Australians at War Film Archive

William Moody (Buzz Bomb) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 14th August 2003

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/640

Tape 1

00:38 **An overview of your life. I guess can you start where were you born where did you grow up?**

I was born Mareeba in North Queensland. My father was a First World War digger. He brought my mother out in 1921.

01:00 Six weeks after they arrived I was born, but we had to move to Herberton where I went to school. Mareeba was too hot for my mother; she was the English rose type of person. It was a backward town, a tin mining town but it was wonderful. We had hills all around us and I guess that is where I became a great walker.

01:30 **When you moved to Herberton, how long?**

Herberton, that is on the Atherton Tableland. It is about 3,000 feet above sea level. About two miles out of Herberton, it is the highest railway line in Australia.

How long did you spend in Herberton?

I went to school there, at the Herberton state primary and high schools, and I started work

02:00 at the post office as a telegraph messenger but after working there six months, there was a scream from Brisbane saying, “Sack him. He was more than fifteen years and six months when he started to work for us.” Despite the fact that I came second in the examination, the person who came first took up a job in Brisbane, so the postmaster put me straight into the job. I was there probably for about six months, then my brother took over

02:30 from me when I was fired. There was no work in Herberton so I went to work in Mareeba in Jack & Newells, a merchandising business. But I would drive home to Herberton every Saturday afternoon. I was so lonely in Mareeba. I was very fortunate. I stayed with my grandmother and I saw my family practically every week.

Then after you, how long did you work for

03:00 **the merchant company?**

I worked until I joined the army in September 1939. My parents wouldn’t sign my papers. I might have got away with the 2nd AIF [Australian Imperial Force] then. Instead I joined the militia and stayed there until I was discharged in 1946.

03:30 My first number was VE419770, which was a voluntary enlistment number with A Company of 51 Battalion, which was the far northern region. I stayed with them until 1942 and then I was transferred

04:00 to various places in the army.

Can you tell me a bit more detail about where you trained in Australia, when you went overseas?

Yes. I was selected to do an officer training school in 1941. I did two parts of 26 OTS,

04:30 that is Officer Training School, and then they stopped giving out commissions with the OTS. So they sent me back to 51 Battalion again in Cairns where I remained on strength with them for three months and then they sent me down to number 1 OCTU, that’s Officer Cadet Training Unit, and that was in Woodside, South Australia.

05:00 I did A wing and B wing of that and I was transferred to hospital and had my appendix out. Then I spent six weeks in a recreation-come-recovery unit, and went back and did C wing with number 3 OCTU.

05:30 I topped that school and then they transferred me to jungle training centre Canungra where I lectured

and trained people coming through before they went to the islands for six months. At the end of that time I was transferred to a training unit in Macrossan, outside

06:00 Townsville. I was there for about three months and then went by ship to Lae in Papua New Guinea and then I did some patrolling up the Markham River. That was at the end of the campaign for the capture of Lae by the 7 and 9 Divisions. I was transferred to 15 Battalion,

06:30 three months or so with them, and then the unit came back to Australia. We were camped out at Strathpine, and then we were sent up to Bougainville. I went up with Don Company. I was a platoon commander with them. We did some training there and then we crossed the Java River which was the first of our

07:00 operations in Bougainville.

How long did you spend in Bougainville?

About eighteen months, but then after accepting the surrender of the envoy from General Kanda on the Mivo River, I was given two options. I was offered a commission as substantive captain with

07:30 the British army in Burma, or after I got sufficient points up, because I was single I decided to come home and get married. But that was not until June 1946. In the meantime I served up in Rabaul. I had the dubious honour of being asked to control

08:00 a firing squad because we were trying Japanese people who came down from Nanking in Central China after the rape of Nanking and they finished up in Bougainville, and some of them had been responsible for the atrocities against the Indian soldiers,

08:30 Royal Punjabi and other battalions, I don't remember them. We actually executed twelve Japanese who had been in the Kempati, they had been the secret police, and they had committed these atrocities on some of these Indian prisoners. I attended some of the trials there. That was a dubious honour.

09:00 I didn't accept the command of the firing squad.

And then after Rabaul?

After Rabaul I was discharged at Redbank and then my brother, who was in the air force, and I got together and got the services out of system. We went back to Mareeba and spent about three months in Mareeba and then I

09:30 came to Brisbane where I was employed in the Commonwealth Public Service in the department of supply.

Can you tell me a bit about that time with the department of supply and your life back in Brisbane?

Yes. I started off with supply. I think my salary was about £375 a year. Yes, a year.

10:00 I was on the lowest level. We moved into this home in 1947, the day after we were married, no, after we came back from our honeymoon, and I worked my way up through the department of supply to department of manufacturing industry until I finished up deputy director contracts, Queensland, Northern Territory and Papua and New Guinea.

10:30 In that time we had our family, a pigeon pair. Phillip, our elder child is now fifty-three years of age and has a Ph.D. He has three children, and Vivienne is forty-eight and she has two children. They live within easy distance of us so we see them at least once a week

11:00 or once a fortnight. During that time when we were having a family I went back to school under the reconstruction training school and became an accountant and associate of the Australian Society of Accountants, and Associate of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries. So I have two diplomas. That stood me in good cause with my

11:30 department.

Excellent. We might go right back to the beginning now that we've gotten right to the end and I want to talk a little bit more about your childhood and your family. Can you tell me the story of your mother and your father, how they met?

Yes, my father was a First World War Dig. He went away in

12:00 1915, I think it was. He enlisted from Biboohra, where he was born. That's just outside Mareeba and I have a photograph of him here, and he went away with ordinance corps. He was so short he had hoped to go to 9 Battalion which landed in Gallipoli. My Uncle Tom, who was younger than my father,

12:30 he was the typical Australian. He was about six feet tall and a wonderful horseman and he was one of the first ashore in Gallipoli. However, my father met my mother, she was a nurse so she was in X-rays over there, and she would tell us stories about the English doctor who had

13:00 one thumb on his left hand. His right arm had been taken off because he was one of the founders of X-ray systems, so my mother worked with him. My father was Mentioned In Dispatches in 1921 after he had been made a warrant officer class 1. He wound up the Australian books

13:30 of the 1st AIF, and that is why he got the MID [Mentioned In Despatches] for his excellent work. My mother continued her great work in Herberton with various organisations, particularly with the CWA, the Country Women's Association. My father died when he was ninety-one and my mother died

14:00 when she was ninety-two I think. They both were in a Mareeba Home.

You said they met while she was a nurse. How did the romance occur?

I don't know. Dad had a roving sort of a job working closely with the army organisations there with the ordinance corps and with the pay corps.

14:30 I think he met her at a dance at the 1st Birmingham War Hospital. She had been transferred to, where is Stonehenge? On the plains? And it was at a dance that he met her and so the get-together flourished and they were

15:00 finally married in England and he brought her back as a bride. I was born six weeks after they arrived in Australia. My mother did tell us a funny story. The first time she went out in a sulky with my father, they went out to what they called Biboohra way where my father was born, and my mother saw her first

15:30 ant hill. She started screaming, "Look, look, you didn't tell me they have elephants here." My father was a great horseman in his own right too. He used to take me up the street in Mareeba on Baby, his horse. The horse was his great friend before he joined and went away. And Baby was

16:00 there out in the paddock and he would just whistle. He had a particular whistle and Baby recognised him, and so did old Annie [?Charlotte] who was an aboriginal woman who worked out on one of the cattle stations. My father was a great shooter and fisherman in his day and as soon as Charlotte saw him, she said, "I know you are Willy Moody. I can tell you by your walk." That was after

16:30 1915 to 1921. We had a wonderful time as children up in Mareeba and up in Herberton, fishing and shooting and tin scratching, and even working down the mines. They would take us down and we would stuff dynamite down the holes.

17:00 We'd be down about fifty feet or so. These holes would be about two or three feet deep, put in two sticks of gelignite and ram them down. They never allowed my brother or me to put the detonators in. As soon as we had done that we would get into the winch and they would winch us up. We would go into the place where they were sharpening the tools and we would use the

17:30 bellows. It was a wonderful, carefree time up in the mountains.

What is tin scratching?

There is alluvial tin and streams. There is the Wild River that flows through Herberton, and the deep lead which is outside Wondecla, and we would take our little dish, tin dishes with us and get down in the water and

18:00 tin scratch. Invariably we would fill an Uncle Toby's oats tin with this alluvial tin and then we would take it to OT Lempria or George Gordon. They were in opposition in Herberton. One day we would go to say to George Gordon, "Mr Gordon." "Oh, the Moody kids again. What have you got today, the old Uncle Toby's oats tin?

18:30 Have you been to see Mr Lenton yet?" "No, Mr Gordon, you are the first one today." "I will give you one and sixpence a pound." So the Uncle Toby's oats tin would hold about £10 so we would get fifteen shillings from him. The next time we would go down to Mr Lenton who worked for OT Lempria. "You kids again. How are you Billy and how are you Johnny? What have you got today, the usual Uncle Toby's oats tin?

19:00 How much did Mr Gordon give you last week? Oh, one and sixpence a pound. I will give you one and sixpence halfpenny." So we were quite wealthy as children. We were only about nine and ten in those days when we did that. That sort of life stood me in great stead because in the army I was in the infantry and I knew how to use a pea rifle, which I owned. I used to

19:30 pay two and six a week to Jack & Newells. And my Uncle George who I used to go shooting and fishing had a single barrel shot gun. So I became a dead-eye dick with both weapons and when I was in the army I was able to zero my rifle and I was a marksman.

Can you tell me about the Depression, how it affected you

20:00 **as a child?**

My father was working as an accountant at Jack & Newells at that time in Herberton. We never had shoes to wear to school but my mother was a wonderful cook. We had no curtains in our home, it was a tin shed sort of a home and the kitchen would be about twenty yards away from the house with a

narrow passageway,

20:30 and my mother used an old copper boiler out in the backyard to do all the washing. The washhouse was a little business off the back of the house. We had no hot water but once a week my mother would heat up water and we would have a hot bath. In winter the temperature would go down

21:00 to minus two, minus four, even today sometimes in the winter months in the past Herberton would record the lowest in Queensland. It was a great healthy climate from minus four, in summer never hotter than about twenty-four or twenty-five degrees. Being 3,000 feet above sea level of course it was a wonderful climate.

21:30 Very hilly. We used to go fishing in the Wild River with bent pins and we would catch fish about three or four inches long. Don't ask me how much a millimetre is these days. I don't remember.

Would you take that fish home to your mum?

No, we would go up to the Anniversary, which was a copper mine, and we would go swimming there and if you had any

22:00 scratches they would burst out because the copper in the water would affect them. But we used to get yabbies, catch yabbies, and we would take a billy can up with us and light the fire, and we would have yabbies with some bread and butter that our mother would cut for us. We might go away at eight o'clock in the morning and get back about four o'clock in the afternoon.

What sort of,

22:30 **I guess during the Depression people had to make do with what they had. Do you have any memories of the family being resourceful?**

My mother was a very resourceful woman and we had a Chinee [Chinese] who would bring round fresh fruit and vegetables once a week. He came from the other side of the Great Dividing Range. He had his

23:00 garden near Atherton and every Monday he would drive his horse and cart up over the Great Dividing Range to Herberton. We had Yang Ye, also a Chinaman who had a little garden not very far from our home, so we had plenty of fruit, vegetables and my mother was a great cook, and she was very fond of skirt steak. We would have

23:30 skirt steak fried with tomatoes or with eggs and every Sunday we had roast beef and Yorkshire pudding with pumpkin, potatoes and onions. We would have rice with milk for sweets. Clothing, my mother was a excellent

24:00 sort of seamstress. She made all our clothes. I had three brothers, I was the eldest.

You mentioned on Sunday you would have roast beef with Yorkshire pudding?

Yes.

That sounds like a bit of an English dish?

She was an English woman and whenever I came home, leave from the army, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding

24:30 was the main thing at lunch. We always had that. We would have people who would come to our home for lunch, particularly John of North Queensland, our Bishop, the Bush Brothers, they would come for a Sunday dinner with us. We had two great Aborigines, the Millers, they were full-blooded Aboriginal boys.

25:00 They were in our choir in Herberton and often we would have them for dinner.

Did you have a good relationship with the Aboriginal people?

Yes we did. Just as my father had a wonderful relationship with Aborigines, we had a wonderful relationship with particularly with the Millers and old Jessie would come and do my mother's washing for us, particularly when she was

25:30 raising three children. Peter is the youngest of us all, he was about twelve years younger than the rest of us.

As a child, were you aware of any racism and stuff that went on at all?

No. No racism at all and even today I have never been a racist. In our home here we have had Japanese girls

26:00 that I have tutored them in English. We have had people from El Salvador, from Sri Lanka as our guests. I never had hatred for the Japanese. They were wonderful soldiers; they were doing what I did.

26:30 They were killing people with whom I had trained in the army, and I was killing them.

Do you think this amazing tolerance, respect for people that you have came from your family?

My mother and my father were typical North,

27:00 my mother was typically English. She had a wonderful mother, she had a wonderful family and she would tell us stories of how her mother would go out onto the streets during air raids to bring people in to have soup with them. There has never been any racist tendencies,

27:30 except my father. Tom, he is younger than I, myself, John, Tom and Peter. Dad said to him once, "I think you are a combo," and Tom said, "What do you mean I'm a combo? Aren't you communist?" Tom said, "Dad, you should know better than

28:00 that." That is the first time I have ever heard my father have a racist attitude at all. He detested the, he never said commos, he used to say combos.

Tell me about your relationship with your uncle?

My Uncle Tom. I had three uncles, all brothers of my father's,

28:30 and that is a thing that I think to myself how mean you were. Uncle Tom was one of the first people ashore at Gallipoli. During my stay with my grandmother Uncle Tom was seldom at home because he was a drover, but when he came home I found him

29:00 difficult to talk to. I don't know why. He had a poor schooling but he knew the Bible backwards and he would get into arguments with me about the Bible. I remember the day I took my first Lee Enfield rifle home from the army and he said, "Don't tell me you have joined the army." And I said, "Yes I have Uncle Tom." He said, "You are a bloody fool son." When I came out after

29:30 the war I would see Uncle Tom and the first time I met him he said, "I believe you distinguished yourself." It was only then when I came home from the war that I realised what a stinker I had been towards Uncle Tom. He was a lonely man and I didn't have enough sense, when he came home after droving away for months and months and months to try and help him. He was a real loner.

30:00 **After the war when you came back and he said, "I heard you distinguished yourself," did you renew a relationship with him?**

Yes, he was in Mareeba at that time too. Whenever I went home I would look up Uncle Tom. He used to call my mother Marion and she got on very well with my Uncle Tom. My Uncle George lived only two homes away from where my grandmother's home was

30:30 and he was the one who taught me many things about the bush.

Can you tell me some of the things that he taught you?

My family got me a three-gear bike and that is the one I used to ride to Herberton and home again up over the Great Dividing Range, thirty-five miles. I would do it four and a half

31:00 hours going from Mareeba. That is about 1,000 feet, up 3,000 feet over the Great Dividing Range into Herberton. And he and I would get on our respective bikes with a shotgun strung along the bars of it. He had a magnificent weapon, a repeater, and I had this silly old single barrel shot gun but it was very good and a pea rifle over my shoulder. And we would cycle out from

31:30 Mareeba seventeen miles towards the upper waters of the Mitchell River, which flows into Carpentaria, and we would shoot maybe a couple of braces of pigeons and maybe three or four ducks. We might get onto a sucking pig and take it home and feed it up for Christmas, and fish.

32:00 Uncle George knew that country backwards and so I became a, I was able to appreciate country and I could, I was always looking for ways I could climb up a hill by the shortest and most direct way. At a tender age I learnt to appreciate country and it stood me in good stead

32:30 in the jungle when I could camouflage myself, when I could move silently. That saved me many times.

Going back for a second, what is a pea shooter?

A pea rifle?

A pea rifle, can you explain that to me?

I had a gold seal pea rifle. It is a .22 of an inch. It is probably one of the lightest rifles.

33:00 It was extremely accurate. It had a long barrel and fantastic German manufacture. You could fire BB caps, they were wonderful for shooting pigeons. Sometimes we would go out pig shooting and I would use a super shell. The pigs were a great nuisance, particularly on South Hedge, which was an important cattle station.

33:30 South Hedge gave Uncle George and me the right to fish and shoot anywhere on South Hedge. So they would tell us there would be a couple of wild brumbies that had been annoying the cattle and upsetting

them or some wild pigs. So we would go out and maybe shoot a wild brumby or two and pigs.

It must have been a really fun

34:00 **time?**

Yes, it was a fun time. It was a most enjoyable time and it was part and parcel of deep-seated training. I was a Scoutmaster too in Mareeba at the age of seventeen, and so three of us were scout leader, and an old army friend of mine later on, and I, we were patrol leaders. Often I would take

34:30 my own little group out up the Barron River or up this creek, the Closie, and take out a steak or take out a roast beef, dig a hole and cook it, and we did our own little Morse code. We were arrested one night by the police. Someone had reported

35:00 subversive activities on the Barron River. I had set up two stations, one on one side and the other station on the other side and we were practising our Morse code by signals. The things we did in the country, it distresses me today to see what is happening to our youngest grandson. Joe is thirteen,

35:30 but when it comes to walking Joe doesn't care to walk. He is more interested in his schooling now and in his piano and in his art. He will make a name for himself in the gentle arts.

What about your schooling? You led a pretty free time, was it hard to tie you down and get you into the classroom?

36:00 I detested school. I did a good scholarship but in those days the highest that I could go was junior. John of North Queensland wanted to take me away from the family and give me an education at All Souls School, the Church of England school outside Townsville, and my mother said, "I can't do

36:30 without my son Bill." So I became a server at the local church. When I did my scholarship I did that examination I think I told you about with the post office and came second, and was employed, but then I only worked there for six months.

Why did you detest school?

I was a pretty good scholar apparently.

37:00 I was always beaten by a lass by the name of Phyllis Lee Long who was of Chinese extraction. Her grandfather worked on the tin mines up around the Palmer in those days. They ran a shop in Herberton. She always beat me right up until about seventh grade. Seventh grade at that time was the

37:30 scholarship. I did four examinations for scholarship, as we all did in those days. I did a good scholarship but when I got to high school I wasn't a renegade, but I got into some trouble. I bashed up a boy once. He insulted my mother and in the school grounds

38:00 Len Foster and I had a bit of a fight up. His uncle was a teacher at the high school. His name was William Walter Wildsmith and he gave me a dreadful time and for that reason I did a poor junior. I really didn't develop until I joined the army, and that is where I flourished.

38:30 I have got two certificates in accounting and also as a chartered secretary after the war with Reconstruction Training Scheme.

Having come from a background I guess where there was always a bit of talk of war in the family, your father was in the First World War and your mother was a war bride, your uncle was

39:00 **involved, what sort of attitude had you formed about war before you joined the army?**

I was in the scouts. I knew nothing about war except what my mother and my father told me. But then when I joined the militia I was always the best-dressed soldier, and many

39:30 times I was on parade and on guard duty with 51 Battalion in Cairns. Whenever we went out on exercises I knew the country. I became a good tactician and that stood me in good stead. It got me the appointment to go and do the officer training school.

40:00 It enabled me to top the class, and of course the cane cutters made a man of me too, because at the age of nineteen in the CMF [Citizens Military Force] our sergeant went ill and I was a corporal and I was made the platoon commander of 18 Platoon, and these cane cutters, six foot six and about twenty-five

40:30 or twenty-six years of age, they used to call me down and they looked after me. One tactical exercise, we worked over an area of about fifty miles from Cairns. Each of the platoons were given four flags and these cane cutters would get on the phone when we pulled up in the afternoon. Any troops that we saw were enemy, and so they would get on the phone, Cairns or Stratford

41:00 or Mareeba, where we might march too in part and parcel of getting around the area. They would say, "Is that you Stelly? Yeah, Who is that? Oh, Joe, how are you Joe? Stelly, any soldiers around your place?" "Yes, we have got a platoon in our garage for the night." One night we marched twenty miles, and we caught one of the other platoons

41:30 of our battalion sleeping. So we just went in and took all their arms and we got their flag. In the period of three weeks of this exercise we accumulated ten flags. In those days there were four companies in a battalion. So that was sixteen platoons who were out over an area of about fifty square miles.

42:00 **We'll just change tapes. That's just the end of the tape.**

Tape 2

00:44 **Can you tell me about how you got the job as the cashier with the merchants and tell me a little bit about that job?**

My father was the accountant for Jack & Newells in

01:00 Mareeba. We had to go to Herberton because of the height and humidity in Mareeba and the coolness of the climate in Herberton. When I was fired form the post office, Jack & Newells at Mareeba said, "Billy hasn't got a job. Send him down here." So I started off as a clerk, then became their cashier

01:30 which was quite a responsible position. So it was just my father had established excellent rapport with Jack & Newells and they needed someone in Mareeba.

What sort of things would you do on a day-to-day basis in the job?

Mainly cashier. They had one cashier supporting their grocery, their hardware and their drapery area. It was quite a responsible job and

02:00 always exceptionally busy because that was the biggest emporium in Mareeba.

Did you enjoy it?

Not really. There was a tremendous amount of responsibility, particularly balancing the cash, and it was a very busy area because Jack & Newells had other shops in

02:30 Mount Garnet, Mulligan, Mossman, Port Douglas. And after all, I was only sixteen and it was a responsibility.

During your time in Mareeba, you lived with your grandmother?

Yes.

You mentioned that you felt lonely?

Well, I did because all my friends were in Herberton and Gran

03:00 lived by herself in this big home. I think there were about four, five, six bedrooms in it. Gran had many relatives in Mareeba but it was in an isolated area away from the township itself. And of course

03:30 I had started studies then for accountancy with a firm, Hemmingway & Robertson, but I could never settle down to that very well. I was lonely until Uncle George said, "Why don't you come out fishing and shooting with me." From then on, apart from that, he had four daughters and his eldest daughter, Coral, she was a beautiful girl, so she took away some of my loneliness until she

04:00 went to Cairns to college.

Your relationship with your grandmother?

Gran was a real dear. She used to call me Willy. I would get up every morning and light the fire and I would take her in a cup of tea. She had a lass who would come over and do her

04:30 washing and ironing. I used to look after the yard. She had almost half an acre and I had to cut the grass from the railway line up to Gran's home which was about 300 or 400 yards to that, so that Mary, who came over to do the house work for Gran, wouldn't get dew or wet on her garments because it was fairly high grass.

05:00 So I worked hard there.

When did you decide to join the militia?

My cousin, Bobby Dawson, was in it and it was just natural for me. I really don't know why, except that it appealed to me, the regimentation and the

05:30 things that they did, the rifle range practises.

How did you tell your parents that you had joined them?

I didn't tell them. I just joined it but it was more or less a foregone conclusion because my father had been in the army and my uncle. I struck a bit of an upset when they wouldn't approve of me joining

06:00 the AIF, the 2nd AIF. So I stayed in the militia but as soon as I turned twenty maybe, I said to Dad, "I think it is about time." He said, "Righto."

Why wouldn't they let you join the 2nd AIF?

I think they thought I was too young, but of course after leaving Herberton they would only see me on, I used to cycle up practically every weekend to start of with

06:30 until I would go fishing and shooting with Uncle George on the weekends. And then they might see me about once every three weeks, and I think my mother was a very protective woman.

Do you think their experiences in the First World War made them a bit cautious?

It was a dreadful sort of experience for my mother.

07:00 She would tell us about the German Zeppelins coming over and bombing the cities and the destruction and then she would see the soldiers coming back from France, and I think that would pray on her mind.

Did you tell your Uncle Tom that you had joined the militia?

The day that he saw me when I brought my rifle home, that is when he said, "You are

07:30 a bloody fool."

Did you at that time question why he said that?

No, I didn't because at that time there was not that much rapport because I held him in tremendous esteem and Uncle Tom was a very quiet man, a recluse really because he was a great drover. And he would go up to Darwin and right up into the Never Never Land

08:00 and up into the Tablelands, and at one time he brought back 1500 head of cattle over about, I think it was about 780 miles from the Never Never country down to Mareeba.

Where were you when and sort of what

08:30 **are your memories of hearing that war had been declared?**

It didn't affect us very much. I was living with my grandmother at Mareeba then, but I was very interested in what was happening to England. I was always a bit of a renegade when it came to cricket. My brother, John,

09:00 my next brother down, eighteen months, thirteen months younger than I, he supported Australia and I always supported the Brits, particularly the MCC. We had some fights over that. We had a wireless set and we would get out of bed about two o'clock in the morning when they were broadcasting from the

09:30 BBC, and fight after fight particularly if the Australians made a better score.

You were just telling me about listening to the BBC reports?

Yes. It was over a homemade reception unit,

10:00 our neighbour's home. We would go down there at 2.00 am in the morning and listen to until about half past five or six o'clock, whenever they'd called off.

What sort of things would you hear?

You would hear, "Bradman has sent another one to the boundary, that is another four to Bradman." And I had grown, and Jack was a great swear boy, he said, "Serves them bloody well right."

10:30 I said, "You're talking about Australians." "Well, serves them bloody well right again." So he was anti-Pom [Englishman] and I was all for the Poms. I have always had that strong feeling because of my mother of course.

This made you interested in what was going on in the early days of the war?

That is right. We would get the news regularly on the ABC here,

11:00 and I know I cried when I heard about Dunkirk coming up, and my mother got a copy of the "Snow Goose". Have you ever read the "Snow Goose"? It is all about this cripple and Fleur, I think the girl's name was, and the great white goose came and settled on the marshes.

11:30 And a very close feeling developed between this cripple and this beautiful young girl and that is how Dunkirk comes in because the goose finally settled on the boat that the lighthouse keeper had been running between Dunkirk and England, and they found him dead over the rudder. That

12:00 really upset me. It still upsets me, but I was always one for worrying. It was certainly no heroics on my

part that I joined the army. It just came naturally, I enjoyed the life.

Aside from enjoying the life, given your family's background

12:30 **did you have expectations of what war would be like?**

No, not really. I don't think anyone has until you are right in it, and then it comes with a sudden realisation.

Can you tell me about the day when you joined the militia? What process you went through to join?

I just lined up. I went along to the meeting or the parade

13:00 one night and I was asked why I wanted to join the army, and I said, "Well, I could think of nothing more interesting," and I had seen the parades and parades always fascinated me, as they still do, and particularly the exercises that they went out on. Firing ranges that we had,

13:30 camping out, meeting new people. So I was a natural I think.

Did you have, what was the process of signing up?

Yes, it is just that I took the oath.

What is the oath?

Well and truly serve my,

14:00 the King of England and that I will defend my country, that sort of thing.

How did you take the oath?

Well, I held a Bible and swore on the Bible that I would well and truly serve my King and country.

How did you feel taking the oath?

Excited. I can remember that

14:30 and the day I was given my equipment, and particularly the rifle. I immediately took it home and stripped it down and what moving parts I could remove, and poured boiling water down the barrel, and it really shone. It was my pride possession.

I've got a few more questions about the militia, but just going back

15:00 **a little bit, was your family very religious?**

We went to church every Sunday. We lived next door to St Mary's which was a girl's college in Herberton. I became a server at the age of seven and I am still serving today.

What does a server do?

At the altar, you assist the priest

15:30 during the evensong or during Holy Communion. I have continued that right through to today. I train servers at St Luke's. I suppose you'd say that we were God-fearing Anglicans, Church of England in those days.

16:00 Of course the Bush Brotherhood were wonderful people. All of them came from England as was Bishop John Featham, he was our Bishop for North Queensland, he was centred in Townsville.

When you moved to Mareeba you'd

16:30 **continue going to church?**

No, I didn't serve in Mareeba. I don't know why I didn't. I think there were too many other things on Sunday, particularly fishing and shooting.

Right. Back to the time in the militia. What sort of training did you undergo? To begin with how did they

17:00 **initiate you into the service?**

You start off by standing to attention and standing at ease and doing guard duties, working the officers' mess, working in the privates' mess and then doing examinations for promotion to corporal and then to sergeant.

17:30 And then going away to do camps to Bonegilla or to Miowera and then finally being selected to go to officer training school.

In relation

18:00 **to the militia, you mentioned earlier when we were talking about the cane cutters?**

The cane cutters, yes. They were recruited into the militia at that time. They came from Mossman and further south to Innisfail. They came in as privates. As a matter of fact, we had funny occurrence, we were sent to Townsville

18:30 as a battalion. That was just after December 19, when was Pearl Harbour, 1941? 1941, and we went overland by vehicles

19:00 and we were camped out at Blue Water. No showers, no nothing for us, and so one morning we went out on parade and the cane cutters just sat down and said, “No baths, no pack drill.” There was a tremendous to do about that of course, but eventually

19:30 every second day we were taken out to Blue Water to the North of Townsville and we had swims. The food also, they complained about the food. In those days you would have pork and beans in cans. The liver would come out in whole livers and that

20:00 was boiled in coppers that we used to do our washing. And it must have been a healthy diet in a way but in any case, eventually the food improved and we were getting a bath every second day. It was through the ruction caused by the cane cutters that we had those improved conditions,

20:30 and of course we always had fun when we had pork and beans because the person who got the piece of pork, or a piece of pork from a meal, he would take the jackpot because every meal we knew that pork and beans were coming we would each put in sixpence, and there might be one piece of pork per can of beans.

21:00 So sometimes the company, that would be about 120 people putting in sixpences, that is eighty shillings. Eighty shillings, twenty shillings to a pound I think, about £4 so it was worthwhile winning.

Did you ever win the jackpot?

No, I didn’t.

What were the relationships like between

21:30 **you guys? Did you make any good friends in that time?**

Yes, I did. As I said, most of these people were cane cutters in my platoon. In the platoon, there would be four sections each with eight people, that would be thirty-two. With thirty-two in the platoon of which I was eventually platoon sergeant, they were the people who looked after me and called me ‘Dad’. So I

22:00 grew up with the cane cutters. They were hard drinking, hard working men but they were good soldiers because they came from North Queensland.

Why had they joined the militia?

I think at that time full time duty came up. That was in 1942. I think it may have been May 1942. That is when I went on to full time duty and that is

22:30 when my father signed my papers to go into the 2nd AIF. My first number was VE419770 and that was changed then to Q39216. When I transferred to the 2nd AIF my number became QX33579.

You said that these cane cutters

23:00 **were hard living, did you get an education from them?**

Yes, in many ways. First of all, to take them out on patrol they were wonderful people because they knew the land too, they knew the area in which we were moving. So they would know short cuts over the mountains probably and over the hills, they knew where all the valleys were.

23:30 They knew where all the roads ran to, but apart from that they had a great camaraderie amongst themselves, and our platoon was going to be the best platoon and time after time we would win the tidiest lines. We even had one, he was an Italian, and the fall-in A and fall-in B, the

24:00 bugle call would be played. But old Ben, Ben Reganazi was always the last and he would go round our four tents and he’d pick up even a little bit of grass that might have been left on the floor boards. So for that reason we won the tidiest platoon area time after time. Here were these great cane cutters some of them six feet tall, and yet to see them fuss around

24:30 the tents was really amazing. They were staunch friends. I still remember many of their names, Ben Reganazi, Lofty Jensen, John Lendich, the Roberts brothers. One of the Robert’s brothers as a matter of fact went over to Lowe Island, low woody isles out from Port Douglas.

25:00 Fourteen miles away a storm blew up, his boat was sunk and he swam through those shark-infested waters over the Great Barrier Reef of course back to Port Douglas. He had tremendous lungs on him.

He could stay under water for up to five minutes. They would start work about five o'clock in the morning and work through to about five o'clock at night. They received wonderful pay,

25:30 so they worked hard but they also ate very well, and then at the end of the cane season they would go to Mildura picking crops or fruit, and they might go and cut beans somewhere else.

Did they, from what you observed, find it strange going from the cane cutting lifestyle to the militia?

26:00 The militia, the army then became their life because they had to sign up and they were in for the war, for the duration of the war. As long as they were well fed, as evidenced by the riot that we had, they settled in very well. They were responsible for us winning twelve flags that time

26:30 and that got me the course to become a lieutenant, but it was through their efforts and through their loyalty to me and my support that that actually happened, because it was the best platoon thanks to them.

What was the highlight of the time with the militia?

I think the time that

27:00 I was selected to go and do the officer training course. I was the only one in the battalion to be selected.

Can you tell me about when you got that news that you were selected?

I was just told, "You are going to Broadmeadows, by Cairns, through Cairns and Brisbane and Sydney next Wednesday."

27:30 No "Would you like to go?" It was an order, "Report to the doctor get clearance from him and see the transport officer for your ticket."

What were you feeling then?

Wondering what the hell was going to happen to me.

You didn't know why you were going?

They told me why I was going.

28:00 I was going down to be, I had been selected to do this Officer Training Unit, OTS, Officer Training School, and if I qualified I would be made a lieutenant and I would not go back to the battalion. I would be sent to another battalion. That distressed me, but on the other side, if I worked hard and passed the school I would be a lieutenant.

28:30 **Was your platoon proud of you?**

I guess so. I know we had a bit of a celebration.

Tell me about the trip that you had to take down to Sydney and Brisbane?

The only thing that I still remember about that that I still remember was the night we were put on the troop train of course, because at that time

29:00 troops were being sent "hell west and crooked" on the Queensland Railways. We pulled up at Mackay about two o'clock in the morning and we sat down to bangers and fried tomatoes and potatoes, and that happened to every troop train that went through Mackay.

29:30 To get a hot meal at 2.00 am in the morning was quite an experience.

Had you travelled before? Had you been down south before?

Only to Cairns but never to Brisbane. You could go to Cairns from Herberton or Mareeba in those days. It was a wonderful experience.

What were our impressions of Brisbane?

I didn't really understand Brisbane because

30:00 I never dwelt in Brisbane until 1946 when I got that job in Brisbane. That was with the department of supply.

Can you tell me about the first day at the Officer Training School?

Yes.

30:30 We were really poorly kitted in 51 Battalion, so instead of having the proper putties over our boots we were given riding leathers. Instead of having a warm overcoat, I had nothing except

31:00 khakis, shorts, because of the climate in Cairns. So my entire kit was simply short sleeved shirts and

shorts and leather, I don't know what you'd call them now, and boots and a fur felt hat.

31:30 Coming from Far North Queensland, it was the first time I had ever been in such a camp as that. People from Western Australia, Tasmania and Melbourne, really I didn't talk the same language. I thought that Sydney people spoke too loud and they were always rushing around, and people from Melbourne spoke with plums in their mouths. I was a real country yokel.

32:00 So I did find it embarrassing. But I just absorbed army life and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I learned so much.

Can you tell me some of the things that you learned?

Map reading. I learnt to shoot with a rifle and a Lewis gun we had. No Bren guns in those days and I revelled in that

32:30 because I became a marksman and there were not many marksmen in those days. But I understood the theory of a rifle and the theory of a machine gun, and I understood the country so when you got out into tactics I really excelled myself. As a matter of fact, when we went out on tactics

33:00 the instructor said to me, "There is no need for you to worry about this. You can go back to camp and you can prepare meals for us." I went back to this German, of all things, grape vineyard, so I would have meals while the others were out training because

33:30 I had passed and I was told that I had done a masterful exercise. It was a platoon attack, a set platoon attack and withdrawal and development of a defensive position. By taking one out of the group it meant the others were able to acquire more experience.

Did this make you feel proud?

34:00 Well, I guess, yes. No, not proud, because I knew what to do and how to do it. I was just thinking about my weekends away with my Uncle George, fishing and shooting. So it came naturally to me.

How was the schooling structured, would you have lessons every day, would you learn

34:30 **different things on different days?**

Yes, when we were at, reveille would be at half past five, we had to shave, bath and shave and attend to other comforts within half an hour to be on role call at six o'clock.

35:00 Make up your bed, get dressed, and then just wait for bugle call for, "Come to the cookhouse door boys." Everything was by bugle in those days and then we had to be on parade by 8.00 am. We would work until lunch time, half an hour for lunch and then night exercises would probably be two exercises

35:30 or two night exercises a week so it was all strictly disciplined and timed.

What were the instructors like?

I've got a photograph. I can show you some of our instructors later on. One, Darby Buchannan, was a Scot. He was a genuine gentleman and

36:00 he never, you could always rely upon him not to engage in any bastardry at all. He was such a very good instructor. You felt like working hard for him and harder and even better yourself because of his attitude.

Did much of that go on?

Bastardry? I never ever saw any. I did in

36:30 the OTS and OCTU but the idea there was to try and break a person, to push them further that they could not accept either physically or mentally. So the wastage there might be up to a third of say 120 who might be doing the course.

How would they push someone?

37:00 You had to stand by your bed every morning after it had been made up and the instructor would come along and there might be a piece of hay or stuffing from the bed on the floor. You might on the spot be told, "Right, after fall-out this afternoon, so many times around the block with a bag of stones."

37:30 You never refused but if you fell down or was unable to finish it, that might be associated with other things that happened during the day or during the week that you would be sent back to your unit. People who graduated from OTS or OCTU had really a hard time.

38:00 The idea was to try and break you. If you rose above that then you were of suitable material to be made a lieutenant.

Do you think it was justified?

I do. I saw some people who had been through OCTU who went out on patrol and one of the officers came screaming back through our ranks. We ran into an ambush

38:30 and he had cracked. It is a wonder he had not cracked when going through OCTU or OTS, because truly you were extended, truly extended and pushed to make sure, or at least to be of a type that could withstand jungle training and jungle warfare, and have leadership

39:00 qualities.

They pushed you?

Yes, they pushed me, but I had always been fit. I'd always been out in the bush, fishing and shooting and walking. I went down there healthy and strong and adjustable.

39:30 **We'll just change tapes.**

Tape 3

00:55 **You might want to tell us that story you told us again quickly?**

01:00 The OCTU was divided into three divisions. The first was armoury and those were the drills, the training, etcetera. The second was

01:30 the administrative branch, and one was on hygiene, and I will never forget the evening that the professor who was lecturing in hygiene from the Adelaide University with a rich Scotch brogue. I can hear his voice now, but I can't

02:00 imitate him at all. So in Australian English it went like this, "Now we could hold roll call or bed check after you go to bed at night," he said, "but we realise that this is the first time that women have been in camps and you people are very lucky for it to be happening to you." He said,

02:30 "I do have a complaint and it has to be rectified." He said, "If there are any peculiar things that are happening which should not be happening in an Officer Training School," he said, "In future please do not put your skins down the septic system." He said, "You are buggering it up."

03:00 **Tell us about some of the things that you would study each day at Officer Training School.**

There would be the theory of small arms fire. This was in A wing, the first wing. We would do drills with a particularly difficult obstacle course. It extended over 800 yards

03:30 and it had to be covered in, I forget how many minutes. It would mean we would go over walls that were fifteen yards high, the idea was to develop comradeship between us in helping other people to climb over it. There were such things as jumping off towers. That was in A wing. B wing was administrative.

04:00 We studied such things as camouflage, hygiene, law, and then C wing was the tactics wing where we would work as platoons, sometimes as companies. We would go through the principles of war, assault or attack

04:30 defence, withdrawal, a combination of cooperation with air force, with navy, and then we would actually go out into the field and engage in activities against other platoons. Assessments were made in A Wing, B Wing and

05:00 C Wing and in each, apart from practical examinations, there was the theory side of things also.

Upon reflection how good was this training for the wartime experience?

I think that it was vital, but then part of the

05:30 training also occurred at the jungle training centre at Canungra. Invariably, people went from OTS or OCTU, to Canungra, before officers were sent out to their respective units. But at the same time during

06:00 an officer's posting to Canungra, they had to take platoons from various battalions before they went up into Papua New Guinea. We also had a battalion or a regiment, whatever the Americans called them, who came through us, and I don't know whether this should be recorded, well if it is recorded

06:30 I don't know that it would be politic to include it, but the first night we lost one of the American soldiers. One of the difficult crossings of the river was from a forty foot tower into the Canungra Creek. The student, we called him a student, but the troop, fully kitted had to jump off the forty foot tower and then

07:00 make his way to the bank. It would be maybe ten feet out from the bank and this American soldier didn't reappear and we could not locate his body until the next day. The entire regiment rioted and they

would not stir next morning. General MacArthur sent up

07:30 General Eichenberger [actually Eichelberger], I think that's how you pronounce his name, and he gave them a complete balling out. He said, "You will leave immediately and you will come back in one month's time and then there shall be no recurrence on this matter." We saw them a month later and they went through. At that time the casualty rate at Canungra was allowed at ten percent.

08:00 I saw people, our own soldiers blown up, I saw our own soldiers on the walkway above a gully, a drop of about fifty yards, the bridge collapsed and I think there were at least five Australian soldiers with broken parts of their body,

08:30 arms, legs, backs, but that was accepted as a norm in the jungle training centre at Canungra. I was fortunate in a way. I had to take a platoon through for eight days. We went out on one-third rations, we had to

09:00 dig defensive positions, we had to do navigation by the stars, we had to do cross country route marches. I had one troop who had done a surviving course, which we had to do before we went out on this eight day trek, instead of allowing one of the liana vines to drain into a mug,

09:30 he cut about four feet of the vine off and held it to his mouth and his mouth swelled up and he couldn't speak. About ten o'clock at night we had to head for the top of the McPherson Ranges which was between Binna Burra and O'Reilly's Guest House and go over the edge. We arrived in northern New South Wales next morning.

10:00 Of the group of eight, four had to go to hospital. I was given a week's leave to go down to Southport to a recreation centre and we were actually looking for at that time a training ground for commandos which we

10:30 actually found, or established. During that time, also one of my troops finished up with a tick in his scrotum, and I had been given before we came out a small bottle of rum. So I dosed him up with that and cut it out with a razor blade. This was part and parcel of training in that area.

11:00 **It sounds remarkably tough training?**

It certainly was.

How did the Americans go with this sort of training?

We were not associated with them except on the water crossing. Later on we did have another casualty. We were doing river crossings and that entailed wrapping a jeep up in canvas and floating it across

11:30 the Canungra Creek or river, whatever it is, and during that time we had roll call on the other side and we had one troop missing. It was an Australian troop of 9 Battalion. We searched for about three hours but we did not find him until midday the next morning. Those are the sorts of things that have happened up in Canungra.

12:00 Another time at Wonglepong which is at the bottom of the range at Canungra, one of the instructors was teaching us how to use the discharger cup from the rifle. That is a cup that fits over the muzzle of the rifle and you use a special round. The projectile had been taken out

12:30 of it. It was painted black and it would throw a grenade about seventy metres if you had the cup open or it would fire about 150 to 200 yards, not metres, yards, if the chain was completely enclosed. He was instructing this group and instead of putting in

13:00 a ballastite cartridge, he put in a live round. How it happened he didn't know, but the rifle exploded. One of our troops finished up with the butt up his bottom and arm had been blown off another person. Another soldier had stomach wounds. In all there were five casualties from that explosion. These are some of the things that

13:30 were accepted, although he should have been court martialled but what happened to him I don't know.

How did the people in charge brief you after this kind of event?

They just asked if anyone had seen what had happened, but I was nowhere near the place. I am just giving you some idea of how authentic training was and how

14:00 absolute it was.

How did you live off the land with limited rations?

We had a water bottle of water to start off, and then we would survive for water on the vines that we would cut down from the jungle. We had done surviving courses under instruction.

14:30 from lecturers who came up from various sources, so we knew how to dig yams, we could recognise the yam vine by the leaf. We could catch fish in some of the mountain streams, by selecting a particular type of leaf, rubbing it together and putting it in a pool we might have created

15:00 by blocking it up with stones, and that would stupefy the fish and they would float to the surface as would some of the yabbies that would inhabit the pool. There are various trees that have berries and fruit which were also substantial in diet, a person's diet, plus

15:30 the one-third rations that we were given. That would be canned rations, potato in particular plastic bag, dried meat that we would heat up over little burners that we had, tea and sugar and milk in tubes, chocolate, dried apricots.

16:00 Of course you do find in those jungles pumpkin, a type of pumpkin, particularly yams, red yams, yellow yams, purple yams. Sometimes we would come across cow-cow, a potato. Sometimes melons, paddy melons.

16:30 **How long you were you instructed here for?**

Six months. I met the company commander of K Company when I was first sent up to Canungra and he looked through my record at Officer Training School and OCTU. And he said, "I

17:00 see that you were pretty good at navigation by the stars. I will make you my lecturer in night navigation." He was a bit of crank. He was an Englishman. He was shorter than I but built like a barrel and he had three rows of ribbons because he had been in Russia, he had fought in

17:30 South Africa in various stoushes. He had also been in Lithuania, and he had acquired these ribbons from the various areas in which he had fought. He said to me, "Feel that?" I said, "It feels like a bone." He said, "It is not a bone. It is a stainless steel hacksaw." He said, "I have been in goal.

18:00 This is an innovation I have made," he said, "If I ever get captured again, I have ways of means and sawing out of goal." He was away with the birds but by heavens he was a great soldier.

Did you have any returning AIF men from Africa or Europe?

Yes we did. We had one in our battalion but he was

18:30 killed in action. I had another in Canungra with me and he had been to a Chemical Warfare School and he had been burnt by mustard gas, and I saw him after he came out of hospital. As one of these

19:00 sort of pouches would develop, they would release it by putting needles into it, but he was scarred all over his body from the mustard gas course that he had done. I did a course too in chemical warfare later on and the instructor there gave a hideous sort of laugh. He said, "All right, have your last cigarettes. We are going into the chamber."

19:30 Once you got in there you put your gas mask on, your respirator as they called it, and then you had to lift up the corner of the respirator and take a sniff to identify lung gas and also snozzle gas. It had a special name, DTDM [Chemical agent] and something else, and those of us who had smoked in one instance, particularly for the lung gas, as soon as

20:00 we got a smell of it we became violently ill into our respirators. I had given up smoking before I went there, thank heavens, but the others who had smoked before going in that day and being subjected to that illness, have never smoked again.

Is that kind of a dangerous exercise?

No, not dangerous. At least you could identify it. I think

20:30 mustard gas smelt like, goodness, it has been such a long time now, rotting manure I think.

Did you receive psychological warfare training?

Yes we did. We did a special course in psychological warfare, the school lasted a fortnight. We were lectured and then we got down to the practicalities

21:00 of it. We would go to bed at a certain time and you could so regiment yourself that you can be asleep in five or ten minutes. We got that way that people could stamp through the sleeping quarters with hob nailed boots. They could bang cans, they could make all sorts of noises and you would sleep through it. But let

21:30 them rattle a bayonet or put a bayonet on a rifle or open the chamber or rustle three or four bullets, and you would be awake instantly. You would find yourself rolling out of bed with practically a boot on before you could say Jack Robinson. It was fantastic.

22:00 That came part of training. I can still do those sorts of things. I recognise noises but let there be a strange noise and I am awake instantly even today. When I say strange noises, it might be the rattling of a chain on our back gate or something like that.

22:30 **Was there a kind, what was the relationship with the guys who had returned from the Middle East and Europe?**

I only worked with one or two of them but you could see the strain on their faces. One of them in particular had been on the Kokoda Trail. He had been in action with

23:00 one of the battalions, an infantry battalion, it might have been the 2/21st Battalion. I don't quite remember. And they had the shit belted out of them at Ioribaiwa Ridge, which is the ridge almost at MacDonald's Corner. There was only Imita Ridge between them and Port Moresby. You could see the strain

23:30 and the distress in the man, but he was a fine soldier and he treated us like gentlemen. He was easy to get on with, but I think a feeling of his need for sympathy from us, and also for support because I think that

24:00 we were able to help him. Many of us, I hadn't been in action by then, but many of them had been through other campaigns in Papua New Guinea, Salamaua and some of the other campaigns.

Did they share of any of their experiences with you?

He did, yes. We would ask him, they had to be asked

24:30 because it was so totally different warfare to the jungle warfare that we had already experienced or were experiencing. So, it was a totally different warfare, so he was learning from us too.

We might talk about actually being called up. First of all, did you have any

25:00 **girlfriends before you went?**

Yes, I had several girlfriends. I was only, yes, I had several.

Did you have a sweetheart before you left?

No, I didn't because she was put in gaol in Mareeba. Her name was Audrey, she was a delight. She

25:30 took me home one night to meet her parents, took me into the lounge and one wall was a tremendous painting with Armageddon on it. Apparently, they belonged to a cult and the father said to me, "Are you preparing yourself for Armageddon?" I said, I thought, "Hello, he has some religion". I said, "Well,

26:00 as far as my belief in the Almighty is concerned, I don't really understand what Armageddon is, but I hope I am leading a true Christian life." He said, "Armageddon will get us, all of us, some time or other." He was a fireman on the railway line. Soon after that, I had to go to camp at Miowera.

26:30 When I got back I made inquiries about Audrey because I wanted to see her again, but she and her family had been taken and put in gaol because they belonged to one of these cults which operated a radio station on the Atherton Tableland, and they had apparently been engaging in some subversive activities, so I lost a true love.

27:00 **What kind of subversive activities?**

I don't know, and I don't know where they went to either. I know that that particular station was taken over by the government.

When you say "cult" do you have any way you can describe it?

It maybe something like Jehovah Witnesses or Latter Day Saints, one of those cults.

Was that unusual up there?

Well,

27:30 I really don't know. I can't answer that. All I know we had some peculiar creatures going around. One, a woman who belonged to another religious belief. She was a magnificent woman. Even in mid summer she would dress up in this great big hat and a thing that came right up around

28:00 her neck, and great big sleeves. She was immaculately dressed. but wherever she went she always carried something in her pockets. It would be a seed of something and she would stop suddenly and she would plant it in an area where she thought it might grow. But she had a strange religious belief, but there was a cult of them

28:30 somewhere around, but they never did harm to anyone. They never tried to influence people in their belief but wherever you would see this woman she would be planting seeds. Of course the country up there is very fertile because most of it is volcanic, particularly on the Atherton Tablelands.

What were your beliefs?

I was brought up Church of England,

29:00 and I went to church and I sang in the choir. The bishop of North Queensland, John of North Queensland, would come to our home, a typical English dinner roast beef and Yorkshire pudding with all the etceteras, and he wanted to take me away and give me an education at All Souls School in Charters

Towers. But even today I

29:30 still serve.

You were saying that. Okay, tell us about when you were called up to go overseas? Just tell us what happened?

I was in Canungra then instructing. I was just told. “You are going with a

30:00 group as reinforcement officer to Lae. You will be leaving by MV [motorised vehicle] Gorgon from Townsville next week. Go and see the quarter master and get kitted for Papua New Guinea.” That is all. It was an order. I was given, an order in writing and

30:30 just went away with a group of reinforcement officers.

What were your thoughts at that time?

I had been trained. I was a well-trained infantry officer, and after all it was a culmination of what I had learned with my uncle in Mareeba before the war. I was trained to be a soldier, an infanteer.

31:00 **What was it like getting on that boat?**

Quite an experience. I had never been on such a boat in all my life. In those days of course, no one on the wharf to see us off. It was all secret. We were taken out of Townsville by two American ships, small ships,

31:30 something like small ships, very fast with only the biggest gun might have been a two-pounder. I remember one of them coming abreast one day somewhere outside the reef. We were getting up towards Port Moresby and this Yank yelled out,

32:00 “Congratulations captain, wonderful navigation.” And I was somewhere near the bridge at that time. The captain of the Gorgon said, “Cheeky bugger.” He said, “I was a captain of a ship while he was in nappies.” Motor Vessel Gorgon, that was it. He was a Scot too,

32:30 a typical Scot captain.

How was the relationship with the Americans when you mixed with them?

We mixed with only a few of them, and most of the time I was not on leave, sometimes in Townsville but then it was maybe only half a day. We never had much, yes, we did. I had to take a platoon, my platoon down on

33:00 to the, not the Esplanade, south Townsville where the brothels were on the other side of Ross Creek because some of the American soldiers, the black soldiers, had rioted and I think they had killed twenty-one white American officers. We were set up on the bridge.

33:30 I had a Vickers with me that time and my own Bren gun and a full platoon of about thirty people. I was given instructions, “If you see any Americans approaching the bridge don’t hesitate, open fire immediately. Particularly if they are crossing the bridge.” The ambulances were running every half hour or so bringing white officers from the

34:00 brothel area into Townsville. We were told there had been some sort of riot of American black soldiers, that is about the only other time. The only other time in Townsville that I got out was on my 21st birthday. I did a patrol up the Strand, I think they call it. I thought I would be up for a court martial

34:30 by the time I got back to the unit again because on the Strand, opposite the hotels, there was a round bed with cans in it and on the seat was a bottle and a half of Johnnie Walker black label, and a couple of bottles of ginger ale. My platoon sergeant and I, his name was Husky Lou Adams, and the patrol, I had twelve people,

35:00 we got stuck into the scotch and half way through it we heard someone say, “Oh, that is lovely.” And the following week we were at Lars Hotel. I was on leave and that afternoon and here was Mavis behind the bar and Husky said, “Oh, that is lovely,” and she said, “You bloody bastard. You stole our black label.” Husky said, “You seemed to be enjoying yourself.”

35:30 “Oh love, I was.” These things come back to me sometimes. Yeah, my 21st birthday, when we got back to camp, we were out at some hills, Adriana Hills I think then. That’s where we were camping and I was patrolled, and I was taken into the CO [Commanding Officer] and he said, “Where were you at half past two this morning? You should have checked in

36:00 at the check point. Where were you?” He said, “You look as if you are drunk now.” I said, “Well, practically Sir, we were celebrating my 21st birthday last night.” He said, “Don’t do it again,” and I said, “I will never be twenty-one again.”

Taking you back to that riot that you were talking about, that is quite a major event? Was it a story?

It was never ever reported. Those things were never reported.

36:30 They might have been but we had no access to reports of that nature. This is just something that happened at that time.

Was Townsville an interesting town in this respect?

Shocking town, it was overcrowded with Americans. Garbutt Airstrip at that time was one of the biggest bases in Australia because of

37:00 the Coral Sea, Midway, and they were supporting MacArthur on the Exercise Cartwheel. This was his idea of rolling up the Japs, going from one bastion to another bastion. For example, the Windward Islands off Port Moresby was also developed

37:30 into a tremendous American base after Townsville. Townsville, Garbutt and Mareeba up in the Atherton Tablelands was also a gigantic airbase where planes would take off in secret and that is where the Coral Sea battle from land base planes, and also planes from

38:00 the American aircraft carriers took off, and were responsible for saving Port Moresby from invasion because the Japanese fleet was dispersed. Neither American ships or the Japanese ships, and vice versa, people thought in those days, and some still think the Coral Sea battle saved Australia. Australia was never under

38:30 invasion from Japan. The navy wanted to invade Japan but the Japanese Imperial Army said, “No, if we invade Australia, at least we need ten divisions, and we can’t afford ten divisions.” So what they intended to do was to establish this great South East Asia Co-Prosperity sphere. It did not include Australia

39:00 but it included Papua New Guinea and then in a semicircle through the south-west Pacific. The idea being that there was no need to invade Australia. They could do so at a future time, but they were going to conduct a war of attrition against Australia and New Zealand, chop off supplies

39:30 and at the same time force Australia, the Aleutians were also in that, off the American coast. But that was the Japanese grand strategy.

How did the locals feel about the American presence in Townsville and Mareeba?

Everyone had to dig

40:00 a trench or some sort of a dugout and put water and stuff like that in there. On December the 8th our battalion, 51 Battalion, was sent out onto the Cairns airstrip. Two Wirraways with one hundred or five hundred,

40:30 two hundred bombs under each wing prepared to take off. They were going to bomb a Japanese ship off the coast of Mossman, that was bombarding Mossman. Both Wirraways were bogged on the airstrip and we had to go to a local cane farm to get the tractor to pull the two Wirraways out of the bog before they could

41:00 take off. Nothing happened.

Tape 4

00:36 Yes, I’m starting to feel like a scotch.

You can have one if you want. Alright, you were saying before about the Wirraways.

The two Wirraways, bombs under each wing, we had to go to a neighbouring cane farm to borrow

01:00 the tractor to pull the two Wirraways out of the bog. They took it out eventually but it was not a Japanese ship attacking the coast, it was an Australian ship. It was sending up balloons to test the upper atmospheres and the people in Mossman thought they were explosions from

01:30 the ship. Many of them arrived in Cairns and were immediately sent up to the Atherton Tablelands and I could have bought a house anywhere along the shore there for £75 because people were absolutely afraid and thought that North Queensland was going to be invaded and at that time the Brisbane Line was becoming a common used word

02:00 and 51 Battalion was the foremost battalion of the defensive system. So we were the teeth of the Brisbane Line, if one ever did exist. It was also at that time that this great friend of mine, Ben Reganazi, who was an Italian, suddenly disappeared one night and he had been taken into custody as an undesirable. There was no greater gentleman or soldier

02:30 nor Australian in the way of thinking as old Ben.

Was that a common occurrence?

He was the only one in our battalion, but at the same time 42 Battalion and the other battalion, 31 Battalion, I think we were all on standby.

Tell us about people's feelings about this so called Brisbane Line?

At that time it was not known as the Brisbane Line

03:00 but we were supposed to be the four line frontline, and I had to take my platoon out. I was a platoon sergeant then because my platoon, I had no platoon officer, and so I was an acting sergeant with all these cane cutters and we were on the Stratford,

03:30 Stratford was a town just out of Cairns, about eight miles out of Cairns almost at the bottom of the range Stratford, Freshwater, Kuranda, and I had to site my platoon on the Stratford Bridge to deny access to the Pacific Highway of Japanese landing in Australia.

04:00 **There was a very genuine feeling of home defence then?**

Yes, there certainly was. We had our defensive position on the bridge and our camp was at the Stratford State School, so our meals would be sent up from Cairns to Stratford, but we had to patrol vigorously

04:30 around Stratford.

Your preparations in a way were for an Australian invasion?

Yes, that was the idea. People thought that the Japs were going to invade North Queensland. In those days we had Lewis guns and we had the initial issues of Bren guns, but we had to take them out

05:00 of grease and the grease was thick grease and we had no real means of taking the grease off the guns, these Lewis guns. Instead of having the chamber, not chamber, the things you put the bullets up into? They worked on a round system

05:30 whereas the Bren gun the cartridge carriage clips into the top of the Bren gun. In any case, we would not have used them until we could really get them out of the grease, so we had rifles and we had the American machine gun, that is the one that weighed a terrific amount

06:00 and it fired .45 shot whereas our guns were 303's, and the light machine gun, the Owen machine gun, fired a .9 millimetre.

Was the American presence quite welcome?

Well, there was a riot in Queensland in Brisbane here of course with the Americans. There were no American soldiers around

06:30 Cairns at that time. They hadn't really arrived in vast numbers here in Australia. Their vast numbers arrived in Brisbane but also in Townsville where they established this tremendous airfield at Garbutt in Townsville, and later on in Mareeba on the Atherton Tableland.

07:00 **What was the feeling of having to have them there?**

I know that the average Australian soldier didn't think much of the Yanks, over-moneyed of course and over here. I think feelings ran at a rather high, but there again I was a humble infanteer in a battalion and we didn't

07:30 have much access to them. We were camped out on Mount Louisa in Townsville so I seldom saw a newspaper.

What about the feeling of Americans with Australian women?

I can't comment on that. I really don't know, but I know the Yankee soldiers were great favourites. They were real charmers

08:00 My mother and father in Mareeba had an open house for Americans and my mother worked for the VADs [Voluntary Aid Detachments] in Mareeba and she had a beautiful testimonial from them for the work that she did helping the American soldiers, particularly in Mareeba.

08:30 The young women, I think they had never seen so much wealth in all their life. The amount of money the average American earned as distinct from the six shillings a week that the average Australian got, that was the private, and I think I got eight shillings when I became a sergeant, and I think it was twenty-one shillings when I got

09:00 my two pips.

Back onto being called up, what were your expectations when you were called up for New Guinea?

That is what I joined the army for as an infanteer. I trained hard I was well trained and being very young, I was still only

09:30 twenty-one or twenty-two I think, I had no idea what actual warfare was like. I volunteered; I was prepared to accept anything that might happen to me.

Tell us about arriving. What did you see; can you describe it for us?

I had seen jungle before. I had been in jungle particularly in

10:00 North Queensland around the Atherton Tableland and then up onto Mt Bartle Frere, so I was aware and accustomed to the animal life, the environment, the jungle environment. Although, of course it was not nearly as dense as the jungle environment in Papua New Guinea.

10:30 **Did you have much interaction with the local indigenous people?**

No, except in Lae, sometimes we might go up to one of the gardens to get paw paws and bananas, but no interaction whatsoever.

11:00 **Did you get an impression?**

No, not really, because we didn't get into their villages and we were told to stay away from them. As a matter of fact, their villages might only be two or three huts. Even in Bougainville until after the war did I see village life and have dealings with

11:30 the villagers. That was only when I was arranging the logistic support for the emerging Papua New Guinea nation.

Can you take us through where you went first and where you were assigned first when you arrived?

My first appointment in Papua New Guinea was to a reinforcement unit

12:00 and from there eventually I was appointed as a platoon commander to 15 Battalion. Prior to that I was doing some patrolling up the Markham Valley with soldiers who were also at the reinforcement depot where I was an officer.

What were your duties as a reinforcement officer?

12:30 Just to maintain training, to exercise the troops and privates and corporals and sergeants, who were there waiting posting to a unit. I also took them out on mortar training. We would set up a mortar on the banks of the Busu River, go through the drills with them, and actually fire live

13:00 rounds into the river.

How was it instructing people when you were new to the area yourself?

It is as though I knew the country already from my experience at Canungra and in my earlier years. It was strange of course training recruits into control of a three inch

13:30 mortar because many of them were only riflemen and had not been trained as a mortar, a second or mortar team. These mortars, three inch mortars through ten pound bomb some thousands of yards.

How do you work a mortar?

How do you work a mortar? It is just like a tube

14:00 about maybe three and a half or maybe four feet, three inches in diameter and the bomb is beautifully shaped and you just drop it down the barrel and off it goes. It has what we call extras at the bottom, around the fin at the back, to get extra range and you just put in extra charges

14:30 at the bottom. I think the range might be 4,500 yards but there again you could get down to 175 yards if you took out all the auxiliary capillaries. That you would put up the spout.

Tell us about how platoons were set up?

15:00 The platoon commander was invariably a lieutenant, he had platoon sergeant. He had a platoon headquarters. The officer normally had a batman [military servant]. If the platoon was sent out on patrol he would invariably, had an I man, an intelligence man with a signaller,

15:30 from the signal platoon which belonged to the headquarter company. In each section, there was a section leader. He would be a corporal, and in each section instead of a Lewis gun when we went into action, we had a Bren gun. So there were three Bren guns in a platoon. There might be a two inch mortar.

16:00 There were eight men in the section, so a corporal had eight men. Then of course they changed to what they called the jungle division and the numbers in a platoon were changed downwards. A section

normally had about eight people in

16:30 it, but then it depended on how long you were in action whether you got any reinforcements during operations. There were, the regiment that I knew well had three sections in a platoon, three platoons in a company. Four companies in a battalion and headquarter company

17:00 which had three inch mortars, medium machine guns, which was the Vickers gun. I think there were six Vickers in each battalion, signals section, intelligence section and RAP, Regimental Aid

17:30 Post. All up, somewhere around 900 to 1,000 people in the battalion. But then under the jungle strength, I think that went down to about 980 but there again I am not familiar with it.

When you would go on a patrol,

18:00 **just take us through how you would set up for that and what actually would happen?**

Training aside, a fighting patrol normally consisted of an officer and twelve riflemen. The officer carried a pistol, you could pee further than the pistol would fire.

18:30 He would have with him a signaller with direct communication to battalion headquarters. He probably would have a mortar man with direct communication to the mortar sergeant who would be back in company headquarters,

19:00 and he might have an intelligence person with him. There would be in a fighting patrol, that probably was the most mobile fighting unit, an officer and twelve, one Bren machine gun.

19:30 Each section the leading scout would have a light machine gun, an Owen machine gun. It might be a Boston machine gun, they fired nine millimetre, they did not have much stopping power but they were light.

20:00 That would be a fighting patrol and the fighting patrol would be told to go out 1,000 yards. The only way you could judge the distance was to count your steps, take a compass bearing straight ahead or in the direction in which you were going, have a look at your map, get coordinates, and then

20:30 go out a hundred paces and stop and check the number of paces that say two other people in the fighting patrol had taken. And that way you hoped you were maintaining the direction to take us to the aiming point which might be a bend in the Mivo River, it might have been a creek, it might have been a known track.

21:00 And then you would operate with a scout, a leading scout. He normally would have a second scout and they work alternatively. He might go on ten yards depending on visibility. He would be looking mainly around while the second scout who might only be two or three yards from him, he would be looking up the trees.

21:30 And then normally the platoon commander, the officer, and he would have his wireless operator with him and then the rest of the people would be spread out on either side but in visual contact. There has to be always visual contact between scouts

22:00 and the platoon commander or the leader of the patrol, and he must be seen and be able to see the people on the other side of him. So, all in all, if it was thick jungle there might only be maybe five or ten yards between the platoon commander and the two people on his right and left. It was like an arrowhead.

22:30 There would be one man, maybe five metres, maybe ten yards or ten metres behind, bringing up the rest of the platoon, the fighting patrol, and he would be looking constantly to make sure that the enemy were not closing in on either side of us. One patrol that I was on, the leading scout was shot.

23:00 The second scout, I was almost touching the second scout when it happened. There was no hope of getting him out because we were being fired on by machine guns from in front of us. I could see that our scout had been shot right through the chest.

23:30 I was able to destroy his light machine gun under fire. It was getting dark. I withdrew with Nicky, who was a dentist from Sydney, and picked up the rest of our patrol, it was about ten yards down. As soon as a shot had been fired some way, somewhere

24:00 they suddenly deserted me and here I am with my leading scout dead and Nicky with me, and we had to go back along the track to find where the rest of the patrol had got to. That's not to go on.

We have a policy where you can say an embargo.

An embargo on what I've just told you?

Yeah. That's fine. We'll take note of that and we can write that in

24:30 **our notes.**

At camp, probably they might have been, I don't know what happened to them but they were as tired as I were. They had been through everything that I had been through prior to that. I was called "yellow" when I got back because I hadn't brought the scout back with me. But

25:00 they sent out next day, and they were able to recover our leading scout with the destroyed gun that I destroyed.

Would you like to pause? Are you okay?

25:30 I'm just on a train of thought now.

Sorry.

I went out about two days later, down to that same area, and we were coming back off the patrol. I had been called up to the CO. He got me directly on the line about two or three days later after that, and he said, "Report up here immediately Moody. I have got a job for tomorrow." I said, "But

26:00 our clearing patrols have gone out." He said, "I want you up here immediately." I wasn't going to take anyone with me. Normally you would go out, the battalion headquarters was about 500 yards away and you would normally take three people with you to protect you. I was so upset and tired and distressed I said,

26:30 I called Husky Lou Adams, the sergeant, and said, "I am going up to battalion headquarters." He said, "Who do you want to go with you?" I said, "No one. I will go by myself." I crawled through the wire because we had almost closed off for the night. I walked straight up the track. I just couldn't care I was so frightened.

27:00 Nothing happened, I was sure someone was looking after me, I know so. I got up to the CO's hut. "You are going down to the badlands tomorrow," he said, "I want eight enemy." I said, "What do you mean you want eight enemy?" He said, "Kill eight and then I will have more deaths to our credit than Brig Hammer has with his

27:30 15 Brigade." He said, "Take a swig of this," and it was half a mug of black label whisky. He said, "Take it, it will be good for you." Like a bloody fool, I did, but it was probably the best thing that could have happened to me. They put me through their defences so I got

28:00 onto the track and I stayed right in the middle of that track. At that time there were Japanese operating behind us, probably 120 or so under a Major Muda, M U D A. When I got back to our battalion I gave a secret whistle and so they were waiting for me to come through the defences. I had to crawl through spider wire.

28:30 It would come up about so high and then go down so low so the Nips couldn't crawl through it and if they charged, they would get caught up in the entanglements. Instead of putting the usual barbed wire entanglement out which you unrolled, each would be about a metre in diameter. Next morning we went out on patrol, a fighting patrol.

29:00 We met no Nips. We got right down on the Mivo River. No ambush, nothing. We were lucky. But as we were coming back Husky Lou Adams said, "Have a look behind you. Can you see some something shining there?" And I said, "I can see a dim light." We stopped the patrol and he and I went back

29:30 and there were sticks about so high and on each of the sticks maybe at three or four yard intervals was a phosphorous mushroom. That is the way the Japanese could come up from the Mivo River at night and get onto these mushrooms and it would lead them right up to our wire, our defensive position. We thought the storm

30:00 was going to break any minute because it was practically pitch black. So, what we did, we went back and picked up half a dozen of these and put them in a circle and right in the middle we set up about six grenades on trip wires. Finally, we got back to our position and about two o'clock in the morning all hell broke lose. The Nips had followed their track and they had got right

30:30 into the ambush area that we had set up with our six grenades. How many were killed, I don't know, but we paid them back for some of the nights they kept us awake and kept us standing-to.

What did you think of that commanding officer's order?

We were going out on patrol

31:00 anyhow, but this was a special patrol. He just wanted us to get into trouble and spring a surprise in Japanese in ambush if we could have set it up to try and get an extra eight casualties from the Nips. To invite me out just on dusk was unthinkable, at least I

31:30 thought so.

What did you think of these kinds of actions by the CO?

It was their prerogative. I was a humble lieutenant; it was just part and parcel of being in action as a platoon commander or as a patrol commander.

What about upon reflection now?

On reflection now, I was a

32:00 bloody fool to have gone by myself up to battalion headquarters but it was something of my own choosing. I was just acting on an order, that was all, and I was fortunate.

What do you think of that kind of an order?

He had every right to give the order. After all, we were there to protect our own

32:30 defensive position. He was there to help his defensive position of the entire battalion. It would have indicated to us whether more Japanese had crossed the river or not, and so by sending us out we were protecting ourselves and helping the battalion in maintaining our own defences.

33:00 **I am just asking about that number situation, did that seem a bit**

Number twelve, normally a fighting control consisted of about twelve men.

I mean the CO wanting eight exactly Japanese?

I don't know how many Japanese casualties that 15 Brigade had, but we were close behind him and if we got an extra eight it means

33:30 that we might have been the brigade with the most Japanese casualties to our credit. There was tremendous, what do you call it? I won't say animosity, but desire to be a better brigade because you had more casualties than a neighbouring brigade.

34:00 We were all part of the one division. In the event of us advancing to Buin then one brigade would have jumped over another brigade. So you move from firm base to firm base.

Almost a rivalry?

That's the word I was looking for. Tremendous rivalry between brigade commanders as there was between division commanders, and that is just a natural

34:30 desire of commanders.

Can you tell us a bit about how a trip wire would work?

A trip wire, you would string it across a path normally low down, and you had a little gadget that first of all you would put on a tree with a spring on it. The spring

35:00 could be sprung, or the trap would be sprung if the wire was cut or if the wire was stamped on. And so you would put it down low and anyone coming along, if they did not look down at wherever they were walking, they might just trip it with their ankle and it pulls the trip leaver out

35:30 and allows the point of the set wire to pierce the detonator on the grenade, and so it goes off.

What kind of traps would the Japanese soldiers set for you guys?

We never ran into any of theirs,

36:00 but I did not have a trip wire. What I had, we tied grenades around the bottom of trees and the trip wire was on to the pin that fitted into the grenade. So you just had to pull the pin out and it allowed the arm

36:30 of the grenade to go down and hit the detonator.

How would you communicate and also prove Japanese casualties to your commanding officer?

If you ambushed them you would normally recover what weaponry the Japs had left behind and count the number of dead.

37:00 The morning that they attacked us on the 9th of July, we buried forty-nine Japanese almost within fifty metres of my headquarters and the barbed wire, but we recovered over one hundred weapons. That was after the attack on my position, that is when I got the Military

37:30 Cross.

They attacked you?

They attacked us there, but a fighting patrol is different because you have the mobility to return to your headquarters. Sometimes you might be out for three days, a long range patrol. Most times it was the close in fighting patrol activity. So that you left your headquarters, your defensive

38:00 position about seven after stand down in the morning, and then you returned before dusk at night so you could set up the booby traps in your actual defensive wire.

The trip wires?

Trip wires, yes. If they tried to crawl through, if they tried to cut the wire, if they put their

38:30 hand accidentally on it, it would pull the pin out of the grenade.

Was there any other?

Yes. We had jump, but we never used them though. They would be about as big as that bag of yours and we would bury them in the ground so far. And as soon as the trip wire was sprung, this box about a diameter of, say

39:00 of about six inches, it jumped up and exploded about waist high. That had a deadly range of maybe twenty-five metres from point of explosion. And there were other types of mines about as big as a plate that you put low. When they exploded, they exploded outwards like this.

Tape 5

00:37 **We might just go back a little way from where we ended and talk about when you first arrived at Bougainville, when you landed at**

Torokina.

Torokina. Can you walk me through how you travelled there and that sort of thing?

We went up on I think the Motor Vessel Gorgon

01:00 to Torokina. We were taken out to our locality. It had previously been occupied by the American Forces and until we went into action on the Java River we just drilled from day to day. There was nothing exceptional in what we did. We went out on no tactics

01:30 whatsoever. So it was just a case of settling in and doing our clothes with anti-mite fluid and just waited.

What did you have to do with your clothes?

Put anti-mite on them. We had to wash our clothes in water with this special chemical in. It was proof against mite attack. Those little things that can give one

02:00 diseases, in particular, the name escapes me, but it was rife in Buna, Gona, Sanananda because of the swamps there, and because we were gong into swamp country we did our trousers, our underclothing also, our putties and the leggings.

02:30 **When you arrived at Bougainville was there a difference from where you were coming from? Were you a bit closer to action?**

Yes. We were going into action in Bougainville. We had been told upon landing in Bougainville, it was supposed to be a secret where we were going to, but we were told by our CO, “Isn’t the Bougainvillea

03:00 lovely at the present time?” So, immediately we thought that is where we are off to. There wasn’t a great difference between the island there and the sand that we were accustomed to on beaches in Queensland. The jungle was quite close, but then of course that was nothing new to us because all of us, at one time or another had been

03:30 through Canungra. The bush or the environment was practically the same.

How about on a different level? You were getting closer to being in action, what sort of feelings were running through you?

All the people in my platoon, at that time, had already been in action.

04:00 They had been in Salamaua and they were sitting on the periphery of Lae when 7 and 9 Divisions put on the assault in Lae. It was my first occasion of going into a combat area. I guess I was filled with expectation, that is about all,

04:30 of something strange that something was going to happen to me, something new. It was the first time also, that I was a leader, patrol leader or platoon leader of troops. I had been in training depots previously but never in charge of troops in an operational area.

How did you find that experience of being in charge?

I was already

05:00 familiar with most of the people in my platoon because we got together after the battalion’s return from Lae at Strathpine. We assembled there as a battalion again after some of the troops came back from leave and after we had been reinforced to bring our numbers up. So, it was an occasion for me to meet

personally those who would be

05:30 in my platoon, which was 18 Platoon Don Company.

So you knew the men pretty well by this stage?

Well, I knew them by name but I had never worked with them. My platoon sergeant, Bob Bennett, had come from the west. He was a tried and trusty soldier. He was a good platoon sergeant.

06:00 **When you arrived at the camp was there any sort of major duties that you had to take care of?**

No, just training. There were duties being an orderly officer of the battalion whenever Don Company was the duty company. So, that changed from well, every fourth day,

06:30 every fifth day our company would have been duty company and we would have to provide a duty officer of the day and probably the guard for battalion headquarters.

What did orderly officer require you to do?

We had to sleep at battalion headquarters. By day we had to supervise the general running of the office,

07:00 but primarily the responsibility of seeing that bugle calls were rendered on time. The various calls to do inspections of the camp with the regimental RMO, the regimental medical officer, inspect not only the lines, the soldiers' lines,

07:30 but also all the kitchens, the latrines.

Did you ever, was it always in ship shape or did you pull anyone up?

I did, the first day ever with 15 Battalion. I had only been in camp the previous day. I was orderly officer and I put in a stinking report about the D Company, Don Company. That wasn't my company then.

08:00 I complained about the state of the kitchen and the state of the lines and the state of the hygiene and the very next morning I was told to report to the CO. At that time, our CO was Colonel Jack Amies. He said, "Who are you?" I said, "I am Lieutenant William Moody. I am

08:30 a reinforcement officer, Sir." He said, "That report of yours," he said, "What do you think of it?" I said, "This is my first responsibility as orderly officer and I have written what I have seen." He said, "It is a substantial report but you don't do those things in an infantry battalion." He said, "Next week or the week after, you will be fighting with these men."

09:00 He said, "You might have been constructive and not destructive in what you have written. Do you understand?" I said, "Yes, I do sir." He said, "Go out now and do your duty as an officer in a fighting company."

Was this good advice?

Yes, it certainly was. As a matter of fact, I met him after I finished doing the examination in my accountancy

09:30 and he was the chairman I think of the chartered accountants. He remembered me right to the day of his death because I chummed up with him again after the war. He was my first CO when I joined 9th Battalion in the CMF, post war

10:00 in July 1948. I was his CMF Adjutant; we remembered each other very well. He went on to become a brigadier in the CMF or the reserve forces, as we were called then.

10:30 **I find it interesting that he said you could be fighting with these men next week. Did that attitude start to hit home with you in the way you treated or related?**

In talking with the people who were in my platoon, most of them who had already been through the campaigns in Papua New Guinea, gave me

11:00 some idea of what I might be in for. But again, I don't remember being fearful of it, but rather a person of great expectancy.

Can you tell me about the sort of friendships or relationships formed between the men?

Yes. I became very friendly with Husky Lou Adams.

11:30 He eventually became my platoon sergeant and he died at my feet when the Japs attacked us. I miss him very much. I still often think of him. He came from Jericho. His father owned a shop, I wrote a letter to him telling him about Lou's death and how he died, and I

12:00 had a wonderful response from him not long after.

What kind of a response?

Just to say that he felt that he was writing to an old friend of his only son. He thanked me very much. He said, “I was very pleased also that you came through without any injury.”

12:30 **Did the act of writing to his father, did it help ease?**

I think it did because it was a personal letter from his son’s acquaintance with me. Lou had a hair lip,

13:00 and he had a remarkable funny way, we used to say, of talking. So Husky Lou became an attachment, a nickname for him.

How long did you know him for?

Oh dear, fifteen months. We became very closely associated with each other.

13:30 We lived in dug outs together, we had many ambushes together, we had seen many people die, we had done some killing ourselves, and he was a man of the land and he came from the country and there was a close affinity with people who come from the country, particularly in Queensland,

14:00 in the outback and up in the Tablelands.

Did knowing you had a similar background, did you sometimes talk about it?

Yes, we knew each other’s history. Lou came from the west and I came from the deep north. We spoke about the land, we spoke about hunting

14:30 and fishing, subjects one can always talk about. As a matter of fact, I had a little collapsible chess set that my wife Jan gave me, and at stand-to at night when there might have been light, and at stand-to in the morning at first light, we would continue our game after we had done the rounds of our trenches to make sure that everyone was

15:00 okay and to give them their Atebrin tablet, the anti-malarial oppressive. I don’t know whether they call it “oppressive”, it won’t be “oppressive”.

Suppressive?

Pardon?

Suppressive?

Suppressive, yeah, suppressive malaria control tablet. It sent most of us yellow.

15:30 I was still yellow six months after I came out of the army but I still got malaria when I came back home.

How yellow?

Quite yellow. It also coloured our urine, that lasted for about three or four months, a distinct yellow. I was called a Chinaman.

Because you were so yellow?

16:00 Yes, I think I might have been the most yellow of all of them or the brightest yellow.

Did you have a bit of a laugh about this amongst yourselves?

Yes.

Can you tell me, when you arrived you said that you were doing drills and just waiting, what were you waiting for?

We were waiting to be

16:30 sent into action. We had placed great reliance on the Salvos [Salvation Army], they did a wonderful job up there. The Red Shield Hut, you could get coffee, tea, sandwiches and biscuits at any time of the day up until about ten o’clock at night. They always had ping-pong for us and music of all sorts and types.

17:00 It was a wonderful thing to be out on patrol and hear the music coming over to us. We used it as a guide. We were able to orientate ourselves from the direction in which the music came.

What kind of music would they play?

One of my favourites, Beautiful Isle of Somewhere, I will always remember that as long as I live.

How does that go?

I am not musically minded.

17:30 It used to be played over 4LG Longreach too. Beautiful Isle of Somewhere, that is all I know, but it had a haunting tune about it. It was like a lifeline that was reaching out saying, “We’re here,” and on that invariably we would know where our direction was, either back

18:00 to camp or back to our defended position, or down onto the Mivo River, or deeper into the badlands.

It must have been wonderful?

To be able to rely on people like that, so friendly, so considerate, and wonderful to give advice to us, spiritual direction. And then on Sundays

18:30 there would be services, church services for us.

Were many of the men religious?

Not many people in my platoon would go to the church services, not that I remember, because they were few and far between, and really you would not know what belief these people were. They could be on duty

19:00 elsewhere, they could be on patrol. So very seldom did we have more than half of our troops at any one time within our defensive positions. Because not only were we involved in long range patrols, say two or three days, but there would be one or two fighting patrols every day in our immediate vicinity.

19:30 Then probably 3,000 or 4,000 yards out from our perimeter.

I guess the nerves must have been, you know, living with imminent danger most of the time, people might have had faith to help them deal with it. Did other people have superstitions or lucky charms

20:00 **or things like that to your knowledge?**

I know one particular person; I spoke to him the day before yesterday. He was one of the mortar team. Mortar was right in our company area and they supported us with close range fire from their three inch mortar on the 9th of July when my platoon area was attacked by two companies of

20:30 Japanese. Somehow it came up he is on a very short wick, he now has prostrate cancer but it had already spread to other parts of his body and he said, “I just live from day to day.” I said, “We always have someone to think about don’t we,” and it came out that he has always

21:00 been a strong Catholic in his beliefs. He still goes to church whenever he can move. He said, “I am happy that I can move now to the bathroom and look after myself, that is all.” I saw him the year before last at our annual get together. I said, “I missed you last year.” He said, “I was too ill.”

21:30 I said, “We have another get together in October this year and it would be my one wish that I see you there.” Lloyd was his name, and so on that note he gave me information that I wanted for you people today. He wrote a book, I’ve read it. I think he has called it, ‘The Mortar Team’, and they were the people with one mortar

22:00 and by bringing the range down to less than 175 yards, they were able to keep the Japanese from escaping because of the bombs they were dropping. He told me the barrel of the mortar was almost straight up. He said it would have been going straight up and going straight down again. That was less than 145 yards from

22:30 where I had my fourteen troops and we were engaging the Japanese who had crawled in under our wire and blown the wire, and being able to pin them down and the mortar behind them, the mortar mob behind them preventing them from escaping. They were between two immovable forces.

What was the end result of that attack?

23:00 We counted one hundred weapons, from their woodpeckers which is their heavy machine gun, down to forty light machine guns. I don’t know how many rifles and

23:30 mortars, but there were over one hundred weapons in front of us.

Were all the Japanese who had attacked you killed?

Yes.

Did some retreat and killed?

Some of them did because we buried forty-eight within an area of fifty metres from

24:00 our defensive position, and on patrols up to a week or more later we would hear this dreadful clacking. And sure enough, there would be dead Jap being devoured by what looked like gigantic cockroaches about two or three inches long. They were attacking the bodies that the Japs had been unable to

24:30 carry back to their lines.

What would you do when you found those bodies?

We would just leave them. We couldn’t bury them, most of the were infested with grubs and these dreadful looking, they looked like extremely small armadillos. They’ve got the hunch back on them.

25:00 These would be about that long.

When you buried the bodies of the Japanese near your camp, did they have tags that you would take to identify them?

If we could recover the tags, we did, but many of them were not tagged at all.

Was there any protocol involved in what you did with the bodies?

We buried them

25:30 and then the area was marked so if the Japanese wanted to exhume them later on. No doubt they would have done so. The area was clearly marked; it was right at Sisikatekori which was the area of where our defensive position was.

Can you tell me about the first time that you went into action, that action? Can you walk me through that

26:00 **time?**

I remember, it may not be the first time but several times, once we walked into an ambush. That is when our leading scout was killed, another time, we never used a track. We just used the general direction that the track would be going. We would always examine it first to see if there were

26:30 any Japanese footprints on it and then the scout would move along the track, but there would be some of the fighting patrol, as I said, working maybe five yards on either side but maintaining contact with me or with the leading scout. Once, I came upon a Jap. I looked down the barrel of his light machine gun. I saw the working

27:00 parts. I saw him press the trigger but I knew nothing was going to happen to me, it was a peculiar feeling. I knew that someone was looking after me, and it was a dead round, it didn't go off. Many times that happen and innumerable people would say that a Jap fired at that them and the round was a dud round. I blew him up with a grenade and destroyed his machine gun

27:30 and killed him too. That was once.

How did you know that nothing, can you describe that feeling that you knew that nothing was going to happen to you?

I had that feeling when I was about six years of age in Herberton. We were out on a picnic at the Devil's Elbow and the bank, I was standing on a low bank with my brother John, and it was about ten feet of water.

28:00 I heard the angels singing and when my father pulled me up, he said I had my hands over my breast like this. I finished up with a tummy full of water but I can still hear the angels singing. That was the first, and then this other time the day I won the Military Cross. The citation said that I

28:30 stood behind scant cover directing the fire of my platoon. Three soldiers from neighbouring 17 Platoon came up to help me put in a local counter attack. A mortar went off behind us, it killed two of those soldiers from 17 Platoon and wounded another

29:00 and just blew my clothes partly off. I had no scratch at all.

When you got into this ambush situation with the Japanese, how did that happen? Were you just walking along?

You don't walk along a track, your scout is out forward, he is the first man. He normally

29:30 looks to his right and left and along the track and eventually all our scouts alternate as to who would act as scout for the day, had the Owen submachine gun. There would be number two scout, they would advance alternatively, and one scout he would have a look around and he would get down behind cover, which led to the track ahead

30:00 and the second scout would keep a watch in the trees because the Japanese were excellent users of the local environment, particularly jungle. They were trained in it, and then the second scout would go up to the first scout and he would move on. As patrol commander, I would always be probably within two or three yards of the second scout with contact

30:30 to either flank and the rest of my platoon or fighting patrol. We always had rear guards; he would bring up the rear looking up into the trees still also keeping an eye on the track behind us. That is how we advanced in what we called an arrow head.

When there is ambush?

Sometimes you might hear a bird call, you rarely know.

31:00 But then the Japanese have a peculiar smell and sometimes you could smell them. Sometimes you would

walk right into the middle of an ambush as happened to me once when I saw the part coming forward of the equivalent of our Bren gun, knowing that nothing was going to happen to me, and then again the day my leading scout was killed.

31:30 **When you came face to face with the machine gun, you mentioned as a child you heard angels singing, was there any of this sort of feeling?**

No, just sheer fright, always frightened, and the more I got frightened the more I ate. In action I went up to nine stone from eight stone, but instead of

32:00 grenades in both pouches I would always have a packet of dry biscuits. I would eat and eat and eat them, and that is how I was able to contain myself.

After you had realised that you hadn't been shot by this machine gun and you responded with your grenade was there an element of shock?

32:30 No, just an instinctive reaction because I was a well trained soldier. Things become instinctive, you don't realise you are doing them. When we were attacked that morning I heard voices in the weapon pit, about where that chair is, and I crawled over and looked down over five Japs at the bottom of this fighting pit of ours and they'd

33:00 overcome one of our troops whose fighting pit it was. I just whipped out a grenade, grenades were of two types, the four second and seven second grenade. So, I just found myself with a grenade in my hand and I pulled the pin out and counted one, two, three and then just dropped it over into the hole hoping it was a four second grenade and not a seven second grenade that I had dropped in,

33:30 and it was a four second grenade. So it killed the five of them.

This just becomes

It is instinctive. Truly, it is amazing how one can respond when scared to death and yet become, and do an instinctive something.

I guess once that moment is over, once

34:00 **you know, does it**

Well, the next thing I did apparently was to stand up behind this scant cover and my batman was down the hole, and as I would sight onto a target, ten rounds in the magazine of the rifle, as soon as I would count ten and, I don't know why,

34:30 but as I fired the tenth round I just dropped the rifle into the pit and he would hand me up a new rifle with ten rounds so I could continue firing, and at the same time directing fire to my three machine gunners who were maybe over there and another one at the front door and another one maybe fifteen yards behind me, but they could all see me and just by using my hand or they'd see which way I was aiming my rifle,

35:00 they were able to bring fire over there.

What were the details behind this particular fight?

We were the forward company. I think at that time I had fourteen people in my platoon and there would be no more than twenty in the other, and about twenty in the other. That would be about twenty, forty, thirty-four,

35:30 fifty-four, twenty, forty, fifty-five counting me in this perimeter that was about one hundred metres across and with a mortar, three mortars. One mortar supporting our perimeter and the other two mortars were firing at about six hundred yards and a thousand yards giving supporting fire to

36:00 the other companies that were within that distance from us. The entire attack was on the sector that I was responsible for, maybe fifty metres in diameter or in the arc, our arc for which we were responsible.

36:30 We were very lucky because of the mortar fire that contained the Japanese and our own local fire because by that time through the number of patrols that we had been on and the Japanese equipment that we had brought back with us, I think each man had about, some of them had about two machine guns, our own plus the

37:00 Japanese, and we would fill the magazines up of the Jap light machine guns, so practically everyone of the fourteen of us had a machine gun.

Was this the 9th of July?

Yes. That fight last from about half past five in the morning for an hour and a half, it was absolute slaughter. All we lost were two

37:30 killed including my platoon sergeant, and two from the neighbouring platoon who had come up to help me and two wounded.

What was, when someone from your platoon was killed were there any rituals that you would observe following their death?

No. Lou Adams,

38:00 we got to him almost immediately. He staggered to my headquarters and he said, “The bastards.” He just collapsed and Jim, our cook, would be about ten yards away from me and he rushed over and he pulled Lou back and he put him on his bed but it was too late.

38:30 As soon as the fighting was over we had a patrol come up from battalion headquarters and they did a lot of evacuation as necessary of the wounded.

Did you bury Lou?

No, that is looked after. That is looked after by CCS, the Casualty Clearing Station, and by people in the rear areas.

39:00 Although, once we had a fight, the marsh on either side of us and just off the track, there would have been eight feet or ten feet of water. We couldn’t stand up and one of my troops was killed in an ambush and the only way we could get the body off the track

39:30 was to push him into the swamp and then push him down with a stick. We took one of his tags off and tied it with some string or vine or something so that we were able to say that it is on the Buin Track, one hundred yards south of Jericho Creek. People in the rear would come up and they would recover the body there.

40:00 Some of the carriers, we had native carriers who would bring food stuffs up to us, and water and ammunition.

We need to change a tape.

Tape 6

00:39 **One thing that I want to clear up that I am just a bit confused about, the MC [Military Cross] that you were won, can you explain to me, I know we have talked about that particular attack, but can you explain in order, and I guess what it means to win this kind of award?**

01:00 The Japanese practised psychological warfare on us. We had no idea how they got onto our wire. When I say wire, I mean onto our entanglements, wire entanglements. We would put out a patrol around our perimeter just on

01:30 dusk, last light every night to ensure there were no Japanese in close, and then that fighting patrol or clearing patrol would come and then we would put out on our low spider wire grenades, set booby traps for them. Sure enough, about ten o’clock, you would hear, “Cooee,”

02:00 over here, “Cooee,” and then some of them could speak English and they would say, “Come and get us you Australian bastards. Where are you? Is that you Lou? Come over Lou.” So, somehow at one time or other, they heard noises with names and they would use these at night time.

02:30 That might go on for an hour and a half, then suddenly it would stop, and you would hear them digging. We were on a sort of a little knoll, on my side of the perimeter there was a deep gully, and you would hear them digging like mad into the side of the gully. That would go on until apparently they had dug a hole or a cave sufficiently big enough

03:00 for them and then the bombardment would start and we would get all sorts of shells into us. We would get search light shells and you’d hear bang, whizz, and the shell would be right on to us. And you would hear the bang in the distance, maybe 150 mm, it might be a five or ten pounder, or whatever armament the Japanese had. It would not be only one shell,

03:30 but in one night we had over 1500 shells put into our perimeter and that was counted by our mortar team. They had a little system of putting strokes and crossing them with a stroke when they got to five. They said 1,500 in one night they couldn’t identify the calibre of the weapons.

04:00 Then they would crawl in on the wire and you would hear them jangling the wire because we had empty tins hanging on the wire. Sometimes the grenades would go off and then there would be deadly silence. That went on for about a fortnight and then on the morning of the 9th the woodpeckers [machine guns]

04:30 started up about half past five in the morning. One of our machine gunners got on to it straight away. It was behind a big tree, it might have been about a hundred metres away from our firing pits and it stopped suddenly. But then there were explosions amongst our wire. What the Japanese had done, they got bamboo poles and they had stuffed it with explosives and they pushed that under

05:00 our wire entanglements and blown tracks through it. They pushed with such fervour that they got

within five yards of my control post which was right in the middle of our sector. I took them out with a grenade and then I was able to direct the fire of the machine gunners that we had

05:30 where the Nips were, and every time I saw a head move I took it off with the rifle I had. That went on for about an hour and a half. It didn't cease because Eddie Perin, he was a sergeant, but he was acting platoon commander of 17 Platoon which was adjacent to my platoon, 18 Platoon, and it was he

06:00 who said, "Mortar, ninety degrees left, remove all supplementaries, barrel straight up." Now, normally it has a winch or handle on it so you can get it up to about a range of 175 yards

06:30 or you can lower it. As you lower it the range can increase. If you bring it up standing upright, it means the shell goes straight up and comes straight down and the barrel had to be adjusted because it ran out of screws on the adjusting worm. Those shells were going straight up and landing no more than seventy-five metres outside our wire.

07:00 It was a wonder we weren't all killed because if there had been any tree bursts, well those who were not actually in their firing pits would have been taken out because of the shell bursts. We were very lucky. He gave rapid fire. When I spoke with this person yesterday he couldn't tell me how many rounds they fired, but if any one of that team had been taken out they would not have been

07:30 able to fire the mortar. So someone was looking after us again, not only me. Suddenly, the Japanese fire stopped and then it was just a matter of sending out a fighting patrol to see whether there were any Nips in foxholes

08:00 somewhere else around us, but they had all gone but they left behind these one hundred odd weapons, and forty-seven or forty-eight bodies. They were buried that day.

How did it come about that you were awarded or decorated for this?

Well, fourteen of us destroyed the bulk of two companies

08:30 of Japanese, and I will show you the citation, you can read it to yourself.

Can you tell me what it says for the sake of the Archive?

It said that my company position had been attacked by two companies of Japanese. The attack was supported by weapons

09:00 of all sizes, it was pushed with ferocity. I stood behind scant cover directing the fire of my troops, that I killed five Japanese. There were many more than that, and that because of my daring aggressiveness the bulk of the Japanese attacking force was destroyed.

09:30 Had my platoon, this was not in the citation, had my platoon not held out there, the Japanese could have gone straight through the entire company position. So, we saved the day with three killed and I think two wounded.

10:00 **That is pretty incredible. There were a lot of losses on Bougainville. How did you keep going?**

We were reinforced; I think I was reinforced twice in about eleven months

10:30 and some people came to us direct from Melbourne, from the training depot in Melbourne, I don't know how they missed Canungra but some of them weren't worth a crumpet for maybe a week or fortnight because of the humidity and the heat. They came from a cold climate right in the midst of a tropical summer with high humidity and oppressive conditions. So

11:00 I would give them maybe three or four salt tablets and it was probably a fortnight before they became acclimatised. Two or three tablets a day I think it was with litres of water, it is amazing how quickly people can recover. Then again they had this disability of not knowing about snakes and sometimes you would have a lizard or a

11:30 goanna falling down round your neck. Sometimes we had our soldiers screaming that the Japanese had dogs when they didn't realise that there is a barking frog. It was simply the frog barking. So all these things were the jungle environment. Not only the heat and the humidity but the oppressiveness of it and the sorts of creepy crawly things

12:00 like ticks and leeches and fungus. I remember the night that I was on a fighting patrol up the Buin Road and the Japs started to fire on us. It was just on dusk, so immediately we went to ground but it was right in the midst of swamp country and to give us some sort of protection, three of my

12:30 platoon tried to roll this great big log up in front of them so at least they would have some cover. The three of them started screaming. It was some sort of a fungus and as it got onto their skin it turned them a bright purple. I could do nothing for them at all because I had no medicines. They were evacuated

13:00 next day, I don't know what happened to them. They all came from interstate. Another time we ran into an ambush and the leading scout, his name was Williams. There was one shot and he said, "They have

shot my eye out," and he collapsed of course, and he had sufficient strength to say he is up there and pointed up to this tree.

13:30 I was only about a yard from him. I had a Bren gun that day so I just turned the Bren gun on and scattered the whole of the trees around us, and the firing stopped so apparently he fell out of the tree but we never recovered his body. Williams was in dreadful agony all night and was crying out. That time I had some morphia with me.

14:00 Ten morphia, I think they them morphettes or something or other, a plastic bag with a little needle on it, and each time I put the needle in, the bag would come off it so he got no morphine whatsoever. I put in a report about that when I came back when we got out of there. We were there all night until we were relieved the morning by a fighting patrol which came up the track to us.

14:30 I'm jumping around, but these things come in to memory again. It was all part and parcel of jungle fighting.

Speaking of Williams being wounded, amongst the men was there thought to be one place where you were wounded, or a certain type of wound, which was the worst to get in a way?

15:00 No, I was very lucky I wasn't wounded at all, never. Again, I believed that I was being well and truly looked after.

Amongst the men, or all the men who you were around, were there certain things that kept them going, for example letters from home, girlfriends?

15:30 Yes, quite a bit of that of course. Letters were written by them whenever they had the opportunity. Every letter from my troops had to go through me. I had to censor them so that sensitive information never got out but they were cleared regularly from our headquarters and we received regular mail.

16:00 I remember the first Christmas there, that would have been in 1944, we all got a parcel from the Red Cross. In it, woollen socks, woollen jacket, what else? Winter clothing for the jungle. Something went wrong somewhere, but there were chocolates and bars of soap

16:30 and sugar that sort of thing in it.

What sort of things was considered sensitive information when you were censoring the letters?

If they would say we are fighting in Bougainville, we have visited Sisikatekori, or places in Bougainville. We weren't supposed to even mention Bougainville but I was always sensitive and probably I let stuff go through

17:00 that should not have gone through. But it could scarcely harm us at all because the Japanese were self supporting prisoners of war on Bougainville. We should never have fought over there, just as the 6th Division should have fought in Papua New Guinea. The Japanese were self supporting prisoners of war there also.

Explain what you mean by that?

17:30 Well, when we went into action and after us 9th Division went from the Finnisterres [Ranges], that was around north of Lae. They went up to Balikpapan, the Japanese were self supporting prisoners of war there because MacArthur's troops had also bypassed Rabaul and were much further north. So, there was no need

18:00 for Australians to be fighting in Bougainville nor in New Britain. There was scarcely any need for the 6th Division, the heroes from the desert campaign, they should, in my opinion, not have been fighting in Papua New Guinea. The Nips could do no harm to Australia because they were out

18:30 on a limb and the American troops already were heading towards Okinawa. There is a very good book on that, The Unnecessary Campaigns. Bougainville is one campaign that is mentioned in it.

Why do you think MacArthur did this?

It was part of his grand strategy but he had nothing to do,

19:00 well really it was the Australian Government, our generals, who had the final responsibility of engaging troops from their divisions who were under their command. In my opinion, and it has been well recorded that probably we should have never got outside of Torokina, and

19:30 gone south to Buin, and another brigade up north to the Porton Peninsula. The Japanese just wanted to be left alone. Of course we forced their hand by encroaching upon their gardens. You must remember I was a humble lieutenant then but it is what I have read since that, in my opinion, we should never have

20:00 gone to Bougainville probably, in the first place.

I was about to ask that, at the time did you have this realisation?

We knew that operation cartwheel, as MacArthur called it. The rolling up of the Japanese defensive positions including Rabaul which was the centre of the Japanese authority

20:30 over the Philippines and Indonesia and Papua New Guinea and the British Solomons.

What I am trying to find out is, you were suffering incredible losses amongst your men and facing all of these incredible hardships and yet, looking back you realised that you didn't even need to have been there. What is your reaction to that?

21:00 It makes me very sad to think on my personal side, those fine Australians who were in my platoon and who were killed when there was really no need for it.

Is it a hard thing?

As I said, there was intense, you provided me with the word. Not animosity between some of the leaders but

21:30 **Rivalry?**

Rivalry, yes, between divisions, between brigades.

How did this affect?

It hasn't affected me now but in this book that I mentioned, The Unnecessary Campaigns, it did say that there were rumblings from some of

22:00 the battalions and some of the commanders that these operations should never have occurred. The more I read, the more I feel that things were done that should not have been done. At the time I was in Bougainville, I should not have been in Bougainville.

22:30 I could have been in civilian life because my actions, my battalion in Bougainville had no affect whatsoever on peace in the Pacific because the Japanese were self-supporting prisoners of war. In my opinion it was an unnecessary loss of life.

23:00 **What was, do you remember where you were when you heard the news that the bomb had been dropped?**

Yes, on the afternoon of the 9th of July a Matilda tank trundled into our company position, right into my platoon position. He had a look at the devastation and there was still the elements of

23:30 that dreadful morning battle we had. He said, "What would you like me to do?" I said, "How about clearing away some of the jungle." So, he just opened up with his machine guns and he had some sort of a gun, Howitzer, on the Matilda. I don't know whether it was a two pounder or a three inch. It was a very short barrel, so he just opened up with this gun, How, and pom pom pom pom right around in front of our positions, and then

24:00 he gave three or four strikes with his machine guns. How many machine guns, I don't know. Here he was, sitting right in the midst of us, that was the 9th of July. Some time later, I think it was the beginning of August, he called out, "Will, will," and in effect he said, that they had dropped a bomb

24:30 on a city in Japan. The bomb had the strength or destructive power of more than 100,000 tons of TNT. And then three nights later he called me again, the tank would have been where the TV set is, and he said, "They have dropped another bomb, this time on Nagasaki."

25:00 Within two or three days the plane flew over with Japanese characters under the wing saying that fighting is over, and they dropped leaflets at the same time saying that a surrender party awaits you on the Mivo River. That was when I had a ring from the brigadier saying on the morning

25:30 of the `5th or the afternoon of the 15th , because it was in the morning that Emperor Hirohito ordered all the military of Japan to lay down their arms. So I was told to take what was left of my platoon with tents, to erect tents on the banks of the Mivo River. Don't take your light

26:00 machine gun, take lights with you. Light them up and nonchalantly patrol the bank and keep a watch on the other side of the river and just let us know what is happening. We were there for three days and suddenly this great white flag appeared. In the meantime, the Japanese interpreter from Hawaii joined us with a PA [Personal Address] system

26:30 and every half hour he would say, "This is the out station awaiting for peace overtures from your commander." And then on the third day this white flag appeared and we saw two Japanese being hoisted onto the shoulders of these six marines who were six feet tall. An interpreter was with me

27:00 from army headquarters and Major Otsu was questioned, and he said yes, that he was the peace envoy from General Kanda from the 127th Japanese Army, and he wanted to surrender.

27:30 I got on the phone then back to my headquarters and they sent forward some jeeps with a Major Burrell MC, and he took them back to our headquarters. I was told to just stay where I was with what I had left of my platoon and facilitate movement to and from Japanese held territory, and our territory.

What

28:00 **was running through your head?**

One of complete confusion, we were very tired as were my troops. We were just, well the waiting was over but the three days were unbearable almost wondering. We had at that time, a band of Japanese between our battalion and our brigade headquarters and our division headquarters. At any time they

28:30 could have put in another night attack on any one of our company positions. So it was a worrying time for us.

What were your feelings about the surrender in general though?

I remember it well. One of, I suppose elation, but one of wondering what was going to happen.

29:00 I just couldn't believe of what was happening to me and to my platoon. I scarcely remember what happened after that except I was approached by some commander from the British Army in Burma and was offered a

29:30 promotion to substantive captain in the Indian Army in Burma. I think I already mentioned this. Instead I turned that down. I didn't want to leave Australia, and I volunteered to go to Rabaul. I was

30:00 one of the first Australian troops to go to Rabaul and I was put into 26 Battalion, transferred from 15 to 26 as an assistant adjutant, and I was in Rabaul until June 1946. I was given discharge then and I got out of the army.

I've got lots to ask you about Rabaul, but

30:30 **just before we get to Rabaul, just a couple of things I have come across when I have read about sometimes in the jungle and that sort of thing, did you have any knowledge of Tokyo Rose?**

No, I never ever heard her on the radio; we had no access to radios anyhow. We had heard of her and I never heard any one of her broadcasts. It was only what we would read in "Jungle News".

31:00 We got a "Jungle News" about once a week, and that was more or less just about local units and things that had happened elsewhere on Bougainville and also overseas.

How aware were

31:30 **you of what was going on overseas and the rest of the war? Were you aware?**

Not very much at all. News was limited to us except papers that might be sent to some of our troops or this paper which was published in Port Moresby [Guinea Gold] and distributed throughout Papua New Guinea but that was mainly only local news.

32:00 **Did the Japanese drop leaflets?**

I never saw any leaflets from the Japs at all. I don't know of the content. The only leaflet I saw was the leaflets that we dropped on the Japanese in Buin about the surrender on the Mivo.

32:30 **What did you do, not for entertainment, but when you weren't, what did you do to relax I guess?**

We would be pulled out of the front line maybe once every six weeks or so. Once, we were

33:00 pulled out and we resting on the river but at the same time we were guarding a vital bridge on the Buin Track or Buin Road. We would just go fishing and we would have to maintain our own local security. But at the same time we would have to send fighting patrols out up into the foothills and up towards the volcano. I forget the name of it, there was an active volcano of Bougainville,

33:30 and just swim and fish. Again, we would have elements from the Red Cross come to us but mainly the Salvos, God bless them. Wherever they could they would visit us and bring their tea and coffee and biscuits and provide us with writing material.

34:00 **Did you enjoy these leave times?**

Yes, it was like being on the edge of a knife, just wondering if we were gong to be attacked because there were still disruptive elements of Japanese behind us. Wondering how long it would be before we went back into action again, and then having nightmares about the things that had happened to us in the past.

34:30 I still have them.

What sort of nightmares?

Being fired at and looking down the barrel of a rifle and firing back, getting lost, being hungry.

So you were having these nightmares while you were on Bougainville as well?

Yes, it was quite easy to happen.

35:00 You would hear the bangs of the big guns in the distance and wondering whether one was being directed at you, or what might happen, and then wondering about the patrol next day. What might happen what might not happen.

What kept you going?

I guess being trained for that sort of thing and

35:30 being there as one of a group, tremendous responsibility, and being frightened all the time. Sometimes I wonder how the dickens I got out of it. I thought to myself well, you were just one of many, one of hundreds of thousands

36:00 of people. They are being subjected right at this moment to what you are being subjected to.

That sense of thinking about everyone else?

Yes, that was a big responsibility, thinking about

36:30 scarcely ever did I think of home. I guess there were so many more important things right there waiting to be resolved, rather than wondering about home excepting when you would get a letter and then the water works.

Was it too hard to think about home sometimes?

Yes, I think because of the factors that were ever present.

37:00 Listening for the crack of a twig or a steady march, a shot being fired or the click of a bolt or movement. Then there would be the soldier who would snore and the reaction to

37:30 nightmares that some of them would suffer. One dreadful night, it was a new sort of tactic that was being introduced, that crawl trenches would be dug from one of the firing pits within the perimeter out near the wire, right in the midst of the wire. So that if you heard movement outside your wire, instead

38:00 of firing at it with a rifle you would toss a grenade over to the area where you heard the noise. That was accepted, but at the same time it was accepted with a great deal as to miss trust as to its success. And then three nights after it had been introduced one of our soldiers

38:30 in one of the pits, not in my platoon area but in 17 Platoon just down from us, maybe twenty-five yards away, one of our troops fired a shot. He thought he saw movement in the wire area and he had shot Cyril Bourke, one of our soldiers. Cyril apparently had moved, the soldier in the perimeter was

39:00 quite distressed, and then of course Cyril was seriously wounded. We didn't get him back until next morning. He had been killed. Immediately that tactic was withdrawn. It was from battalion headquarters that it had been introduced. It was a way they thought, a means of keeping

39:30 the Japanese off our wire.

Just one thing, maybe a small point, but I've been wondering can you describe to me what a firing pit was like?

A firing pit. We had firing pits but you also had dugouts. A firing pit would be no more than eighteen inches wide depending on the size of the soldier, it might be a yard long

40:00 and it might be two or three feet deep so you could kneel in it. Then that was an initial sort of firing pit, but then from that a complete dugout would be prepared. You would dig a hole maybe two metres long, maybe eighteen inches or two feet wide, down six or seven feet and then at the bottom,

40:30 not at the bottom but about six inches off the bottom, we would excavate into the side of the hole and there would be accommodation for two men, sleeping quarters. The soil that we threw up to the front was known as the parapet and the soil that you threw to the back of the firing pit was known as the paradox. And then on top of that,

41:00 if we had time we would cut down coconut palms and use maybe two metres of the tree trunks and then camouflage that with soil and with grass, or knock down trees. And that would be a firing pit come security.

Tape 7

00:23 I was still down on the Mivo River and they said, “We have a VIP [Very Important Person] coming down to visit you. Be sure to look after him very well.” That was all. About half an hour later the jeep arrived with this huge man sitting in it and I thought I recognised him.

01:00 He said, “Are you the boss?” I said, “Yes.” I said, “I am Bill Moody. I think you are Bert Oldfield, are you not.” He held out this hand. His hand covered me right above the wrist. He was the great cricket wicket keeper in the Australian team and he was the Deputy Director of

01:30 Sporting Activities. I said, “I was told to look after you, Major Oldfield.” He said, “Just call me Bert.” He said, “I would like you to take me down to that place where you ran into an ambush and where your scout was killed.” This was only about a week after the surrender. The Japs were still behind us. They hadn’t come out.

02:00 So I got hold of an old singlet and put it on a stick and I took a couple of my soldiers down with us and we found the place easily enough, and had we gone either side of the track to try and get around the Japanese ambush we would have run onto mines made out of wood. There were three on each side of the track. So, anyone going out that way would have been blown up on these mines.

02:30 We were lucky again. He was tickled pink of course. He said, “I have never seen anything so crafty in all my life.”

Describe for us what those mines looked like?

About nine inches long, about four inches wide, quite crude they were. It looked

03:00 as if they might have been made out of local bush timber, and probably the explosive used in it would have been the stuff they used to stuff the bamboo poles up that blew up the wire, and stones and all sorts of things put in around the explosive.

When you talk about these ambush incidents,

03:30 **what was it like when there were was nothing happening?**

All the time we were in action, it is nothing like desert warfare but it gets down to individuals and small groups of soldiers or fighting patrols that rely on mortar fire if you get into trouble. And once I

04:00 brought down mortar fire, that day that we ran into that ambush, but fortunately the first bomb that they put down was a smoke bomb. But even so, I couldn’t bring the fire down close enough to get onto the Japanese who had ambushed us and who had killed a scout. That is about the only time I called on mortar fire to help me.

04:30 But small groups like that of twelve men or ten men would be extremely mobile. It is no set fight, it is setting an ambush with the hope that you might trap the Japs, or walking into an ambush or avoiding an ambush, and that is what jungle warfare was all about. The greatest number of troops

05:00 in any fight would have been in the sort of fight that we were in, in a defensive position or the thing that happened at Slater’s Knoll where there were many more Australians. I’ve got no idea how many. Slater’s Knoll was towards our headquarters, towards Torokina. In that fight, the defence was able to bring a Matilda [tank]

05:30 over the river. It was able to wade in about six feet of water so they buried over 175 Japs, I think, but they had the assistance right from the start of a Matilda tank, and I think that fight was almost a battalion of Japanese. That would be many more than the 100

06:00 or 150 to 200 Japs who attacked our position.

Describe how your senses were when on patrol, what were your senses like?

Quite emotional. One of fear, one of great expectancy. We came to hear the clatter of a machine gun

06:30 or a single shot from a rifle, the blast of a grenade, were you going to walk into an ambush, that sort of thing.

I was also talking about your hearing, your smell, your sight?

At high pitch. Every time we went out we would blacken our faces with grease from the fire

07:00 to prevent the sun shining and acting as a reflector on our face, and of course, noiseless movement. You can, with training you can do that even in the jungle. It is as though you are feeling through your boots.

How would you communicate with each other?

Just by signs.

07:30 Stop, go right, go left or go down, just hand signals. There were a whole set of them, there were about ten. I can only remember some of them.

You were always looking around?

Yes,

08:00 constantly searching around, looking up into the trees because the Japs were great tree fighters. They would tie themselves into the high areas. They did that on the Kokoda Tail or Kokoda Track. They did it wherever they fought. They had a similar jungle training centre on Formosa and that is where the Japanese were trained in jungle warfare.

08:30 They had, one of the saving features of the Jap ammunition was that quite a bit of it was dud ammunition and it didn't fire. The Japanese, particularly the 17th Army, after the rape of Nanking in 1937, they were then engaged in the Japanese movement through Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia,

09:00 and Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The training that they got on Formosa and the experience that they gained in coming down through the jungles there, made them exceptionally good fighters and they could use the jungle tactically.

Did you respect each other?

09:30 I respected the Japanese as wonderful fighters, the things they did at night time. Australians never fought at night. We would send out fighting patrols, clearing patrols just before dusk and we would get down behind our low wire entanglements and get into our pits before complete darkness because the two prime times of attack would come last light at night and

10:00 early in the morning at first light. There was an instance where a Jap dug under the wire of 42 Battalion. It was in the tank that I took up to the battalion one afternoon. The tankie, the tank commander, thought he heard some movement on his tank and looked out and he couldn't see anything so he went back in his tank again and then

10:30 suddenly there was a laugh from outside the wire and a bang. A Jap had crawled in by tunnel under the wire, planted a box of shells that the tank carried on its back, and ran a fuse and an explosive box of shells, trailed wire behind him, got out again, pressed the button and it was a dud.

11:00 So the tank wasn't blown up but that is how good night fighters the Japs were.

Speaking of which, raising that dud round which you faced down the barrel of a machine gun, looking back at that experience was that in slow motion, that experience?

Seeing him pressing the trigger

11:30 and hearing, you could hear the bolt going forward. It was, as you said, in slow motion. It wasn't happening. At the same time I knew nothing was going to happen to me. I was perfectly safe. It was uncanny.

The feeling on patrol when you weren't

12:00 **in a fight, there was a sense of, how did it feel, what was the sense like?**

Unrealism, one of great expectancy, wondering whether there was going to be a burst of machine gun fire or a single shot or many single shots, the explosion of a grenade. All those sorts of things, they would come crowding in on you at the same time.

12:30 You would stop and there would not be a whisper anywhere.

Did this kind of lifestyle affect your ability to relax even after?

Yes. There was no relaxation, not at night time, even when we were taken out of action there was a feeling of disbelief. A feeling of any minute now there is going to be a shot fired. It was period of great stress.

13:00 You can talk to any infanteer and he will tell you the same thing.

Going on the surrender, can you describe to me in a bit more detail that meeting at Mivo River?

On the Mivo River. I have a report by a member from I think it's the library in Canberra, he and I were on the beach at the same time.

13:30 He was up with my platoon. He had come up that morning so the both of us went down on the river. It is interesting to read his account because other accounts are dissimilar to what I reported and what he reported. To what the Nichi Boy, he did the broadcasting over the

14:00 PA system, "Come surrender here." And so I maintained some sort of a diary and I typed it up afterwards but my report somewhere in the system is dissimilar to his as to the number who crossed the stream, as to what happened at the actual Mivo Ford. It makes interesting reading.

What did happen?

14:30 In my opinion we waited for the three days, no indication that the Nips were present on the other side. And then suddenly this great big blood flag, white flag went up, and I had my glasses. I said to Husky Lou, “Have a look at this.” No, Husky wasn’t there, it wasn’t Husky, he was dead. It must have been to one of the others. I said, “Can you see something over there?” He said, “I can see

15:00 a great big white flag,” I said, “Let’s hope this is it.” Then suddenly the group came out, first the major. We identified him as a major a bit later on when he crossed the stream ahead of the Jap who was waiving the flag. You can see that in the photographs that I’ve got here, and then the reception where the interpreter asked the Jap,

15:30 “Are you a surrender party from 17th Army headquarters?” The Japanese, “Yes.” I don’t know what happened then. Really, I just got on the phone and I said, “I think it is the real thing this time. The Japs are here, a representative from Kanda’s headquarters at Buin. They want to talk surrender, they want to talk terms.”

16:00 I have photographs there too of the Australian officers and the actual initial interrogation of the Japanese. You can see those when you are ready to see them.

How were the Japanese?

One of them had a smile on his face, Otsu has a look of calm on his face. There was no jubilation but it turned out that

16:30 Pakashima, Superior Private Pakashima, the flag bearer, understood English. So he had a fair idea of what was happening and what was being said. But Osto, he only understood Japanese.

What was the interaction like between you?

There was no hostility. I think there was, “Is it really happening?” One of incredularity

17:00 on my part. I just didn’t comprehend. I can remember that to this day.

Can you describe how you felt about the environment there?

Before I got there I was accustomed to

17:30 that sort of environment. The features of being in that sort of country, the ability to move through it silently because I was attuned to it, and my experience in Far North Queensland when I would go shooting, my sense of direction and my ability to navigate,

18:00 my knowledge of wild animals, particularly snakes, leeches, ticks and walers.

Did you like the environment?

I was attuned to it so I was able to

18:30 accept it and fight in it.

Did it seem strange in fighting in such a natural environment?

It is something like that in Far North Queensland around Kuranda and Cairns, up in the Great Dividing Range

19:00 on the Atherton Tableland, particularly around Ravenshoe, deep jungle. Firing weapons, understanding weapons, attuned to noises. That all comes with one’s local knowledge and training, and after all I started in the army in 1939. But I had already been trained

19:30 in self-discipline when I would go camping. I could go a day or two days without food if necessary. I can still do that even in this sort of environment.

Have you ever returned to Bougainville?

No, but I took my wife and our daughter, Vivienne, on a South West Pacific tour. We went to Honiara, which is in the British Solomons. We went to

20:00 Madang which is in Papua, in New Guinea. We went to Lae where I patrolled from.

What was that like returning?

I was a bit disappointed because Lae was a beautiful city but that was well after. In 1975 when I was in Lae working for the Australian government

20:30 on one of my bi-annual visits, it was a delightful town. The natives were respectful and the place was clean and tidy. When we went there on our tour the place was dirty, the natives would push you off the footpath into the gutter. It was not safe for you to go to the cemetery that was being maintained by the

21:00 Australian Government. It was always wise to go with a party.

Just on one thing you mentioned a while ago with the “Jungle News”, what kind of articles did

they have in the “Jungle News”?

It would invariably have some crude drawings in them. Invariably they would have snippets from

21:30 things that might have happened to Red Cross people or the Salvos, or that might have happened within a unit without identifying the unit because of security. Reporting of any particular news from Queensland, New South Wales, depending on the state from which the letter had arrived. Intimate things,

22:00 things about Australia generally. Not much about overseas unless it was an exceptional sort of campaign that was happening, say in Burma or on the continent.

What was the purpose of the news?

Just to give us something to read.

Was it for morale?

Morale, yes.

22:30 It would be mainly for morale but also for information of units that some people in our own unit might have brothers or relatives in it. They might send a message to a brother, an uncle, or an aunt. It was a means of communication, approved communication between

23:00 unit and unit.

When you would go on patrol, what kind of things would you pack?

Invariably we would take our pouches of course. I invariably carried the dog biscuits in one packet, which I ate constantly during patrols and grenades in the other, two grenades tucked into our belt by the spring lever. I always carried

23:30 an Owen sub-machine gun, and a pistol, a water bottle of course and that is about all. I would always have to carry a map because the signal was always with me for direct contact back to our mortar platoon. Beret,

24:00 blacken our faces and our arms. That is about all.

Moving onto after the war when you were involved in Rabaul?

That was after the war. In Rabaul they had assembled all the armaments, the heavy guns, there were

24:30 acres and acres and acres of weaponry right from 155 millimetre guns to twenty-one foot torpedoes. I was a liaison officer between my headquarters and various companies that were distributed or placed around the area in encampments in which

25:00 there maybe up to 10,000 Japanese. I would liaise with them and report back to the headquarters. I was also assistant adjutant of the unit and I acted for and on behalf of the CO of the unit. So it was more or less a liaison. I had tremendous mobility.

25:30 I saw quite a bit of the country around Rabaul. There were high activities of course. I would be invariably invited to the hospital in which I was a patient for about a fortnight, to the nurses’ quarters.

26:00 A group of Japanese even built a sailing ship for me. I registered to go sailing in one of the carnivals on Simpson Harbour. I had chummed up with a delightful nurse whose name was Oates, and we were becalmed near the Beehives in Simpson Harbour. We had to be rescued.

26:30 Worms got into the planking and we were gradually sinking, and of course we were becalmed. We were finally pulled out of that by a rescue boat amidst great laughter. I think we were running last anyhow.

What was it like to see women again?

It was fun. They were great

27:00 nurses. About sixty women, I don’t know whether they were Korean or not, they might have been some of these Comfort Koreans that have been seeking recompense form the Japanese government. I saw one of the places where they lived, where the brothels were, and they were above

27:30 the pens that the Japanese had carved in solid rock on the banks of Simpson Harbour, and they had stairs leading up to the rest areas, and on one wall with the names of all the high ranking officers and the days or weekends or nights that they could spend with these girls up in their little rooms. A Japanese took five of us up

28:00 and we got stuck into the sake and I have never been so ill in all my life. Little sake cups and the Japanese, I think he was a colonel, insisted on setting them up and showing us. So we had a little sake afternoon tea and then we had to go down about 120 steps over these rickety ladders to get down into the submarine pens before we could get out into Simpson Harbour again.

28:30 **What was it like interacting with Japanese in this way?**

It was fun.

Did it seem unusual?

Completely unusual, particularly when you'd get into the compounds. Some of them were quite interested in us. I was invited to see an operation, an appendix operation. The Japanese colonel,

29:00 he was a surgeon that particular day, and by sign he gave me to understand that the patient had been given a spinal injection but the affect would wear off in about ten minutes because it was so old. I asked how long he would be unconscious or under the affect of the spinal. He said, "Ten minutes,"

29:30 but the operation took about twenty-one minutes, so for eleven minutes or so the chap was without any anaesthetic. The sweat was pouring off his forehead but he didn't move. A stoic people.

What did you think of the Japanese now that you were closer to them?

I have great respect for their soldiering.

30:00 I think they were remarkable soldiers, strictly disciplined. They could live on the smell of, not an oily rag, they could live on a handful of rice. They lived off the land and the gardens, this is particularly over the Kokoda Trail, Track, but they were engaging in cannibalism towards the end of their

30:30 six months campaign over the Owen Stanley's.

Have you seen any of this yourself?

No, no.

That brings us to the war crimes trials. You were asked to be involved with that. Can you tell us about that?

Yes, that was in Rabaul. We had quite a bit to do in the unit with some of the prisoners, the Indian prisoners. They would be from the

31:00 Royal Punjabi, some Royal Sikh Regiment, they would come to us as guards. Each day we would get about 300 Nips who would construct buildings for us and also a soccer field and a football field and we would arm these Royal Sikhs with

31:30 a pick helm or pick handle and they would just wonder around magnificently with helm at the slope, and you would hear screams. Immediately the orderly officer for the day, or an officer handy, would turn out a guard and they would go to the source of the screams and invariably they would find a Japanese crawling on the ground or

32:00 otherwise intimidated. He would be placed under arrest, and the Royal Sikh or the Royal Punjabi Soldier would be interviewed, and they would bring a crime against that particular person. Invariably, he would be one of the Tempati Police, and had been responsible for some activity against the POWs,

32:30 some act of, what would you say? Some harm. There were eight or nine executions of Japanese at Rabaul. I didn't actually take place in any of the investigations but I was given the opportunity of commanding one of the firing squads. I declined.

33:00 **Why?**

It just didn't appeal to me and I didn't want to do it from a morale point of view. It is different when you are fighting them, but not otherwise. I have no animosity towards them at all. We have had Japanese girls, students, come here.

33:30 I have given them English lessons to help them on the way through their learning programs here in Australia.

Were the trials on Rabaul fair trials?

Yes. They were fair. Some of the commitments against the Japanese were brought by the indigenous population of rape and other acts.

34:00 None of those went to the firing squads. It was only proven acts of maybe terrorism, maybe of great physical harm or of actual execution by firing squad, shot to the back of the head or beheading with a samurai sword. That happened too.

34:30 **How would you gather evidence?**

Through the soldier or the PW, who had been a PW in Singapore, and also from British records and other records that had been maintained by that particular regiment.

There were Japanese brought to court from where?

They

35:00 were, these Japanese were in Papua New Guinea or in Rabaul but maybe had committed these crimes in Singapore.

I understand, okay. What was your exact role in this process?

35:30 It was mainly liaison. My appointment was assistant adjutant 26 Battalion, and one of my responsibilities was liaison with those compounds the 26 Battalion had mounted guards. I think we had about four.

36:00 Each enclosure had a platoon of 26 Battalion there. So, I would go and liaison with them and also ascertain whether the Japanese commander had any complaints. It was a fair dinkum appreciation of harmony in the camp.

Did you attend any of the court processes?

36:30 Any of the courts? Yes, I attended, three or four of them. It was fascinating to see how criminal courts, army criminal courts operate with the judge advocate and defence and prosecution, and the interpreters present.

Describe that for us,

37:00 **on Rabaul, how they were set up?**

It was just under an ordinary building, thatched top, maybe in the outskirts of one of the football fields or under the palm trees in various places. The four I think I attended

37:30 were near the beach in very pleasant surrounds, but isolated.

How was everyone dressed?

The judge advocate had, he just wore khakis and his shoulder badges of course, and he had no special regalia.

38:00 And the defence, I think he was just in civilian clothes and one of the prosecutors was in army clothing because he was part and parcel of one of the regiments.

How did the Japanese work with their defence? The defender, where was he from?

I have no idea at all but the court cases as such were remarkably

38:30 quiet. Discipline of course was, and security, was most important. There were no fireworks that I can remember. There seemed to be tranquillity about the whole environment.

What kind of punishments were received apart from executions?

I don’t know.

39:00 The only one that I was associated with was the approach asking me if I would care to command one of the firing squads.

How was the firing squad made up?

I think there were eight selected. From whence they came, I don’t know. I never attended a firing squad.

We’ve got to change tapes again.

Tape 8

00:38 I’ve got the official history here and you can have a look at that too.

Just tell us about that again, the Japanese Army?

About the award?

And what they have been involved with.

The 17th Japanese Army was responsible for the rape of Nanking in 1937

01:00 and it was that same army that fought its way down through Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and they finished up in Bougainville. Otsu and Superior Private Pakashima, were envoys from General Kanda of the 17th Army, surrendered to me on the Mivo River. And so

01:30 you might say it was the end of 17th Army surrendering to an allied officer in the southwest Pacific. It

was the last fight of some consequence before the Emperor ordered the surrender or lay down arms. It was a furphy [lie]. We don't know the base of

02:00 it, but what we heard that Chiang Kai-shek had recommended an award of the White Order of, or the Purple Chrysanthemum, or some order that the Chinese recognise. We were told that again unofficially, a furphy maybe,

02:30 that General Blamey would not approve of the award because of the size of the number of the people who would receive it. And that being so, it would have been my platoon because Otsu and Pakashima, or Pakashita was part of that army,

03:00 the 17th Japanese Army. A furphy, we don't know the significance of it. We don't know the origin of it but it was circulating in quite a big area.

Were you aware at the time that you were fighting this army, which had possibly been

No, that came well after the surrender.

03:30 **What could you have possibly said in defence of some of the Japanese on trial?**

I don't know because I was not present at any of the interviews that took place between the Australians who conducted the interviews. I was not aware. I knew that they were going on

04:00 but I was not aware of what actually passed between Australian authorities, legal authorities and Japanese authorities. I was only present at four of the trials.

Were there any Australians that had done some war crimes that you were aware of?

Yes, I was lecturing in military history at the Wagani Staff College

04:30 as a visiting lecturer on one of my frequent trips to Papua New Guinea, between 1964 and 1975 and the campaigns for study for promotion to major at that time, was Bardia, that's in the desert campaign, the first forty days of the First World War, and Kokoda.

05:00 A question came up, I was addressing 150 students who were attending this Wagani Staff College and something came up about natives or indigenous people who were

05:30 at Popondetta I think it was, who betrayed some Australian troops after the Kokoda Track campaign, and I saw the teacher, "Oh," he threw his

06:00 arms up in the air. So, I immediately realised what had happened and I said, "Of course, we also had a renegade Australian who betrayed some Australians to the Japanese up at Wewak." I said, "These things happen in any war, so whilst there were some

06:30 of your own people who betrayed Australians to the Japanese, yet, on the other hand we had an Australian who betrayed some Australians to the Japanese in Wewak," and so things settled down again. It was funny thing that one of the students at

07:00 one of the lectures I gave in Port Moresby, his father had been with ANGAU, the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit, and this indigenous person had been on long-range patrol in Bougainville

07:30 on one of the patrols of Australian troops that I took out, and he was the son of his father who could not be present in Moresby while I was there because rains had cut the tracks in the centre of the island. But I was able to give him a book on the retreat from Kokoda which was a study book at that time.

08:00 He was delighted.

How did you feel about the Australian leadership during these campaigns in New Guinea?

I would prefer that this was not made public.

Don't answer it then. It's okay.

I'd prefer not to because it

08:30 involved people in the highest appointment and also the CO of my unit.

Don't answer it. It's not a problem. That's fine. Okay, after a time on Rabaul, you must have been quite keen to get home?

Yes, I was. I served out my time until I got sufficient points.

Tell us about travelling home.

I don't know the name of the ship, it was

09:00 an American ship. I was duty officer one night, went down for dinner and saw the way that the Americans served their meals, a great big, just like M.A.S.H., a great big dollop of potato and a great

big dollop of stuff there, and the smells of the cooking down in the holds. I was not a good sailor.

09:30 Otherwise, it was comfortable but it was good to get off the ship. It was a Victory ship and it rolled like buggery, particularly through the China Straits but it was great to get home again.

Can you tell us about arriving home?

I came to Brisbane and went straight up

10:00 to Mareeba to my parents, and then for three months with my brother who had just been discharged from the air force, and I, visited all the areas that we had been in on the Atherton Tableland. We went to the shows in Mareeba and Cairns and Atherton and Herberton. We even went up onto the range in Herberton, to the Great Northern Mine where we would scratch for tin on

10:30 weekends. We just completely relaxed. We went fishing on the reef a couple of times. Then I had been in touch with the authorities and I was told I had a job waiting for me at the department of supply in Brisbane whenever I cared to start there. I came to Brisbane, chummed up again with

11:00 the young lady that I had met during the war years, and we planned a home for ourselves. We got married, I was decorated by Sir John Lavarack, our governor, the day before Jan and I were married in October 1947. We went away on our honeymoon to Yamba for a fortnight, came home and moved straight into this home, which was waiting for us.

11:30 **How had you met Jan again? We haven't talked about that.**

I think you might remember where I said we had been out, eight of us on a patrol trying to locate a training area for a commando unit and that one of the lads had sucked a vine to get water, his mouth swelled up, so we had to do something off-hand immediately at night.

12:00 It would be about ten o'clock at night so we went to the edge of the McPherson Range. I don't know if you have you heard about the Stinson that crashed into the lost world, which is between O'Reilly's and Binna Burra. We went straight over the edge. We used vines until we got to the bottom at which time some of us got struck with Wait-A-While [type of plant].

12:30 Our skins were torn, one of our troops I had excised a tick from his scrotum after giving him a great shot of rum. I think that's recorded, and we were picked up by transport near Murwillumbah by one of the dairy farms there and brought back to Canungra. Four of the people went to hospital

13:00 and they sent me down to Southport. I can't remember the name of the lady, but she said, "What do you want to do? Anything you want to do, you do it and be my guest." I said, "I would like to go fishing," and so she said, "My son is a fisherman. He is leaving tomorrow morning at two o'clock. Are you well enough to go with him?" I said, "Yes, I am." She said, "I will wake you about midnight with breakfast."

13:30 I slept right through to eight o'clock, she came in, and she said, "I didn't wake you, you looked so tired." She said, "There is a family I want you to meet. They are having breakfast now, come down and join them." So there was Mrs White, Mr White and daughter Jan, and that is how it started. That would have been in 1942 I think or '43 so we maintained contact,

14:00 and that is the end of the story.

Back to meeting up with your brother again and going on a trip around North Queensland, tell us what did you talk about?

We just talked, not much about what we did during the war years but we just went from house to house of our old friends. People with whom we'd

14:30 been associated since we went to live in Herberton. That would have been in 1922. We had a great range of friends up there. We even had friends who went fishing with us in the Wild River, or who went up with us into the hills to scratch for tin. It was social activities.

15:00 **You didn't debrief each other about your experiences?**

At times we would, we would go and have three or four beers together and loosen our tongues up a bit.

What was that like?

It was wonderful relief. We had free travel everywhere on Queensland transport of course. So, we would go to

15:30 dances and fishing, and tin scratching again. It was just wonderful to get back into the country that we had been brought up in.

How did you find settling back in?

After three months, I found it quite easy. When I came to Brisbane I had accommodation and the

16:00 woman who owned the place, Mrs Marks, she was a bit of a villain in a way. But I had good company. I

could see Jan every night. I got on very well with her mother and stepfather so I was taken to many places on picnics, and then they looked after me very well at work also.

16:30 **Did people have any understanding of what you had been through?**

I didn't talk about it much but it all came to a head at the function they put on the day before we were married. I went to hospital, that was only six weeks after I started work, with malaria, and they treated me

17:00 over at Greenslopes. They put me on paludrine, which was a new drug out at that time, and massive doses of iron and practically put me through the roof. So, instead of being there for a week I was there for three weeks. They sent me down to a con [convalescent] camp to Southport. So, I went back to the same hotel that I had been there during my experience from

17:30 Canungra. And Jan and I spent our first night there after our marriage on our way to Yamba. I was given, there was no great fuss because it was 1947. It was a year after the war, so I got no welcome when I went back to Mareeba because the war had finished and

18:00 people's memories are short.

What did you think about people's everyday troubles here comparatively?

I don't understand your question?

I'll rephrase it. How did you relate to people, say complaining about small things and that sort of thing?

They got short shift from me. I get cantankerous sometimes.

18:30 The older I get, the more of a recluse I become I think, because when I was in Mareeba, during that unhappy time I was telling you about, I would go out by myself on my pushbike and I would go fishing by myself. I didn't get on very well with some of the people at work. As a matter of a fact, I had only been there a week and then they introduced me to the flour bin. They stripped me to

19:00 my underpants and more, and then poured treacle on me and chucked me in the bran bin. That started me off on the wrong foot too with them. I settled down eventually. Particularly so, when I got out bush with my Uncle George.

Uncle George? What about Uncle Tom?

Uncle Tom he was the digger.

Yeah. Did you see him

19:30 **when you got back?**

Yes, only when I went back on holidays from Brisbane, then I would seek him out. It was the time, just at the time when I joined the army and before that I first went to live with Gran over at Granite Creek, and that is when I would cycle up to Herberton on my bike.

Did you have any

20:00 **resentment at all to people not understanding what you had gone through perhaps?**

I never told them. It didn't occur to me because the war had been over for twelve months or more. That was when I was living with Gran. No no, I'm sorry. I'm becoming a bit disorientated. After I arrived back in Australia I went to North Queensland to my parents

20:30 and that is where my brother and I got the services out of our systems. I joined the CMF again in 1948 when it was being reformed and the CO of 9 Battalion was Colonel Jack Amies, who was my CO with 15 Battalion

21:00 in Bougainville. So I got on very well with all the officers and with 15 Battalion. I transferred to ordnance corps and it helped my progress in the department of supply because I became secretary of the district contract board in Brisbane.

21:30 And then I became the deputy director of contracts in Brisbane and one of my main responsibilities was to lecture commerce and industry throughout Queensland, in logistic support to the army and air force in Queensland and in the Northern Territory, and then Papua New Guinea came under my jurisdiction and from 1964

22:00 to 1975 I would go back to Port Moresby and go right throughout Papua New Guinea wherever there was army company or battalion and organise industry by contractual system to provide those outstations with fresh fruit and vegetables. With such things as shoe repair, with transportation by

22:30 boat or plane or vehicle. Whatever they wanted by contract, I had to satisfy their needs and it was a result of that that the Queen awarded me the MBE when she came out here in 1982 to the Commonwealth Games.

What was that like?

That was simply wonderful.

23:00 Such a delightful person, so delicate, so beautiful. One felt a man in her company. She asked me about Papua New Guinea as to where I got the Military Cross and why I got it, and about my current activities and what did I actually do in Papua New Guinea

23:30 to earn the award. So I had quite a talk with her.

How did you feel about the Empire?

I am a great monarchist. I know we must become a republic eventually. I think it is needed because out of our 18 million I think 3,500,000 of us now are from other countries.

24:00 I don't dread the day when we become a republic, but I think it must come.

Going back to before the war, was that a factor for you fighting for the Empire?

Oh yes. For King, Empire and country.

24:30 And of course my mother being English too.

Going for the cricket team?

Yeah.

You mentioned before that you sometimes suffer from nightmares. How long did this continue for?

It is still going on now. I have psychiatric treatment, which amounts to one tablet, but in the opinion of the psychiatrist I am doing

25:00 the right thing, that I have been a voluntary tutor in English at TAFE College and in other places now for twenty-two years. She is anxious that I should learn the computer. We have a computer, Jan is expert at it and our grandson is on my shoulders every time we see him. He is going to teach me how to use the computer.

25:30 I am not that way inclined.

In the post war period, was there any counselling available?

Not to the extent that it is available now. In those days, it was something up with which I put. Some of them were quite horrific but after all, it is only a nightmare. And I got sufficiently involved

26:00 at work and with my church, and with Probus [non-profit organization] and with other things. So, I have been doing the right thing. I have found that the drug I am on is a child's dose and it has done wonders. She told me you will feel a different person probably in three or four weeks.

26:30 She was quite right. I feel more, shall I say, rested and more interested than ever in these young people that I meet twice a week. Last week for example, I worked with three classes. There were over forty students from about twenty different countries. Every time I go there I learn something.

27:00 **What strategies did you use to cope with it back in those post war years in the '50s and '60s?**

I was then a member of the Citizen Military Forces again, or whatever name they were known, and I did examinations for promotion to major and then I became senior lecturer in military history with the command at staff training here at Northern Command.

27:30 I lectured in military history in Sydney and Melbourne to CMF units down there and then of course up in Papua New Guinea, whenever I went up there. I was also lecturing to commerce and industry in all the mainland states in Queensland and also in Sydney and Melbourne for the department in contractual practices and procedures.

28:00 **Did this help?**

It kept me mentally alert all the time as I am now. These young people wrought miracles with me and they still do.

This is a bit of a change, but how have you felt about the depiction of war in the popular culture like television or film?

I can still watch it. I find the

28:30 noise affects me more than anything. The last time I went to see a war picture was with Jan. I had to get up and walk out on it, but we still watch M.A.S.H. That is a favourite of mine because I can see so many things happening that happened to me, and also in some of the experiences that I had with American troops, although they were infrequent.

29:00 But my experiences with their, what do they call them? Not canteens, and with some of their officers particularly, when I went home to Mareeba where my mother and father had open home with the Americans. I don't agree with their tactics ever because they are so totally different from the tactics of the Australian Army, but when it comes to

29:30 socialising they are remarkable people.

What were some of those tactics you disagreed with?

You could smell marijuana sometimes within a hundred yards of them. Their tactics were to advance straight up a track. The tactics with the Australian Army are so totally different. We use the track as the axis, but we never move on the track,

30:00 except our leading scout, and our second scout. Even they don't move on the track. They would move about one or two metres off the track and there might be coverage on either side of the track for a line of advance by ten or twenty metres. You still have to maintain visual contact though for signs that the infanteer has.

30:30 **What was the film you didn't like and why?**

It might have been "Private Ryan" or something or other. The noise, or the tactics that the Yank uses are so completely unbelievable that I just gave up. I couldn't follow it properly. I don't like their command system, I don't like their tactics

31:00 that they engage in. I don't like their systems generally.

Did you feel part of the Anzac tradition?

Yes, I am still a member of 15 Battalion Association. That is the battalion that I fought with in Bougainville. At the last meeting there was twelve of us. Our numbers are diminishing quickly.

31:30 I am a member of the northern command officers' mess, and four of us meet regularly at the officers' and soldiers' mess at Victoria Barracks every Friday, the last Friday in every month. I still lecture in the surrender on the Mivo River

32:00 and some of my other experiences to Probus, to Lions and to Rotary [Clubs].

Have you told your family and your children all about your experiences before?

Not unless they ask me. I have found that

32:30 recently, maybe over the last six months or so, that Jessica who is now seventeen, has become very interested in what I did. Our grandson, Joe of thirteen, also wants to see my medals occasionally, and Kristy who is twenty-one and the daughter of our son Phillip,

33:00 and I call her Leefamaysha, his wife has become quite interested too in what I have done.

Do you think we have learnt the lessons of war?

Well, I don't think, lessons of war are purely political in my opinion,

33:30 highly political. I didn't agree with our Prime Minister recently in sending troops back to Iraq without Parliament approval. I feel distressed whenever I read the paper about things, acts of terrorists, as do all people I guess.

34:00 I only hope there is not another war that my family might become involved in.

Was it worth it in your view?

I would never surrender one day of what I went through. It was something so totally different for me and I don't regret one

34:30 day of my service to Australia in the army.

I read in your brief that you do yoga?

Yes. My wife still practises Yoga and so do I. I went out to Griffith University and had yoga

35:00 group out there for about two or three years but I still do it every morning, or elements of it, and it is part of my remedial treatment by my psychologist. Once a week for six weeks she is working with a psychiatrist from the Queensland Government

35:30 and they are designing a system, or designing a rhythm that they hope will help people like me.

How does it help, you do you think?

Relaxation and a discipline, because I am accustomed to discipline, so I find it quite easy. Apart from that it keeps me mentally alert

36:00 also and flexible.

I might ask you a final question. Do you have any final words that you would like to say?

I am happy with my lot. I have a very happy family life. I feel contented.

36:30 My wife and I do anything that moves us these days and we have our family close and handy. Both Phillip and his family, and Vivienne and her family, and we are well looked after by our family, as well as by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and

37:00 our church and our way of life. I never had the opportunity to talk to my mother and my father. The amount of time I spent away from home I feel was lost

37:30 because I did not record or keep records of what my father and my mother did during their lifetime. That is one regret that I will never live down in my opinion. They had so much to tell us but I had to spend quite a lot of time away from home.