

# Australians at War Film Archive

## James Mackenzie ('Serg') - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/678>

### Tape 1

00:41 **Hi James, can you give me a broad overview of your life?**

Oh yes I suppose. I was born in, on the 26th May 1917 in New Zealand. So I was a Kiwi [New Zealander]. My father was a special colour printer

01:00 and he had gone to New Zealand for a special job over there and my mother, who was the first lady Dentist in Queensland, packed up and went over there. They got married and I was born and father enlisted in the 33rd Reinforcements the New Zealanders, and went to the war and was killed. And she got advice of this on the Armistice

01:30 Day, which was rather sad. So she came back to Queensland and my Uncle built a house for her, in St Lucia and so I lived in St Lucia or Brisbane most of my life. I eventually.....As a result of that of course we were, or my mother was poor monetarily because

02:00 we found out, I found out very much later in life that she should have been on a bigger pensions then she was on. Cause she had a child, so we had to grow our own vegetables and that sort of thing. So I used to of course walk about 3 miles to School from St Lucia to Taringa School and

02:30 because mother was very conscious of the fact that I was an only child with many aunts and two uncles who weren't in Brisbane, that I should be mixed with lots of children and men where I could be. So I was taken away from Taringa School after having a woman teacher for a while and I had to go to West End School, across the river. And

03:00 then I went to the Brisbane State High School where I passed junior at 16 and then had to find some work. Which was hard in 1932 because that was the middle of the Depression. I found it very hard to get a job but within a couple of weeks got 3 or 4 acceptances so I choose the Main Roads

03:30 Department for a Junior Clerk at Nunda Workshop. So I was there for a few years until, I was transferred to the Brisbane Office where I stopped until the war. During that time I was, in all those years of course I built a dingy and did a lot of canoeing

04:00 and joined the Scouts and eventually became a Rover Leader later on. Because two of the Rover's were already in the Queensland Cameron Holders and they talked me into joining there to. So at the very beginning of 1939, we enlisted in the Militia, which of course, derogatively was called

04:30 the Chocos - they melted in the sun, or Koalas - not to be shot at, not to be exported. But when war was declared we, they tried to get the whole Battalion transferred to AIF [Australian Imperial Force] but defence wouldn't do that so, most of them I suppose transferred to the 2/25th which was a very famous

05:00 battalion, and from there some went to, a few went to the navy others to the air force. I stopped in the unit to be trained in Brisbane and Caloundra and Townsville and eventually in July '42 went to New Guinea where I was,

05:30 by that time a Platoon Commander and Sergeant in Don [D] Company. Our Company was sent half way up the island about 20 miles as the out post and from there I went another 20 odd miles to East Cape with one section of my platoon. And coming back we had the Bondswing episode which is an episode in itself.

06:00 In escaping there over the Kunmine my feet were damaged very much so I ended up with a few days in hospital. After which came back to the battalion. Then there was trouble with Ordnance and Staff Captain Allan from Advance Land Headquarters came up and wanted two Sergeant's to help him the Ordnance crowd there so I went over as one and the other fellow had a Military Medal but he couldn't stand this parade ground stuff,

06:30 he was a fighting fellow, getting a MM [Military Medal]. So from there, the Staff Captain told me, he give me a Warrant Officer First Class and after that I went into Ammunition and up to Lae where we

formed a Ammunition Depot.

- 07:00 Then I went up for a short time to Buna where we were going to form an Ammunition Depot and I was, by this time bullied into going for an Officer's Pre Selection School. So I was one of - about 7 of 40 odd I think that was selected to go back to Australia, so I eventually
- 07:30 went to Waltue and got my Commission. I became Adjutant of 2 BOD at Bogan Gate near Parkes in New South Wales. It was the largest Ammunition Depot in Australasian and from there I was posted in charge of Field Ammunition Depot at Liverpool in Sydney.
- 08:00 I had to, I was very busy on VJ [Victory over Japan] Day because I together with some Major of Ammunition in Sydney found sufficient blanks to fire the victory salute. And then I came back to Wallangarra for discharge on the 6th March 1946.
- 08:30 So I came home without any fan fare and very happily after a few days went up to Toowoomba to become Godfather of one of my greatest mates from 3 year old. What happened then. I went back to work and was offered the job of Storekeeper for Main Roads Department in Townsville.
- 09:00 From there after 2 years, from 49, 48 I came back to Brisbane and worked at, oh then I joined the Queensland Computers Society. I was a founding Member of the Queensland Computer Society of University of Queensland. In 1960
- 09:30 I was chosen as one of the oldies that knew the Main Roads Department inside out, cause they had bright fellows from, University to do a lot of the other work but they wanted somebody, a few who knew the ins and outs of the Department. So one of these young fellows Ron Webber, who became a Professor of Economics at Uni, thought I could teach him a few things that he
- 10:00 hadn't learnt from books. So we became friend, so I worked in Computer Branch until the 70's when I got another position. And at the end of 69 my mother died. At the beginning of 1970 I married Mavis. And by this time I'd got a nice
- 10:30 26 foot diesel yacht, launched designed and built for me and I had many years of fun with that until 1975 I sold it And then after 2 years from 70 to 72, a senior scout Duncan McFee, who was a partner by
- 11:00 that time in Conrad and Gigah, one of the leading Architecture Firms in Queensland, had promised me at 16 when he became an Architect, he'd design my house for me. So I called his bluff then and so he designed this and we occupied this before the flood in '74 and hmmm so here I am I suppose.

**Excellent.**

**11:30 What are you earliest memories of your childhood growing up in New Zealand?**

I have none. I came over when I was a few months old. So I didn't know anything about New Zealand until I visited it later in my, well adult life.

**So how do you see yourself. Do you see yourself as a, being born in New Zealand, do you see yourself as .....**

Oh I was a Kiwi yes. But that was alright, in 1949 there was a World Rover Scout

- 12:00 meet in Norway and so we were forced in the government to take a certain amount of our leave then or get pay in lieu and various other things. So I decided that I was due for a holiday, by this time. So I went over to the World Rover meet at Salk in Norway, with a mate of mine who had been Rover Leader of the West End
- 12:30 Dutton Park Rovers. He was then in the Agent's General Office in London and knew more about Europe than I did that's for sure. So he planned some of my trip over there and I came back after 6 months of course and started work again. What lead us to that. Oh yes being Kiwi. So of course it was quite easy to get a passport in those day we were
- 13:00 all British or something but then in 1979 I think it was. That passport had expired of course, so I made, went down to Eagle Street to the Commonwealth Offices there with an application and they said "Oh no we can't give you a passport, you're a New Zealander". So I,
- 13:30 being a Sergeant Major with some sort of a voice, as you might even realise now, I told that floor that I'd done more for Australia than the whole of the rest of them together, threw the papers at them and stumped out of the office, after telling them that relative to them I should have had a red carpet from the curb to the office. So anyhow then I got back to the office a very
- 14:00 clever gentleman rang me up and said "Oh Mr Mackenzie look there was an error when you came down to our office today, we are very sorry about this but look we'll send up a blue form for you to sign instead of that green one and you'll have no trouble". So now I am an Australian. From then on fortunately.

**Did you have similar problems when you first joined the army?**

I don't have many problems, the other people

14:30 have them. I well I'd make the gullets and get them fired, I think. Being a Regimental Sergeant Major at one stage I find that problems are only little difficulties to be overcome. Like one of the other battalion's mottos is - the difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little bit longer.

15:00 **So you can't recall any problems with having a New Zealand citizenship joining the Australian Army?**

Oh no in those days we were British subjects and provided you were British, Scots, Jewish, Kiwi or anything else. Oh they all liked you to join the army, no trouble to do what they want. But if you want something then it's difficult.

**So that time you were talking**

15:30 **about when you went overseas, was that the first time you went overseas?**

Yes, in 49.

**So how did you feel about doing that?**

Well I was a traveller of course, see these days your called tourists. But in 1949 I got the Largs Bay I think from Brisbane and it took 6 weeks to get to London so I had quite a time on board, because I wore my uniform the whole time I was away for the 6 months.

16:00 So lots of people talked to me because I was in the uniform and I could talk to anybody without, of course in those days people didn't think they were going to be molested as much as they do these days in any case. But I could talk to anybody and get away with anything as I wanted to.

**What are your first memories of growing up in Brisbane as a lad?**

Oh, well

16:30 as a little boy, I suppose I wanted a bicycle and my mother wasn't going to have me killed by about one of the few hundred motor cars in Brisbane in those days. But she said "If you like to build a dinghy you can go out on the river".

17:00 Well I wasn't too keen on swimming really, I didn't mind it but, so of course I had to then make a dinghy so that I could, if I couldn't have a bike then I was going to have a boat. So Patterson, in charge of Patterson Saw Mills, one of them became a friend of ours so I had no trouble getting the bolly gum that I wanted for the dingy. And a fellow

17:30 named Whygos he was a famous boat builder in Brisbane lived down the river a short way from us and so he called me Mattie all the time. So by the time I had the sides of the boat fixed to the stem and the stern fastened on, he said "Well right oh you can take it home now and this is how to put the bottom on". So I built the dinghy and

18:00 from them on had a lot of fun of course with the dinghy. I had a lot of fun because I then got a canoe, a beautiful canvas canoe and took a couple of my young friends from work and others up the river. We used to do a lot of canoeing, from St Lucia up past Seventeen Mile Rocks. We'd camp for the weekend and come back again, go up with the tide of course, if you were

18:30 clever. And so, then of course in the floods we used to go out and jump off the boat, onto the huge mounds of Harsens that used to come down the river. Without ever thinking that of course that's what the snakes were on as well, but anyhow we never got bitten or anything. But so of course by that time I was well and truly

19:00 bitten in liking the water and a fellow Ron Wilson who was a Civil Engineer and Architect had befriended me because I took him out in the river to find out where he could get the river flow to erect his house. And so when I got my launch, oh yes,

19:30 so in the action at Milne Bay I was, I had part of my platoon at one end of the strip and one section of it just across. So this evening after our evening meal I went down to this Section to, for no particular reason but to see them I suppose. And we

20:00 had an air raid red, which we really ignored and this air raid red kept on, so I said "Oh well I'd better go its looks as though this might be real, fair dinkum". So I got about half way across the bear end of the strip when all hell broke loose. The fireworks you see here in peace time was nothing to what this sky looked like with all the

20:30 3.7's opening up and search lights and everything. So I thought no matter where I go I suppose the bomb will go where I am or it could go somewhere else. So I sat down there on a log and said "Well so help me if I get through this and can get back to Brisbane and blow the froth off a

21:00 schooner of beer and have a little putt putt boat to go down the river I will never rumble again in my life", and I never have. So when I came back to Brisbane from Townsville, this becomes a bit disjointed doesn't it. When I came back to Brisbane from Townsville, I had bought a

21:30 18 ft launch which was made by the Senior Carpenter from Nunda Workshops where I had been before so as you can image an 18 ft timber boat in those days of course, built by the Foreman Carpenter was quite a nice little boat. So I had that until '61 when my wife launched Tydesong.

**Do you remember what you paid for that?**

22:00 I think the 18 ft cost me 300 pounds and the 26 ft foot diesel, which you can see over there in the Rock Creek in Townsville was designed particularly by a boat builder friend of my who worked for Evens Deacon and that cost me 3,500 pounds

22:30 I think all together. A beautiful show with fibre glass, cedar top side, dark glass, diesel engine, everything for safety. And so when it was launched I said to the crowd that I had there I said "Now you can see a lot of things that shine like silver, lots of people think this is chrome

23:00 but I know it's all pure solid silver because I paid for it" and I said "You see that other shiny stuff there some people think it's brass well", I said "That's gold too because I know I paid for it". So that cost me as I said 3,500 so a long story one of my Senior Scouts by this time used to come down on this launch with me together with one of his

23:30 Polish mates and another fellow who'd been sunk in a submarine in the Atlantic during the war. He wasn't much of a navigator he ran my launch onto a sand bank in the Bay. I told him that did he think that he was in the middle of the Atlantic for safety or something. Anyhow it came off quite easily. But when I was selling it just for fun this fellow Alf tried to in fun told a fellow that was buying it that

24:00 the bottom of it wasn't very sound the engine wasn't too good. So anyhow I said "Well there it is there's the price 7,000 odd dollars and there's no argument", I said "Don't talk about it you either pay that or you don't I'm not talking about price anymore". So I was tipped off that the fellow that, bought this was a bit, might have been a bit of a shyster so he paid

24:30 me in two cheques. So he did this at Main Road Office up in Boundary Street, so I said to the secretary "I want to go down town in a hurry for a few minutes". So I dashed down town and got both these cheques cleared by a special clearance. I think in those days special clearance, I think it cost me a dollar each cheque. I don't know whether it's fifty dollars it would costs these day, but they do it for you I suppose. So I got my

25:00 money into my bank account and that was the end of my, that part of my boating.

**As a lad and playing on the river a lot what are you memories of the Brisbane River?**

Oh well I also had a friend who became a Cabinet Marker, as a matter of fact he made our dinning room suite, eventually. But he made a speed boat out of cedar, looked beautiful. And one of my ambitions

25:30 there was to go in my tennis creams, everybody wore long creams to sport then, all except the footballers, all the cricketers wearing full creams. So I was to go, what did we call it, aqua planing, in those days, water skiing hadn't come in. So this aquaplaning was on a board about the size of an ironing board.

26:00 And one of my ambitions was to go down the reach of the river as far as Gray Street Bridge or so on in my creams, aqua planing. So Saturday came, but on Friday evening a single skull fellow was rowing at the end of Edward Street and a shark bit the end of the single skull,

26:30 so it frightened him somewhat, of course. And the press has a have a photo of this, in amongst the rocks right at the Edward Street Ferry. So as you might imagine little Jim didn't go aqua planing that weekend he waited a few weeks until the shark had come up that far I suppose. But there were lots of sharks in the river I can remember in several canoes and

27:00 us were up at Carinda Lone Pine once and we saw these fins about 6 ft apart cruising around. Well of course one part was the dorsal fin and the other part was a bit of the tail of the same shark. So 6ft there, they weren't bad were they? Cause in canvas canoe's we didn't feel very safe. So I

27:30 suppose I knew the river pretty well.

**Did you ever do any fishing or anything like that?**

Oh yes, as a matter of fact I've got a photo of fishing in the river. I might show it to you.

**Might just show us later. I think**

Later yes. Oh yes all along the Davis part side of the River people were nearly shoulder to shoulder,

28:00 particularly around Anzac Day, getting golden perch and jew and that sort of thing. So yes I was nearly run over one day, one morning, I'd been down fishing early and the tide was running out so I was, no the tide was running in, and out of the fog came the Dayunda which was a gravel barge in those days.

28:30 So it was coming up the river and my anchor was towards it and I was there in it. And it was coming

right for me, so I had to pull up the anchor going towards it at the same time. Anyhow I got the anchor up and just avoided it fortunately without pushing it over. But to show you that that was quite a hazard eventually the same barge with its tub boat ran over the St Lucia Ferry one day and drowned

29:00 the Ferryman. Ran straight over the hull. Ta Ta.

**What other things did you get up to as a kid in Brisbane besides you river fun?**

Well I was in the Scouts I became Troop Leader. I can remember cooking flap jacks for our wonderful Governor that we had in those days Sir Lesley Wilson who founded the Queensland Bush Children's Health Scheme.

29:30 Wonderful bloke. He had been a colonel in the army of course, and what not, and he had a taste of one of my flap jacks, I was very proud of that of course. But well I suppose at times we were larrikins, like I can remember one fellow, the son of one of the Senior Banks in Brisbane another fellow was a professor's

30:00 son and I. And we used to make tiny little packets of saltpetre, sulphur and ash or something like that. Wrapped it up into tiny little silver paper, packets and put it on the tram line at Wolf Street and as the tram went over it, it would compress this and explode. And everybody on the tram used to think they were

30:30 being shell shocked or something or rather. But that was about the worst devilment I did, I ever got up to. There wasn't much of course in those days because police would kick you in the backside and tell your parents if you did anything wrong and parents in those days thought that the police and the school teachers were always right. So the kids thought so too of course, whereas

31:00 these days if little Johnny gets spanked it would be harassment, molestation, goodness knows, torture wouldn't it, yes, hell. Of course there's a lot more pranks these day and more severe than getting people frightened on a tram I think.

**Speaking of school can you tell me what you remember of your school days?**

School days,

31:30 oh well apart from in those day, I suppose there wasn't that much formal sport. You were more red rover and goodness knows what not things. I eventually played tennis when I got to State High. Hmm my weekends was spent basically boating and scouting

32:00 with other crowds. One family, I think they, he was a very...he was quite a known man in Brisbane, and his wife had I think 14 children, 12 or 14. One of them became Private Secretary to

32:30 [Robert] Menzies the Prime Minister. But I was often with them as my mother made sure I had tonnes of mates always. Cause we used to put charades on in there dinning room. A very big home on River Road, now Coronation Drive. Quite a big home.

**And tell me did you enjoy school?**

33:00 Oh yes, yes. I well you see the teachers were always right, you had to learn to get on in life and so it was only natural I suppose that I liked school. The funny part of it was that after I was taken away from Taringa because I had a lady teacher, so I became the male teacher's pet at West End

33:30 because I was good at sums, and I used to get these done in no time and get off early. So I liked school, yes. And I didn't like Latin so I got kicked out of the top class at Brisbane State High, because all the top bods learnt Latin in those days. I didn't, I wish I had now I'd have learnt more about

34:00 the trees and what not, that'd been easier to remember with there Latin names I suppose.

**Can you tell me about what life was like at home with mum?**

Yes well as I said we didn't have much money. I can remember having sliced bread with hot milk and pepper and salt on it

34:30 for breakfast. I had what they called pig weed as a spinach. We've had, sweet potatoes the leaves off the young leaves of the sweet potato vines as spinach. I've had the stalks, the rather tender stalks of potato vines, peeled off the outside, skinned, as you would

35:00 like celery and we use the other part as, green. I don't think this was because we couldn't afford it but, I used to catch pigeons in a trap and come home and pluck them and clean them and we'd have these as a sort of pigeon pie I suppose.

35:30 We grew all our own vegetables and that sort of thing. We eventually got a few goats and in the early days we got, mother persuaded the local grocer to take us down to Redcliffe, to Woody Point for holiday once. So we went down there with the goats,

36:00 because you couldn't get milk ordinarily much. So we took them down for milk. We took WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s down to eat, they immediately started to lay eggs and so that was a marvellous

holiday cause going down there was quite an event. But these days you leave home at half past ten or eleven o'clock to go to Southport.

36:30 In my young days you'd get up at half past five to get out and you'd get a ferry across the river where they have bridges now so I would be a very very long day to go down to the coast to the surf for a day.

**Can you tell me more about that holiday to Woody Point?**

Oh, well one thing

37:00 I particularly remember I was a little boy of course in those day and where we were staying in a flat as you called it them. There was a little girl and I was chasing her along the beach. And we saw tiny little things like diamonds in the sand. So I stopped chasing her and came back and had a look at this and these were the spines of a stone fish, which was about, well over a foot long. And

37:30 if we'd have trodden on those we'd have been in hell. So eventually I dug it up with a flat stone took it home, back to the shop and we kept it in a wash up dish full of salt water for about week, for everybody to see. Changing the water frequently of course. So everybody knew what a stone fish was by the

38:00 time. Yes so I learnt to swim better of course by getting down to there.

## Tape 2

00:31 It's rather disjointed in a way do you plan any different.

**No just how it comes out its all fine, however it comes out. Cause usually one thing leads to another and sometimes that's the way a memory is. You mentioned before that you were in the Scouts, can you tell me a little bit about that?**

Yes well as I've said before mother was very consensus as

01:00 I was an only child that I should mix with lots of other children and that I shouldn't get my own way too much I suppose, which happens with that sort of person. Hmm I think I sort of been used to my own way a fare bit. I suppose, no somebody else

01:30 had better make up there mind as to why that is. As a sergeant I suppose I got my way by the youngest Lieutenants as soon as they became lieutenants one or two of them would be sent to Mackenzie's Platoon and they'd say "Oh Sergeant will you mind so and so, oh would you please", I said "No I don't want to at all, if you want something done Sir

02:00 you tell me what you want done and Sir it will be done, its your responsibility I don't want to do things, yes please, no thank you". So they soon learnt that if they issued orders they were responsible therefore. And of course I suppose then as a Regimental Sergeant Major I was again used to having things my way. Although

02:30 when I was in ordnance the fellows there, there was a fellow named Hicky, he was a Hotelier of some sort or rather in NSW [New South Wales], I think. And they had the best jungle juice in Milne Bay. It so happened that I was trying to contact one of my neighbours who was in 101 Tank Attack and they'd landed at the Bay.

03:00 Anyway Jeff and David weren't there but I contacted there sergeant major. So he got me to come over one evening to their headquarters and we'd have some whiskey. I said "It's wasted on me", he said "This is beautiful", he said "They call this some jungle juice", "Palm nectar they call it" I said "Oh yes my crowd make it" he said. And I tried to

03:30 find there still, I found all there drums of fermenting stuff from cast offs from the kitchen, potato peels, dried fruit that had worms in it, but I never found there still. So I decided that I wasn't such a good scout as I thought. But

04:00 scouting of another sort we were on weren't we.

**What would you have done if you found it?**

I wouldn't have let anybody know I think, I would have liked to have seen the operation going on. They made lots of money out of it and it was, absolutely water clear so they had to put a little bit of colour in it so they knew the difference between it and water. Great stuff. Oh no I had a Platoon of wags [jokers] as a matter of fact

04:30 one of them is still a great friend of mine. I had to know if they were doing something that wasn't to be done then I had to know how it was being done so that I wouldn't know anything about it. And I wouldn't put my foot in it by trying to find out something that I shouldn't know. So I always knew the things that I shouldn't know they let me know that and so

05:00 nobody got into trouble.

**Can you give me some more examples of that?**

I could give you one very good one. They used to take the, when we were up at Rolling Stones in the army these fellows used to be able to catch a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK [chicken] and kill it without it squawking and then of course they'd have to cook it. So I knew when there were going off so that I wouldn't want them and then when they were cooking it I also didn't know where they were cooking it

05:30 did I? So that everything went quite alright.

**And did they know about this that you were ...**

Well they let me know, so that I wouldn't, so that apparently I wouldn't know, do you follow? I mean if they were off catching WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and I wanted them, well I'd want to know where they were and the cat would be out of the bag, or the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK would be squawking or something wouldn't it, you see. So you

06:00 always have to have a great understanding with people. Quite a science having an understanding with people.

**So back to the other kinds of Scouts, was the Scouting movement like when you were growing up?**

Well Scouting of course in those days was a lot different to what it is these days. We used to around and around the country there just out here there was Mogul Creek, we used to

06:30 camp out there. And the Scout Master used to come out at the weekend with his car even. Oh quite an event. And we'd be there for the rest of the week without him. And we could try catching cat fish in the Mogul Creek or Ugly Gully or something like that.

07:00 Oh then we'd have played games and learn all about compasses. We learnt signalling with semaphore, and Morse code, tapty tap tap sort of business or raise flags like this. So when I joined the army of course I said "Oh yes I knew Morse and semaphore". So from there I went into the Signalling Section of Intelligence at

07:30 Headquarters Wing and Headquarter Wing in a battalion is the real elite. So you get special privileges in Headquarters Wing. And I of course, the band was in Headquarter Wing too, so I was indoctrinated by that stage with bagpipes.

**Can you tell me about some of the privileges?**

Oh I don't know that they were anything that much except that

08:00 possibly if you were late for a meal there was no trouble, or if you wanted leave you could get in when you wanted it, rather than at some other time, because you fitted in being in the Headquarter Wing with other activities that were going on in other parts of the battalion, I suppose.

**Having lost your father in World War I, did you as a young boy have a tendency to research the war and just find**

08:30 **out more about it?**

No I sure didn't. No. No, it was never harped upon at all. But I was in a way sorry that mother didn't marry again. She was the first lady Dentist in Queensland and by them I think, possibly the only one practising in Brisbane in any case. So she never practised again worse luck, and if she

09:00 had of I suppose we would have been a little bit more affluent. I could possibly have done Medicine or Engineering instead of becoming a clerk or something. But I've never cried over split milk and my wife doesn't either. Neither of say if only and but if and we get on with what's there.

09:30 And I think this is part of being contented and happy in this life really. So I've been contented, I haven't missed my father because I never knew about it and my uncle, one was in Brisbane but quite distant and the other wasn't in Brisbane at all. He was, a pilot, quite an adventurous type that flew out to England,

10:00 from England in 1919 in the Southern Cross with St Hubert Wilkins and there plane was sabotaged so they crashed in Crete. So he was a bit of a harem scarum I suppose.

**Can you remember how your mother reacted when you were joining up?**

Oh, no I think mother... mother accepted

10:30 what happened I think and she was no doubt very sorry to see me go off to the war. But when I came back just, I was just a natural return. I was very sorry, that happened with our battalion fellows, really none of us marched down Queen Street and got a whole lot of acclamations. And of course these Vietnam

11:00 boys are treated quite differently and they are a different sort of crowd. But then I was up in 1992 was in Townsville for the Battle of the Coral Sea celebrations, I got tangled up with some very, a couple of very tall Vietnam boys in the front line.

11:30 So I said "Now look tell me I was in the '42 - '45 war, tell me why you people seem so different". And the reason was of course that they got the white feather and the people didn't, they were called up you see they were conscripts, so they were deprecated, smeared out something or rather by the populus

12:00 in that regard. But the main trouble was that the return Soldiers and Sailors Inferior League of Australia wouldn't accept them as members because they were conscripts and that was the thing that really hit them most of all. And the RSL [Returned and Services League] has a lot to answer for, for not accepting them as Soldiers just the same as everybody else. And they went through as much hell or more than a lot of other people.

12:30 So were very sour about this.

**Can you tell me about when you joined up?**

When I joined up. Well of course it was a social business. The Queensland Cameron Highlanders were all in there regalia of kilts and the sergeant's had big red sashes around them and the officers had other special regalia's. So we were

13:00 the, in the social strata of Brisbane in those day. So we opened Cloud Land and we escorted the Debs up to be presented and if there was Government House garden parties and of course some of us were there. The Guard of Honour at the Royal National Show, who was there, but yours truly you see,

13:30 with a few more of the Guard of Honour. Everything was spectacular.

**Can you describe the opening of Cloud Land and the times there?**

Well it was of beautiful interest of course, a huge arch entrance, goodness knows it must have been 30 ft high I suppose. And the,

14:00 dance floor was on rollers and it moved with the dancing. Beautiful polished timber floor. And yes very spectacular, there was a gallery as well for pa and ma to see there daughters and the spectre on the dance

14:30 floor. So it was quite a glamorous affair in those days.

**What did that mean to young people at the time with a venue like that. Was it something new to the city?**

I think yes. Well debutants were, there were still quite a, I'd say half a dozen balls that I suppose would have debutants in 39.

15:00 After the war I think that was the end of it really. But they were the social events in Brisbane for sure. Debutants Ball in the City Hall and that sort of thing.

**And what were your thoughts when Cloud Land was finally destroyed?**

I'm not really for maintaining timber places.

15:30 I can remember when we were overseas seeing Wells Cathedral, particularly and it was costing millions of pounds to just maintain Wells Cathedral, in some type like it was. And the idea of keeping any timber house is a very, lacks a lot of knowledge really.

16:00 There's places on Carmity Road and Milton Road now being built as old colonials exactly what we lived in with new type kitchens and that sort of thing but to look at in all appearances as old as they were built in the 20's. Another funny thing of course

16:30 about maintaining all these big trees and not chopping them down, it's the only type of material which is replaceable. Coal once it's burnt, oil once its burns, nuclear once it done but timber regrows.

**Well if we can just go back to when you joined up. If you can tell me about your first few weeks and months what your training entailed?**

17:00 Well yes, they tried out certain people to become corporals and this sort of thing, so they used to put us in charge of Drill Squads. So I used to get my, a Drill Squad that I would be drilling, say 12 or 15 and I'd get them into step exactly with another crowd and then I'd

17:30 call out "halt" and the others would halt as well as mine. I used to have a lot of fun that way.

**Can you tell me a little bit more about that how, the other things that you had fun with?**

Oh no I don't, it was really quite an experience in those days to get into, war gear because there wasn't

18:00 much of it. It had been a long while since the previous war, it ended in 1919, didn't it? So it was a thing



of the past. So it was all a good adventure as far as we were concerned. We just liked the camaraderie of the business. We used to go one night a week to Kelvin Grove for drill and

- 18:30 then we'd have camps at the weekend. And then eventually I think, once I think we even got pay from where we were, at least in the Government where I was we got paid. But we went for a weeks camp, and this was out at Enoggera in those days which was quite a small set up compared to what it is now.

**Can you tell me what sort of things you might do on a week long**

- 19:00 **camp?**

Well we'd have rifle shooting. One of my aunts was, a great rifle shot, she one the diamonds in the King's Shoot one year. But of course it was always men so they were diamond cufflinks and she said "There no good to me you'll have to turn it into a bracelet". So she had a diamond bracelet

- 19:30 instead. So I suppose I got coached by my aunt, in what they call snapping practice, which was for rifle shooting. So I was quite a good rifle shot and that was worth while of course.

**Did the other fellows know that you'd been taught by your aunt?**

Oh no, I just let them think it all comes natural.

- 20:00 When I went to the Officers Course they, used to do a bit of betting so that this fellow in charge, Club Captain in charge of our crowd wanted to know if we had any good shoots. And I wasn't being in it at that stage so anyhow of course I hit the bullseye centre, or mostly and he was quite annoyed that I hadn't let him know

- 20:30 so that he might of won some money on it. So there was rifle shooting and route marches of course with boots. Boots I'd never worn in my life before. I always disliked boots they reckon they strengthen your ankles. I said "My ankles don't need strengthening". You splint things up they get weaker don't they?

**How far would you go on those route marches?**

Hmm,

- 21:00 goodness I can't recall. I can't really recall how far. But we'd be accompanied with our band of course and former Soldiers and little kids. It was quite a business. So and then of course our meals weren't exactly what we were used to at home either. And just before war was declared

- 21:30 I was, those in the battalion, or I suppose all the Defence Force Personnel. First of all we were put on, it was a voluntary business, but you were put on a weeks notice and if you were given a weeks notice, at the end of that time you were suppose to be able to report in full

- 22:00 marching order, which was the full pack on the back and everything so that you could go out into the bush, straight away and shoot peanuts or something or rather. So then it became a 24 hours notice so that given 24 hours notice you could leave work, get home, get into all your gear and report to

- 22:30 Kelvin Grove. Then it got to 4 hours notice and at that stage one of the other wags that worked with me, we'd hear a plane go over and we'd say underneath the table or here they come or something. And of course we were reprimanded for being so unruly or something or rather. But we thought this was great fun. So anyhow one

- 23:00 day at work, Mackenzie, yes report to Victoria Barracks immediately in full marching order. So home I went and got into all my regalia and by this time it was about five o'clock I suppose and we got to Victoria Barracks and there was about a platoon of us, about 30 blokes

- 23:30 I suppose in all. And we were put on guard at Victoria Barracks and that night, they talk about how... what little knowledge some of this intelligence mob have and what not. But do you know that all night long cars and motorcycles with side cars were bringing people into the other part of Victoria

- 24:00 Barracks. They had them all tied up just like they have now. They've got tabs on everybody, that they should have tabs on.

**So they were bringing people in?**

Rounding them up. Foreigners that they suspected of sabotage or whatever. So anyhow I was Corporal of the Guard this night and

- 24:30 of course your suppose to go around all the buildings and see that all the doors were locked and everything was hunky dory [fine]. So I went down to this building and the door was opened. So I went in the door and I went upstairs with my escort, leaving one down below and up we went and pulled open draws of records and what not. And then I left the guard down below

- 25:00 and went back and reported this to sergeant of the guard and we got the major in charge of Victoria Barracks express out there and showed him where I'd been and the cleaning lady or the cleaning man or whatever just hadn't locked these things. What a fast. Quite a hilarious business and then on Guard

at night, you'd port

25:30 at arms and they inspected the fact that you had all your ammunition in and everything. And when you closed the bridge of course you should have made sure that there wasn't a cartridge in the barrel. So anyhow one night band, plop, pressed the trigger and shot went off. You'd have thought war had been declared. So part of business the Victoria Barracks Guards and there we

26:00 had for our meal dog biscuits we called them, biscuits about this big square, hard, break your teeth biting them, black tea and woolly beef. That was tinned corn beef in little tins about so by so square. Just imagine and if we were lucky we got tined

26:30 peaches. Just imagine you'd have though we could have had ordinary hot meals like we had on our manoeuvres. We'd camp, we had horse wagons, limbers, joined by horses and like pie tarts, hot stuff, hot ovens and what not to cook things. So we had our hot meals on our camp.

27:00 **So why do you think you didn't have that food, was that just one way of preparing you or?**

I think it was a bit of inefficiency myself. That we should have been able to have what the staff ate.

**Can you tell me what sort of punishments men might have gotten for misdemeanours like a shot being fired and the room not being locked and that sort of thing?**

Confined to Barracks, was all there was really. Confined to Barracks. You got no

27:30 leave and you might of, possibly have pack drills. You'd be put into full marching order, and have to march round a quadrangle or something or rather. But there was no sort of digging holes and then filling it in business which people used to think of as punishment.

**So those people that were rounded up, do you know where they were kept or**

28:00 **what happened to them?**

No I don't. But they would have been in accommodation there until they were cleared in some way or other, again I suppose.

**And what was your feeling that night and the other men when you saw this happening?**

Well we were a bit oared I think by all the people that were being collected from around town. We sort of thought the war was on in a way.

**Can you tell me about**

28:30 **how the mood changed amongst the men that you were with when war was declared, was there certain things that you can recall?**

I think they didn't, the people in charge didn't know much about war for a start did they? But I can remember when the war was on, this would have been in 1941 we had some

29:00 propagandas come out to address us at Tombside Camp about how the Japanese were coming and rape all the women and burn down the house and machine gun the children and all that sort of thing. And how horrific and terrific and everything else they were. But we thought it was rather humorous. We thought the whole thing was a

29:30 joke.

**So when you and your men talked afterwards you basically/**

Even then we were, a couple of them were pulled out for laughing outright at what went on. Oh yes we had our chuckles there I can remember. Some of them were reprimanded, they'd interject or laugh or something or other and these people were

30:00 trying to make out that it was very serious. But you see point of fact... we didn't, we as individuals didn't dislike the Japanese at all. I was cruising up on the [Great] Barrier Reef once and there was a Jap there and he could have been a son of mine in age, and he burned around with ear phones all the time. So I told him

30:30 "Take em off, we talk" I said "Oh yes you talk English alright", "Yes", I said "Well I'd like to know more about you", I said "You know your father and I could have been fighting one another in the war, but I said that we didn't dislike one another at all, we had to shoot the Japanese because they were going to shoot us". It wasn't that we bore them any animosity at all. And

31:00 this happened in the First World War the same of course. Christmas time they waved the white flag there was a truce and the Germans and the British went out and exchanged smokes and plum puddings and all this sort of thing. If I hear anybody use the word hate I pull them up and say, particularly children. I say "Don't use that word", I said "You don't know what hate

31:30 is, don't use the word until you grown up and you might, if you're unfortunate enough hate something".

**So do you have those feelings and the propaganda seemed a bit extreme at the time. What did you feel that you were fighting for or were you just doing a job?**

Well by the time we got to, by the time we were sort of involved in Australia, we were fighting to defend

32:00 Australia that was for sure. Those that went overseas they were for sure, they were fighting for Britain. I mean Churchill tried to get, I hope I've got it right. But the 7th Division was leading the Middle East to come home because of the Japanese war and if I've got it right Chifley, said no

32:30 there coming back here. And they, the English authorities tried to divert them to India. No he said there coming back here. And that was the first time, the idea was that they'd concur the Germans, they'd defeat the Germans and then if Australia had been concurred by the Japanese they'd come back

33:00 here and chase the Japanese out later. And I think they were treated that way. Some of the way up in Britain still think Australia's a Colony of course. And we used to say we were going home. That is, that is one of the great troubles, I think. Of course then they came, the Japs, and that

33:30 Division got back here and certainly helped in the defence then in New Guinea and what not too.

**So after that time at Victoria Barracks what happened then, what happened next?**

Oh, I think we, I think we came home for a while, I don't think we were permanently called up. I think we got back

34:00 for a while, I could find out actually when we finally went full time duty as they called it. And we were called up then into... Tombside Downfalls Creek, Downfall Creek Tombside on full time duty. And then we'd get leave, nearly everybody got leave at weekends to start with. You know we were still a week day

34:30 Army.

**What sort of things did you get up to when you were on leave?**

Fairly little I think in those days, very little.

**What was the social scene at the time?**

Picture shows. I suppose a little bit of dancing weekends. By that time of course there was lots of movement was

35:00 restricted in a way in that, petrol was rationed and this sort of thing, so that there wasn't very much movement away. You didn't go down the Gold Coast for the weekend.

**Can you tell me a bit more about those restrictions and how people began to notice that it was impacting on their lives?**

Well not really.

35:30 People didn't grumble I don't think. They accepted what shortages there were and there wasn't that much I don't think. It's a long while ago now isn't it? It's a good job time flies, with reality like this otherwise we might remember too much of these things.

**Do you remember if the young girls of the day preferred men in uniform and whether there was any...?**

Oh

36:00 I think we were, I think we were well looked up to. See the young fellows all enlisted in any case. I mean this is what happens in a war. Those that are physically and mentally, at least in those days if they were physically fit they went into the forces. Now you've got to be physically and mentally

36:30 fit to get in. And I think the soldier today is a rather, very top notch, physical type. One of the things I think is wrong you know when it comes to meeting people or animals there is a great,

37:00 examination as to beating down the line that you get competent fully complete people but when it comes to the humans that isn't so these days. I often say I was the last generation naturally conceived, naturally born, naturally survived baby hood, naturally survived my teens

37:30 and grew up. Whereas these days I mean a mate of mine in America he had a child with his heart, with the heart was outside the breast and this sort of fixed up and put back in. Practically anything that is conceived these days is bought to maturity and we have a terrible lot of misfits because of that, I think.

**Do you recall how involved the medical**

38:00 **was when you joined up, was it much that you had to do?**

I never been in hospital really except once out at Tombside something or rather must have happened because I got up this night from Guard Duty or something or rather and I went out to relieve myself and I

can remember

- 38:30 seeing stars and I must have collapsed with the flu, you see. And so I was bought into hospital at, underneath the Storey Bridge there, I forget the name of the place for now. Anyhow they got me about half past
- 39:00 five in the morning they came round to give me a sponge bath. And I said "Not me at this hour", I said "I've got a temperature as well", I said "Don't disturb me" I said "I'd get a chill in any case", I said "Look you're increasing my blood pressure now", I said "If there's anymore disturbance here or about baths at this hour ", I said "I'll get in touch with Doctor Norman Sherwood", who was Deputy
- 39:30 Director Medical Services Queensland, whose my doctor. So for the rest of my stay in hospital matron used to come along and say "Would you mind having a bath now Sir".

## Tape 3

- 00:31 **Basically Jim you're just done your stint in Vic Barracks in Brisbane can you just continue on with there with what happened?**
- Yes right oh. Well of course eventually we were called up for full time duty and then we went out to Tombside Downfall Creek and that's where of course we were lectured on these awful Japanese
- 01:00 which I referred to before. And I was, a sergeant, I've been a sergeant most of the time. So I was instructing practically all the time. Once we went out to Enoggera Range and one of these fellows didn't have the rifle properly to his shoulder and I said "Look you'll get a sore shoulder if you". He said "I've
- 01:30 got one now that's why I can't hold it there". And the whole of this was black and blue, I'm not exaggerating all, oh golly. So I said "You'd better get out of this no more shooting". So and of course, I really liked shooting and our Lewis gun which I still though was better
- 02:00 than the Bren because I liked its field of fire better than the Bren. By the time we got to action the Bren was quite in vogue.
- Can you just explain these guns to us?**
- I don't know. The Lewis gun was used in the First World War I think. It had a cover
- 02:30 over the barrel which tend to keep the barrel cool, whereas the Bren gun barrel wasn't cool at all. Whereas the Lewis gun had a big magazine, of about 40 rounds in it or something, and the ordinary magazine on the Bren,
- 03:00 I forgotten of course now, 25 or 30, it was smaller. It was in a way more portable. More like the rifles that the ordinary Soldiers carry these days, but of course now there plastic, there terrific shows. The main thing still was the
- 03:30 303 riffle really, I don't we even had a Lewis gun per Section. And then of course the Vickers guns were our medium machine guns and they were in one particular Company. Yes so we were then training at...
- 04:00 Tombside. We used to go for long route marches from there I can remember one big manoeuvre we had right up to Haigsley which was of course, the German settlements in the First World War. And we there, I can remember still quite well the pikes were down in a
- 04:30 little coxes of small gum trees and I was sitting up here on the slope, about 150 yards away I suppose, and that's the way to listen to bagpipe, beautiful, beautiful. And then I can remember another manoeuvre we had down to Beenleigh. And the route march there, I don't expect you to believe this but, I was a
- 05:00 Sergeant and we were on this route march for quite some time and the fellows were marching along asleep. I'd say "Doug get into line", and you'd push him into line and he just kept on walking. Some of them didn't answer you at all, I reckon they were marching along asleep. And that's the sort of thing we had of course real tiring sort of route marches. I think is the first
- 05:30 time I really fell out with our colonel. Yes it would have been. We were on the defensive, Yellow Wood Hill, so my platoon was suppose to be on the forward slope of this hill right down near the bottom and I was suppose to mark out weapon pits there, and the enemy were suppose to come from the area.
- 06:00 So eventually we had the brigadiers and all the red tabs and what not coming round to examine all this, it was quite a big do. And so they came down to my position and where's your field of fire, no what are your duties here, yes - yes. Where's your field of fire, where's the enemy suspected to come from, yes. So
- 06:30 what do you think of this position sergeant, I said "Well I was sent here, I was, this is where I was told I

- had to go” “That’s not what I asked sergeant, I asked you what you thought of the position”, “Well Sir, hmm I, hmm, well where would you prefer to be”. I said “Well I’d prefer to be right up on top of the hill because the enemy had to come up a
- 07:00 hill to get you whereas”, I said “At the moment I’m right down on the flat, it would be far easier to get communication with other and supplies if I was up on the ridge”. And the brigadier turned around he said “You listen to that sergeant there”, so I think that was the first time little Jim and the Colonel didn’t get on too well.
- 07:30 But later on of course I went to several training courses while I was at Tombside. Like I went to some NCO Infantry Course, and Intelligence Course. And of course Intelligence Courses weren’t because you were intelligent really it was, you were suppose to disseminate or distribute or something or rather the information and make
- 08:00 sketches and report and that sort of thing. And then I also went to the First Bren Carrier Course in Brisbane, which they were the light, tanks shall we say of the time. And I can remember I was, we went as far as Caloundra for a manoeuvre in these and they were
- 08:30 track vehicles of course and if you got them on the right chamber of the road they steered themselves. Otherwise if you put on the brake too much on one, you’d swerve right round. And I never forget this manoeuvre of course we had to find out, well we had to find out for ourselves what these would do. So up this blinking steep hill we went and
- 09:00 the fellow who was driving was a mechanic, a little bloke, very shred he was. Anyhow just as we got to the top, all hidden in this grass is a stump and we ran onto this and we couldn’t get it off. And of course our, the mental relief of getting up without capsizing was terrific. And we all burst out laughing and the Chief Instructor came over and
- 09:30 bored us out, so we knew it was no good saying anything at that stage. But that evening I said “You know we weren’t really laughing at anything, it was just the trauma of the whole business, it was relief that this happened”. This fellow, well was a mechanic and some how or rather we clicked. And course we had to draw,
- 10:00 carburettors and this sort of thing and he said to me one day, he said “Hey, mate the petrol doesn’t go into your engine at all, that value’s the wrong way”, so anyhow, it shows how stupid exams are. I passed the exam quite well. He just passed and I know who was the more competent person on the Bren Carrier of course by far. I’d have given myself 3 out of 10 and
- 10:30 him at least 9. So much for exams. But nevertheless that’s all I ever had to do with Bren Carriers. One of our fellows he became Secretary of our Battalion Association, with Bren Carriers in the war. But of course when it came to the Jap action both the Jap tanks were bombed in the proverbial Milne Bay mud and got no where. But
- 11:00 I had a lot of fun instructing there, I’ll never forget one day we, I had my squad underneath a tree and I told them just for a while I said “Just for a once do get fair dinkum just lets say we might really get to the war and see how well you can do this a few times”. So
- 11:30 we analysed how the best way and everything and everybody was satisfied. So they were just resting and down came colonel on his horse, so Sir, sergeant your squad shouldn’t be resting at this time, this isn’t the rest period they should be training. So I just bulled out number 7 gun action and whoop they went. Sir,
- 12:00 there pretty good, I think he thought they were pretty good too somehow or another. So second time Jim and the colonel didn’t get on. I’ll never forget once I came back from a course and I had a full size port of text books, and they gathered around of course the company as I came back with this port full.
- 12:30 And well what did you do this time? I said “Oh I had a good time”, I said “I know everything in there now”, really? I said “Yes, you try me out”. So of course these fellow couldn’t really ask you too complicated a question because they weren’t up in it. So anyhow they pulled out something from me book and blah blah blah, “Yes” I said “Well I can, that’s about 17 or something”, I told them all that. So then they pulled out
- 13:00 another one which was pioneering and I hadn’t done much pioneering and they’d done none, so I told them how these veterans should be done and so on and so on. So then they pulled out AMO&R, Australian Military Orders and Regulations which is about this thick, and I thought I’m a goner here but anyhow, fortunately they opened it at somewhere and I said “Yes well that’s so and so and so” I
- 13:30 said “You see”. Somebody else how about this, I said “No, no three’s enough”. So I won. I’d hate to know what would have happened if there’d pulled out some of the other books. I wouldn’t have even known what was on the cover. But anyhow I got away with it. So we had a lot of fun that way. But eventually the Regimental Sergeant Major
- 14:00 who was a terrific bloke. I think if he’d been allowed he was very old, if he’d have been allowed to take us up to Milne Bay we wouldn’t have needed the other battalions. The Japs would have got a bigger shock than they ever did, terrific bloke. So anyhow he whispered to me that I should parade myself to

the colonel as I thought that I had been overlooked for promotion.

- 14:30 But of course I wasn't to let him know how it happened. So anyhow this was, arranged to I marched into the Orderly Room, halt, so I saluted the colonel and said, started to say that I was parading here under AMO&R chapter this section this and paragraph so and so. And he said
- 15:00 "I don't want to hear any of this", he said "I choose the lieutenants and promotions here, its got nothing to do with you, so". I said "Well under this Section Sir I have the right to state my case". So I looked right at him and he looked right through me, never at me and when I'd finished he said "March him out Sir Major", and that was the end of that. So little Sergeant
- 15:30 Mackenzie never got any further. Three times with the colonel. The only other time I remember was at Milne Bay and somehow or another we got a two inch mortar, a brand new thing and Sergeant Mackenzie was selected with another sergeant mate of mine to find out about this mortar, there were no handbooks or anything to
- 16:00 it and we got a bomb as well. We took off the nose cap and then tried to take off the next bit too because we didn't know anything about it, fortunately it didn't come off easily otherwise I wouldn't be here today. Eventually the Colonel and the Brigadier come to see this two inch mortar in action and I said "Right oh, 200,
- 16:30 150 yards, coconut tree, I finger left, clump of bananas, 1 round sighting fire". It went a little bit too far, so I said "Down 50, 1 round fire". And out came the bananas. I said "Sir...", so from then on we must have been
- 17:00 mates I think.

#### **Do you have a theory for why?**

So I'm still at Tombside aren't I now. But this is the trouble not having notes you see to go by. But anyhow back to Tombside. So I eventually became President of the Sergeant's Mess there and one of my mates a Sergeant, with 1 glass eye who was

- 17:30 one of the leading Share Brokers in Brisbane. Was a Sergeant as well, I think he was Treasurer at the time. So anyhow it was a very popular Mess because I think it was well, we were, it was well managed and other Brigade Sergeants and Sergeant Majors and others would try and get me to have drink at lunch time. I said "No", and they tried to kick up a fuss,
- 18:00 you won't drink with us. I said "I'll drink with you when I drink, I don't drink at lunch time". And so this is one of my stories that I liked all liquor except whisky is wasted on me, although I have some single malts which I have been given by the neighbours down below. But whisky's wasted on me, but the rest of it I quite enjoy, but I've never been drunk
- 18:30 in my life. Well that's my story and I was over in Paris once on one of these beautiful evening trips going through all these night clubs. And somehow or another I was in Scout Uniform of course, and I defended this French, I think a French Navy fellow and these rest of them on the trip hardly drank any of there
- 19:00 champagne which we had at each place we went to. So by the end of the night I think we'd had quite a few glasses of champagne. So I caught a bus and eventually told them to stop here and wondered whether I was the right bus stop and whether I'd get back. But anyhow it was quite right. That's the closest I've been to drunk, I think. So in the morning I got up and went back and found that I'd taken the shortest way back to my Hotel
- 19:30 from the bus stop. So I think, I like it all but I've never been drunk. That's the way you can enjoy it. So from that the Sergeant's Mess of course was closed. The furniture was stored at some Quartermaster's place, we never heard anything more about that. But as far as, it was rather funny but my Sergeant mate,
- 20:00 Stockbroker mate evidently fixed everything cause there was no money left over and we had no debts and that was the end of Tombside then. From Tombside, cause the war was on, we then went from there to Canowindra and we were involved in then the outer perimeter defence of Canowindra. We went to various peoples
- 20:30 homes and roadways and dug weapon pits and reinforced them with saplings that were cut down and all this sort of thing. And I think this is one of the time for which I was, I became quite famous for looking after people. I had this platoon of fellows who were
- 21:00 out with me, felling the trees for rebutting these places. So they were real bushman and only half cut the trees through and eventually at the end fell one or two which, then fell them all. And of course as can happen one fell sideways instead of forwards and pined one of my very tall strong fellows
- 21:30 to the ground. So I was in trouble, so I got signals to call Headquarters and Headquarters didn't know what to do and the brigade didn't know what to do, so I thought I'll look after my mates so I rang Nambour Ambulance to come out and pick him up. So of course I was pulled up before the beacon and

told didn't I know I was in the army and what not. And I

- 22:00 said "Yes and I knew that this fellow had a very bad possibly broken back too". I didn't get any more reprimanding for this but I think my reputation amongst the troops for looking after people regardless went up a few notches, as a result. So from Canowindra we went to Yandina.
- 22:30 We were suppose to then prevent enemy Troops coming down the main road from Darwin or Townsville or somewhere or rather, so they couldn't get to Brisbane and there we had a Lieutenant Emmet, a great bloke and he caught a carpet snake and draped it around
- 23:00 himself to come to back to the troops one day. And carried it around, carried another round in his shirt for a while, I think. Quite a wag was Nugget. And course that's the sort of fellow that men can follow anywhere. Unfortunately he fell off some scaffolding
- 23:30 back in Brisbane and was killed soon after the war. So much for Yandina we used to hop on goods trains there, cause Queensland trains that went up and down the coastal line never travelled much faster than you could run. So we used to hop on these trains and go down to Nambour to the pictures for the night, and
- 24:00 get back before morning, we hoped, cause these passes ended at 23.59 or a minute to midnight but provided you were there for role call nobody got court martialled. So we survived Yandina. Quite good training there I suppose in a way. And from Yandina
- 24:30 we then boarded one of these Queensland trains to go up North to Ant Hill Plains outside Townsville. There was some Mexican's on board from NSW, cross the boarder blokes and they thought we had a double line all the way up, cause when we pulled up we were on a sliding
- 25:00 and there was another line beside us. It was the only time there was a line beside us but anyhow, I think they woke up eventually. So the Ant Hill Plains, the Colonel Meldrum lost another few marks from me because we were told that the Japanese had landed by parachutes in Ant Hill
- 25:30 Plains and we were to go out and search and capture them. And we weren't told that this was a training exercise. Very bad. So anyhow we came back from that not having found any Japanese eventually, and we were told I think that time the manoeuvre was quite satisfactory. We were a bit annoyed about that.

**Were you given live ammunition**

- 26:00 **for that exercise?**

Oh yes.

**But you weren't told it was an exercise?**

That's right.

**So what were the possibilities of something serious happening on such a thing?**

Well there was I suppose, the same as a fellow he was a prisoner of mine in, must have been at Ant Hill Plains I suppose. Anyhow this fellow was, supposed to be in prison with the Guard.

- 26:30 And one of the other sergeants were suppose to be on guard but he had some, he concocted some reason that he didn't want to be on guard so I volunteered and this fellow escaped. So a few of us fired a couple of rounds towards where this fellow went, but I think we went a bit too high to hit him, purposely. So we had live rounds alright there. Fortunately didn't get
- 27:00 hit I suppose. But I got a severe reprimand for that escape. Another down mark for the colonel. I wasn't very amused.

**On previous exercises how realistic was the training?**

I think by this time, certainly we, the companies that I was with, there was eight companies by this time. I think we tried to

- 27:30 be really serious, yes, because we realised that the Japs were in the war of course by then you see. So there was the possibility I suppose that in the far distant future, via yonder, something could happened. So we tried, one mark for our colonel we had water bottles on our side and they were in a
- 28:00 canvas thing, and to hold it in there, there was a little clip came over which could either be in front of or behind the little mouth piece. So routine orders would come out, water bottle clip in front. And the colonel used to drive by on his horse and if he, and he had a very sharp eye, did he what. He
- 28:30 got a, I think he got a DSO [Distinguished Service Order] in the First World War, no he didn't he got a something or rather. Anyhow First World War fellow he knew what he was about for sure. And if he could find anybody with a water bottle clip, either in front when it should be behind, or vice versa, the lieutenant was called out and some fellow in the platoon was called out, how
- 29:00 did you know it should be in front weren't you told that it should be in front, why didn't you pass it on

and see that everybody had it in front. It could have been a serious message that this water bottle clip, you should have possibly an extra bandolier of rounds or you know some special rations you should have carried to action. So

- 29:30 that was his particular bit of communication down the line, and so for sure my fellows knew. I suppose I'd been on this Intelligence Course, might have had something to do with it too. But they knew that if you had to give a report and there was nothing to report it was just as important that you reported that there was nothing to report as if there was something to report. Because
- 30:00 if there was nothing to report maybe you weren't there to report it. Very important. So I think we were pretty fair dinkum in general and now comes another one against the colonel I think. Yes him and I seem to be at cross purposes occasionally. He'd sent me on a manoeuvre when one of my aunts was dying, he sent me on a manoeuvre
- 30:30 this night. I wasn't very amused. This was back in Brisbane and I'd had to report to Company Headquarters to go on this manoeuvre and of course I thought that when I was summonsed that my Aunt had died but this wasn't so. So I was very annoyed. So I made sure that he was in bed at home when I got to one of the public telephones and rang him up. And when he lifted the receiver I hung it up and when we got to our next public
- 31:00 telephone and I thought he was safely back in bed I rang him up again. It took him longer to get out of bed that time I thought. But when he came to the phone I hung up on him again, the devil. So I wasn't very amused. Neither was he probably. But anyhow, yes where was I with this.

**You'd just left Yandina, come back to Brisbane. Actually can you tell exactly what you did at Yandina?**

I'm

- 31:30 trying to think of what the. Oh no, we were at Ant Hill Plains sorry, and by then from Ant Hill Plains we went to Rolling Stones and we were there on the sort of outer perimeter of Townsville. So somehow, leave was pretty tight, but anyhow,
- 32:00 somehow or rather I broke my spectacles. And so I applied for leave to go into Townsville to get my spectacles repaired. But, I blame the colonel because I kicked up a bit of a fuss about this, so I think it got past my Company Headquarters that I wasn't allowed leave. And I thought this was rather right that I should. So when I think things are right I take them a
- 32:30 fair distance. Anyhow no leave. So I don't know whether our Regimental Sergeant Major might have heard about this. A lot of people did for sure. So anyhow I was tipped off to parade to the Medical Officer. So I paraded in to the Medical Officer and he said "What's wrong with you Sergeant". I said "Well my spectacles are broken", "Oh", he said "So I suppose you can't,
- 33:00 you're short sighted", I said "Yes", he said "So I suppose you can't see who this is when your putting up barb wire entanglements and so and so and you can't see as well as you should and you get headaches I suppose", I said "Yes", never had a headache in my life. Didn't help that he was the person giving me a headache. So anyhow he gave me instructions that I was to get the spectacles repaired in
- 33:30 Townsville. So of course it had to go through the Medical Routine. So from the Battlefield when your injured you go to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post], that was him, then he sends you to the Casualty Clearing Station, CCS as its called, that was at Anomba, outside Townsville. So I was sent to Anomba with these broken spectacles, and as you can imagine if your sent to the CCS with a wound its worse than can be coped with
- 34:00 ordinary little trivialities at your local RAP. So the CCS couldn't fix my broken spectacles either. So the only thing to do was go to Base Hospital, Base Hospital that was at Charters Towers. So off I went to Charters Towers, to Base Hospital and of course by the time you get there your injuries are rather severe.
- 34:30 So I was, I can remember the second day there I knock on the top storey and some nurse came to squirt some juice into my eyes because anybody that saw the optometrist or ophthalmic surgeon had to have these drops in. I said "Not me", "Oh yes", I said "No not me". By this time I was doing a back somersault over the rail. Anyhow
- 35:00 she didn't get them into my eyes and out I got to this very learned orththalmic surgeon to study my severe problem of course, broken spectacles. So he didn't think this was very much of a joke. And he said "Well go down town sergeant, see the optometrist down there and get him to fix them for you". So down I went down town and
- 35:30 "Colonel so and so sent me down to ask you to fix my spectacles", he said "Got an order" "No", he said "I'm not working for the army", he said "Go and tell them, no order, no pay no money no go". So I went back to, next day of course, very severe
- 36:00 trauma I was in, orththalmic surgeon says "Hmm well go down again, tell him who I am and try and explain to him that we couldn't do it and would he do it". So back I went and he said "Not on your life, not on your life" he said "They're military, let them do the job properly". So back I went again.



- 36:30 By this time he wasn't very happy with having a third consultation with a fellow with such a calamity. So he wrote him a little note. This didn't make the optometrist very happy either. So he said "Right oh, ten shillings, you pay five shillings out of your own money and I'll fix them for you". So I got my
- 37:00 spectacles fixed back I went to base hospital, and of course, after you'd been to base hospital with some very severe injuries, otherwise you don't get there. You then had to go to a convalescent depot to recuperate from such a severe complaint, so out I went to Hughenden to the convalescent depot. By the time I got there some how or another, my reputation as an instructor was recognised by somebody
- 37:30 there. So they had arranged that, very quickly that I would stop there as a permanent Instructor for the rest of the war. So I was cluey enough to do nothing about this. The next morning I hoped on the guard van and told the guard, to hide me I had to get back to Rolling Stone and my battalion. So I was hidden in the guard's van, and back I got to the battalion. Only a
- 38:00 few days, I think only a day or so before we embarked to go to Milne Bay. So I don't know whether the colonel gets one down or I get an extra mark there.

## Tape 4

- 00:31 **So you got back just in time to head off for Milne Bay. Did any of the boys think you might not make it back?**
- Oh no, probably everybody else was, there. I also while we were at Rolling Stones one of the fellows in my battalion, in my platoon. His wife had come up to stay in Townsville
- 01:00 and blow me if she didn't stay in a house next door to where my wife's Aunt had her house on Melton Hill. So we knew more about what went on than my mate knew. We knew what went on with the wife and the American's, that he didn't know about. But anyhow,
- 01:30 I got another few marks, because I got him a lot of leave, because there was nothing for most of us to do. Townsville was like an ant hill. It was barren nothing there at all. You couldn't even get a good beer. So things got pretty bad there at one stage though. The Negro Americans were out of town
- 02:00 compared to the other Americans, and Aussies that were in the place properly. Yes so we got back to embark to go to Falls River. None of us knew where Falls River was, and we were in Townsville for a night when blow me if the
- 02:30 Japs didn't come over and bomb Townsville. That is formerly officially denied that it ever happened, because if it had of happened all the Troops that had been, that were in Townsville then would have been on active service, and they would have got extra reboards, or considerations. So it was denied that that ever happened, but in our Vet [Veterans] Affairs
- 03:00 Magazine this query cropped up once and my wife knew people who had been outside, Townsville where one of the bombs had injured a little Italian girl, who had been taken to hospital and everything. So I wrote to Vet Affairs with all this detail, but
- 03:30 somebody else that does exactly the same thing. So they've not published it. So we know that Townsville was on active service. So we got on board this ship, the Swartenhondt, I think it must have built to carry pigs only, prior to us ever getting on board. And there were a lot of pigs stink still there, that's for sure. So we got on board the
- 04:00 Swartenhondt and off we went out from Townsville Harbour out into the bay and eventually had a destroyer, or cadastral or something or rather to escort us up the coast. We seemed to still be travelling North, so we wondered where Fall River was still and it wasn't until we struck land that we thought it must be New Guinea. And it was a
- 04:30 bit rough on the way up in places, so we sailed into Milne Bay, a beautiful placid place of jungle right down to the waters edge. So we landed at Gili Gili, as it was called, and we climbed down the cargo nets. As you know cargo nets are made of rope about as
- 05:00 thick as your thumb and there'd be about 15ft square, I suppose and you climb down these with your rifle and your full packs and what not, a few of those on. It's just as well the cargo nets were as strong as they were I think. And then we set about unloading other ships that came in and building
- 05:30 roads and the [MV] Anshun was unloaded and it was sunk by the Japanese eventually. I must remember to refer to that. And then we also then set about, getting defensive positions and Don Company, for which I was
- 06:00 the platoon sergeant, was sent about 20 odd miles up the coast, to an outpost called Hiyoma, which was the, it was a bit of a Base actually for fuel and what not, and also a plantation owners place. Beautiful

low bungalow with a calapas and creaton and a few

- 06:30 trees, and when you switched on the electric light at night these were all lit up, the fairy lights, as if you were having a birthday party. And then my platoon got advice that there was a suspected Jap signalling from right at the point of East Cape so, one of my, myself
- 07:00 and one section was to go right to his cape and the other two sections were to go across the Headland, away back. So I set up Headquarters about another 10 miles or so up at Wallalier. Wallalier I established as my platoon headquarters and I was Capata No. 1. Of course
- 07:30 this, hut that I was in was up on high stumps and was built to be occupied by the patrol officer when he came there. So I was quite the big boss. And of an evening I used to go down to the shore where the natives used to be washing there little babies with coconut, desiccated coconut that
- 08:00 they'd scrape up and they used to wash them all over with this. This was a quaint affair. I set about forming a dictionary of the native words and our own. So I got as far as seven different words for water, but I couldn't find a word for work. They had no word for work. Isn't it a marvellous philosophy, no word for work.
- 08:30 And so one of the native seemed to be friendly a bit. One day I was walking down the road, they weren't very wide and they were made of crushed up coral, which the beaches were. And he held a paw paw, by its stem and peeled off the skin in sections all the way round,
- 09:00 the transparent skin like you'd have on the outside of a blanched tomato. And then the whole of this paw paw exuded a sap, sort of juice, like pearl. And the whole of this paw paw was covered in these little eggs ovations of moisture like pearls, all over. Quite
- 09:30 a skilful affair I suppose, I was quite impressed. So I had to go right up to the cape with this section, and there was a hill right on the end of the cape, which I suppose was where there signalling would have come from. So up to the top of this, I decided I'd have to go jungle
- 10:00 clad as it was. So a rifle was no good to me I thought, so I took a very pistol [flare], very pistol, you fire one round and it stops the signalling, they have red and green and white cartridges that go up into the air and illuminate. So I thought I'll only have time for one shot in any case, or I'll be dead or they will be.
- 10:30 So I carried a vary pistol and the couple behind me had their rifles and the rest of the section down below. So I went up to the top of this hill and there was nothing there. So down we came, fortunately and I didn't have to fire the vary pistol. So back we had to go. So right at the point there was a tiny little bay, about the size
- 11:00 of this house, I suppose, in which there was a sailing boat. So I thought this is the shot, well sail back to Wallalier and then back to Hiyoma. So I got the rest of the section on board, pull on that main sheet, main sheet,
- 11:30 that rope, that rope, now hoist the sail, that's the main sheet, oh, pull that up, now get the rudder working, right the rudder's working alright, yes, now how about the jib, take tie the point of that jib out on the bow strips, the what - oh buy this time they'd pulled up the anchor and I could see
- 12:00 coral all the way around about and no water, so I said "Drop the anchor we'll never get anywhere". That was the end of that escapade. So back we went to Wallalier back we went to Hiyoma, by the time we got back to Hiyoma we found out that if this Jim Mackenzie had got this yacht sailing, we would have come into Milne Bay
- 12:30 just with the Japanese fleet wouldn't it have been spectacular. So we got back to Hiyoma one evening together with Sergeant Mukam's Platoon and we were met by the 2IC of the battalion, a fellow Major Wiles, he said
- 13:00 "These two yachts the bronze wing and the yellow vana, have to be loaded with everything and you have to go back to base as quick as we can. And everything has to be loaded on these and all the arms have to be below decks and everybody else below decks too in case in the Japs, in case you could be identified". But all the galley iron,
- 13:30 all the cook house galley iron had to be dismantled and all stacked on board and as this was happening I said to the major "Excuse me major, but why do they have on the skyline there", I said "Are they ships out there". "Sergeant", he said "You get on with your duties and get this launches loaded that's your trouble don't bother star gazing around and about Sir". So back
- 14:00 we went to loading the rest of the galley iron and everything else on board. And then we were told to set off hugging the shore so that our launches were silhouetted against the skyline. So we hadn't gone very far when the Sergeant Major Jock McMillan, was really in charge of the launch, and myself and the native
- 14:30 captain, whatever you liked to call him, Helmsman, started counting 1,2,3,4,5. I said "What are they?",

he said "What, boats", he said "Up to eleven". I said "What, ours?" "No", "Whose?" "Don't know". So by this time looking on the shore I could see a whole lot of little fairy lights all along the shore

- 15:00 and I thought good gracious. The next thing we heard all these bang bang bangs and then of course the bullets started to hit the launch. This was the muzzle flash, then the noise of the discharge of the gun, rifle, and then the hitting the launch. So Jock said "All overboard for your lives". So everybody by this
- 15:30 stage was suppose to go overboard. So I went down below into the hull to see that everybody was gone. One of the fellows was a white as a sheet, I couldn't move him, absolutely petrified with fear, and a native I couldn't shift them. So I got a Bren gun to climb out of the hull and it was
- 16:00 shot out of my hand, as I put it up. So I thought this is no good, so down below I went, up into the helm, with Sir Jock. I said "Well that was pretty hot we'd better go". And this was the funny part about it, we both walked up to the bow, took off our boots and dived overboard as I would have in the neighbours swimming pool, with my hands of course above my head
- 16:30 because the boat had been, we'd run the ship ashore you see, the launch ashore. So I thought it was pretty shallow, what we were diving into, but anyhow, I didn't hit bottom. And of course then you could hear all the, bullets, because if you've ever been under water with anybody banging two rocks under water, that makes a lot of noise, and the bullets hitting the water, I suppose was the same. So I was under water to
- 17:00 shore, which wasn't very far I suppose. And we have a picture of it which you might be able to see later, which was only painted a few days ago by a fellow from our Intelligence Section. So I fortunately was able to get a copy specially delivered by Jim Bott who wrote our battalion history and one of his daughters bought it up to me, just yesterday. So ashore and into the bushes
- 17:30 and just beside me landed another fellow, and I looked and its Jock. "You Jock well come on up and away we go", "No", he said "I'll stop just a little while", he said "I'll suss things out, see what's going on". I said "Well this is too blood y hot for me I'm off". So up and across the road, and as providence would have it straight across the roads there seem to be a little
- 18:00 path, and up this path I shot, till I was out of breath, couldn't hear a thing, so I just jogged back down and before I'd knew it I was right back at the roadside and across the road here is a Jap with a gun squatting down on the side of the road. So I let him have a good hit, and back I was up that
- 18:30 pathway, quicker than... So the following morning I came across a stretcher bearer, and so he and I escaped together through the low foothills and the kunai grass had been dead or something there and my feet got, punctured all the way with the little
- 19:00 shoots of the kunai grass coming up so it was like, big thorns. So my feet in not time were very painful, barefoot, thought I wasn't used to being barefoot at all. So anyhow Norm and I took off our shirts and we put our shirt sleeves over my feet and tied them on with some vine
- 19:30 and so I hiked the rest of the way protecting most of the bits of my feet, I'd hope with shirt sleeves. The boots that we had weren't much good either, by the time we got back from our 40th mile route march to East Cape and back we reckon these boots that we were issued with by the
- 20:00 Army were, had soles of cardboard, and I'm quite sure if we could have found the fellow that was responsible for manufacturing them, we'd have shot him. A real crime I reckon. So anyhow, the following morning up on a ridge, I saw a
- 20:30 whole lot of fellows, me without glasses of course, but Norm said "There ours, that's Jack Nuckham up there", he thought. So we waved to them and called them up. They had there rifles of course and what not, so that was a big reunion, we were very happy that that was two Platoons of us sort of what was left of them. And the Company
- 21:00 Commander a fellow named Davidson who'd been in the First World War, had of course, fellows like that were like Daddy's to us. Any problems you had like I might of back at Tombstone I'd know some, one of my crowd would have a problem or something so I'd let this fellow Patterson know at that stage, and of course they were able to solve all these sort of things. And Davidson used to be able to solve most of our
- 21:30 troubles the same way. So anyhow the next thing a whole lot, a formation of Kittyhawks went over. So I grabbed a ground sheet that one of them had and I waved the ground sheet around my head and they flicked there wings. I said look we've been identified this is beaut. So hiking along the next hill amongst the kunai
- 22:00 and I looked down and here I could see them signalling Morse to us. So I yelled out to one of them or two of them, "Hey concentrate I'll read you out the alphabetic letters try and get words out of this". Flash, flash, flash..... couldn't make anything out of it and then the shells burst amongst us - 25 pounders.
- 22:30 Our troops were shelling up. So of course we hit the ground and one fellow lying down got burnt behind the knee with a little bit of shrapnel about that size. That was the only trouble. So that was just our ranging those few rounds. So we got down, there was a real ravine somehow or other, we got down

23:00 into this some of us and blow me what, and the shells must have exploded there. Well that was absolutely deafening, in a tiny little crevasse at the side, all rock, both sides. No more damage. So that night we hiked through the foothills still. We heard of course the shelling, by the Japanese fleet of our Troops,

23:30 but our 25 pounders never replied because our shells wouldn't have penetrated there ship side, so they laid low. But course, it was just like thunder to us, so anyhow that night, things weren't going to well for us and we decided we'd camp this night in the kunai grass which

24:00 was oh 7ft high. So we made a little pad of it, flattened it out and the whole lot of us settled down in there facing outwards, prima defence, we joked about calling it. When this old captain in charge went a bit berserk. So Jack and I had to take his revolver of him and the two grenades he had so that

24:30 he wasn't a danger to anything too much at night. So Jack cared for him after that and I don't know what I did. We tried to go to sleep I suppose. So the following day we hiked back towards the Battalion lines and I can remember getting back there when they saw us and

25:00 one of the fellows, some of them were cued up welcoming us, you see. So I had quite a cluster around me, queuing up, and I can remember Dave Hook giving me a big hug. And I said "That's the first and last time I've been hugged by males in my life". Of course now these cricketers and footballers climb over one another sometimes I wonder what

25:30 there bonding periods are like, the way they climb over one and other. As far as the cricketers were concerned they used to kiss one another too, until I wrote to the Cricket Association and said I thought this had gone a bit too far, this kissing one another, so they don't kiss one another, the sweet little boys. They only jump over one another and hug each other if they ever dispatch a wicket. What velar they have.

26:00 So much for the hugging, so I thought it was quite a business I thought. So back we were. I went back to the RAP with my sore feet and for some reason or other the doctor was scrutinising my eyes, so I don't know whether I was in shock or not, but anyhow myself and the fellow,

26:30 Dave Summers who painted this book, we both ended up back at the American Hospital. We weren't allowed to have our rifles, that was the first and only time I was frightened, when there's enemy and you haven't got your rifle and you haven't got your mates, you can be frightened. I suppose a lot of people had been frightened at other times

27:00 in action. As far as I go I was too flat out looking after myself and other Troops to have time to be frightened. Seems queer but that's seem fact to me, but I was certainly frightened back there, I say it was hard to get to sleep. So after a couple of days there,

27:30 or several days there, I was discharged back to the battalion and of course by that time they'd finished attacking the strip, but the Japs could never get across and Don Company in any case had had a bad time, as you can imagine. So we were really in reserve in any case, so it wasn't

28:00 until the 18th Brigade, 9th 10th and 12th Battalions had driven the Japs back that the, I ever got with the enemy again, taking out a section as a patrol. Just as a routine sort of patrol. Of course

28:30 it was rather funny, I can remember one day I was in the planters house, double storey place, with a captain who'd been taken, his company had been taken off him and he was sent back to us, with this Captain Davidson, as I've told you, a World War I fellow

29:00 who could calm anything. So anyhow I was upstairs with this other captain, when he called me and he said "Sergeant, what's that section of yours doing there going out on patrol without there raincoats in the rain". I said "That's right" and he said "Stop them send them back, send them back to get their coats", I said "Well it's no use Sir, because in 10 minutes you're wet underneath by perspiration

29:30 if you've got you cape on and otherwise your wet in 5 minutes your wet by the rain. So anyhow I dashed downstairs to Captain Davidson, and said "I'm in a hell of a trouble, Boss", I said "That captain upstairs wants me to send my patrol back because there not going out with there coats on, there going out without their capes on" I said "What the hells the use of their cape". "Get away with you" he said "Send the

30:00 captain down to me". So that was the end of that, we went out. Cause we'd held quite a lot of consultation about this and we decided we were far freer and better without a cape in the rain than you were with a cape. So I won again. So of course by this time, the Japs in general were dead and smelly. I collected a whole

30:30 lot of money, I must have had a stack about that high, of there Japanese invasion notes. But they'd all been blown of course, so the stack became full of maggots, so I spread them all out, got the maggots free, stacked them all again and blow me another lot would hatch. So I got no Japanese money and I've got no Japanese swords all I've got

- 31:00 is two buttons of the, one of the Japanese Marines, which these Japanese Marines, were some of the top, cracker jacks, Jap Troops which invaded us. So that's the only souvenir I have of it all. Although Dave, somehow or rather came back with a Japanese sword, goodness knows how. But if you got very much, if you got very many souvenirs
- 31:30 you were a base walloper. The fellow out the front of course could never gather them up or carry them, without manoeuvrers, so very few of us ever had anything to remember it by. Not that we wanted to I suppose, when all said and done. It's long past by me. So that apart from one day being out on
- 32:00 a manoeuvre and getting some Japs on a hillside which, we don't know whether we killed them or quietened them or what. That's as far as we got with them.
- Can you tell me about that night after you abandon ship and everyone was a bit disorientated, what do you recall from that night. Cause you had no weapons, no food or anything for a while?**
- That's true.
- 32:30 Well I always felt, I make it 2 or 3 days, but my mate who wrote the book, was convinced we were only out really the night of the 26th, the full night of the 26th in the kunai and that we got back the following day. But it certainly seemed more than that to me. Of course there was tons of water as you can imagine. So, and
- 33:00 I found a couple of eggs in one of the native huts, places, Norm wasn't going to suck eggs but I'd sucked eggs before, it wasn't my grandmother that showed me how, or I taught her either. But so I sucked a couple of these raw eggs, but apart from that
- 33:30 so we had nothing for a couple of days. Both my wife and I had very corpulent and I could quite easily go without a meal. I think that's why fat people are actually are fat, they just can't stop eating. As my wife says the greatest exercise for slimming is pushing chairs away from dinning tables.
- 34:00 So I didn't really miss the food, I suppose we had enough anxiety, didn't we without food. An interesting thing though, in 1995, the Commonwealth Government organised a pilgrimage to New Guinea and I will deal with that later. And I was the one from our battalion
- 34:30 that went. And on board the ship I saw a list of the passengers and this fellow McGuire, 2/5th Field Regiment. So I thought, who's this Field Regiment at Milne Bay, who was this flurry fellow that was shelling us with his
- 35:00 25 pounders. So I left a message to say, please see me, Jim Mackenzie at cabin so and so. So along he came and said "My names Charles McGuire", I said "Oh yes, now" I said "You must have been one of those fellows with the 25 pounders at Milne Bay shooting these fellows up in the hills", he said "Yes that's right", he said "We had
- 35:30 two rounds gun fire", that's a quick as all four guns can fire. That was what we were at the end of. So he and I are still mates. But I thought and I was blamed for attracting these aeroplanes with my ground sheet. I was blamed for the gun
- 36:00 firing at us. But McGuire told me on our trip actually there Advance Observation Officer had identified us, not the aeroplane, and he had got them to shell us. But he wasn't on board them, our ship up there, so we had no further contact.
- You talked about the boots not being very good,**
- 36:30 **did a lot of men have foot problems?**
- Oh yes, yes. See one of the reasons was at half past three or so everyday, it rained and we reckoned it rained pick handles we reckon each drop was about a foot long and as thick as your finger. And the whole place was mud and rain. And
- 37:00 I can remember very clearly once an American wagon, three axle drive, dual wheels on both rears, three axle drive, was winched to a coconut tree, trying to go forward all wheels engaged and all they did was pull out the coconut tree.
- 37:30 And later on I, when I came back from the Hospital I found out that my Platoon, our Company had very few, if any 36m grenades which was one of the handiest things in Infantry fighting. So I saw Major Bicks who was our front line fellow, who got an immediate DSO, which is different to a
- 38:00 DSO and immediate DSO is second to a VC [Victoria Cross].. And ordinary DSO is awarded to the boss for his organisation. So I saw Bicks and Captain Campbell and I said "Look could you let me go back I know where the Ammunition Depot is would you let me go back and get a few boxes of 36m grenades", so they said "Yes right oh", so
- 38:30 back I went and when I got to the place I found there were only 3 boxes of 36m grenades left for the whole of the battle. So on the way back I came past the Signalling Stations on Milne Bay and I said to the Sergeant in charge I said "I want this message sent back to Advance Headquarters immediately

please,

- 39:00 no 36m grenades left in reserve please extradite for the front line", and he said "Sergeant you can't send messages here to Advance Headquarters". I said "Excuse me" I said "A sergeant in action can send an immediate message for weapons and ammunition", and I said "You'd better send this straight away or
- 39:30 you'll be in big trouble". So I don't ever know whether that message ever got sent or not, I'd like to know really. But anyhow I got back on this, on a four wheel drive big truck and the road was shaped like that, and you see if you went over too far this way well the whole thing just slid into the gates at the side. And the driver was a slight built little bloke, very skilful
- 40:00 though he was keeping it on the road. But we couldn't get by and there was the wagon in front of us had full load of Army biscuits, in huge big boxes this square. So Sergeant said "You unload all those", he said "That bogged there". "Well we can't" I said "Don't tell me you can't, put them there". So there was a
- 40:30 load of tins of dog biscuits put into that bog so that we could eventually edge around and go on. So I helped make the road at Milne Bay, with army dog biscuits.

## Tape 5

- 00:32 Yes so new tape, we got to the stage where I'd sent a message for ammunition, and the fellow said he wouldn't sent it. So anyhow I got back with these two, after filling up a gulley with dog biscuits. And I just got back to the Battalion and a couple of fellows greeted me they said "Hey where have you been, you're
- 01:00 up for desertion or something, you're in bloody big trouble". And I said "Why?", they said "Nobody could find you", I said "That's alright Major Bicks sent me up, he let me go back for ammunition, I got it", and just at that time blow me if Bicks and Captain Campbell didn't come down in a jeep. So I said "Hey they tell me I'm in trouble", "Oh" they said "Forget it you're all right ", so we got the
- 01:30 grenades and I went back to company and then I think as I said we were really reserved mods by then. The 18th Brigade 2/9th, 10th and 12th were doing the Japs back so we were really in sort of a reserve rest position. And I think I told you how, I
- 02:00 sent one of my sections out on patrol without there capes and how in the that big air raid we had I said "I'd never grumble again if I could blow the froth of a beer and go putt putt down the river". So a couple of patrols and stink of dead Japs and but that was about
- 02:30 it. The war was over as far as I was concerned and quite a few of the rest of us. So then it was a case of recuperating I suppose in general. And I also told you about the training I didn't, training course I ran for the two inch mortar, and
- 03:00 things were just drifting along normally when I was called up to headquarters and they said "There's a Staff Captain Allen come up here with a problem with Ordnance and he wants two Sergeants to help him and you're one". So over I went and a fellow that came with me was from 2/9th I think he'd got a MM already. But he said "I'm getting out of this as quick as I can don't
- 03:30 let me make a fool of me self", he said "I don't care what you do with me just don't let me make a bigger fools of myself than you have too". So anyhow he soon disappeared and this Staff Captain Allen, was investigating the CO of this Ordnance mob who was evidently selling Australian war equipment to souvenirs, souvenirs for the Americans.
- 04:00 And one of my girlfriends had married one of the Overells who were, who ran one of the huge nurses business in Brisbane. And so he knew me of course and so when I went into the Mess I think they all only stood up because of why I was there. But we got on all right and Captain Allen was overly satisfied with me and
- 04:30 promised me this O1 one in charge of Ordnance down there. So the next thing I'm whisked back to the battalion because were moved to rest at Donadabu, which was the plateau above Moresby. And I understand the road up this huge ravine is nearly as bad as it was then nearly. Anyhow
- 05:00 we got to the top no trouble and we were suppose to be resting there so I never forget this Loloki River was rather swish flowing, there was a little bridge there and a couple of very strong swimmers which I didn't know of course they were diving off this bridge and having a swim and going up for another one. So I thought this is alright so I dived in too, but this whole thing was in a nettie and eventually I thought
- 05:30 I don't know, if I can do breast stroke I said I don't know whether I'm going up or down or what. I've stopped. So I stopped and came up to the top save getting drowned. I was down stream a bit, so soon after that I thought well this one hasn't come through for me so I wrote a letter and got an officer outside our battalion to censor this and wrote to Staff Captain Allen and said when's this

- 06:00    wow coming through. So a couple of days, few days time, the CO calls me up and said "Sergeant what's this you know something about this", I said "About what?" he said "You are transferred back to Ordnance as Warrant Officer", I said "Oh good", he said "Oh so you know something about it?", I said "Staff Captain Allen
- 06:30    told me this would come through so goodbye colonel". And back I went to this flurry hell of a flurry muddy dump, oh you have no idea. So anyhow back I went there and of course nobody knew me and I knew very few. So anyhow, things went alright there and eventually they decided I'd go over to ammunition
- 07:00    there, so I went over to 18th Ordnance Ammunition Company and took charge of them. So going on a Mess Parade soon after I got there one day and one of the fellows in line "Sir be careful", he said "You've tripped over a blinking dog's lead", so everybody burst out laughing. But this mob,
- 07:30    ammunition it was slavery handling all this ammunition for everybody, but when it came to the evening they all went down to the river and had a swim and came up and dressed in what they called the going homers. And these days they pressed underneath there palliasses, so they had some sort of a crease even in there trousers, a pair of polished boots. So I went along the Mess Parade, you see and had a word with them of course, and
- 08:00    they'd abuse me for kicking the dog and all sorts of things.

**Can you tell us what's that all about, the dog?**

Well there was no dog there, you know, it was, they were having fun. So anyhow I told you I think at the beginning that I ran across this palm nectar which they produced so I set about trying to find this place but I never did. But one of the corporals there,

- 08:30    very nuggetty strong bloke and we all got, some sort of skin complaints underneath our arms and in our crutch and everywhere. So this was the main thing, what's doing you good, so genjsa violet would do somebody good and aquavene would do somebody else good. Now this little corporal had nothing wrong with him. The trouble is we don't bath enough.
- 09:00    Every lunch time he'd have a copper full of water boiling and he'd have a hot shower. So eventually he got worse mange than the rest of us. Well so off he went, in a humble shame and the doctor told him the trouble with you is you wash too much. You've got nothing left on you. So poor old Corporal Dye, never had BO [body odour] for
- 09:30    5 minutes after that. Anyhow then this Ordnance Ammunition Company had movement orders and off we went by barge up to Lae to establish an Ammunition Depot immediately behind 9 bigwigs which we'd just finished the Shaggy Ridge episode. So looking back on it I realise that maybe at last somebody recognised some of my skill.
- 10:00    This might have been, because when it came to establishing this Ammunition Depot, I was in the discussion with quite vehemently and we had this road going just underneath the jungle and these sheds for ammunitions shelter that were thatched, businesses just inside so that they couldn't be discovered from the air and the trap that we had to go round the was
- 10:30    very good. So maybe the Officers thought I was better than I thought I was and at this stage they decided that I should go to OCTU [Officer Cadet Training Unit]. Oh before that, everyday a very clever corporal used to take the ammunition advice from this Advance Post back to Advance Land Headquarters and none of the officers were up to it
- 11:00    as much as this corporal, he was quite, he came down to the Officer's School. And so I decided one day well Warrant Officer First Class Mackenzie should take this telephone call. So Sir, yes, couldn't hear, oh dear, Corporal Niddles, Corporal came out no trouble at all, so I thought well that's funny so I got him to ring me up on another phone and I discovered I was deaf in this
- 11:30    ear. So I told the officer in charge, I said "I'd better go down and see what's happened". So he thought I was trying to get a homer, so he oiled up the medicos down there so when I went down they did all these things, oh we can't really identify anything you'll have to wait until there's a specialist coming up. So the specialist came up and he went over me more thoroughly of course, than anybody else cause Enis had
- 12:00    told them be careful of this fellow his trying to get a homer, which I wasn't. So anyhow sure enough I'm deaf in this ear. I'd be able to get a pension of two and tuppence for it now. So anyhow back, we established that and well we had stacks of thousand pound bombs about four high and these ammunition ships, or ships would come into
- 12:30    unload and we had American Negroes there unloading them and oh one day there was a Captain Adler funnily enough he and I were up on top of these thousand pound bombs watching the shemozzle, where do you go if there's going to be an air raid. I mean there where the bombs go or on top of this stack which isn't going to be hit. And there was this fellow with a tongue about two feet long hanging out of his mouth and he was gasping along and we burst out laughing, and he gave us one look which would have

- 13:00 killed us I think. So after that we a few of us were sent up to set up an Ammunition Depot at Buna, and Buna had a smell of death about it, I wasn't there very long and I was recalled to go on this OCTU, which I'd been selected for. And on the way back in the Duntroon we were all for Cape
- 13:30 Tufi I think it was, at night in darkness and you've heard of the Voyager and that other ship that was cut in two nearly. Well the American Destroyer Flotilla Ledo, with its Commander on board decided that it would cut across the bow of the Duntroon and the Duntroon has damaged every wharf in Australia I understand but it's always come off
- 14:00 best. So it cut this American Destroyer clean in two, I was down stairs with some other Warrant Officers and we heard a bit of a thud but that was nothing. So one of them got up for a leak and when he came back, he said "I think we've hit something", I said "Oh come off it", so anyhow the kids started running up and down the passage way, so I got out and in my best voice told these fellows, what they'd do
- 14:30 they get back to there bunks and they'd shut up. And one of the rest of my cabin came up and said we really had this panic up on top. So up we tore on top and we just missed getting out in the last life boat, to go and rescue these fellows, they were off the Destroyer Essex and these slobs came on board and you couldn't see there shape hardly at all, all the way they were just
- 15:00 big deep black oil apparitions. They were hosed off on deck and the oil had burst, so they were in oil about this thick and I think all but 3 were rescued. A couple of them got the Purple Heart [bravery medal] for neutralising the torpedos and depth charges so that they didn't explode when then sunk. And we went back to Milne Bay
- 15:30 of all places, by that time the stench was still in our nostrils from Buna, you have no idea. You couldn't get it out of your system. So there was a bit of an enquiry there I suppose after a couple of days we were allowed to go back to Townsville. So I phoned my mother from Townsville to have a, hot water bottle ready to give me in Brisbane if I'd pass through,
- 16:00 and she'd get to me whatever happens or else air mail it to me somehow, in Melbourne. So anyhow I was unloaded in Brisbane by air, got my hot water bottle down I went to this course and every morning we had to fold our blankets so and so and wrap them up in a sheet and you know all this kadoo.
- 16:30 So soon as all that was done I emptied my hot water bottle out the window with everybody else on Parade put it under the, blankets and what not and then strutted out. Because I knew if I got a chill that was the end of it. And a couple of officers that were down on this OCTU and my smart Corporal Nicholas was there, they all got malaria. But not me.
- 17:00 So last day of the course, half of them had left the course with malaria. I didn't use the hot water bottle that night and the following morning I had malaria. So off I went as a hero then down to Heidelberg Hospital and I wasn't there for long and of course then I had to convalescence fortunately, so I went down to Lorne, Apollo Bay and a Sailor was on the same trip as
- 17:30 me so we befriended one another and he had an uncle there or something other that this truck diver this little mini bus, so we were on the, we I used to go out fishing, salmon fishing on the wave before the one that broke. We'd hooks with no barbs on them, fishing each day and when I came back the meal I thought was very small meal, I thought so I called the waitress
- 18:00 over and I said "Could I have another helping please", she said "Oh I don't think so", I said "Why?", so the hostess came out and she said "I'm sorry Sir but you know we're on rationing", she said "But I'll see what I can do". So this big war hero that had never had any and down there of course except for one American Troop ship that was wrecked there, Liberty Ship I mean. So every night we used to stroll along a
- 18:30 promenade and have half a crayfish each, for supper with a coffee and come back. But they found out just how to live. So from there I was transferred with my commission at last as Officer and Ordnance Ammunition Officer to Two Base Ammunition Depot at Bogan Gate near Parkes.
- 19:00 So I got off the train there and was welcomed by a fellow there, who said "God thank goodness I've got somebody a lively, arrived at last he said this place is dead". So Lyle Leeds and I livened up the place a little we had a Battalion Labour Corps there and Lyell said "I get on very well with them you don't deal with anybody except for black prince", a
- 19:30 very smart Italian. So everything was good. My sub depot was so big I had a huge Harley Davidson to ride round it. Space was nothing. So from there I was well I knew nothing about ammunition, talk about people being promoted beyond there capabilities, I was transferred to Officer in Charge of Field Ammunition Depot
- 20:00 at Liverpool. So I could write to my mother and tell her this, but I said "This Field Ammunition Depot is very close to where Auntie Laura lives", cause I had an aunt down there from the Mackenzie side of the family. So fortunately at last, I was in civilisation. So anyhow I just got into this depot, I can only remember Staff Sergeant
- 20:30 Harvey and I wished some of these sergeant's could recognise me and tell me, communicate with me now to let me know what they really thought of me. But anyhow, they said "Hello Sir, we'd like to have a



few private words with you if we could some time", I said "Well anytime at all you can come and talk to me and the same goes for me talking to you, what say we have it

- 21:00 now" they said "Very well", I said "Well where, where can we have it?", so I said "Well come on in there". So about five of these sergeants and staff sergeants receives this humble lieutenant and they said "Well its like this Sir, it's um, it's like this Sir, we've been to Mataranka for several years
- 21:30 and we will promise you that we will run this depot and you will have no trouble from staff majors or anybody else, you will have no troubles or", they said "of course you're in charge in Sir, with a couple of other lieutenants and we do your bidding". So I said "Very well, very well, I know I let you into a secret that I know
- 22:00 a lot about a lot of things but I know bugger all about this ammunition", I said "You run the thing and keep me out of trouble and well be fine". Well they ran evenings, they hired mansions and ran parties there with truck loads of nurses that were so under the weather in the long run we loaded them in like ammunition to take them home. We had a
- 22:30 marvellous time. With yours truly in charge of nothing. I went into the Orderly Room and hoped I could make an intelligent remark to a lady officer, the first lady officer I struck. Not that I wasn't used to capable ladies, but so I tried to make an intelligent remark and this lady said "Well Sir are you going to run this office
- 23:00 or am I still in charge?", I said "Oh, I'm not trying to upset anything", I said "I just wanted to see what went on and so on". So nothing further and I didn't bother her anymore and she didn't bother me. One of the other lieutenants was desperately in love by this time and I still haven't forgotten, this is the story of a starry night. Which is part of what
- 23:30 Mavis... some opera. Anyhow he was in love and this starry night and everything went swimmingly. I've got a photo of myself outside the Peddler which was a bit of a fernery there, and I looked like, Hirohito at any case at that stage I had a mo and kept out of trouble and the staff sergeant did everything.
- 24:00 And eventually came the end of the war so I was transferred to Wallangala and got home. And 6th March 1946 I said tah tah [goodbye] to the army and had no more troubles.

**Can I go back and ask you a few things that might specifically sort of about the stuff you've just**

- 24:30 **covered. What was the general opinion of the American Troops, in New Guinea?**

Well yes, I'm glad you said this because you see the American Troops that we saw in Townsville, that most people saw in Brisbane, were what I called base wallopers or ordnance blokes like I became, that hadn't seen a shot fired and possibly didn't know anything about it. So they were immaculately dressed, very

- 25:00 wealthy, spent money like water and well the girls loved it didn't they? So they stole all the girls they were immaculate they were well behaved and they were just base wallopers as far as, those that I met in general. And I think that's why possibly why there were various judgements of them like that, whereas
- 25:30 no doubt the real fighting one were a bit different, although at Buna, they sat there in there huts and everything and had ice cream until the Australians came to drive them out. They were quite satisfied to stop there, and let the Japs stop there too. And as a matter of fact it hadn't been for blasted politics that would have been the end of the war for the Australians. But for some reason or other
- 26:00 they decided we still had to go through these Islands what they call mopping up. I'd like to get one of these fellows that talk about mopping up. I'd mop up a few of them. Mopping up was just fighting Japanese that didn't want to fight and we didn't need to either. But so that part of the politics of the war was completely unnecessary, as [General] Macarthur said "Leave them there they died". But in Bougainville,
- 26:30 see I never went back to the battalion then, but our battalion after coming back to Atherton, were reorganised and then went to Bougainville and fought in Bougainville. But there was a creek down there and I believe our crowd used to go and leave smokes down there and they used to come and leave vegetables for us. But of course when these red tab homers came we had to, they had to go fighting again, which of course upset everything. But the
- 27:00 Japs had market gardeners there and they were living quite happily until we had to go and fight them for no reason at all.

**What was your opinion then of the American Serviceman that had seen the action, that was the American fighting man?**

Well except not for the fact that as far as I was concerned those that had been at Buna, weren't thought that much of because they just stoped there, which was a sensible thing to do, but

- 27:30 our troops were bullied into going in and driving the Japs out. And the people that read all this probably

wouldn't be any the wiser, but I pigeon holed one of the fellow that was in one of those actions and asked him to make up a report of a Patrol that he might have been on and he wondered what I was on about. So he just sent compasses bearings for distances, there was no

28:00 identifiable points at all. It was a ghastly war because nobody could identify where anybody was, hiding in the kunai grass. And one of a fellow who stopped in after the war and became a colonel, he was so overcome because of the troops that had had such hell, when he was at Oro Bay that he couldn't even say the ode, tears just rode down his face. Which was a sad sight.

28:30 **What was the opinion of the sort of equipment that the Americans had in comparison to the equipment the Australians had?**

I don't know we didn't come across it.

**Did you send mail, receive mail, can you tell us about that?**

Yes we, well see in Ordnance we base walloppers of course were right away from the real front line there. But back at Milne Bay in the infantry we got mail, once in a blue moon [rarely].

29:00 Some of it soaked in water cause the mail bags had gone down or something or rather. But our mail seemed in general to get through alright. There was nothing like getting something from home of course. In this Ammunition Depot I was, there was an infantry corporal who'd been qualified at Canungra Training School, as an infantry

29:30 corporal, he was the cook. And he was, he had everything he wanted like, I did. So these Red Cross parcels used to come so one night we were undoing the parcel and some of us that opened them, took the plum puddings and this sort of thing. I didn't want to, he didn't want anything, so I said "Arch, well you know you have this pair of socks". So he had this pair of socks and down in the toe of it

30:00 sure enough here was a preverbal letter from the girl who had visited them. So he wrote to her, very politely, described what happened in the parcel and everything. And it ended up he married her. A real instance of marrying a girl he met in the toe of his new pair of socks.

**Geez that's not a bad care package is it? What about what was your perception of the**

30:30 **separation of black American Troops from white American Troops?**

Yes there was absolute, well of course in Brisbane, base Walloppers could tell you more probably, but in Townsville the same happened, they were the Negroes were one part of town and the whites the other side. But you know they were all very strapping blokes in general I think.

31:00 And as far as I know a good labour corps in general. The Yanks, there was a huge pair of gates going into the railway property there and of course the American trucks could hardly get in, so one day they got jack of this so they just got a big dozer and swiped the whole fence and gates down, that was the end of it no more padlock gates and passwords.

**And how did they**

31:30 **treat you, with malarial things?**

Yes well when I came back from the infantry after I'd got through the Japs, I was walking round with practically stiff legs, swinging myself from the hips, I was that painful, riddled with malaria for sure. But I got over it there and I didn't have anymore attacks and the reason was I kept warm

32:00 back in Australia, I never got a chill. But I've seen one fellow his whole body shook that much that it's a wonder he still kept cold. One other thing, in this ammunition when I was back with this Ammunition Depot, at Milne Bay we used to go out of a night in the pouring rain to watch the movies or something. So we came home one night and one of the fellows that hadn't come,

32:30 well call him Joe, they said "Come and have a look on Joe's bunk" and here's a huge huge carpet snake all over Joe and all over the bed, so we couldn't wake up Joe, Joe had to much palm nectar so we eventually got him out of this bed from underneath the snake and what not, pulled out the snake eventually and killed it and left it on the what you call the Parade Ground, I don't know how long it was. It was an enormous snake.

33:00 He was none the wiser. And also up at Lae we, I used to put a couple of fellows on patrol guard of a night and I said "Oh there's not need for two we'll just have one", so anyhow one burley fellow came to me and said "Look I hope you don't mind" he said "But I'll let you into a secret, these fellows are a bit frightened, if you

33:30 don't mind we'll go on two of a night". I said "Well right oh I'll do it myself tomorrow night, I'll do a shift myself" but I said "Yes that's alright with me". So they weren't used to it you see and there was a lot of rustling and what not around I suppose.

**Can you recall the army giving you anything to stop you getting malaria in the first place?**

Yes well, my wife had been,

- 34:00 as I said she came from Cooktown originally she had an aunt in Townsville so this aunt collected a whole lot of quinine so I had I don't know quite a whole lot, a couple of handfuls for sure of quinine, which I took and shared a little bit with a few mates I suppose. By then went in came to the bombing episode of course I lost it, so that was the end of it. So then we got ephedrine
- 34:30 eventually and this turned the whites of your eyes yellow and this sort of thing.
- And have you had any relapses since?**
- No the last was my heroic one in the hospital at Heidelberg.
- And can you tell me did you write home to your mum?**
- Oh yes, fairly regularly, but there was really nothing you could say. But
- 35:00 I thought she didn't know where I was of course and so, I wrote her a letter to say that, it must have been over, I suppose I could see over a hundred and ten coconut trees from where I'm sitting at the moment, and I suppose coconuts on the ground if I went there I suppose there'd be 87 or something like this.
- 35:30 So mother thought, I don't think Jim would be camped out in trees and coconuts. So I gave her the latitude and longitude of where I was.
- Did she work it out?**
- No.
- Did you work it out?**
- No she woke up to it you see.
- When you were in reserve can you ever recall the Army Entertainment Unit?**
- Yes, it was terrific
- 36:00 and as well as that of course they organised some of our troops to entertain as well. And one of the sergeants in Ammunition, anyhow, Ordnance Sergeants he had quite a good little singing voice into a microphone it was very good. But of course, lots of sergeants weren't liked very much and they sneered at his singing,
- 36:30 but actually it was very good. But we had a crowd I forget there name that came up from the mainland, and we got some great songs of what they say the typical, I could give you, I might turn up the word of one or something afterwards. Yes.
- Can you recall if there were any big stars or can you recall any of the shows or did they have**
- 37:00 **films and things like that?**
- No I couldn't. Well I can't be bothered with picture theatres, but I really do like live shows. But we'd go along there, we'd take a tin to sit on in the rain, hoping it would fine up. But of course it was never cold.
- And what did those shows do for moral?**
- Just Australians, they couldn't dampen us and even the rain couldn't dampen
- 37:30 us.
- Can you tell us what its like to be in the middle of air raid, how does it begin how do you know that an air raid is immanent?**
- Well I told you about my blowing the froth off the beer, right. So first of all you get an air raid yellow, or orange I forget which now, air raid yellow. So that was a warning to be prepared because there were enemy air planes
- 38:00 possibly approaching where you were. And then, so you knew they were coming to you, then you got an air raid red so then you were suppose to run and get into a slit trench, which of course was two feet deep full of 23 inches of water or a foot deep full of 11 inches of water. And others could possibly tell you about diving into these slit trenches, but I
- 38:30 never bothered I thought if its going to hit you well its going to hit ya. And as I said, if I get through this one tonight, looking up at that sky and seeing all those wonderful fireworks I will never grumble again in my life. So I suppose some people were sort of frightened, I don't know but I mean, the day I told you Adler and
- 39:00 I climbed on top of a stack of a thousand pounders and when we got the air raid red and they didn't come near. If they had of I suppose we might of gone somewhere else, but I don't know where we'd have gone in the time that we had because there was ammunition everywhere.
- So the air raids you experienced were they clearing bombing or were they strafing as well?**

I was, I was knocked down on the strip when the Japs tired to strafe, but no

- 39:30 it was only bombing that we were every really concerned with. And the bombs did damage to a few things. One night at the bay all the planes took off this night and went to Moresby and the rumour went around that the fellow in charge of the bay, field or clothes I forget which we blamed, was going to do a, what was
- 40:00 that fellow, that got out of Singapore, anyhow, the big boss of Australians, got out of Singapore and so as I quoted I was there beside this American multi machine gun of 50 bullets and we had heard that
- 40:30 when the Japs came that night, because all our planes had gone, we knew something was on, this plane was going to take them off. So they thought. But this 50's and I was there, wasn't going to let that plane off that night. And it never tired. And Truscott who was the squadron leader at the time allowed all his strafe people to go
- 41:00 in the planes but he stopped behind, as well. But when these grubby filthy pilots things got to Moresby they weren't allowed in the Officers Mess so they took out there revolvers and said "So you're going to stop up, you base walloppers, at Moresby are going to stop us ah, when you get as dirty as we do and are as experienced
- 41:30 we'll let you back in, now back off". And the interesting thing was I also, I had this verified by Gowring who was a big boss, that the barrels of the guns on the planes were so worn that you could drop a bullet through, it didn't have to be forced through, they were so worn. And
- 42:00 when they were back in Moresby they

## Tape 6

- 00:31 So the battle of Milne Bay, I understand by history, because never were the air force and the infantry so close together. And immediately the plane took off, it level out and started machine gunning, the troops that we were that close. And although I suppose you can't do without infantry in wars as you find in Iraq at the moment.
- 01:00 But they can't win the war, but they've got to be there to hold it for sure. And whereas the 18th Brigade did a marvellous job and the 61st held them for a long while, before that. The fact that, chaos reigned at the Japanese Base really was what won it. They were
- 01:30 absolutely demoralised practically the whole time. And the fellow that wrote Milne Bay '42, they even went to Japan and interviewed Mojeri who was the paymaster for all the Japanese Troops and he survived, so he's given part of the story as who demoralised they were. So, so much for, I don't know how we got back onto Milne Bay at
- 02:00 the air force there, but so much for yes the machine gunning and what a good job the air force did. Where are we, actually we were back from Ordnance weren't we. So I got discharged. So go from discharge.
- 02:30 I got home and the clothes box of course we didn't have hills hoist like these days. We had clothes boxes and these old clothes pots at home were broken and tied up with bits of wire so I said to mother I'd go down the road and chop a couple of new ones down. Pouring with rain, axe over the shoulder and went down the road and one of the nice ladies said "Jim come in here, come in here its raining you'll get
- 03:00 soppy wet", I said "I am already, when you've been to Milne Bay, a bit of rainwater doesn't hurt you". So I went down the next street and chopped a couple of saplings down for new poles and carried them back on my shoulder with the axe and Mrs Pascoe said "Come on come in you'll get the death of cold" I said "Not me". So we got new clothes box a few after I got home. So then I thought well it will be nice to go up and see my
- 03:30 friend from when we were 3 together up in Toowoomba and so I rang him up and went up there and blow me the day I arrived he was christening one of his children so I became Godfather of one Alison Jean and my other Goddaughter was Jean Alison, what a coincidence.

**Can you describe you first few days back at home, was it easy to settle**

- 04:00 **or did you have to get used to it?**

I don't think so, no I think that I was just glad to be home and you know the neighbours knew I was there and I was. No everything went very naturally, really, there were no parties to throw, there was nothing you could have of course. But I went into town one day there was a fellow ran a butcher, well I didn't know this at the stage, but this butcher shop

- 04:30 was in Anne Street, near the corner in Adelaide Street near the corner with Edward Street. So I went in there and blow me here was this Henry. I can't remember his surname at the moment, but never mind.

So I went in and he came out, you see, oh hello. I said "I came in to see if I could get some meat, what could I have". He said "Well what do you want?" so I said "Well do you

05:00 have things like sirloin roast now", he said "I could get you a sirloin roast", I said "Good and how about some liver, I'd love some lambs fry", he said "Yes right oh and some chops or something", I said "Yes", he said "Look were flat out at the moment", he said "When are you going home?", he said "How about you pop in here about 2.30, 3.00 Jim, make it a quarter to

05:30 3", and he said "I'll have it all done up for you". So I went back at a quarter to 3 and I said to the fellow at the counter, it was all arranged of course I suppose. I said "My names Mackenzie", I said "There was a parcel here, Henry told me I could pick it up at a quarter to 3", he said "That's right there you are", two hands together over the counter I said "I don't know about these rations tickets", he said "Oh don't worry about the ration tickets", I said "How much is it", he said "Henry said its all paid for", I said "Well its not", he said "Oh you'll have to see Henry about it sometime his not

06:00 here". So I came home with some beautiful lamb chops and a nice sirloin roast and some lambs fry and what not all off the ration book.

**Did you notice that there was a feeling of generosity from the general public for men coming home, or was that just..?**

Oh yes I think so. I was treated like a lord down at the Apollo Bay, along the Great Ocean Road. But

06:30 there wasn't that much, could be done. Oh yes I think we were all greatly honoured or whatever, in general. But it would have been pretty hard to throw a party I think.

**So beside good meat what was some of the other things that you just really wanted when you got home?**

I don't remember but when I went overseas in 1949, with the Rover Scouts

07:00 I bought a whole lot of blue mountain plum puddings, tin plum puddings, tin cheese, tin butter, and that sort of thing, and I had my haversack, rucksack full of all these goodies to give to people that were going to give me hospitality. But things were so rushed that really I didn't get that much, until I got to

07:30 Fort Reedham in Scotland, and blow me was heading down there, that afternoon and of course there's some more Mackenzie's there. And this was my last bit of carting this stuff around so I went and got my rucksack and bought it back and put all this stuff on the table and I said "Well now I've had a good time with you people, now here you are". But prior to that,

08:00 my Adjutant General's Office mate said every night if you put a couple of bob together each and bought a couple of big tins of Minties or something to send over cause the children over here don't know what lollies are like. So all of us put in I think 2 shillings each, that was all and we bought all these sweets, except for one

08:30 wealthy fellow who had a big business in Brisbane, said "You've got no right to nominate me to put in any money", we said "Oh well we put you in for 2 and 6 pence, actually", and Ken and I put in an extra 6 pence just to make up the money. Not me he said no.

**So did you have a sense of what you wanted to do after you were discharged. Did you have a plan?**

No, I think I

09:00 had about a fortnight off and then I just went back to work. And that job was, I wasn't back there long and a vacancy came, as a classified position as Storekeeper Townsville, so up I went. And I went to a house there and my, sort of an acquaintance or friend of the family,

09:30 who already was boarding an Italian boy Charlie Estier, who was quite a brain, because he was, he controlled the trains up and down, when the Railway Commission was watching him one day and I remember Stanley said "This fellow's a bit of a genius", and he got a promotion out of that. But in the afternoons we'd come back home and I'd

10:00 point to the mangos in the mango trees, no not those Charlie, over there, there better, over there, and yes and no, no over there. And we'd have about 10 or so mangos each sitting down with a running hose between us with mangos and that was quite a... But the landlady or whatever you liked to call her, that looked after us she used to go down town to buy things but she didn't go down to buy potatoes, or carrots, she went down to see what there

10:30 was. And she might of come back with pumpkin and shallots, when you wanted potatoes. Absolutely, it was desert. But a thing I missed out on actually one of my aunts was Private Secretary to one of the top dogs in America in the United States. And

11:00 his nephew was coming over in Ordnance so the aunt said oh well give Lee a letter of introduction to my sister, with my mother over here. So this pretty little fellow he was, very short, blonde very nice curly hair and he was, he sort of nearly lived with my mother when he could

- 11:30 replacement for Jim. So we met in Townsville and he was in charge of the Mechanical Depot there so over we went one night and he gave me a ride around twin V8 engines in the Tank Destroyer with a barrel as long as from here to the street and this little fellow manipulating they whole lot, this huge tank destroyer.
- 12:00 We used to go up to Mount Spec for the evening, or something. Now they wouldn't sell us a dozen eggs, they only sell them by the box, by the box full, a cube about that big full of eggs. So he said "Right I'll buy the box". And the same thing happened with me with my broken spectacles, these Yanks just took the lot. You see so one night I was too early down the street, before the picture show started, I said "Two trays of cream buns", I said "I'll buy both
- 12:30 trays", I said "In the interval these two trays come out and there sold to me you understand". So a few Yanks there, one of them "Well have half a dozen cream buns", "Sorry there all sold", I said "Yes there all sold to the Australian this time", two trays of cream bun, I beat them.

**Can you tell me anymore stories like that post war with the Americans in Australia?**

Well on the troop train going up

- 13:00 I can remember, I forget where this was exactly, but they came over with little dishes of fruit salad for us and another place came over with a huge, a real huge bunch of bananas and breaking off hands of bananas and passing them into the train. Big Italian fellow. So yes civilisation
- 13:30 took a long while to get back to normal. That was even in the end of 48 in Townsville, when I left to come back to Brisbane it was still a pretty desolate place. So back to civilian life.

**How did you come to meet you wife?**

I knew

- 14:00 my wife when she was at Brisbane Grammar School. She was a very smart young student there, and so her mother's name was Myra, and so was mine, by coincident. But they both met in Townsville years ago so of all the girls I knew she was the best. Yes so my mother died
- 14:30 in 1969 and I married Mavis on the 24th January 1970. And I said as I quoted at the interview before my father was killed in the First [World] War, I was posted missing in the second one if you remember and I said there be no little Mackenzie's
- 15:00 to fight there political wars that was for sure. So that's one thing. No kids to fight there political wars for me. Like [George] Bush [President of United States] and the rest of them, our mob was sent off to war without us having any, we shouldn't have been sent should we. All political.

**Do you still feel that way now?**

Oh

- 15:30 yes. Very much so, yes. There's very few honest people in this world, one lad he was the eldest son of a medical fellow down from me, he had a Pontiac after the war and he wouldn't sell it without tell the buyers that the back axle had been welded. Another fellow still had my Power of Attorney, he was one of my Rover's who runs an
- 16:00 Accounting Business of his own, in Brisbane, and I said today, you shouldn't have a business of your own, your mind will be tortured far too much. So when I went overseas the first time, he had my Power of Attorney and this glass eyed stockbroker, even bought shares for me in Argyle Mines at least while I was away. I forget everything else they might have done. But so my finances were
- 16:30 well managed by him. Then worse luck after I was married I found out that my wife was one of these ghastly honest people too. And one of her, the husband of her greatest mate was one of the Chief Auditors in Queensland and he's honest too. Doesn't even let his Royal National Show pass,
- 17:00 be transferred to anybody else, it's only for him. Whereas other people pass it round. Honesty is a ghastly thing, I'm glad I'm not. I don't know what my price is of course, nobody's come up with it. You know I think honesty has be grease or I will also agree that it's either full or its not. Whereas honesty your not.
- 17:30 Must torture the mind I think. A few white lies are quite good. Granted I said my patrol, my platoon fellows you know, if something happened a few white lies covered it all up and nobody got into trouble.

**Did you miss, I guess being in charge of a group of men, as you were, when you got back to civilian life, did you miss that camaraderie that there was between**

- 18:00 **men, or did you feel there was still a sense of it at that time?**

Oh they had no chance with me. I took charge of an office of about 35, at one stage. And I interviewed Joe and Joe said "I'm flat out usually, but Arthur over there his got quite a bit of spare time". So of course I saw Tony and Andrew as well and eventually I got to this fellow didn't I? And he said

- 18:30 "No, I'm flat out here, cause Joe over there he has a bit of time to spare but I don't have any". So one day I said "Well you all know your own jobs", I said "Its like a football field, you've got to be able to do the other person's job as well", I said "So now well start off this week you and he change places", and I said "What you don't know you can either ask him or ask me, won't ask anybody else" but I said "I want to know exactly
- 19:00 what each of you do as well". So everybody had to learn everybody else's job. It was amazing how some had time to spare alright. But I suppose with this section which was despised by the rest of the whole department.

**Why was that?**

I won't say anymore. And eventually when I reduced the staff from 35 to

- 19:30 23 or something or rather like that, they didn't work in that section they worked for Jim Mackenzie. And they all knew one another's job. I used to talk shares to them I used, I'd say I'll swap, you know you talk a lot about sex and all sorts of things, I said you never talk about money, I said I'll tell you what I'll swap you the amount in my bank account for the amount in yours. Now you get yours out,
- 20:00 I said "I'll show you mine, and I bet I've got less in it than you have a look", "oh no Mr Mackenzie, no I wouldn't look". I said "You may as well there's very little in it" I said "Silly if you've got money in the bank. So one of them bought gold and some of them bought silver and two of the young fellows bought houses on tied payment and I even arranged for one of them to get some second hand
- 20:30 carpet to put on the floor for one of them. So they set themselves, some of them set themselves up very nicely by the time I'd finished. So people they don't talk enough about money in point of fact. But an English fellow at the garage station, opposite Main Roads, and he asked me a few questions somehow on
- 21:00 finances. So I thought well you know there's a lot of braggers in this world like me so I took him in my tax return to show him, I don't show it to everybody. But I said there you are I said "I'm not blowing any trumpet or anything", he said "Hmm".

**Do you feel that you've always been a natural leader even as a young boy?**

Well I was patrol

- 21:30 leader without much trouble. But then I suppose I've always treated other people as equal as myself and no better and no worse. And I remember one of the other patrol leaders when we were building the Scout Den we discovered that instead of the joist being mortar skin they were skew nails, so we got onto his father.
- 22:00 So that was a case of putting the weights up of something. Yes I put the weights up once at work. And once I wanted to know what went on in this next job up and I couldn't find out
- 22:30 and I couldn't find out where the abstract went to each day, except it went to the treasury. So I was relieving this fellow, I rang up abstract the treasury and blow me if Manfred Cross whose been a member of Parliament didn't answer the phone. And I knew him in Scouting so I took it up that day to Manfred and found out never really had to be up there until two o'clock, but ours was always up there by ten. So I came
- 23:00 back and when this fellow whom I was relieving came back I told him, exactly what there doing. And I can remember having going to reorganise, something in accounts once and this Assistant Accountant McConzie said "Yes that's a good idea Jim", he said "Don't bother getting it typed or anything just write it down on a sheet of foolscap for me that will
- 23:30 do", so he got the credit.

**So tell me about bee keeping how did you come to be involved with bees and bee keeping?**

Well one of my aunt, we don't give one another presents at any particular time, but if we find something that they want and they see it they buy it. And that what presents are with us. And so this

- 24:00 Aunt of mine, had had an unassembled bee hive which she didn't want anymore so she gave it to me. So my Scout Master then kept bees and he started me off with a bee hive and that was hmm, in the 50's I suppose. So I kept bees ever since. In 1959
- 24:30 the fellows who manufactures most of the bee equipment for Queensland, got me to be on the Organising Committee for the International Bee Conference we had down the Gold Coast, in 1959 and the result of that was that they thought I should also run a Bee Club to save them because the Government Officer got pestered with the likes of you that want to know something
- 25:00 about bees, so you ran up him or you went to the bee keeping manufacturer, and wasted his time. So they conned me into getting the job, so I got all the queries then, in the Bee Club. So I started this Bee Club in 59 and its still going.

## So what's the attraction of bees?

It's a very good hobby because you can name many other, wood carving, wood turning,

- 25:30 picture painting, china painting, pottery, tapestry, macramé. What happens when you've done it I give it to you. Now I've given you three pieces already you don't want anymore and you don't want anymore, what do I do with it, so you can't do it anymore. So you can't sell it but beekeeping you can give honey away, you can sell it and it's an activity out in the open
- 26:00 and made a lot of friends. I went to Cooktown with one of the bee keepers fellow from our club. So an you meet a lot of people, two ladies came to the door one day and they said "Do you, is this honey from your own bees", I said "Yes" "and so you have the hives", I said "Yes", "Would there be any chance of me getting some honeycomb from you". I said "Yes but there's none at this time
- 26:30 of year", which was about April or something. I said "Come in September, give me a name and address and phone number and when I get some honeycomb I'll ring you", so they said "Could we have it without chocolate on the outside". You know that violet crumble. So I had some there and I put it out in margarine containers and fifty cents or a dollar. Unfortunately I never saw them again, I would love to
- 27:00 see there face when they saw what honeycomb was like. But I got out and talk to kindergartens and this sort of thing. And then I had to talk at a few garden clubs at times, and I organised our crown to put up a skillion out at the Brickfield Show even and we ran a really honey court out there for a few years. And with this skillion attached to the thing and we fixed the guttering for them and everything. They eventually
- 27:30 pulled it down and then we closed up. So I find it very, you meet some wonderful people, collecting bee hives. I was only recalling one recently, I'll tell you about design. We went up to get a swarm of bees from up Chelmer, Graceville way or something, beautiful house, no blinds on any windows, plate glass down to the floor, all surrendered by trees. No need for blinds.
- 28:00 Those people appreciate the country. So I made a lot of friends that way. So back to civilian life, so when I came back from overseas I thought.....
- 28:30 I got my Tydesong built in 1961 and sold the other 18ft and then I sold Tydesong in 1975 as I told you before and got the cheques cleared in a hurry. And then after we were married in January of course Mavis was still lecturing and
- 29:00 I thought well, we said well it's no good going back to college and being Miss Donald for a little while and then becoming Mrs Mackenzie we'd better get married now. So we got married on the 24th January and didn't get a holiday until August. So we thought we'd go up to the Barrier Reef Islands so somebody put us wise to the Bedarra Islands. So I wrote to
- 29:30 Bedarra and said that we'd read there pamphlets about it but we'd had a bad report from a lady at one of the conference dinners that we'd been too. She said that the food was very monotonous for the few days that she was there and no fresh fish. So they wrote back then and said as far as monotony goes for food, he said well we have a smorgasbord everyday, with everything on it, as far as no fish goes, well he said "We don't
- 30:00 have any frozen fish, we always have fresh fish so it will be possible". He said "As far as I know we only have satisfied guests here, they only take 12". It was between \$28 and \$32 a day and so he gave us a list of people in Brisbane. So we rang up two lots at Oakenvale oh marvellous, they were he
- 30:30 told Ken Hewitt, told them they'd been here 7 times or something you see. So we flew to Dunk Island and met by Ken, and he said "Now is there anything you want in your luggage as soon as you get there?", "No", we said "By why", he said "Oh we might want something", he said "Well we'll just send all the luggage on the launch and you can go over on the speedboat". We don't like speedboats,
- 31:00 you can send the luggage over on the speedboats, but we go back on the launch thank you very much. So that set us with him and so four years out of the first five year we were married we used to go up to the Bedarra Island for the fortnight. You know how much it is a day there now \$1470 per day, per day. Princess Alexandria's been there,
- 31:30 all the film stars have been there and we went there first. I caught a nice big fish, that long from my bed one evening. Threw the line in the water, took it back through the trees, put it on the sill above the bathroom and swizzle it went and up I grabbed it and played with him. So we were up there another year and a
- 32:00 very big boss from Melbourne, Sir Peter somebody was up there and that's in our visitors book of course I pointed this out, I said "I must try this". So where sitting there one night, he had a lye down so we heard a wiz and we heard a terrific thud. He collided with a gum tree and the fish got away.
- 32:30 Beautiful, you used to go round one couple each day would go and collect at least a quart of oysters shells of a morning. And you could sit down and get two cups full from just where you sat. So we'd been to heaven before most people found it, most places had been that way. Two



- 33:00 beautiful cruises for a week on the Elizabeth Eade, around the reefs. In 1979 we had 6 months in Europe again, and I linked up with my Norwegian mate from the Rover Meet at Stalk in Norway that I went to. And that was terrific because when I came back
- 33:30 and went round Europe I could stay with fellows that I'd met at Stalk. One family apologised they couldn't put me up because they had two other families staying with them at the moment, but they wanted to pay for me at the hotel. I said "Indeed you won't", my hotel wanted to know what temperature I wanted the bath water at. You wouldn't know what temperature your bath water's at would you, but they all do. Once Swiss family they
- 34:00 had I think it was at least 5 it may have been 7, hand basins along the wall and because I was there of course they had all there big family there. You can imagine with there wives and whatnot, and Master at one end and Mistress nearby and of course everybody but the mother spoke English. Although some of them
- 34:30 had to have my jokes explained to them, but everything had to be translated to her of course and by the time it was all translated there was no joke. But I had a lovely time.

### **Can you tell me about your trip back to New Guinea in 95?**

Yes, 95... Well first of all it was a, Mikhail Sokolov it was a Russian ship which was engaged

- 35:00 to take us there. One representative from each Unit that had seen action there, or the wife of one of the people. Like Mrs French came because the husband VC winner had died. And they inspected it and said no filthy got to be cleaned up. So they came back and said no
- 35:30 that's no good look all this has got to be redone. So eventually when we got on board, there were, four berth cabins, terribly small and there were only two of the likes of me in it. So we both had a double, a lower berth each you see. And the entrée dishes of the day were at least
- 36:00 that long and that wide of canapés and whatnot before dinner proper. We had commercial entertainers. When we got to Moresby we were given morning tea at the Australian Ambassadors place and the wife looked after the fellows in the 2/25th because he only had black
- 36:30 tea or something so she bought him, she herself bought out a little tray with the black tea and spare tea pot. We were looked after beautifully. And then we were taken to the cemetery and the fellow Richard... Richard Bird, yes, he wrote
- 37:00 all the service words, for each of the services of a different cemetery, very good fellow. Absolute control of English, very good presentation as well. And so we got off there about 8.30 of a morning and back at 4.30 and on during the night to Milne Bay and then the same thing happened at Milne Bay.
- 37:30 Except that I wrote to the Headmaster at Milne Bay because you see, the 61st Battalion were on Cameron Plateau the Queensland Cameron Highlanders went to Cameron Plateau didn't they. So the high school was the Cameron High School and so I wrote to the headmaster and said I was coming up and I'd like to see him. So he met me at the ship, and took me round otherwise, than
- 38:00 everybody else. So I saw what I wanted to see and then that evening back onto the ship around to Lae, the same thing happened at Lae, over to the cemetery, blah blah blah, back in the evening. Round to Oro Bay and the same thing there and then back to Cairns and then we flew home from Cairns.

### **When you went back did you**

#### **remember things that you'd forgotten about?**

You couldn't identify Milne Bay at all, because where as Gili Gili was the headquarters when I was there and now it's quite a town, it's going on the map even. But the air strip at Lae went right down to the sea, they went to some trouble to show me a little patch of it, which was part of a road now.

- 39:00 But otherwise, nothing to see at all. So people say about the memories of it, well that picture that you'll see, I know I can't say that I want to hang it on the wall and see this. I'm not over keen on rehashing any of this stuff
- 39:30 except for the likes of you people. That was yesterday, you know, today I'm having fun, tomorrow I'll have more fun if I'm still alive and that's why I'm 86. I have no worries, Mavis has a few I think at times, but I don't nothing worries me. That's why I think were still alive, the mates I know, even when I was in Rovers I used to train them that
- 40:00 if you want something done give it to a busy man. Some of my Rovers and other teenagers that I've had on my launch, one that come to the very top in Brisbane and Australia, I won't do any names of him but I'm quite sure both of you will at least know one of them. His got a very nice launch now, only twice as long as my 26 footer of course. And another
- 40:30 fellow, a son of one of my girlfriends up here, wants to take me out on his 30 odd foot salute. I think one of the things that kept me sane when I came back from the war and we went back to Rovers those of us that were there straight away and then every second weekend we used to go down to Fort Lookout and

we'd play bridge on the way down and get there about midnight and leave at

- 41:00 three o'clock on Sunday afternoon and of course the fish in those days, we always bought some fish home. So about eleven o'clock on Sunday morning we went down to catch the fish to bring home. We'd knew they'd be there they always were, your lucky if you catch fish there now at all. Even if you go when the fish should be there, your lucky if you catch them. We went there and caught them even when they shouldn't have been there.

## Tape 7

- 00:31 Well I think I've said as I said to my Rovers for one lot, if you want something done give it to a busy man. And I think I when I retired and I thought I should take on a job which is my skills, and as I've got arthritis in my knees I took on the job as Secretary
- 01:00 Treasurer of the Queensland Arthritis Foundation, and I'm a life member. I founded the Brisbane Amateur Bee Club in 1959 and it's still going. I've just retired from it, I can't be bothered spending night going to it now. I'd rather do something better.
- 01:30 I took a leading part in the Scout Association, our original Rover Leader, Arthur Jackson was Manager of Sydcrome and when I went overseas I decided that instead of wearing the Scout hat we should wear berets like they did overseas, so he got me to buy him one as well. So I came back with a few
- 02:00 and that was the beginning of Senior Scouts and Rover's wearing berets illegally. Everybody still wore Scout hats except those that had something to do with Mackenzie. As happened on a few other occasions, of course. So with my Rover crew I decided that we should be involved with the girls a bit so, the Sea Ranger lady in
- 02:30 charge in Brisbane, moored here launch near mine. So I started a Rover Ranger Council, so as the boys would get mixed up with the girls at that appropriate age but actually we had to arm ourselves with base ball bats to keep them away. So that eventually got by the way side.
- 03:00 I was Treasurer of the St Lucia Uniting Church for 13 years, I'm not really a god-ess I'm a Jesus Christ-est. I don't know anything about this levitation of going up to heaven but for sure if more of us thought more about Christ's teaching I don't think we'd be having so much war, nor would be so highly critical of other people, and also we might be a
- 03:30 little bit more honest. But so much for the Treasurer shift there. I was practically a Foundation Member of the St Lucia Probus Association and I'm still a keen member of that and next week we go away, mid week to Toowoomba, amongst other things. I was a Foundation Member of the
- 04:00 Computer Society of Queensland, which was organised by Professor Webster of Queensland University. And so I eventually because of my, by then long service with computers I became a Member of the Australian Computer Society, which is now a University Degree show.
- 04:30 And one other one....oh yes so my wife for quite some time, I told you we used to play bridge on the way down to Fort Lookout. Mavis is
- 05:00 a long time member of the Bridge Club so because she goes to Bridge on Mondays I don't want to do gardening there either so I became a member of that Bridge Club recently and we also have a men's four that we go and we play Bridge amongst friends as well. And because I thought I might be getting Alzheimer's disease because I can't remember something that I want to now, always, and I'm sorry for
- 05:30 you when you get that way too. I can't remember everything I want to so I, lately even started doing the crosswords but Mavis is still one ahead of me, because she does the cryptic as well, which I'm not really trying for. So I've had a rather busy life. I like being busy, I like people being friendly. All our neighbours here are very friendly,
- 06:00 those we have the keys of their house, although I've never been inside, and we supplied it to them when they come back and can't find their own. They mow my back lawn always and dug up a stump there, I let him do it because it would be easier for him to mow. And my neighbours over there mow my front lawn if I let them and also the footpaths and
- 06:30 all that and do all the edges. So I'm fairly well looked after in general and I supply neighbours on all sides with mint and parsley and onion and garlic chives. And also lettuce and the little child down below here likes pulling up a carrot occasionally when they're grown. So were all friendly we have no fences around us,
- 07:00 were friends with both the neighbours across the street, although one of them doesn't talk to the other, but they both have to be friend with me. So even the other day, one of the very kind wives across the street, bought a nice lemon delicious over so much to Mavis's embarrassment I now skit that not only do our neighbours look after my garden and everything for me,

- 07:30 but our neighbours supply us with the pudding. I had a, I bought the first new Austin A70 utility that was delivered in Queensland, and took five other Rovers, two in the front and 3 in the back down to Tasmania for an adventure many years ago. And some of the others had
- 08:00 gone down another way, and we wanted to meet up, so I said "Right oh, well, you'll be there first and you leave a little message in the first pillar on the left hand side of the bridge on the post office side of the bridge on the left hand side and we'll find it", and they said "They'll never do that", that fellow that said that won't happen
- 08:30 now creates most of the wide games for the Scouts of Brisbane and has a GPS [Global Positioning System] of course and has travelled all over Australia and one of my other Rover's with a GPS recently was telling me how they went cross country in their four wheel drive from the Highway, North from Alice Springs to Darwin, to connect with some track in Western
- 09:00 Australia which they hit right on junction as they expected.

### **What are your thoughts on Anzac Day?**

I used to go to the dawn service but I'm too old and what not to go there these days. I, the fellow that I just did this

- 09:30 two inch water course with, he eventually couldn't march or anything, so I wasn't good at marching either so I took him a van, and felt rather self conscious. Subsequent years I went in a jeep and started to feel self conscious but now I just enjoy myself and I think if they.... One year I waved a PNG [Papua New Guinea] flag with my little Australian flag and I heard some woman make
- 10:00 some remark supposedly to me too, that what are you waving somebody else's flag for, so I don't do that now. But I'd like to be able to wave the flag of Islam as well. I think if we could become more understanding amongst our nations and less bigoted we'd get along all right. I read a lot of the Corinthian recently,
- 10:30 my minister had two copies so he lent me one. And I figure if people studied, that a little and realised that it was written 4 years after Christianity was established really, and that the Bible was written in 1500 years or at least 1200 years before they
- 11:00 discovered that the world was anything else but flat we might have a better understanding of it. When I was in New Guinea the first time I went to a service conducted by the Bishop of New Guinea who for the benefit of us, talked at his sermon that Christ was black, which he was, he was a dark haired fallow brownish more with black hair. But all these things are picked up
- 11:30 and commercialised like Father's Day. Christ wasn't born at Christmas time, he was born in September. Easter was a heathen feast time, it wasn't originally when Christ was crucified or anything, it was a heathen feast. All these things are so artificial that if we could get down to the
- 12:00 basis of each of us understanding the other person, and realising that they can have other points of view, I think we'd have a far happier life and a lot of us wouldn't get cancer. I'm quite concerned that some of these diseases we get are brought about by the disturbances of people's hearts and guts. And you can't disturb my, a few I suppose have tried while I was in the army, very unsuccessfully
- 12:30 and I think I should be able to get along with anybody and if I can't I should be able to find out why. And we'd have a lot happier life all round.

### **What about the RSL?**

I became a member of the RSL to begin with but I found that I wasn't very

- 13:00 interested in the army I'd finish with the blasted thing. And I wasn't very interested in people who thought they were great in the army, or had done anything marvellous there. I didn't want to hear anything about it I'd rather talk about cultivation of roses or types of carrots, or parsnip or tomatoes that were best grown in Brisbane.
- 13:30 I have for sure not allowed anybody to put themselves on a pedal stool, they soon fall off. I've met everybody that supposedly anybody and that hasn't impressed me anymore than usual, and I like you and I like everybody else. And I hope I can continue that way.
- 14:00 **What about the DVA [Department of Veteran's Affairs] have you been happy with everything they've done, for return serviceman?**

Vet Affairs. I think Vet Affairs are one of the most courteous and obliging mobs I've ever come across. Yes and I was able, well one of our battalion put an SOS in at, from Adelaide, so when I got this I rang him

- 14:30 up and he thought that was great. So I have a photo of his garden now. But some of them even come up. We've got a branch of our mob in Sydney and we have our get together this Sunday, at Cameron RSL and we have about 100 there this year, there 114 last year, I understand, there getting fewer each year.

I'm not always

- 15:00 here at home to read the death notices so we don't know whose dead half the time. But I'm not interested in really going through death notices, I'd rather go through something else.

**Can I got right back now, I'm just going over some questions that has been bought up by the entire day. Did your mother talk about your father much to you?**

No not all. No.

**Did you have a father figure or a role model when you were a young boy?**

No,

- 15:30 no. My mother as I said she was the first lady Dentist in Queensland, she wanted the verandah closed in with folding doors and they said "You can't do that" and she said "Well I'll show you how. You put 3 doors across there and that's there approximate width and you put three hinges each down each one and you hinge them from there", and that was it. And she I used to have a little Hornsby train I used to get one carriage each

- 16:00 Christmas, I think, and I used to go over and play at another lads place. He was the son of a leading Medico in Queensland, with a huge block of land, and huge lounge in which we had several railway tracks.

- 16:30 Each one of them was 10 times bigger than mine, but we got along quite well. And when making this railway station, which I still remember, she used to say "I wonder what we could get to do something there", and of course she'd have something there but she waited until I could recognise it and I'd say "Well how about that", "That would be a good idea".

**I may have already asked you this one earlier,**

- 17:00 **I'm not sure. Can you remember where you were or how you heard that war had broken out?**

No. Wasn't a very important thing for me. But when war ended, see I was the one who, my Sub Depot, my Ammunition Depot supplied the blank rounds for Sydney to go bang bang, and that evening I was still back at the depot, everybody else was

- 17:30 banging things around and my sergeant's were all having a party and I held the fort. So no those particular dates I don't think are very particular as far as I'm concerned and I know the date I was discharged but I don't remember when I enlisted eventually and as you realise today, we haven't mentioned dates that much.

**Was it, obviously you remembered the war ending,**

- 18:00 **how did you hear about that?**

Oh well, we knew it was sort of happening, and then I was up at Field Ammunition Depot at Liverpool, you see and they wanted me on the phone. Yes I had to be on the phone and I had to get these blank rounds. They said "Look" this was some Staff Major in Sydney proper, I said "Look I'm sorry but", I said "I don't know where they are I've got no idea", I said "I

- 18:30 don't know whether any of my sergeants here do", "Oh" he said "Never mind" he said "I know where they are, I'll come out", he said "We'll get them ourselves". So we got them all. But all these bundles of gun powder were about 3 and a half inches in diameter, for 25 pounder guns, and about 10 inches long and most of the bags were eaten away.

- 19:00 So we had to go gather enough of them that weren't too badly eaten, to hold enough pots stuff to bang in Sydney.

**I'm sorry to continue down this line but can you recall hearing about Pearl Harbour, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour?**

Oh.... not at the moment and my memories not the best always. But no I don't remember the actual incident

- 19:30 now but I can remember being at Milne Bay and getting some bunches of grapes which were as long as a quarter case and you don't know quarter case, but these bunches of grapes were that long. So one of the supply ships that was suppose to go to the battle was side tracked down to Milne Bay and the perishables were unloaded there, that's for sure.

**What about when Darwin was bombed, can you remember that at all?**

Ah... no, not

- 20:00 particularly. See I was in the front line then I suppose and you see talking to other fellows in your battalion like Jim Watt who was a runner, and a runner in the Infantry, they were nearly as dispensable as lieutenants they would be popped off each day. Somehow or rather Jim survived but so he and the fellow in charge, that was

- 20:30 on Bren Carriers who was a secretary prior to this one, in the battalion knew a lot about what went on in the battalion. But I don't because I was either in front of the front or I was at the front, and although as I said before the time I was frightened, when I was back without a rifle in the hospital you were so busy with your own little front that if you weren't you'd be dead. And what anybody else did, was of no concern of yours
- 21:00 except the people on the left and the right. And provided you could keep contact with them, then the battle went alright. But once you broke with them or them you were in trouble. So that was all, that was my responsibility with the platoon. So the 2/12th Battalion decided that all these medals were very good, we all got four of them, we call them, the breakfast
- 21:30 money or something or rather. But the 2/12th decided that they'd have one for front line service, which you can only wear on the right hand side. So they developed a ribbon and a medal and it's for front line service. And to get one of those you have to go through the 2/12th and they will only supply it on the authority of a Commissioned Officer signing the fact that this fellow was in the front line.
- 22:00 That's the only thing that's worth while really. I mean the people that were back there, and I tried to turn it up actually for today, I'd have loved to have quoted it - vasage or savage, said most of these Base Wallopers that got there battles, came there for a few days after the battle was over to see what had gone on.

**Did you know of the famous speech that [General] Blamey made back in New Guinea?**

No

- 22:30 not that Blamey made, no I heard of that one. I know of people that were there, and they, he was very lucky he wasn't shot. Very very lucky, of course he was a drunken as well so we don't know how much was him and how much liquor talking. But to say what he did about it with rabbits that ran away, part of
- 23:00 the efficiency of the battle of Milne Bay was due to the fact that General Rowell at Moresby had faith in clothes and field. And Rowell didn't even pass on some of the illogical stupid messages which the likes of Blamey and headquarters
- 23:30 told us, clothes should do this and clothes should do that. And what clothes did proved to be right of course. They had no idea what mud was like, none at all. Can you think of three ton steel truck nearly begin buried in mud, on the side of the road that was shaped like that, and it just slid off.
- 24:00 I filled up as I said I bog with a huge load of dog biscuits. And the rain came down like pick handles, they don't realise what real front line was like. The stuff at Oro Bay where five yards ahead of you there might be the Japs, hidden in the kunai grass, and you couldn't direct, there was no way of paving a bearing to them from where you were there was nothing to
- 24:30 take a bearing from. You were lost wherever you were, because you couldn't identify where you were hardly. People don't realise, what it was like. Even when we were there, one of the roads was closed or something.

**So can you describe what feeling the man on the front line had for the headquarter staff?**

I think we were too busy at the time to worry.

- 25:00 They don't know how far up the line this went, but for sure I instilled it in my little clan. A bad plan carried out well can be successful, but if it's a good plan carried out badly it's deadly. So if you stick together and can understand one another, be it on the football field in the war or in an Office, particularly in
- 25:30 Computer Science, and have faith in one another. My big program, that I wrote was would have enabled all the Government Servants in Main Roads to be paid from the computer and it would only need an identification number, for the other departments order for it to be adapted there. But we used to
- 26:00 particularly my favourite programmer when he read my specifications said "What do you mean there?" and I'd explain it to him and then I'd say "Now you tell me back". That's why business is a little bit more efficient these days then it used to be because it's controlled logically whereas in the past it was very much controlled over long lunches when everybody was
- 26:30 alcoholic. And I can remember taking my, a report that the Secretary of Main Road wanted, it was about an inch and a half or so thick. So I took this up to him myself one day and I said "Well there you are Mr Borris", he said "I have a lot to go through to find out what I want from this", I said "You needn't at all", I said "If you can tell me what your looking for, we'll give you those stats" "I know" he said "Oh no no".
- 27:00 Why because he couldn't specify it right, otherwise we could have given him just that. No faith in your staff then you've got, your inefficient and so is your staff. Have faith in your staff know what there doing, they have faith in you, you've got a chance of success of wining in the war.

**Can you tell me how if any, what was the method of receiving any news of the outside world?**

27:30 Oh we used to, if we could get near a wireless we used to Tokyo Rose [Japanese radio propagandist], was it? I think, we used to love listening to Tokyo Rose and finding out what went on and how inefficient we were and how we were going to be overcome in the next few days or hours. See that is why Britain so far has

28:00 won the battles because she has the most diversified mob, there actually all mongrels, no shortbread the British, some of the Scots are thoroughbreds. But the British are a mob of Norwegian's and our Royal Family is German. And there such a mixture that they appreciate not only the sense of humour but the thought processes

28:30 of these other nations. And they understand them, they can read them without too much bias, whereas a lot of these other nations can't do that. The German's have a completely different sense of humour, they laugh at calamities more than the sort of fun. We find that English humour is a classy business, isn't it compared to the other you think? So sense of humour is a great thing isn't it.

29:00 I can even laugh at myself, although a lot of you people mightn't think so.

**How important was the Australian sense of humour on the battlefield?**

Oh it was absolutely, yes one of my mates still loves talking about diving in on top of somebody else. Yes he said "Oh I was on top of him" he said not for any other reason but to try and keep out of the

29:30 water. He was down in the water and I was on top of him. Yes. Oh I think, well I told you about the ordinary rank abusing their Warrant Officer at the Mess parade tangling himself up in the dog's leash. I suppose they must have known I was going to take it in good part I suppose, you know. And I made sure that in future they had there dogs tied up properly at Mess Parades.

30:00 **So after the war did you find yourself talking about it at all?**

No.

**Or did people ask you about things?**

Not very much, see people say oh you know, well even now somebody came to our battalion and said "Do you know so and so", and I said "Well what company was he in", they don't know. But you see in the paper, I wrote to the paper, but they wouldn't do anything about it. I wrote to the Funeral Directors Associations

30:30 they say so and so and they give you his army number, I can only just remember my own, it doesn't mean a thing. See if I only said they were in the 61st Battalion Queensland Cameron Highlanders well we might go to the funeral but they don't they give you their QX number we don't know who that is. I mean there was one of the Mackenzie's got a MM and Donald Ian Hamilton,

31:00 Kitchener Mackenzie fancy a name that long he nearly got me on an A4 because I didn't know who they were talking about. We have a name for a thing so that we know that a caladium is different to a reniculus and that way you got a name. But numbers are very good in, fail safe in computer wise but apart from that,

31:30 one of my computer programmes, had Bernadette as a, I won't tell you the surname, but Bernadette and a long surname. And blow me the ordinary person field for the name wasn't big enough. Its like some of the documents we get to sign, you can't sign J R Mackenzie they give you an inch.

32:00 They give you an inch you take a mile, I'm rather to take a mile and I want about two inches to sign my scratch.

**Can you go back, one story that intrigued me was the story where after you escaped from the Gold Wing can you, when you went back and you saw that Japanese soldier by the path, can you go more into the details about that?**

Only in a flash. See I was jogging,

32:30 down this narrow path, okay, the road was eight feet wide at the most, and in those eight feet, when your jogging out of the scrub you're in it all of a sudden and there he was, so I just booted him with my heel I suppose and I was back up. I never got across the road, I just kept him there and I was back up there.

**So you've got no idea what happened to him?**

No idea at all. That was for sure I didn't even see him fall over.

33:00 I'd turn round by then, I was back half way across the path. That's why I'm still alive, I mean if he'd have been awake he'd have shot me coming down the track wouldn't he.

**So how do you think the war shaped your life?**

It didn't. I was 22 nearly when it started off. I always hated it I suppose, when I went overseas

- 33:30 the first time I didn't have time to go to my father's grave, but as it was in a nice part of France, and we were travelling around we arranged to go there with my wife and I must say I lent on the tombstone and shed a few tears I suppose and just said how bloody hopeless these wars are. And I
- 34:00 suppose I, that's why I detest a lot of the political tripe that were dished up with everyday. I know it's not honest. As I've said several times already if your honest with the other person, and you can get repartee, not esprit décor and what not, collusion you're a success. But and yes if that person on your staff has your,
- 34:30 unless they think you have respect for them, and vice versa then you're not successful are you. I had a fellow with a classification in this section that I took over at one stage, he had a gammy arm, lovely bloke, a Classified Officer and all that fellow did when I went into that office was a date stamp he dated every, every sheet of paper that came in. Issues came in quadruplicate
- 35:00 every one had the date stamp on it that he put on. I said "Well Nev that stops today" and some of them rushed to me and they said "You're going to stop all of these things being dated when they come here. I said "That right", "What will happened if somebody said they came in some other day", I said "Well that will be quite alright, maybe they did" I said "It won't worry me that we will cope with it as efficiently as we can and you and I will have the right
- 35:30 answer". They had a whole lot of work hidden in case they didn't have any, they thought they might run out of work. I said "Well now we'll split all these ledgers", there were five ledgers, split them all in at least in half, that was 10, you take that pile, you take that, you take this bundle of issues and you the codes that are in the ledger that are relative to these issues you deal with and they go right round, or they go anti clockwise, or clockwise right around.
- 36:00 They all get dished up that's all there work.

**And your father having died an Anzac in the First World War, did you feel that your military service gave you a connection with him in anyway whatsoever?**

I haven't thought about it much. Never had any reason to. There was a very nice photo of him on the

- 36:30 wall which when we altered the place I think mother took down here twin one to it and I said "Well what's the good if it's there and you're going to put yours away". I wish I had them both now, just antique sort of frames. But no, no I believe in the living, once there dead, if somebody dies I go out of there way to possibly get some flowers to them or go and
- 37:00 see them or something like that, but once there dead well. I arranged mother's funeral with a Funeral Director who was in our B Club, and everything was there, funeral notices and everything put in the paper, and I was hoping that I don't think I'd have come home for her funeral. But I did I wouldn't have
- 37:30 married until while she was still alive while she had to be looked after as well as anybody could because of the sacrifices she'd made to me. That's the least I could do. But after that when you're dead you're dead, as far as I'm concerned. Anybody can fool me that those stars were made
- 38:00 up there, there just discovering now how huge all of them are the size of suns, or twice as big they didn't know that when the Bible was written. Lovely I'm glad you have a few questions. At least my philosophy kept me going very well at my age, and apart from arthritis in my knees I can still do everything I want to fortunately.
- 38:30 **That's it I've run out of questions.**
- Well thank you very much I hope if anybody listens to this, they'll be amused at least at some of my philosophies, might have been imparted to them. Thanks Peter [interviewer].