those things like days at the beach and route marches were just filling in time.

Did you have much contact with the native population of New Guinea?

No. The only times were when we were working with the boong trains. They were controlled by a group called ANGAU, A-N-G-A-U. It was the Australia and New Guinea Administration Unit and

- 28:00 they controlled all the natives that were prepared to work on their boong trains. Well they used to carry stretchers where necessary for us. Supply columns if like, if you had a like, for instance the Kokoda Trail, Shaggy Ridge. All your supplies there had to go up man manually. You couldn't drive a truck
- 28:30 or anything like that. Well you have a team of perhaps two hundred natives. Every one would have a I don't know what sized load they'd carry, what weight, but probably forty or sixty kilograms and this long, long train would go up.

Did you ever so there was never a chance to talk to them or

Not a great deal no. No. I was involved with one of those boong trains in going up onto Shaggy Ridge and

- 29:00 well that just about killed me that day. We'd had an early reveille and were ready to head up for Shaggy Ridge and once again we were more or less lined up there and I got the message to report to the CO. I thought "Oh" once again "What have I done wrong?" He said "You feeling fit?" So I said "Fit as a Mallee bull. Why?"
- 29:30 He said "I want you to take the boong team up" Well this boong train was not just for us it was the 2/12th Battalion we were going up with and this column would have been at least a mile long I suppose and every here and there there'd be soldiers, Australian soldiers, just keeping your eye on them though 'cause they were wonderful workers occasionally they'd get a bit tired and you had to keep your eye on them. They'd just toss their load off and then just
- 30:00 keep going with the column. It was a lot easier to walk without carrying their load so you had to keep a bit of an eye on them so anyway the 12th Battalion had all their gear and the signallers whoever it was they all went up tailing along at the very end of the column was this 2/5th Field Ambulance. We might have had I don't know thirty or forty natives there all carrying our equipment up and I was very last man in a mile long column
- 30:30 and you know most of these columns when they're marching they'll sort of close up, they'll stop and lengthen out again then you're stopping for awhile and they're all of a sudden they've raced away ahead of you and you've just about to break into a run to catch up to them. It's a brute of a trip, and the hills went up like that and you were wading streams and in mud up to your knees at other times and it was I think about five miles to Geyton's Post
- 31:00 when that was as far as we went but it was reckoned to be a ten hour march. I did it with the natives in about two and a half hours. We never really stopped once. Occasionally the line, as I say the line would come to a halt and you had to sort of stand there waiting again so they could get away ahead of you but we never stopped for a rest from start to finish and we got to Geyton's Post and
- 31:30 I said "Right, this is it." Well I know I just sort of buckled at the knees, flopped down because I had apart from all my own personal gear I had a twenty pound pack of medical equipment on my shoulders as well and I just buckled at the knees, flopped down flat on my stomach and I didn't move for around about two hours. I couldn't even get the load off my back so we were, then most of the most of the
- 32:00 boong team dropped their loads and they turned around and head back again and they didn't even stop for a rest. But oh I was just about completely bushed that day but when the rest of our crowd staggered

in about half past five in the afternoon they wouldn't believe me when I told them I was there by ten o'clock in the morning.

So these fellas who were in the boong team or boong train?

Boong train

32:30 we used to call it.

Boong train.

Mm.

And the fellas that'd throw their stuff away and just keep walking what would happen to them when they got to the other end and the sergeant major or whoever said "Where's your what have you been carrying?"

I don't know. I never had any other experience with that but you we were warned to look out for that.

And what would you do in Port Moresby when you were stuck there for six months or so as you said

Oh it was

For a bit of fun?

Oh it there's mainly just a routine training which is stuff we'd

33:00 done over and over and over again. We tried other things for sports. For instance I know I said to the CO one day "What about building a tennis court?" He said "Good idea." He said "You take charge of it" and I said "Right." So I got a team of blokes together and we built a tennis court. The ground was a bit hilly and we had to sort of dig into the hill and fill it up and so got gravel from a gravel

33:30 quarry and built that and we got camouflage netting for the fence around it. We got nets and rackets and things from the amenities section of the army and we used sump oil for the lines on the court. The strange thing was we spent two or three weeks building this. Got it all finished mid afternoon one day. They said

34:00 "Oh before knock off I'm going to have a set on this." So four of us grabbed our put on our sandshoes and grabbed our racquets and we had we had a good set of tennis, knocked off and went for a shower. That night we got movement orders. The next day we moved out. We only ever did play that one set.

And where were those movement orders to?

Dumpu. To Shaggy Ridge.

And was that a trek through the jungle to get there or you were in a boat to get there?

We

34:30 flew to Dumpu's on the north side of New Guinea whereas Moresby's on the south so we had to fly over the Owen Stanley Ranges there. There's an air strip at Dumpu and we, the 18th Brigade took over there from a 21st, no 24th Brigade I think it was.

And just by the by, amenities you said had tennis racquets and stuff

Mm.

35:00 **What's amenities? Was there a column that followed along with tennis racquets and cups of tea?**

No the amenities section of the army was an organisation that looked after all recreational activities and they had footballs, cricket equipment, anything like that and when you of course they never went to sort of really forward areas. They were always in base areas and when you're in a base area if you wanted to have a

35:30 play cricket or play football or something you'd always apply for equipment from there and then

Sounds like a cushy job. Did everyone want to be in amenities?

Well I suppose. I don't know who used to be in that but there were quite a lot of well-known sportsmen were in the army and I guess they had some of them would have jobs in that. I know I played quite a lot of cricket with Ernie Bromley, who was a

36:00 test cricketer. A spin bowler.

What was he like to face?

Bit tricky.

Did they have cricket pitches up there or where did you face him?

Oh we used to make our own.

Now these guys in amenities, could they be called on as like were they trained as riflemen or artillery men as well and they could be called on to go to the front?

I don't think so. The biggest majority of them I think were old older blokes or blokes with

36:30 perhaps some disability that just precluded them from taking a fully active role. There obviously would be a few that got cushy jobs because of their name or their fame or something like something like that. That Ernie Bromley that I mentioned he was not in that section. He was in the infantry.

And apart from him were there any other sportsmen you bumped up against over there? Any other names?

Yes. I've played football against the 2/10th Battalion

37:00 at one time and out of their eighteen men, fourteen of them were South Australian league footballers, including the captain of the South Australian interstate team the last year before the war.

That would have been a tough side to play.

We beat them.

Congratulations.

We had about five league players, VFL [Victorian Football League] players with our unit and almost every team

37:30 we played they would have one or two league players in. I know I played in a match one time against the 17th ASC [Army Service Corps] I think it was and I was playing centre half forward at the time and their centre half back, we'd introduced ourselves, "How do you do? I'm Lloyd." "I'm Bill". "Right." Well on the day he gave me a bit of a bath but I kicked two goals

38:00 and got a few kicks and that sort of thing but I was I didn't know him other than Bill and I said to one of the other chaps in the team, their team, who I knew. I said "Who's that Bill bloke?" I said "He plays a bloody good game." "Name's Bill Morris, plays for Richmond." He only won the Brownlow Medal I think the first year after the war. I was always proud of those two goals I kicked.

I bet you were. Gee, that's a great story.

Mm.

Now we're running out of time but I there's one important question I have to ask you. Did

38:30 **Ernie Bromley get you out? Did you survive his spell?**

I think he probably did, yeah.

Was he a leggie or an offie?

Ah a leggie I think. Though an offie to me. I'm a left-hander.

Yeah. Alright we'll just change tapes.

Right.

Thanks Lloyd.

Yeah.

Tape 7

00:31 Jim Ewers who played for St Kilda. Bomber Wells played for North Melbourne. Bob Ellis played for Essendon.

The Bob Ellis that just died recently?

No, this bloke died quite a few years ago.

Alright Lloyd it's back to the action.

Yeah.

Shaggy Ridge. What when did you arrive in Shaggy Ridge? What time in the war are we talking about?

Ah this would have been 1944.

End of '44?

01:00 No. It would have been early '44. I think. I'll just have a, I'd have the dates in the history book but I've just forgotten exactly when [Fighting in the Shaggy Ridge area took place between December 1943 and January 1944]

That's alright. Just roughly.

We spent Christmas '43 in Moresby and we left I think fairly early in '44 for Dumpu and we were there several weeks before

01:30 we tacked up no, I'd say it would probably have been around March, April.

And it was a joint Australian and American

No.

Operation wasn't it?

No.

It was just all Australians?

All Australian. Yes, 18th Brigade.

The

The 24th [21st] Brigade had been in there before us but they I'm not sure whether they'd gained much ground or what they'd done but the Japs were still in control of the ridge at the time then.

02:00 **I've got a list of questions here that they'd like us to ask about to any chap who was at Shaggy Ridge so I'll just run through them now.**

Mm.

Did you think this was one of those jobs MacArthur threw at you guys just to mop up? Not a very glamorous job?

Yeah definitely.

Due you think you got due respect from MacArthur? From everybody? From your own commanders for that operation?

From our own commanders yes because it was a particularly tough conditions there and

02:30 it was a real hard slog slogging sort of a campaign. I don't think MacArthur thought very much of it. Just a not a very big force there and he was inclined to think it was not a very big force they're not going to do any harm. You can bypass them but

Was this one of those just mopping up an isolated pocket of Japanese operations?

03:00 **While they were charging off towards the Philippines? Was the story?**

Yeah. Yes. MacArthur's aim always was the Philippines.

In that case did you think or did anybody else any other Australians think this is a waste of good men. There's no need for this operation right now?

No, we really felt at that time that the entire South West Pacific [Area] Campaign was going to be a case of island hopping.

03:30 Just push 'em back one island at a time and we could really see the war going for another ten years. There's an awful lot of islands to clean out between Australian and Japan and it seemed a never ending task ahead because each one was a slow operation. You couldn't just walk in and they they'd surrender. You'd virtually dig them out of every island.

And

04:00 **what excuse me Lloyd I've got these lamingtons coming back? Thank you Joy.**

What illnesses and diseases did you encounter in amongst your men on PNG [Papua New Guinea] around Shaggy Ridge and so forth?

There was always malaria and dengue fever which was very similar to malaria. It was carried by a different mosquito, and the symptoms are very similar. It's not as recurrent as malaria is but it can be pretty severe.

04:30 They were the two main ones. You'd always get stomach upsets. Dysentery and that type of thing.

Okay. Did you think or did you know at that stage that the Japanese were very much on the back foot? Did you think that was the case?

Yes. We realised that from following the Coral Sea Battle and the Battle of Midway

05:00 they were we realised they were on the back foot definitely and we could see that we would eventually push them back and win the war but we realised they were not the type to surrender very readily and we couldn't see any alternative really other than just to island hop virtually all the way back to Japan. We thought they

05:30 might surrender before Japan itself was invaded but not until then.

Do you think did you think did you think at that stage that you were still defending Australia or do you think the threat of invasion was over by that stage?

I wouldn't say it was over but it was certainly very much lessened by Midway,

06:00 Coral Sea and Milne Bay and Kokoda. All of those had blocked the Japs' advance and we were fairly well convinced that the Japs realised that they'd lost any chance they had of invading Australia.

I just need to check my notes for a second Lloyd.

06:30 **Did you feel that your actions the Australian army's actions around Shaggy Ridge were a decisive factor in the war? Or was it sort of bywatered [backwatered] by that stage?**

I wouldn't call Shaggy Ridge a decisive battle. It was a very hard tough battle. Conditions were shocking there. It was a very hard tough battle but it was

07:00 really mopping up. Just clearing the Japanese from a position of strength where they were pretty securely dug into and they had a very strong positions there and a very hard to get them out but in the overall picture I think it was a fairly minor operation.

07:30 **Okay, here we go. One or more of these questions. How would you compare fighting in the Middle East under British command to fighting in the Pacific under the U.S. command? What was there any appreciable difference?**

One main difference is that if the British thought they had didn't have much chance they'd send the Australians in. I think they

08:00 whether they admitted it or not I don't know but I think they sort of realised that we were pretty good fighters and but also I think they thought we were expendable if they were going into a hopeless position. The Americans only used us I think where there were no

08:30 real kudos involved. All the high profile jobs went to the Americans. The Australians were left to do the mopping up and the tidying up afterwards.

Very frustrating.

Mm.

Now what about shortages? 'Cause I know or I've read that the medical guys went in there not expecting to do as much or to cope with as much as came down in terms of supplies.

Mm.

Were you short of supplies?

09:00 In most cases we were pretty right. Shaggy Ridge was one point where we had to do a lot of improvisation in a way. When we were establish establishing the dressing station at Geyton's Post we had catered and provided for an estimated level of casualties.

09:30 This is something they always do before action. They make an assessment as to what casualties they might expect. How severe they might be and how much to what extent they'd be doing surgery or not just virtually advanced first aid. Now they'd they did not anticipate very many casualties on Shaggy Ridge because

10:00 the [2/]12th Battalion, who we were escorting, were making more of a surprise attack. The country we went up through was considered to be impassable. Nobody had had ever been up there before and the [2/]10th Battalion were attacking from the other side of the ridge and that was the main area where the Japanese were defending.

10:30 For that reason they thought the 12th battalion, making a surprise attack virtually from the Japs' rear, that they'd sort of sweep in there and be over and done with before very long and added to that they as far as they knew the Japs only had small arms, machine guns and rifles. As it turned out the Japs were better armed than they thought they were. They had what they call mountain guns.

11:00 They're like a smallish cannon but it was mobile. They could move the thing around even in bad conditions and they fired always at point blank range into their troops and they caused mayhem there. Also they had intended to do not much more than advanced first aid just patch them up enough to get back to Guy's Post, which was the next dressing station, and but as it turned out

11:30 the casualties were greater in number and much worse due to this mountain gun than they had anticipated so that many of the casualties that came back were incapable of going back to Guy's so that we had to do advanced surgery rather than first aid and hold the patients there for several days be

12:00 rather than send them back to Guy's Post and wait for the next batch to come down.

So were you working virtually 'round the clock at that stage then?

Yes. For myself personally, from the time we got up on the Friday morning and then took the (UNCLEAR) team up, the first time I lay down was the following Wednesday night.

So that's what? Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.

Mm.

Six days without any sleep?

12:30 No not a wink of sleep in that six days.

And what kind of gibbering mess are you at the end of six days without any sleep?

Oh I think I was fairly right.

Really? How do you feel? Well tell me how you feel physically after six days without sleep.

Well the funny thing was, when I lay down I couldn't sleep.

Really? What was going through your mind or

I don't know. I just could couldn't sleep. Bit sort of wound up with it. I was

13:00 kept busy during the day time and we were so overloaded we had far more patients than we were really. I only had I think two nursing orderlies with me and at night time when night come on I know I could have put them onto night duty but I reckoned I was fitter than they were by the end of the day. I said "I'll take on the night shift. You go to bed" and

13:30 I'd go on and as I say they were still operating until up 'til about five o'clock in the morning and that's when the surgeon'd say to me "Call me at seven." He'd go and get two hours sleep.

You got none.

I got none. I'd call him at seven and away we'd go again, start a fresh day.

Was everybody able to cope under such stress or did any of the fellas

Well I don't think anybody else tried six days without sleep but none of them got too much sleep at the time

14:00 but on the Wednesday our commanding officer came up from Guy's Post with a relief team to take over from a lot of us. I must have looked the part because he looked at me and he said "How much sleep have you had since you've been up here?" I said "None." I said "The last sleep I had was back at Guy's before we left." So he said "You go to bed now."

That's incredible.

They had somebody take over

14:30 from me.

Did you drink a lot of coffee to stay awake or was it just adrenalin that kept you going?

Just adrenalin.

That's incredible.

Mm.

So it was non-stop there's not a chance to sit down. You've just gotta keep going and going?

Oh I could sit at times, particularly at night time. I might be the only one still awake there but it had to be on call if any of the patients needed help

That's an incredible effort.

15:00 Yeah and you could sit on one of the logs there and just do the rounds every now and again.

And was it a very incredibly stressful six days for you? Or did you sort of become numb after a few days without sleep?

No. I felt I was coping apart from being a bit heavy-eyed the last two or three hours I really didn't miss it very much. The sleep.

15:30 It was probably adrenalin I suppose.

And when you did sleep how long did you sleep for?

Oh I was up at oh seven, seven the next morning. Went to bed about ten at night.

That's incredible. Well alright

No actually I went to bed the CO said "You go to bed right now." That was late afternoon. I hadn't got to sleep when dinner was ready

16:00 so I got up and had had my dinner, went back to bed again but it was probably ten o'clock before I got to sleep but I was up at seven the following morning.

Speaking of dinner up there at Shaggy Ridge what were the rations and the food like up there?

Oh adequate.

Was it regular bully beef, biscuits and tins of bacon and

Pretty much, mm.

What about by this stage you'd been in the war for a number of years. You've only been back to Aussie for a week. Was homesickness

I had had other leave since. Each time we came back from the

16:30 islands.

Oh of course.

We had leave. Most times it was only perhaps two weeks but on one occasion we had a five week leave.

Even so, you'd only been back for brief periods.

Mm.

Was homesickness starting to get to you by this stage?

It was. You reach the stage where you where you wonder if the war is ever going to end. It just seemed to be going forever but

17:00 toward the finish they did start a scheme for early release. Anybody who'd served over five years and they started up a points system. If you had five years or more overseas service if you were a single man you got virtually no points. If you were a married man without children you'd get some more points. If you were a married man with kids you'd get a stack

17:30 more points depending on how many children you had and the idea was to repatriate you for discharge. You could you could elect to either join the scheme or not and I put my name in. I thought "Oh well I'll see how it goes anyway" and the idea was that they would evacuate those with the most points first. The married men with a number of kids

18:00 they would go home so I was well down the order of priority being unmarried, no family responsibilities, so I was sort of in the lowest or the last group of the five year veterans and they were just more or less starting to send the first of them home when they dropped the bomb so we had another couple of days and the war

18:30 was over so they still sent us home to a large extent in relation to that priority. I was I left there in early November with a lot of others like myself who had served the five years.

November

19:00 **of '44?**

'45.

'45.

Mm.

Alright while we're on Shaggy Ridge I just want to check my notes for a second. If I throw these words at you, do they mean do these mean anything to you? The Pimple,

Yeah.

Green Sniper's Pimple,

Yeah.

Intermediate Sniper's Pimple?

I've got photographs of them I can show you.

Were they the Japanese positions there? What were they?

They were a geological

19:30 feature. Shaggy Ridge was almost like the ridge was like that. You could almost walk along it with one foot either side of the ridge and the Pimple was just like a pimple growing on it sort of little offshoots. So I have photographs in the album there of the Pimple.

And like you were saying it's very, very steep. How would you get a stretcher down from up

20:00 **there? 'Cause you can't have one bloke on either end can you?**

You'd have anything up to twelve or sixteen men on a stretcher.

On one stretcher?

Mm.

And how would you lower them down those very steep

Pass them down hand from, often you would stand still yourself and just pass the stretcher down. Another man would go down below and take it.

And then would you walk down to the end and get back to the end of the queue?

Yes. Mm.

So it was a very long and slow laborious process.

Very.

Were you exposed to fire at all or were you a target at during that

20:30 Oh I wasn't no, but I didn't go up onto Shaggy Ridge itself. I was I spent all my time at Geyton's Post.

How far away from the Ridge was that?

These things were never measured by distance it was more

Rough roughly

Ah.

Well how were they measured then?

It could have been half a time taken to walk the distance. It might be a two hour trek. It might only be

21:00 half a mile or a mile.

Terrible terrain.

Mm.

And excuse me, I'll just stretch my neck and check my notes. And how long were you in Shaggy Ridge for?

Ah, be about ten days.

And during that time, you yourself or your station did you lose many patients or was it

21:30 **a good, did you have a good record there?**

No we had a very good record there. We never lost a patient at Geyton's, at Geyton's Post. Everyone who reached us alive left us alive and I think and reached Guy's Post alive. I don't know altogether what happened to them all after that. We did hear various stories. One chap

22:00 who I have a photograph of there in my album he had both legs shattered. From a mountain gun a lot of shrapnel passed between his legs and shattered both knees and we did hear that he lost a leg further down the track. He was evacuated to other hospitals and apparently one didn't heal properly but other than that I never heard what happened to any of them

22:30 after they left us.

Must have been some incredible injuries though with those mobile Japanese mountain guns?

Yes. Yes they were

Firing pretty much point blank as you said.

Almost point blank and I think there was something like fifty eight major operations plus numerous

smaller minor ones that you can refer to almost as advanced first aid you might say.

Would you be required at all to assist in the operations?

23:00 I did a little bit, I might on two occasions but we did have operating theatre staff. Two chaps, Joe Hughes and Norm Ely. They were there purely as operating theatre assistants but the operating table was an army stretcher sitting in four forked sticks. Operating light was a torch and a Tilley lamp and the operating theatre

23:30 was a couple of half man tents slung over the branch of a tree.

How did you keep flies off and bugs and stuff like that?

Wave your hands. About all you could do.

Crikey.

Sometimes the surgeon'd be standing in the one place operating for might be a couple of hours and he was gradually sinking down in the mud almost to his knees. When he wanted to move he'd have to get

24:00 the other boys to drag his feet out of the mud.

Geez you you'd laugh about it now but in it must have been incredible to be under that kind of stress and in those conditions at the same time.

Yes. Yes. I have photographs in my album there I'll show you afterwards showing the operating theatre.

Do you find that when you're under that kind of stress and in that kind of condition that you quickly you quickly get used to that and you say "That's what we're in so

24:30 **we're going to have work that hard" and you just make yourself work harder and get used to it?**

Yes you do. You realise that you haven't got the equipment that you would like to have so you've got to manage with what you can do.

And from Shaggy Ridge did you go back to a base station then or did you go straight on to Borneo?

No. We went back to our base camp at Dumpu. We were running a MDS, a main dressing station there, and we were running

25:00 that right through. That was our base and various so it had differing company's headquarters run that. A company went up to one side of Shaggy Ridge, I was with B Company, we went the other side which was the so-called surprise attack but because the country's considered to be impassable it turned out to be the worst track of the lot but

25:30 in war time we were at Dumpu for I think about eight or nine months.

After Shaggy Ridge?

Yeah well Shaggy Ridge fell in the middle of it.

Right and from there you went to Borneo is that right? Balikpapan?

From there we went back home to Australia again.

Yeah.

But our next our next outing was to Borneo, yes.

And that was that was when it was the real mopping up wasn't it? Balikpapan.

Yes, yes.

Did you think then that this was perhaps a waste of

26:00 **time at all?**

Well we looked on it as part of the mopping up. The island by island mopping up and Borneo was just another island to be mopped up and so we did while we were in Australia we were up on the camped up on the Tableland then and we did amphibious training to get us ready for that sort of thing. Down to Trinity Beach near Cairns. Well then when we moved off

26:30 we sailed up via Milne Bay. We had to stop in there and so some repairs actually. The it was had extremely rough conditions and we were in the LSTs they call them, landing ship for tanks. They had big pontoon rafts slung on the sides of the boats ready for you to use as wharves when you got to where you were going and with the rough seas the

27:00 boat swinging over side to side. Every time these pontoon rafts would hit the water the whole boat would shudder like this and quite a number of the chains broke that that were hanging in place so they

were hanging loose all over the place and we had to call into Milne Bay for oh several days anyway to effect repairs before we could continue so and actually we must have must have finished up half way to New Zealand I

27:30 think. The weather conditions were so bad that they had to turn and run with the storm rather than buckling into it. I know that from Townsville to Milne Bay used to be classed a forty eight hour trip. It took us a week so running the wrong way and pushing in into the storm. Well then after we'd left Milne Bay we went 'round the north side of New Guinea. We had to stop at Biak Island to refill with water. They were in

28:00 our water at the time and from there we went on to Morotai and Morotai was used as a staging post to attack Borneo. So we left Morotai I think it was about the 25th of June, somewhere around there, but we landed at Balikpapan on the 1st of July. I remember that date, but that was

28:30 quite an education in itself. I'd never seen an amphibious landing before.

Can you tell us can you walk us through an amphibious landing from your point of view? What did you see?

Yes well there was a I don't know how many ships there must have been probably a hundred. There were cruisers, destroyers, other boats I'm not sure what they call them they seemed to be just like a rocket

29:00 ship I suppose you'd call them. They were just a ship with banks of rockets on them and all the troop ships all lined up there. We'd be what three mile two or three mile off shore I suppose and the planes were bombing right along the beach area and back beyond it.

29:30 The fighter planes were strafing the same sort of areas and the war ships were pouring shells into the land. The ships that we classed as the rocket ships they were firing bursts of rockets, not so much then as when we were going in. There'd be a bank of I don't know might be twenty or thirty rockets would scream in just in one sudden solid bank but

30:00 when the time came to land there'd be all these invasion barges from all the various troop ships that were there. They would charge in and beach. They had we were allocated various stages. The initial landing was called H hour and then there'd be H plus one. That's one hour after the initial landing. I was with the H plus one

30:30 group. Then there's H plus two, H plus three and diff different groups go in at different times according to their priorities. Well I know it was rather an amazing sensation going in with this wave of I think there might have been thirty, forty, fifty barges all going in at a time and there were shells screaming overhead, there was that's where these rocket ships were amazing. They had these banks of rockets. They'd go "Whooshooooooooo"

31:00 right over your head. They only seemed to be twenty feet up. I guess they were a bit nearer higher than that but they seemed to be just right over your head. Anyway sort of charged in hit the beach and they've got a sort of a drawbridge in the front and that drops down and you take off. We were sort of lined up on both sides of it and you had to go off one go off one side, one the other side to sort of avoid landing on top of the other bloke. Well as it turned

31:30 these boats beached into I don't know about four or six inches of water I suppose that I was first off on my side and what actually happened there where the boat had beached, hit into shallow water, but what we didn't know was a bomb had apparently landed just in front of it and I shot straight off the end of this drawbridge into about twelve feet of water. I had a

32:00 load of all my own personal gear on my back plus a big pack of medical equipment and I go straight off there and head first down into about twelve feet of water so I fortunately being a swimmer it didn't worry me unduly. I let myself go 'til the bottom and got my feet there and pushed off straight to the top and I got out but the others all saw what happened to me and they all went off the other side and hardly even got their feet wet

32:30 so

Were there any Japanese returned fire or were they completely shelled out of the game?

Pretty well completely shelled out of the game. When the initial landing was effected, an hour earlier, the there was resistance but they were pretty well wipe wiped up with shelling and bombing that had taken place but by the time we came ashore there was a few odd shots but that's about all you could say.

And

33:00 **did you actually see much action on that beach? Or were you off the beach setting up your station straight away?**

We were off, we left the beach almost immediately. I was I spent the first about a day and a half just off the beach in sort of a base camp. We weren't doing anything very much

- 33:30 at that point. We'd sent several sections out. Just can't think quite how long it was. Might have been about two days I suppose before I left to take several stretcher teams out to relieve the group that had gone out there initially and
- 34:00 we did a certain amount of stretcher bearing there. There wasn't a great deal to be done. Things seemed to have quietened down pretty fairly quickly but strange rather a strange thing happened there the after about half a day, a day I suppose it'd be, I was told to set up a dressing station, or RAP really, in one of the houses
- 34:30 sort of a suburban area it was there and take over one of the houses there and set settle myself in and run that as a RAP for the lc local troops. So I did that. Found a reasonable house had been stripped pretty well clean as far as furniture was concerned so I scrounged 'round neighbouring houses to find a table here and a chair there and a bed somewhere else and carted them into this house and set myself up and I thought
- 35:00 "Right" so I was doing a bit of RAP work as people would come in with sickness or minor injuries and patch this and patch that and saw a couple of Dutch naval blokes came in and they started snooping around other rooms in the place and I thought "Oh they're trying to pinch some of the stuff I've already pinched." So I buttonholed them and I said "If you're wanting medical attention come in here and I'll fix you up but this stuff's
- 35:30 all taboo." I said "I've got hold of this here otherwise you can clear off" and one of the Dutch blokes said "No" he said "It's okay. This is my house." He said "I live here." He said "I lived here before the war." He was off in the navy then and he said "We're in port at the moment. I just call called in to see what was left of the house."

And what did you say then?

What could I say? I said "Oh well you're welcome. I thought you were trying to pinch some of the stuff that I'd swiped

- 36:00 to make myself comfortable."

Now Lloyd we're almost at the end of this tape but if it's alright with you and it's alright with Stella I'd like to go on just a little bit longer 'cause I'm not gonna get

Yes.

a chance to finish what I'd like to do. On Balikpapan the Japanese were pretty well entrenched weren't they and they had to use flame throwers at times to clear out Jap positions. Is that correct?

- 36:30 Yes I didn't see didn't see it actually done myself. I didn't have occasion to but they would get into a fox hole and they would stay there. They would have to be either burnt out or somebody'd have to go in after them which was a very dangerous proposition.

Did you have to treat any Japanese at that stage on Balikpapan?

I never treated a Japanese, no.

Did you ever see any?

Not really 'til after the war. I came under fire

- 37:00 a few times. One time was just when I was taking those stretcher bearers out after the landing. The team that had already been out there they'd transported out there with them a couple of jeeps and that sort of thing and a couple of the jeeps came in to pick us up to take us back out there and we got out to where our
- 37:30 previous group had been based and it was the road went through a cutting through quite a steep hill, bit of a ridge either side, and when we got to there the infantry blokes were scrambling down this cutting and off over the other side and going and the driver said "Oh" he said "I don't know what's going on." He said "They were had their bases up on the top of the on top of the ridge there" and I said "Well things look a bit funny at the present time."
- 38:00 I said "Come and we'll leave the rest of the team here" I said "and you and I'll go up and see if we can find them." So I said to one of the infantry blokes coming down I said "What's going on?" He said "Bugged if I know" he said "but I'm getting out of here." So I thought "This doesn't sound too good." So anyway we scrambled up this embankment and went to where the our crowd had had their base and there was no nobody there
- 38:30 so we decided to go a bit further along the ridge and just see if they'd moved anywhere so anyway we worked our way down the ridge quite some distance and no sign of them but in the meantime there's bullets going over our heads in both directions so we thought "Well this is there's not much future in this. We must be in no man's land." So we started working our way back again and then down the side of the ridge we saw a one of our stretcher parties down there

- 39:00 and we waved at them. They waved back and beckoned us down. So we went down to see them and they said "What the hell are you blokes doing up there?" We said "Look looking for you." They said "Oh the Japs took that ridge back an hour ago." So that we thought "Well we could have very easily walked into a into a trap there." We said "Well we didn't see any Japs." So anyway the I think they sent us on to the
- 39:30 infantry battalion that was there to sort of report to their intelligence bloke and let them let them know what we'd seen up there and they were when we told them there were no Japs on the ridge they sent the battalion boys up there to reoccupy it. The Japs had pushed the Australians off it but hadn't actually occupied it and when we were able to tell them that it was vacant the Australians went back up and reoccupied the
- 40:00 ridge.
- Good move, good reconnaissance**
- Yes so
- Sergeant Tann.**
- That was unintentional but actually when we went up on top of the ridge with them to save time and they formed a bit of a perimeter there they didn't they weren't terribly strong numerically and they formed a bit of a perimeter there and oh before that we'd gone up there. We had all our
- 40:30 equipment and everything up there
- Excuse me Lloyd, we might just stop there because the tape's about to run out any second.**
- Oh.

Tape 8

- 00:31 **What were you saying just prior to the tape finishing Lloyd?**
- Yes and we went up onto the ridge with the battalion, the 2/10th Battalion I think it was from memory. Not certain of that and we were told to dig in for the night so we dug ourselves a bit of a trench and up there and then next thing it was dark by this time. Down comes somebody a runner and said "They're forming a
- 01:00 perimeter a couple of hundred yards along the along the ridge. You've got to fall back behind that perimeter. So leave all your gear here" they specifically said that "Leave all your gear here and just come back inside the perimeter for the night." So we did that and they formed a line right across the ridge a sort of semicircular line perimeter and actually the battalion
- 01:30 didn't have enough men to guard it thoroughly. They wanted a man about every five yards so we all helped them guard it. They provided rifles for us and everything.
- Was that strictly legal?**
- Possibly not.
- Did you have to surrender your Red Cross card during that time?**
- I think I was given a Red Cross card back at Puckapunyal and never saw it after that. Yeah so anyway we were there and I was forming part of the guard line
- 02:00 and a bloke come out "Sergeant Tann". I said "Here." He said "Captain" oh the doctor who was there at the time "wants a Thomas splint." He'd got a casualty being brought into him so oh no he said "He wants you." That's right, so I went back to see him. He said "I need a Thomas splint. Where is it?" I said "Out there about a quarter of a mile
- 02:30 along the ridge" so he said "I need one." "Oh" I said "I left all the gear out there. I was told to leave it there and come in just as we were." He said "Well I need a Thomas splint" and I said "Right" so I had to go and warn all the sentries along this line. I said "I'm going out down along this track. For god's sake don't shoot me when I come back." So I had to go about a quarter of mile down a out into no man's land. Fortunately I didn't see any
- 03:00 Japs and I not only picked up this Thomas splint I loaded myself up with what seemed like about a hundred weight of medical equipment of all sorts in case it might be needed. I didn't want to have to go there out there again.
- Was that a particularly frightening quarter of a mile trip?**
- I was rather nervous because I didn't know just where the Japs were and the fact that the infantry had a man oh it must have been every, about every six feet they had a man there with a rifle to they must have considered it a pretty dangerous

- 03:30 spot or they wouldn't have had half as many men on duty so I didn't know just where the Japs were. So that was rather hairy walking out there walking sort of toward them and then a bit hairy walking back as well. I didn't know whether I might have been hit by friendly fire as they call it.
- Yeah.**
- So anyway I come back loaded up with stuff of all descriptions and
- 04:00 we were able to fit this bloke up with his Thomas splint and get rid of him but so that was a very good experience in itself.
- So this is July 1945 isn't it?**
- Yes.
- Where were you on VE [Victory in Europe] Day? Can you remember?**
- No I can't. That was June '64, '44 wasn't it?
- 04:30 I'd have been in Dumpu I think. (UNCLEAR) would have been in (UNCLEAR) at that stage.
- What about VJ [Victory over Japan] Day? Well where you first of all when you heard that they'd dropped the bomb?**
- Balikpapan. It was rather a strange feeling. I'd always thought you know of the war ending there'd be wild celebrations. People go mad. Everybody just thought "Good god. It's finished."
- 05:00 It was an anticlimax.
- Did anybody cry? Did people sort of break down in relief or anything like that?**
- I don't really remember that but we just sort of talked it over quietly and said "You could hardly believe it the war is over. What's going to happen now? How long before we get home? What's going on?" You just couldn't quite believe it. Everything was so sudden. A couple of days
- 05:30 beforehand you were looking at another ten years. Island hopping. Unless they discharged us under this five year scheme before that and then all of a sudden just like snapping your fingers like that and said "War's finished. Nothing else."
- Were you tempted to stay in the army or do you were you hankering back to civvie street?**
- No. They did call for volunteers for BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force], the
- 06:00 occupational forces to go to Japan. Some joined up, mainly those who had not been in the army for very long. Joined us as reinforcements. I don't think any of the originals like myself went at all so I just felt that alright I was twenty one when I enlisted, I was twenty seven when the war finished.
- 06:30 That's a big slice of your life gone. I wanted to get home, get married, get back to work, start a family.
- And so when you got back to Melbourne who was there to meet you?**
- Joy. My mother and father and my young younger brother.
- And when you saw Joy was like "ba bing"?**
- Yeah.
- Tell us about that. If Joy will let**
- 07:00 **you.**
- Yes well our romance blossomed purely by correspondence. As I said before we'd been lifelong friends and when I'd been home on leave I'd always seen her and realised she'd made a pretty good job of growing up and then through our letters
- 07:30 and gradually got a bit closer and closer and I'd asked her to marry me and suggested giving her an engagement ring for her birthday I think but at this time I was still away and she preferred to wait 'til I came home and before any getting a ring together and celebrate together rather than apart. So anyway it was though we were not
- 08:00 formally engaged there was an understanding when I came home so when mum and dad came in to meet me and they brought Joy in with them and my younger brother, Rex. He was still in the army at that stage of course but I'm not sure whether he was home on leave but he was home anyway or available and he came in with them, which was just as well because the night we arrived we came by ship
- 08:30 and on the Cheshire and we sailed down through the Indonesian islands. I know we passed Bali. You could see Bali on the just off the side of the ship and came down via Fremantle around the south coast and the further south we got the rougher the conditions got. The crew of the ship had said they'd been

on Russian convoys

09:00 right through the war and they'd never experienced seas as rough as we struck through the Bight. So anyway we turned into Port Phillip Bay and it took them I think it was two hours or more to berth the boat.

Would have been a very frustrating two hours.

They'd put the ropes to shore, put them on the bollards and this howling south westerly would push the boat away from the wharf

09:30 all the ropes'd snap. They were trying to moor nose in toward the shore and they had two tugs trying to push the boat into the wharf so it could tie up. Eventually they put I don't know about six or eight ropes from the bows onto the bollards on the wharf and just let the wind swing the boat 'round

10:00 and with the stern toward the shore and nose out. Fortunately there was no boat on the on the shore side of it so they had the room to do it but they simply could not berth the boat the way they wanted to so we finished up facing the other way and we were all lined up in on deck in our jungle greens with this howling south westerly and cold as charity so Rex my brother fortunately he had his great coat on

10:30 so the first thing I did when I got to shore was to grab his great coat but then we had to get on the train go out to Royal Park by train to get leave passes if you please. Couldn't give 'em to us on the boat. So mum and dad and Rex, Rex came with us I think. Mum and dad drove the car out to Royal Park and were going to wait for us there and Rex

11:00 and Joy hopped on the train with me and went out to Royal Park. We had to walk all the way around the outskirts of the zoo to the camp and Joy had a pretty new pair of shoes on but they were wrecked by the time we got there. It was slush and mud. It'd been raining of course with the rain with the wind and was at Royal Park for about five minutes I suppose. I just presented myself they gave you a leave pass and walk walked straight out the other side of the park and

11:30 picked up mum and dad and the car and came home. So

You were a free man.

More or less. I was still in the army but the following day we headed into town and bought Joy a ring and we were engaged the following I think it was the following day and we got married six weeks later. I wanted to get married before I started back at work otherwise I felt I'd have to wait perhaps twelve months 'til I could get holidays

12:00 to have the time off so of course Joy's mother was in a flat spin. She couldn't arrange a wedding in six weeks but it was arranged. Everything went off well so

I imagine it would have been a wild, not wild but an immensely happy occasion after the war. To have a wedding.

It was. Yes. Yes we had quite a number of my army mates came to the wedding.

And they lived happily ever after.

12:30 Yeah.

Thank you very much Lloyd.

You're very welcome.

I think we're there. That was great.