

Australians at War Film Archive

Lancelot Machattie-Smith (Lance) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:43 **I'd like to start off the interview today by asking you if you tell me a bit about yourself in your early life?**

01:00 Well I was here, on the property you on now, but what we call little Boree, but is now known as Boree. It's just up the drive from where we are in the cottage. My father built the house in 1915 when he was married. And, all my immediate family were born in the house, that's my two eldest brothers, and my eldest sister, myself and my younger sister. So 5 of us were born in the house.

01:30 And we stayed there, I'm not quite sure if it was 1932 or 1933, but 1932 my grandfather who lived at Boree Carbon, in a big double story house over on the hill. He died and, his widow was my step grandmother, my father's mother died when he was about 8. She came over to live at Little Boree and we,

02:00 that's Mother and Dad and the 5 children, went and lived at Big Boree. Boree Cabire, they call it now. And, I was 10 then I think. I hadn't been to school because we had a tutor or governess. In 1933, I went as a boarder to Warrawee College in Orange. Spent a year there, in 1934, I went to the

02:30 King School, Parramatta and stayed there for 7 years and left in 1940. But I came home and cause my two brothers were in the army, and, they weren't in the Middle East then. The initially joined the live horses, 65 Horses, but left and they joined the 2/1st Light Aircraft Regiment.

03:00 I felt that I wanted to be in it too, but unfortunately in 1941, I had a bad accident on a horse. The horse reared over on top of me and I was in hospital for a long time. It took me something 12 months to recuperate. And then I did, did get better I was able to

03:30 pass the medical and I joined the army myself in March '42. 1942. So that sort of was my life before I joined the army. And from then on basically, it was just 4 years of my army life.

04:00 **And, what do you remember of the Depression growing up?**

Very little actually. All I remember is that my father had, a couple of, a couple of children at school and had to bring them back, because he just couldn't afford to have them at boarding school at that stage. I was really to young for the Depression to have any

04:30 impact on my- really I just heard stories about how you couldn't sell you stock and wool was worth nothing. And there was a drought at the same time so as you tried to keep alive we had been fed of scrub. In those days it was basically, no fodder, to be bought, or fodder wasn't being made. Grain was in short supply. And, so really, that no good, it's just a

05:00 story a memory, but I don't think it had any impact on me at all. I never felt that, on a farming property you were fairly self supporting. I mean you've got your own milk and you've got your own meat. And you can grow your own vegetable if you want to so really it doesn't cost you very much to live. Different story today of course. All you basically had to do in those days was,

05:30 pay your shire rates; I suppose and if you had a mortgage try and pay it. But as far as I'm concern it, I have no memory of the Depression at all.

And I understand that when you went to school you were in the School Cadets?

I was in the School Cadets, yes that's right, that reason when I joined the Army my life was made easy because I didn't have to spend much time in the bull ring as

06:00 people that had never been in the cadets and knew mothering about Arms School or forming 4's, whatever it might be. Had to spend a lot of time learning what I had learnt at school. So army, well I

mean when you join the army you learn a few lurks. Basically what you try and do, is keep out of trouble. And do at least, least that's possible as far as works concerned. And,

- 06:30 when I joined the army I was enlisted in the 2nd, March, I was sent up to Singleton to join the Armoured Division. That seem to be a place they sent people who had, a high school education and most probably knew a little bit, which was their left foot and which was their right foot,
- 07:00 I suppose. A lot of fellow really didn't know, and I was there for quite a while, and then, I got to know a man who was a colonel's driver, our commanding officer's driver. And he said to me "Would you like a good job, for a while, while I go on leave?" And I said "Yes, what is it?" And he said "Being the colonel's driver", well I had
- 07:30 never really driven in the city myself and one incident was I was told, you know wanted me at headquarters in the morning to take the colonel to Tamworth. I thought oh well that will be good, so I drove down there I guess I'd have to work out where I was going to go because I'm sure I didn't know. And so we got in the car and another high ranking officer got in beside the colonel and, they sat in the back and I took off and drive along
- 08:00 very quietly. But apparently too quietly for the colonel because after a while he said "Pull over driver". So I pulled over and he said "I'd like to drive" I said "Yes sir, that's alright". I got in the back seat and the colonel go in the front seat, the drivers seat and this high rank officer got in the seat beside him. It wasn't very long before we took off an there I was a, lowly sap that had been driven by the commanding officer of the unit and the
- 08:30 lieutenant colonel of [(UNCLEAR)]. And I'm sure that's never happened before. How I ever got back from Tamworth I will never know, but apparently we did. I don't much, really any other sort of memories of the Armoured Division. I joined in January, March. And in June they called for volunteers for this Observers Unit and it sounded exciting,
- 09:00 and there were going to be horses and that, and at that stage of my life my greatest love was horses. I used to ride them every day and had aspirations of being a jockey, or a polo player or something like that. So I volunteered for the Australian Observers Unit, and was accepted and then in July, we were called into a camp at Ingleburn. And
- 09:30 after a bit of training we set off to the [Northern] Territory. We were told I was sort of going to be a sort of surveillance unit, mounted surveillance unit, to observe from the coast. Because that that stage it looked as though it we imminent that the Japs would be going to land somewhere in Australia and that was, there was no defence really, basically around the whole of the North West. That's what we were going to do.
- 10:00 So... what did I say, In August actually, we set off for the Territory. It took us a fortnight to get from Brisbane to Katherine. You know there were a lot of fellow, a bit uncomfortable, there wasn't much room, and
- 10:30 of course we didn't have wash. The only time I think we had a was between leaving Sydney, and getting to a place called Nelia, on the North, no East West railway line across North Queensland was a flying [(UNCLEAR)], this little town called Nelia, and somebody said probably the first time Nelia had ever seen a parade of nudists, because everybody jumped out the train and 400 or 500 of us.
- 11:00 There were only 450 in the unit and everyone pulled of their clothes and had a wash in the main street of Nelia. And we arrived in, where did we go then, oh Mount Isa. And in those days Mount Isa was, a stinking great hole. It was they said that every dixie [tin for eating] full of meat that the, the orderly put
- 11:30 in your dixie got 100 flies with it and fellows with dysentery. Quite a number of chaps died I think. It was a terrible place. It was full, although it was August, it was as hot as Hades, the, full, of American Negroes, they were the transport drivers from there to the Territory. Well that's as far as the train went, you see and we went from there in American
- 12:00 6 x 6 GMC. They were the big troop carries. There across to... Camooweal through Alexandria Downs to Tenants Creek though 6 inches of bull dust, you just couldn't see. That why we were travelling in convoy even thought the trucks were well apart, the dust used to hang, there was no wind and you just couldn't see. Some of the driver were actually hanging,
- 12:30 well the door was open, with the foot on the accelerator and just looking around the corner of the windscreen. And we were covered in dust because it used to suck it in from the back. Anyway there was a very pleasant surprise when we arrived at Tenants Creek and that's as far as the bitumen road had been built, at that stage, and we got on the bitumen road and it was quite pleasant. I forget how long it took us, it
- 13:00 took us a few days to get across. And then we, that's as far as the railway had been built in those days and the only trucks for troops were cattle trucks. So we were put in the cattle trucks and taken by train up to Katherine. And in those days Katherine was, one horse town, there only be a railway station, a couple of buildings. Basically nothing.
- 13:30 You couldn't believe it today if you went back after 16 years it's a striving township as you know. And

then we spent a few days at Katherine, then the unit, the Northern Australia Unit, was split up into 3 companies. A, B and C company. A company looked after, sort of Victoria and Wyndham area. B Company was sort of up the centre of Darwin and through there and down to the Roper River. And from the Roper River

- 14:00 South down around Birdum and up the other side of the Cape was C Company. So there were 450 men patrolling that area. In, in sections of 4 people, well we lived in tents and just like, the only difference between living like a black fellow, and living that we had a tent over our heads. And we'd go out for 6 weeks to 2 months and then we would be
- 14:30 relieved. We were stationed at a place called Timber Creek, which was sort of head, head waters of the Victoria River as far as the traffic was concerned. It was about 90 miles up the river. From the mouth and that's where most of the, goods and chattels and things would lie at the stations in the very old day,
- 15:00 would go and then be transported by wagon or doggie train or whatever to the stations. And that was our headquarters. And we were head section down the river at the mouth. Waiting for the Japs to come and hoping they didn't sort of thing. So I was up there in that part of the world and across to Wyndham for 16
- 15:30 months without sort of getting home. And as I said it was an isolated sort of a job, and you had to be able to get on with your friends. Because you lived in the same tent as you did for 2 months. You had to laugh at his jokes, and not get to upset about anything he did. What else can I tell you.
- 16:00 **And where did you pick up the horses?**
- Well some of the horses came, from a place called Nutwood, which was sort of a long way away from the Territory. I myself went up with, with a chap called, Clan Muldoon, he was a sheerer from Giro, he was a great chap he actually, he captained the NSW [New South Wales] Cricket Team, country cricket team against one of the touring sides at one stage.
- 16:30 And he and I and a black fellow called George, he was a tracker at Timber Creek Police Station, went up to Victoria River Downs, and picked up 90 horses there and bought them back down to Timber Creek, where they were broken in and, we had a bit of fun, you know breaking them in and ridding. Because some of them had been broken in, and we took about, 90 or 100 miles from Victoria River Downs,
- 17:00 to Timber Creek. In those days Timber Creek amounted to 2 houses, a new police station and an old police station and today you know there's 2 hotels, a motel and goodness knows what there. But there was absolutely nothing and we bought those 90 horses down. It took us 3 days I think. We were doing about 30 miles a day with them. And George the tracker he was a wonderful bloke, he was
- 17:30 incredibly good. Especially in the morning if we had 90 horses we used to hobble our own horses, the horses that we road, and the horses that we used as the pack horses, so they didn't get away from us and put the rope on them. They didn't get away from us but the other 80 or whatever it was, used to just spread out and George would pick them up every morning and we would perhaps go on ahead with our horses and the pack horses and George would finish up bringing the others
- 18:00 along. He used to just track them in the night, morning and pick them up. But they used to stay together most of the time. And then they were broken in.. we had two very good, three very good horsemen with us. Arthur Winters who was a buck jump champion of t Australia. Cecil Pearce who was bull riding champion of Australia and we had.. Lance Timmons who was buck jump champion in the
- 18:30 North West, you know around Pilliga and Coonamble and that part of the world. So we had some of the best horseman in the country to break the horses in. The trouble was they could ride them and a lot of us couldn't, it was definitely. We didn't spend so much time of the horses, because some of the places we went to were inaccessible, other than by boat. We had a boat, we had, we called it a Bondi. When we got there
- 19:00 we were just under provisions, and under equipped. We were suppose to be looking after posts of the Victoria River which is an enormous river, you know. Its 90 miles, you can come up 90 miles, a salty 90 miles when the tide is high. And almost probably 10 feet up at Timber Creek. And all we had was a rowing boat. But eventually we acquired a boat over at Wyndham after it had been bombed
- 19:30 and bought it back on a boat, on a blitz wagon. It's the only boat that apparently been ever carried over land in the Territory. And that's what we had to supply our post on the Victoria and the farthest one away from Timber Creek was 90 odd miles. Just opposite it was an island, which is at the mouth of the Victoria. And you couldn't,
- 20:00 basically you couldn't get in other than by boat and by water. You had about 1000 miles of mud to walk though to get to the place, where our camp was established. It was established there because of fresh water. That was a big problem on the river, you wanted to get close enough to observe what was happening on the river, you had to find out, you had to find fresh water. And it often was pretty difficult. So that, a lot of our camps were only established
- 20:30 where there were, because of fresh water. The interesting thing about the fresh water of Blunder Bay which is the farthest one sort of before you got out of the sand of the Victoria River. Was when we were there, there was a beautiful little creek. We relied on that for our drinking water, or washing water. And

when I went back, that was, in 60 nearly 60 years later that creek was completely. When we went in the helicopter just to have a look where we used to live.

- 21:00 And that creek was completely dry. So I don't know where we would have gone if it was dry in those days. And after being there we actually moved our headquarters from, Timber Creek across to the Wyndham area, over to a place called Ivanhoe Station, and that was
- 21:30 the headquarters and we, had a, post in Wyndham and one up called at a post called Cape Dussejour, which is the North West Point of the Cambridge Gulf. About 80 or 90 miles from Wyndham. And they used to say. Wyndham was a terrible little place. We used to say that or they say
- 22:00 now, that Wyndham is the backside of Australia and well Cambridge Gulf was the backside of Australia and Wyndham was 60 miles up it. So that gives you some idea of what it was like. Now it was just a little town with one street, houses on either side of the street. One that, one house backing up to the bid high hill, and the other one backing up to the mud slab. And when we were there of course after the bombing, only 2 people lived in the town I think.
- 22:30 The chap that had a liquor licence and, I think something to do with a protection board or something like that. And we used to go up to this Cape Dussejour which was right up, which was a nice place up there actually. Because you got out of the mud, the.. Cambridge Gulf was just like, like a sea of mud. The tide, 40 foot tide and the rushing out just disturbed the mud all the time.
- 23:00 So there was no was in the world you could see the bottom or anything like. And you get right up on the sea wall, we were right at the end of the Gulf and at the edge of the sea. So it was a good spot to be but it was very isolated. It basically, you could only get in by sea and we had.... as I say 4 of us were in the section up there and we might be up there for 6 weeks or 2 months. And we used to have to get out water,
- 23:30 we had a dug a soap, I don't have far it would have been, maybe 1/2 mile from, and we used to go, we had a donkey, we used to go up and load him up every day. Put I think about 16 gallons of water on him to a load. Bring it down and tip it into a 44 gallon drum and then we would put a lump of carbide into the, into the drum to clear the water.
- 24:00 And in the morning would be crystal clear and you drink it or wash in it and do whatever you like. But we had an observation post, we used to take it in turns to be up there. I suppose for 4, 6 hours at a, I suppose a stint would be about 6 hours I suppose. And we always had coemptions to see who could get up there the quickest, because we had a telephone up the top so you'd
- 24:30 get down and say go and you'd run up and say I'm here and the bloke would take your time with his watch. That was about the only, fun we got out of being there, expect the fact we were on the sea. But we were never game to go for a swim because of the sharks. You could see them swimming all about. But there were a lot of entities or a lot of turtles that used to come up and lay their eggs. The used to always lay their eggs before high tide so when the tide comes up you have
- 25:00 no idea where they have actually laid their eggs. But if you got there before the high tide you can find them. And we tried them, but they were not much good to eat. If you had plenty of tomato sauce they were tolerable but other than that. I think I passed. You know nothing really happened it was just, pretty boring sort of existence. It wouldn't have been of course if the Japs had arrived,
- 25:30 it would have been intolerable. I don't think we would have lasted very long. But after, as I say after being up there for 16, well 16 months.... I went home. Came back to, flew across I think from Wyndham to Darwin and then got on the
- 26:00 train to Darwin back to Burnham and then picked up the truck back to Mount Isa and home again. And then I, my brother who had been in the Middle East had joined the 2/15th Field Company, or the Australian Engineers, and I thought oh well I'm sick of this outfit I'll go somewhere else. So I applied to join him and I got a transfer but unfortunately by the time I got there he had
- 26:30 left. And, but went back to the old boy again and. And they said to me, he was working on the, Sydney Harbour Bridge. And I said what's its like its just like being in the Army Lance, he said, its 50% boredom, 30% enjoyment and 20% sheer fright. That's what it amount to. So
- 27:00 I was then sent up to the Tablelands and spent, god I spent about, well I had all 44... about another 16 months on the Tablelands, just, you know what Engineers do, building bridges, and making roads and learning about explosives
- 27:30 and those sorts of things. Playing football and, it wasn't a bad life, but it was achieving nothing id didn't think. When you sort of used to think about all those poor fellows getting killed up in New Guinea and we were doing nothing. But then I'd been up and down the railway line, about 5 times from here to Cairns. It wasn't much fun really, because you had to get out at stops every now and again, and have your
- 28:00 meals out of the soup kitchen and, didn't have enough room to lie down in the train. But it wasn't as bad as being in action of course. That's why I also feel that although I spent a lot of time in the army it was

rather and inadequate sort of a war that I had in comparison with a lot of other fellows. Is that enough, or do you want

28:30 me to go on?

Please go on. What were you preparing for at Appertain?

Well we, we transferred or were transferred to the 2/1st Australian Beach Group which is a, I suppose I don't know what you'd call it, a brigade or something. We were being taught the new technique

29:00 that the Australians had developed of beach landings. Because a lot of the beach landings had been disastrous as far as casualties were concerned. Before you even go off the ship you were dead. So we were taught you know, sort of...we used to go down to,

29:30 after we had been up on the Tablelands, we used to go down every now and again to Trinity Beach, which is a beach just above Cairns. And used to go out of ships and taught how to get out of the ship and how to get ashore in a LCI, Landing Craft Infantry. And our job was to make sur that the beach was clear of mines and also that the, wheel vehicle could get across the sand

30:00 by laying, laying out, we used to lay out mesh and landing ship mesh, landing type mesh that sort of things along the beach. And we used to do that fairly often. And that's what we were being prepared for because they were making assaults on islands held by the Japs and the Japs were starting to go back then but they were still there. And that was what it was all about. We were sort of a company,

30:30 that they called....in the. .. sorry no. Anyway we were a company that were attached to any sort of division that they wanted us in. But we were not like a 6th Division or a 7th Division. But when I joined, after I joined in the 2/15th Field Company had been in Syria of the 7th Division. But they had come home but they were

31:00 sort of an independent company as far as who they were attached to. So that's what we did there, we learnt. And then down the... what happened then... oh in May we embarked on, a ship, David C Shanks I

31:30 think they call it. And we eventually 8 days later arrived in Moa which is a little island above Cape York and.. it was very overcrowded, we used to take it in turns to sleep in hammock, I don't know I think it was built for 400 and there was 1200 or something. So we didn't have very long in the hammock. Each fellow had a few hours in the hammock. And somebody told me that during that

32:00 voyage from Townsville to Moresby, the then President of the United States, President Roosevelt died. So I don't know whether that worried us much or not, but.... anyway when we got to Morotai, Morotai had actually been captured previously so really there was no action there. We well we just carried on beach training,

32:30 we could have got more exciting jobs because the Americans were flying out of there with their liberators and things like that. they were looking for fellows who were interest in being rear gunners. Most of us were thinking more about getting home and having now. But now I wish I had because it would have been a great experience. And I don't think there was much chance of being shot down then, because the

33:00 allies had control of the skies and most of the factories had been knocked out and it would have been quite exciting. But I don't know any of our fellow that took it on. But there it was interesting, I met 'Diver' Derrick [Lieutenant T C Derrick], you know the famous VC [Victoria Cross] holder. I think he felt that he was invincible and there was no doubt that he going to win a bar to his VC. But as we all know unfortunately did didn't. But he was that sort of fellow that gave

33:30 incredible confidence which is wonderful to see. But unfortunately, as you know, I still believe that fellows who have, who have shown their colours, they said they've won a VC shouldn't be sent into action again. Inadvertently that something will happen to them. We were there for about 3 or 4 weeks just playing about, doing whatever we were suppose to be doing, and then we

34:00 embarked, well I did on, an extraordinary ship, it was the only one of its type in the Pacific. It was a land ship dock, or as the name implied, it had a great area in the back of it like an enormous Olympic swimming pool and when the dropped the doors at the back

34:30 the water flowed in and it was just full of water. It was the same depth as the sea of course outside as it was under water. And you would drive in in your, land craft instrument, with a tank of it or that's what I was on. I just don't remember how many tanks were in it but I had an idea that there might have been 21, 3 across the ship and 7 along the ship. And

35:00 when you all got in they put up the doors at the back and pump the water out and you would just sit on the floor until where you wanted to go and they would open it and you would all come out. And that's what happened 10 days later. It was a wonderful ship to be on because the conditions were marvellous. You had a decent bunk to sleep in and the food was wonderful in comparison compared to what our other fellows were getting on the ordinary troop ships beside us.

35:30 They were living on stew on the deck and we were having chickens and ice cream and everything else.

You couldn't believe it. That's how the Americans live of course. I don't think they would have won the war without good food and Joe Beluka and all those numerous things they went on with. Anyway so, where were we, we go to Labuan, that where we were going to land. And that exactly what we did they just opened the doors and

- 36:00 we we all the tanks steamed out and, and headed for the shore. And previous to us arriving there had been a lot of bombardment and, along the beaches where we were expected to land and when we go there there was the shelling on the beaches and bombs going off, the liberators were flying up and down and dropping their bombs and rocket ships. There was no chance of anybody
- 36:30 living, within 100's of yards from the beach. So the landing was unopposed. The only interesting, thing, as far as I'm concerned, was when we were getting close the shore the chap in charge of the tanks said to the chap who was, my superior Colonel, not Colonel, Corporal Webb they asked him to
- 37:00 depth the water. So me being a subordinate. So he said depth the water Sapper Smith, so I had to jump over. And of course it was a lot to deep to let the front board down, so I went out of sight then came up and they said well you know well have to go a bit further. So this day I always reckon I was the first fellow to be on the beach at Labuan, because nobody else could have possible hit the water before I did I'm sure
- 37:30 of that. Anyway that was no problem because there, the Japs had all retreated backed into further in land on the Island. So basically there was no action there. And after spending, 7 days on the Island, we then went across to the
- 38:00 mainland landed on the mainland a place called Weston, which is only 25 miles away, and it was unopposed. So, quite an incredible thing. I think I read later on somewhere that they dry space in Weston was over the water on stilts. But it was, Borneo, that part of it there were
- 38:30 no roads, it, was all the transport relied on the railway line and where we landed was Weston the dry part there, a gravel quarry there so we spent most of our time, in the gravel quarry. And using the gravel to upgrade the railway line because the railway line from there right through to Beaufort or somewhere like that had been knocked about by the
- 39:00 allied bombers and there were no trains left on it and carriages and things like that and odd carriage where the, adapted jeeps to fit on the line, the railway line, by putting big bigger hubs on the wheels and they sort of fitted onto o the line itself and you used to use the jeep as something to propel the train but, there wasn't enough,
- 39:30 load on it, enough balance to keep it on the line, so you had to get as many men in the jeep as you could and then you just couldn't get the traction and then you had to, if you had to go up the hill you had to get the fellows in the carriage to get out and push. Anyway by the time, but it actually got you from A to B but it wasn't very quick, but at least it was a way of getting along, otherwise you had to walk, there were
- 40:00 no roads. And you know how all the rubber plantations in those places, used to exist was with the railway line. Actually there was no opposition there either. I do remember the, VCE, his nephew was killed just up from Weston there a place called Lingkungan that was a little bit of opposition up to,
- 40:30 I think there was a station up along the railway line but on the whole. The Japs put up some resistance, a lot of resistance in some places, we were very lucky to land at Labuan because, Tarakan and Balikpapan were pretty hot, they were defending their oil wells and things like that. Where we were they had nothing left to defend.
- 41:00 I really don't remember but I think, I think as far as we got be Beaufort when the war finished. That was when the you know, and then from then on I went to.

I might just stop you there because our tape is about to run out.

Tape 2

- 00:31 **A funny thing happened while we were there a little chap called Carmen he adopted me because I was only young at 20 whatever it was, and he was probably 10. And how we sort of came to get together I don't know but he sort of followed me around like a bad smell. Every now and again I would give him a biscuit or cake of soap or something.**
- 01:00 **And there was a girl who used to walk up the railway line every morning past our camp with these 2 buckets on her shoulders to get some water out of the well up the line. Because were they lived there was no water, it was salt water. So one, cause I was in charge of a group of men that were working on the railway line. I learnt to speak a little bit of Malayan, and.**
- 01:30 **Some of these fellows didn't learn any, they couldn't, didn't even try. And said to me one day**

ask that little mate of yours what is the name of that girl that goes past. Because she was a pretty good sort, she was a Malayan, and I said to Carmen in Malayan, "Uppen all pruum pruum?", that what's the name of the girl. And he said "Nala Shundel".

- 02:00 I said that good thank you very much. When they asked me I said Carmen said the names Shundel. So everybody when she went past they say "Upper tarman Shundel", and she put her head in the air and she do. She didn't want anything to do with them. And a little bit later on a fellow said to me do you know what, that little fellow told you that that girls name was. I said "Yes, Shundel".
- 02:30 He said she told you she was a Japanese prostitute. That's what Shundel, and we'd been calling her. No wonder she wasn't responsive. Oh god it was funny, quite funny her name actually was Liama, which in Malayan that 5, that's for 5. And this team I used to have, 4 or 5 fellow and wed do work on the railway line. And
- 03:00 in Malayan, sadu, doa, tega, at, mat, liama. that's 1, 2,3,4,5, they used to say sadu, doa, tega ump wordward Liama. Ump means fornicate. Whether it been going they, would be hitting, they would be going 1, 2, sadu, doa tega ump wordard Liama, and they all throw their tools in the air and go into hysterics. I was quite funny actually. That where a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.
- 03:30 Anyway that just, by the way of what happened as Weston. Anyway we got to Beaufort and when the war was over we were 2 were transferred to a place called Papar, which was on the river. And a mate of mine Neil McKenzie, we were given to folding boats to
- 04:00 go down the river from Papar to take provision and, them down to some of the troop who were on the sea board. And then later we got a job of going up the river to bring in the Jap prisoner of war. And it was a great job and the only time I've ever been in charge of anything in my life. And you could tell the Japs, to sit, the Colonels and the Captains to sit down and behave themselves. And I remember we were up there with a chop in charge
- 04:30 of doing this job. And I remember lying of the bed and making the Japanese prisoners of war take off my boot and put them on again. And do them up again. I suppose it was a selfish thing to do but after all those years wed come out on top and it hadn't been easy.
- 05:00 But anyway, then what did it do, Oh then I suppose somehow or rather. That's the only time in my life id ever been sick was in the Army, the only time. And I m sure I ended up in the hospital in Papar, they though I had dengue fever. Whether I did or not I don't really know but anyway, I was there for a while. Then
- 05:30 I finished up at Jesselton, which is a town which had been really badly knocked about by the allied bombers. The planes were wrecked on the strip and everything else and we had a POW [prisoner-of-war] camp there. And the only job we had was, a few details around the camp. Then once a week was something, we had a few hours to, guard duty at the compound.
- 06:00 And other wise we spent our time playing cards or playing volleyball on the beach. And this must have gone on a long time, I reckon about 1 month or 6 weeks just doing nothing. And then all of a sudden most of the people in my company were just, taken and sent back to Australia.
- 06:30 So they had a point system operating. You had to have I think it was 25 points for something, made up of time in the army, time spent overseas and all these things. Otherwise you were going to be, sent to Japan in the Occupation Forces. That's the last thing in the world that I wanted to do, because I had
- 07:00 1 point too short. Although I'd been in the army a fair while I hadn't been overseas very long. So I think I had 24 and I was suppose to have 25. So I finished up going back to Labuan. And I remember quite vividly, but I don't know when it was going down to the
- 07:30 chap in charge of the movement orders from the island. That meant the chap in charge of sending personnel on aeroplanes, or ships to whether they were suppose to be going. So I went down and saw him and had a yarn with him and told him I would give him, I don't remember how much money it was. But it was perhaps \$200 or \$300, because we were being paid in Dutch dollars in those days.
- 08:00 And he said son you will be on the 1st plane in the morning. I said that's wonderful. I went down in the morning and go on the aeroplane, and I think it was an old DC-3, because we sat down the side of each train.... and we had been out about 10 minutes and we turned around because something had gone
- 08:30 wrong. We were a bit upset because the only people who had any parachutes in the plane were the crew. If it had of gone down we would have been in trouble. But anyway we came back and they fixed up whatever the trouble was and then we flew from there to Morotai, in one go, I can't remember. But I think it would be 1000 miles. And I'm not sure how far a DC-3 could travel without refuelling. Anyway once I got to Morotai I was on the way home, so I didn't

really about it

09:00 **too much then. And I went and tried the same trick in Morotai and the bloke said, I couldn't do it I can't get you on an aeroplane, there are too many high rank fellow in front of you, and it wouldn't be worth my job, but I'll get you on the 1st ship that goes back to Australia. I said thanks very much and gave him whatever I was going to give him I don't know. So that's what happened. On the**

09:30 **13th January 1945, no 46 must have been and I was heading for home. And you know I still don't know where I landed whether I came to Sydney or Brisbane. The funny thing about it in my war service record it show me on a different ship although than the one I was one.**

10:00 **So it just shows you some of those records are not right. Because I've got a letter I wrote in Morotai, it had to be Morotai to say that I was getting on board the Eastern Trench at such and such a date but the army had me on some other ship completely that I had gone somewhere else. So basically I arrived back in Australia, I'm not sure how many days it took, no idea. And then they sent me out to a....**

10:30 **depot.... closed depot out a Penrith, because it was much harder to get out of the army than it was to get into it. We were just filling in time do nothing. We used to get up in the morning at this depot, the, Quartermasters Store. Get up in the morning, you might get a**

11:00 **job and you might not get a job so you'd go down to the pub, or whatever we might do. Spend most of your time playing football or going to the pub and then eventually.... in May, 46 I was discharged after 1,523 days I think it was. And that was the end of my army career.**

11:30 **And where were you at war's end?**

Where was I, I was at Beaufort in Borneo, you see that was rather disappointing because we were not around for any of the festivities. I don't even think we got an extra bottle of beer when the war was over. Was as people were at home or somewhere they could have parties. We were nowhere where we could have a

12:00 party. I was actually going to..... things were dropped. I don't know what sort of context to put this.... this in because you know I've got some of the pamphlets in things in there that were dropped in to the jungle to tell the Japs that the atomic bomb had been dropped and things like that

12:30 and also to tell the Malaysians that the troops had landed and to be carefully not to walk around in dark, or you know to go out boating or anything like that because they would be shot. I really don't remember, I think it was such a relief I don't remember any clarity at all so. The war was over, the war was over and that all there was about it. But you know people at home had

13:00 just, they had parties and you know those sort of things. I missed out on all that.... But I'm pleased I was in the army, fortunate I think that I was lucky that most probably I didn't have many opportunities of being killed. But I think it was a great learning curve, you know,

13:30 chaps from every vocation in life, you know and solicitors, the shearers, the wood cutters anybody else, we all got very well together. I think that the war broke down a lot of the social barriers. I don't think there is any doubt about it.

And when you were discharged what did you do?

When I was discharge I came home immediately, and just went on with farm life looking after stock, and

14:00 well actually being made on horses I then decided I'd take up training race horses. So I made a track just out the back, a 7 furlong track, and had 3 or 4 they were old race horses. They had been in work before except 1 horse, who belonged to my sister, called Sunday. And I used to work them and train them and take them to races. I didn't

14:30 ever win a race, I didn't even ride a winner, but I rode in a couple of places and I've often though oh well that wasn't so bad because a lot of the leading jockey have a long losing sequence at some time. So I don't think I was the best jockey in the world but I enjoyed it. And then that went on for, but I just you know carried on, then after I worked my horses at 7 o'clock or whatever in the morning I

15:00 just carried on doing what I had to do. Chasing rabbits, doing flies in sheep, or fencing or doing whatever you did around a property in those days. Cutting burs, you know there's never, well my father would not allow you to have a spare moment. He was always pretty keen on you were doing something. And what, that was. Then I, when I finished up

15:30 training race horses I tough there has to be a better occupation than this I suppose and I started, my brother and I, 2 brothers and I we formed a polo team and we had a polo team. We used to practice in Cudal with other teams which used to come forth and people like that. Unfortunately now there is only 2 of us left in the

16:00 Cudal polo team. He's in a hospital in Dunedoo and I'm here. You know most of the chaps I played with are gone. I've had a couple of games of football with Cudal, but I couldn't play football and polo in the,

same time, because they were both played in the winter in those days. And we always played league football in the army in

- 16:30 those days mainly league after the war even in, you know the country now that's into rugby union in a big way. Then, I carried out doing that sort of thing until 1951 and then I went to, to England with 3 of my friends. We went across on the Strath Air which in those days took 5 weeks to get to London
- 17:00 to get to Tilbury. And spent 12 months in England and on the continent you know just having a good time, doing nothing really except, site seeing and at that stage playing up and all those numerous things you do. Came back in the Orphadis in 19....1953 that was of
- 17:30 course, an oriental line ship the other one was a P&O. It was a great life, being on a ship for any length of time. Just like living in the best hotel in the world and doing what you pleased. Wonderful. Swimming, games....

Thanks Lance, that's very good. What we might do now is go right back to the beginning again and

- 18:00 **I'm interested whether or, what you knew about World War I, and if any of your family were involved in the First [World] War.**

Where you want me to talk now. Well my mother who was a Victorian had 2 brothers in the war. Uncle Walter and Uncle Jim, Uncle Jim he was

- 18:30 at Gallipoli.. was wounded. Uncle Walter he was a doctor, so he got an honour... honorary majority, he was a Major. Uncle Jim he later on... he married an English girl in England,
- 19:00 bought her out to Australia, but she didn't like Australia so Uncle Jim went back to England and lived there all his life. Uncle Walter he served throughout the First World War, unscathed and came back and became a judge. So my father....
- 19:30 unfortunately he always felt that he, wasn't able to go to the war, although he was great footballer, Dad, he played football for Australia. Some reason or other, he was, I think it was to do with his keens or something, but he was knocked back when he tried to enlist. So he went and worked on the wharfs for a while. And I'm sure he felt a lot of his friends,
- 20:00 were perhaps not as able bodied as he was. Gone to the war and were killed or whatever happened and he was not able to paly his part but after the war he was pretty keen on supporting the RSL [Returned and Services League] and he built, the Scouts and all those sort of things. He built the scout hall in Cudal and had a lot to do with the RSL club and numerous things like that. Really
- 20:30 the First World War soldiers and I didn't talk very much about, the service or where they were. But it's interesting to know that one of the chaps I went to England with, Neville Hall, he had been a POW with the Japs in the 8th Division and although I'd been with him, and I went to school with him, I didn't know. He'd never ever spoke about it and I didn't ask him. And that was a story with most of the chaps after the war it wasn't until they had, when Australian remembered that,
- 21:00 people started to talk about their war service. When you came back it was just the end of it. I didn't know half the fellows, I mean I remember playing polo once in Wellington and a woman came up and asked me if I was back from school on holidays. Well I'd spent 4 out of 4 years in the army, before that so she had no idea. No every now and again, I never heard anybody really say
- 21:30 very much about their war service in the First World War. You'll have to get it from somebody else. I've got a few papers 1915, actually the story of [(UNCLEAR)]. I don't think I ever read them. It's only locally. Actually a good many years after the war that a lot of us decided to go on the Anzac Day March, a lot in Cudal for instance, we went for years, there was no march in Cudal.
- 22:00 But then after the Australia Remembers period everybody that had been in the Army or whatever service they had been in turned up. But now of course there's none of us left. I think there's only 2 fellows in Cudal now in the march. I can't really say that I knew very much about the First World War

Well what then did you know about the Second World War,

- 22:30 **and why did you want to enlist?**

Well I wanted to enlist because I though it was going to be exciting and because I had 2 brothers that were there too. I felt it was my duty but I didn't want to be left behind. I.. think it was not that I felt that way, but I think some fellows thought it was rather a stigma. I've heard of people getting white feathers in their.. mail boxes and numerous things like that. Not that I ever though that was going to happen to me

- 23:00 because I was pretty young, and I think, that everybody was joining the army and as I say my 2 brother in the army and it just sounded that it was going to be a pretty exciting sort of experience. I don't think you actually gave it thought as to your chance of coming home of not. I don't think that even enters you head. And as far as, we used to follow the

- 23:30 bombing closely but my mother had one of her sisters and brother in law in England and some of my cousins were, you know in the army and the air force in England and we used to follow what was happening with the Battle of Britain or whatever it might have been. I followed that a lot more closely than I did the first war. But see where we were up in the Territory
- 24:00 there for the first 18 months when things weren't good, we had no, no communication at all. All we had was a chap with a wireless, every section had a wireless operation and that was that. That was Morse code, you never spoke on it so we didn't hear anything. We didn't have a wireless that we could, we were up there for say 16 months and the only outside news you go was if you got a letter from home.
- 24:30 Which most probably took 6 week to get to you there anyway. So we didn't ever know what was happening in the war. Sometime, some fellow had told me they heard Tokyo Rose [radio propagandist] talking on the wireless but other than that never anything about the war. Or we couldn't send any messages. But the object of the unit was to deceive the Japs into thinking that there was a big force around the whole of North of Australia. And at the same hour
- 25:00 every night every section would send in their messages from the section. So if you were listing at the other end you would think there might be 10,000 troops or 50,000 troops. But in actual fact there was only 450 from right across the, of the North of Australia. So you know basically we didn't hear any think until we came back to Sydney, or got up into the Tablelands and then of course
- 25:30 we had plenty of communication and we got, the table tops, you know the paper that they printed on the Tablelands every day. I've got the last edition of it out there now in my book. So I can't.

Well going back to when you first enlisted,

- 26:00 **I'm wondering how was that training?**

Well the first training as I say was something that I had been doing for years at school in Cadets. I mean we used to hold tattoos and things like that... or... line the street in Parramatta, or we used to do a tattoo at Sydney Showground occasionally, the King School Corps and other Corps. So you know, nothing

- 26:30 basically other than learning how to drive trucks, I think which I didn't know anything about. I didn't do anything new as far as the Army was concerned..... I can't think of any think else to say to tell you as far as that's concerned. It...
- 27:00 Everybody was anxious to get away, you know. You wanted to get away and get to somewhere where there was a bit of action. That was the whole story was, you know and some fellows unfortunately like the Army Division, I was so pleased that I didn't stay with them. They were taken over to Western Australia and spent nearly the whole war over there chasing kangaroos and emus. Which is very disappointing as far as they are concerned. I mean they were just holding to get there and you know,
- 27:30 see a bit of action. At least get out of the country and see something different.

Because of you horse accident you were not able to enlist until late in '41?

I was 19, I actually had... I had been accepted for the 6th Light Horse, and of course then when I was hurt, well, that didn't eventuate

- 28:00 and of course they were disbanded then. There was no chance of any light horses being sent abroad, as they were in the First World War. So no 6th anyway. But then they, the boys all went along and they were allotted to the units that they were allotted to. And you basically didn't have a choice. If they though you had a bit of an education
- 28:30 you know they'd most probably put you into a gunnery regiments. But if you sort of was a blow out or a drop out from school they'd put you in the pioneers or the infantry. And I think the infantry won the war anyway. I always had tremendous admiration for the infantry. They were usually the first ones in there and the first fellows to get killed. They achieved everything I think.

- 29:00 **When you were recovering, where were you?**

I was in Orange, I was here, it all happened in the paddock up there. The horse just rolled, went straight over backward and... I was taken to hospital and there wasn't a mark on me apparently. But when the doctor prodded my stomach, I apparently groaned and he said, we'll open you up and he found that, he had to remove quite a lot of my bowel, as it had been ruptured.

- 29:30 And it took me a long time, because, as well and my bowel having to be fixed up my stomach muscle, had all been torn. I don't know how long it was before, I think 6 months before I could do anything. The poor old horse I felt sorry for him too because he died of tetanus not long after, so I wasn't a great success. He put me in hospital and died himself.
- 30:00 **I'm wondering, what did you know of the war during that time and how under threat did you feel Australia was?**

Well, at that stage, Australia wasn't under threat. Because you know the Japs didn't come into the war until they

30:30 bombed Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and that would have been most probably after I had my accident. It had to be it was early 41 I think. So really Australia wasn't in threat at that stage so I really wasn't thinking. And I think most probably at that stage things were going pretty well in the desert as far as we were concerned. The problem really was England. And well I don't

31:00 you know suppose felt sorry for everybody. But I don't really believe that I understood the severity of the situation in England. You know I have terrific admiration for what they did during the war, I mean how the hell did they against those odds I will never know. Considering there is only about 20 odd miles across the channel and Hitler was never prepared to have a go. No I think a lot of people knock the

31:30 Poms but I give them a lot of admiration for them. And at that sort of stage I never thought about it. It's only as you get a bit older that you start to think about these things really. And you don't remember them until you have written them down and you go back and have a look in your diary and you can't believe you'd done things that you said you've done. That the book said you have. And that's the unfortunate thing about

32:00 getting older.

Well I'm wondering in you admiration for the English, how aware were you of fighting for the Empire?

I think I believed in it. I mean I have never been a republican cause I think our system works wonderfully well. And at that stage I mean, the empire

32:30 was an accepted thing wasn't it. I mean most people were only too proud to be a member of the Empire. I suppose that a lot of us that... that acquired it, I suppose legally in many instances I suppose. But they had done a pretty good job governing it I think. And really now you find all the trouble they are having in these republican areas, that

33:00 England most probably did a better job in those days. Everybody wants to be in charge of themselves and that's part of life really, you want to be your own boss. Of course until you find out that the boss has got more responsibility than you thought he had.

And how affected were you by a

33:30 **sense of patriotism towards Australia?**

How affected was I, I think I was quite proud to be an Australian, I mean.... I don't think.. We show our patriotism to the same extent that the Yanks do, I mean they go off the bend, around the bend, don't they with their patriotism, the way they sort of celebrate occasions. And they

34:00 like to be known as Americans, to the extent that we used to say .. 1 or 2 Americans are tolerable but you know a bunch of them... it's very hard to take. I often think that you know, they.... I remember once looking at Napoleon's tomb in Paris

34:30 and there were a couple of Americans there a man and his wife, and she said So Harry who is this bloke Napoleon. And he said honey don't you know he's the bloke that lost the Battle of Waterloo. So she got out her book and wrote the little note down in that you see, so she could take that back to America and tell them that she had seen Napoleon's tomb and he was a very famous man. We had, you know, there was

35:00 more chance of being shot by the Americans than you had to be shot by the Japs at times. They were just very trigger happy. And unfortunately if you've seen in the papers the last couple of days they shot that photographer because they thought he had a rocket launcher in his hand instead of a camera. Well one of the Yanks shot him. Well you had to be a bit worried about the war too if that was what they were going to do.

35:30 But lucky we had the... because we couldn't have won the war without them. You know the Battle of the Coral Sea was paramount and so important really. A lot of people knock them but they are a great. You have to be on their side. Johnny Howard I think he realises that he is making sure that the premium he pays for the insurance policy is worth it.

36:00 **When your brother joined up into service, before you, did you know much about where they went and how they were going?**

Not really because of censorship. I knew they were in the Middle East and..

36:30 the censorship wasn't as strict, stringent, as it was later on because you know when they wrote letters back they had been in the holy land, they been to Bethlehem and they been to Gaza. And they been to all these places, but as far as where they got up the desert I did even know, no I didn't. But they were lucky, when they came back they..... I think it was Java

37:00 or somewhere like that, they were landed in Java, because the Japanese threat, but fortunately for them the guns were on another ship and the guns came onto Australia and so they were landed on the island without anything, any means of defence, so fortunately they were actually re-loaded and sent onto Sydney. So they were not captured and came prisoners of war for the rest of the war as so many other people were. And they probably would have died anyway.

37:30 So that about all I knew as far as there stint in the Middle East was concerned.

Which divisions were they with?

They were attached to the... well they were actually attached, they were anti aircraft. They would have been with the 6th Division, the 6th to 7th and of course the 8th and the 9th went up the desert again.

38:00 I think all they had was a cook's tour I think. It depended a bit where you were. Some fellows had a hell of a time you know a lot of, action, and other people didn't have any even though they were over there.

After your training, your initial training you then volunteered

38:30 **for the Northern...?**

[North] Australia Observer Unit, Nackerroos as they called it. Cause I thought it sounded exciting and the story was there were horses and I just as I said I loved horses, every day I rode horses and rode horses, and I though this is going to be exciting and be better than walking anyway. And I had no idea actually what it was going to be like. You know you have no idea how vast the country is until you get tup there on your

39:00 own. You know it takes you time to get there in a motorcar. But when you're walking or riding horses it's a long way. You know a black fellow said a little bit a long way, long way a little bit. I never knew which way was the long way. Long way a little bit, little bit a long way. I'm not really quite sure. So no actually it was very fit you could walk.

39:30 **And how much did you know about the operation before you went?**

Nothing, basic, or though it was suppose to be a surveillance unit. When we got to, actually the chap in charge of it he was an anthropologist a man called Stanner who had spent a lot of time in the Northern Territory and you known he had a lot to do with the blacks and he knew a lot about the country side. And he gave us a little bit of a speech, when we arrived at Katherine

40:00 just to say that we were going to be a surveillance unit, we were going to observe, what was going to happen, going on around the coast line and if we saw any landing well we would just report the landings but not to come in contact too much with the Japs, because they, had superior forces and, all, but basically what we had to do was report any landing we had. And we were sort of stationed in positions where they felt the landing might occur, you know,

40:30 in lets and rivers and those sort of numerous things. Bloody mosquito and fly's, mosquitos were terrible. You couldn't have existed without a mosquito net. And as I said before you had to make your camp where ever you could find any fresh water. And usually fresh water, you'd find fresh water and things like that you'd nearly always

41:00 find that if you dug a hole there would we a soak there and that was mostly probably why we couldn't have horses in some places because we didn't have enough water for them to drink. We had enough for ourselves but not enough for horses. Anyway the horses, well were we were, they set them out in outfits, but most of the time we spent on foot.

41:30 We actually at one stay a boat called the Bondi it was about 20 ft long and a top speed of 8 knots, 8 miles per hour about. And it got turned over in the mud at Blunder Bay which was right at the mouth of the Victoria River and got stuck in the mud so we had to walk out of there 125 miles we walked out across

42:00 Northern Australian up through to the station

Tape 3

00:32 **Lance I was wondering if you could tell me I guess why you joined the Cadet Corps and what you got up to.**

Well I enjoyed it because it was compulsory. Normally I'd tried to get out of it by joining the band. But I discovered that I wasn't very musical so I then had to go back to the corps. And every chap after you got a certain age at Kings, you had to be in the corps.

01:00 And that amounted to every Tuesday afternoon you know going through practices and doing a field drill and... compulsory arms school and numerous things think that and occasionally you'd be taken down to the mound where you had bit of shooting practice with a 22. And every year at the end of the year you

would go up to a camp at Holsworthy or somewhere like that, and you'd

01:30 pretend to be soldiers and you go out and shoot on the range. And march around the parade ground and do all those numerous things. So really a lot of people wouldn't have been in the corps if it hadn't of been compulsory. Because it was a bit of a bore after a while.

Had that compulsory rule been bought in because of the war?

Oh No, Kings had a compulsory, a military school and

02:00 Kings was opened in 1832 and I think they had a corps in 1832. That would be the oldest boarding school in Sydney. And they has a corps from there right through. And you had to do a certain amount of drill. And we all wore uniform of course. And all our pocket sewn up so you couldn't put you hands or anything in your pocket. And if you dropped a bit of paper on the playground or anywhere around the

02:30 school you were disciplined. Well it was a military school to a certain extent. Probably did you good to. I mean a bit of disciplined doesn't do anybody any harm. They can talk to you all day as far as don't do this and don't do that but when they administer it physically it makes a difference then. Today of course that wouldn't be on you wouldn't be allowed now.

Can you tell me Lance being at a military school

03:00 **what the reaction was when the war broke out in Europe?**

Well a very high percentage of the boys that went to school joined the army, the ones who were old enough, and the other just carried on as usual I suppose. I don't really know, I cant see any changes that, well most probably took the emergency, the step for you know in case of air raids and things like that they no doubt did

03:30 drills. I don't think they built a, dug any slit trenches in Sydney. I know in other places they did but I don't think they did at Kings.

Why when you were enlisted did you choose the army?

Well I don't really know why I chose the army, I think most probably because I felt, my brother were in the Army and it would have taken a little bit longer to become a pilot.

04:00 My best friends were pilots. It took them longer to get anywhere I felt, and although they said that anybody that was keen on horses and could ride the horses quite well also would make good pilots and also good observers. They said that all country men were good at picking out things. 'Cause they were used to looking for rabbits or fly blown sheep or whatever it might be.

04:30 And they made good observers. I think that most probably that's why I joined the Army. But simple most probably because my brother was in the army and I felt that most probably do something a bit more quickly then I could if I had to learn to drive an aeroplane.

Where were you hoping to go when you joined?

I didn't care anywhere they sent me, anywhere really I had never, I don't think anybody ever though of the consequence, you know when you joined the army.

05:00 Because it was going to be good fun as I said before, what we didn't realise there was such a period of boredom. there was such so much of a muchness all the time, you know you got up in the morning and you did exactly the thing day after day, in disperse, with a menial job like cleaning out the cook house, or washing up all the pots and pans of the cook, I mean he dirtied ever pot and pan in his

05:30 kitchen every meal and you had to wash them up in Luke warm water. Which wasn't much fun really being a slush as we used to call it. I used to take on chopping wood because I was quite fit and chopping wood didn't worry me because it , well I liked it better than washing up dishes and cleaning out grease traps and things like that. So I used to volunteer, because I didn't peeling potatoes you had to

06:00 peel bags of potatoes and after a while you'd get a bit tired of that. I think there was more thrown down the drain with the skin then there was potato when you finished. As long as you did you bag of potatoes you were, you'd got to leave.

Can you tell me I guess you reaction when you heard that the Japanese had entered the war?

Well as I say I wasn't in the army

06:30 then so I don't think I had any reaction at all, I suppose we though what a terrible thing to happen, but you know it wasn't served up to you on television as it is today, so really and there was a lot of censorship, you know basically, we most probably didn't hear. It was like the bombing of Darwin, I mean half the people didn't realise that bombing, that Darwin had been bombed and a number of people were killed. There were more planes over Darwin then there were actually over Pearl Harbour. And people didn't realise that because of censorship.

07:00 So I didn't have any recollection of that happening at all.

How much news were you getting out here in Orange and on the property?

Well the, we used to listen, we you know, we were not great wireless people at home and we didn't have a wireless in the motor car and basically the only time we listened to the wireless was the new sessions.

07:30 And you'd only get what new the censorship wanted to give you. And you often had no idea what was going on in the rest of the world. You would get more news from Britain most probably then you would from Australian, wireless.

How did, after you enlisted in the army how did the training you'd had in the cadets help you?

08:00 Well it helped me to the extent that I didn't have to go through the bull ring, to any great extent. Well people were doing there bull ring work, I'd be doing something more pleasant. I really don't know what the difference was. I suppose I was most probably out learning to drive vehicles id never ever seen before let alone driven. And as I said,

08:30 at 19 I don't I suppose I had a motorbike, I certainly had a motorbike licence because I remember on my service record, or I don't remember, Perhaps I do remember a little bit about it. But apparently was riding a motorcycle at Tamworth as a Dispatch Rider, well that's something I don't ever remember doing but it's on my service record. So how easily you can forget these things. So I've most probably

09:00 forgot to tell you that we were, honoured in ground of the freedom of the City of Darwin, in 1992 we were flown up there in a commonwealth plane those that wanted to go and those who were fit enough to go. And we I know the night I left, it the

09:30 first night I spent a Richmond Aerodrome it cost me \$2 because I was billeted in the Officers Mess. And then when we came back I'd been demoted and was billeted in the Sergeants Mess for \$1. So it cost me \$3 to go Darwin and back in a commonwealth plane. And a friend of mine, Ray Thatcher, who was my section leader in the NAOU [North Australia Observer Unit], we stayed at Naracoorte barracks for about 3

10:00 days then we had the parade through the city and I remember saying to Ray this must be how the Queen feels, you know waving to her subjects everyday. And... we met the celebrities, the Lord Major and his lady. I remember and I don't know why I did but I gave her a kiss, and normally I don't believe I kissing people I don't know but for some reason or other,

10:30 whether I though well I'll never get the opportunity to kiss the Majores again. It reminded me a little bit of the time, being impetuous, the time with Lilly asked the Queen for her autograph. Rather silly thing you can do. But I don't think she was upset.

What was that story?

Which story?

About the Queen?

Ah Lilly asked the

11:00 Queen for her autograph once. And you, just off the cuff, he though well I'm, people get their autographs from everybody, why can't I get it off the Queen's autograph. I don't know whether she gave it to him or not. She might of. But that how you can do things by impulse. I think the Majores might had been a good sort, I don't know.

Can you tell me about the freedom celebrations?

11:30 Well really I said to Sally what it really means, he said it doesn't mean anything it is just a way of the town say, or the city I suppose saying thank you for you have appeared to have done. And that's about all it was. We had a dinner at Larrakeyah barracks which is the main barracks up in Darwin and had a parade or 2.. we had to parade though the city and that was about all I think

12:00 then we were flown home. It was a pretty low key sort of a job. By I suppose it was an honour in its way, but I always feel, that most probably we didn't deserve it but they though we did so, that the way it went.

Why do you feel you didn't deserve it?

Well I mean nobody was shooting at us or anything like that. I mean we had, we were lonely, and I suppose we were, we had to put up with

12:30 conditions that weren't very comfortable and you had boredom and numerous things like this. You had none of the luxuries of life I suppose. That a lot of people have lived like that, the old pioneers and explorers. It was no great hardship, I think I most probably quite enjoyed it.

What did you know about Darwin or Northern Australia before you went up there?

13:00 Nothing, I had no idea, in the world what it was like. You know I'd did read some of Ion Idriess's books like Man Tracks and those sort of books that talked about... you know the black fellow and Fanny Bay

and all these numerous things. That I had no idea. Actually it was interesting you talk about what I know. When we were at Timber Creek there, there was a... when we

13:30 originally arrived there there were 2 policeman, Tag Spencer who was a famous Territory Policeman, and a chap called Gordon Stott, who actually stayed there while we were there. But Tag Spencer left he was the man that actually captured that notorious Nimilac who was an aboriginal murderer and just a bad man. And he chased him around the Territory for a long while and then into Western Australia but he was a remarkable man,

14:00 Taz hey reckon he was 6 foot high, he could jump his own height from a standing start. Which took a lot of doing. That how fit he was. But he had had two trackers there.. George who I mentioned was with us when we bought the horses down and lightening. Now lightning was an aboriginal who had apparently speared a white prospector somewhere up on the Morris River. Anyway he'd been in

14:30 Fanny Bay jail and he served his sentence and was bought back to Timber Creek. He wasn't allowed to leave the area. But he was a wonderful athlete. And we had a chap there, Carl Race was his name and he was a semi professional foot runner. I remember saying to that fellow once, that lighting is a very

15:00 quick runner and he said him being a terrible quick fellow catch him kangaroo along the foot eh. I said oh he must be quick so we give him a race. So we got Carl and marked out 100 yards in paddock, and we gave Tiger 10 yards start because we didn't know how fast Tiger was and we knew Carl to run a bit. So away they went and Tiger when we said go he, Carl went away like that and

15:30 Lightning didn't know what to do, so when Carl got up to Tiger we said go Tiger go boy go and away he went and he killed him, he just went past Carl. So he would have been a wonderful runner being a mild bloke he could hardly speak English. I don't think he would have done any good down here. He would have been a great smoky one if you wanted to back him he would have been a beauty.

16:00 But he was a great horse rider, really anything. A very athletic black fellow.

How well did the troops get on with the aboriginal guys?

Very well, we were told just not to spoil them you know, don't be sort of, actually on most stations they worked for their tucker and a bit of tobacco. They didn't get any niceties. And they didn't want us handing out tins of woolly beef and all that sort of things to them because

16:30 it had taken them a long time sort of to control them to the tent that they were controlled I suppose you'd say. And they didn't want us to spoil them and then set them back many years. But we actually in many incidents, we had no idea where we were going, just like if they dropped you in the middle of the... desert you'd have not idea which way to go. We had no idea which way to go to anywhere.

17:00 So they were a great help because they knew the bush like the back of their hand.

Did you learn much about, I think you had a tracker with you. Did you learn their techniques?

You couldn't tell, we went...We waled one day Thatcher and I from Blunder Bay across to Buller River which is where,

17:30 Mrs Henderson set up that property of hers. You know on the Buller River there, and we had a couple of black fellows to show us the way and they were telling us. They'd say you put print there whatever it might be. And we couldn't see any thing, there would be rocks and everything else. But they could see these things all away along the line. And apparently this tribe had a reputation for being wonderful trackers. And you

18:00 can see where the black fellow had been before, it would have to be a black fellow because no body else was out there. And they took us over there to the Buller River. It was a terrible posting. The mosquitos I've never know anything like it they nearly ate you. There was suppose to be a big crocodile in the river there they reckoned he'd been there for 100 years and he would be over 30 feet long. A big crocodiles and salties [salt water crocodiles]. As they call them salties up there.

18:30 So that the only experience really I've had of black fellows demonstrating to me just how good they were at tracking.

How much did you rely on them to get you aground?

Oh well not to a great extent because if you... got to a section post or something like that, in many instances you couldn't go anywhere because there was no where to go so

19:00 we didn't in incidents like down the river, Victoria River we didn't have horses. Although we had a few horses over in Cape Dussejour that the North West Cape of Cambridge Gulf. The, we didn't use the horses. They were in a dead end sort of a gully where we used to get the water from. They couldn't get out the other end, and we had to make a fence up the front. But the only time I ever rode one I jumped on him and

19:30 he.. took off and bolted thought the scrub and I though well I was going to be killed and was going to jump off him. So I slide down beside him and let go and of course id dint realise he was going as fast as he was and I fell flat on my face. But at least I didn't get knocked off by a tree or something like that.

That the only time I got on a horse at all up there and it wasn't for very long.

Can you describe for me I guess

20:00 **having been here on a property and being in the city for boarding school, what shocked you most about the landscape up North when you first got up there?**

I think a lot of it was sort of just ever lasting there was no change in it for miles and miles and miles, then when I remember I wrote to somebody

20:30 to say that, you know, the terrain was rough and the grasses were terrible, mainly spin effects and.. if the Japs did come we wouldn't mind giving it to them. That was my sort of impression of a lot of the country. But of course there was some beautiful country when you got onto the Mitchell, and the grazing country but a lot of places we were on the fringes were terrible just rocks and spin effects.

21:00 The only things that were living there were kangaroos and things like that really. No I absolutely no idea to think, the vastness of, see we one stage, when we were going up there one place might have been going at.. East to West or somewhere, from Hewitt's Creek.. to Mount Isa it took us say 3 days and 5 nights in the train. And see that's,

21:30 so we had plenty of time to look at the scenery because I think we averaged, that you were averaging 10 miles or 7 miles an hour across Queensland. That country up there of course is all plains country and so much better country then when you get over into to Kimberley's. The West Kimberley's, magnificent scenery but, the escarpment

22:00 that you looked down, and I don't know whether I told you. Thinking about the time we went up to unveil the monument that had been built in honour of our stay in the Territory in Timber Creek. I unveiled the monument on the 24th April, 1999.

22:30 And it's on top of the hill looking down on the escarpment around where we had a base camp down at Bradshaw. Looking over the Victoria River. A magnificent site, but then we opened, unveiled the monument to the NAOU on the 24th and then on the 25th of course we had a Anzac

23:00 Day celebration up there. Which was you know quite moving I thought and everybody said a few words and Mary had quite a few pictures set up somewhere in the album she's got there.

Can you tell me about Timber Creek and the time you spent there?

Well when we were there thee was nothing really, only what they called the depot,

23:30 which was, the site. There were a few photographs there that were all the goods used to come from outside, mainly from Darwin or from up in Perth to supply the stations. It was just a big sort of shed with a doors. We built a lean to that we used to sleep in with just made of bushes. It had no sides or anything just to keep the sun off really and if

24:00 it rained you'd most probably go inside into the depots. But there was no water there, we had a well it was 90 feet deep you used to have to take it in turns to wind the water up. Have a bath and, make our tea or do whatever you wanted to do with water. Unfortunately when we went back last time, somebody had pulled the old shed down which was really historical, just to get the galvanised iron, which was a tragedy

24:30 really. We went back expecting to see where it was and there was nothing there. Because Timber Creek consisted of a very old police station that just had shutter on the window that you could just pull down if the aborigines charge or whatever they might be going to do. And a more modern police station, which would have been built is suppose in the 30's so it wasn't terribly modern. Other than that there wasn't a building in the place.

25:00 Now of course it's quite a tourist resort. There's two hotel, a Motel and service station and everything else. The thing that really bought it home to me what the change was was that Timber Creek itself used to be a little creek that we used to swim in. Well now it's full of cumbungi [weed] and crocodiles. Its quite amazing because they don't shoot them anymore you see, there's no control over there. And they are becoming a

25:30 real menace I think up there because in those days you use to take a lot of horses and cattle and things from the station, and I heard there was something like 200 or 300, cattle of head taken, in the Victoria River Downs Station, every year by crocodiles. And there suppose to have smashed over 1000 eggs between Bradshaw and the depot which is about

26:00 30 miles on one side of the river just to try and keep the spread of the crocs down.

How much of a problem were crocodiles and things like snakes?

No they weren't really a problem as long as you made sur that you did sort of not get in their way. Basically the snakes, you saw an odd, most probably a king brown the big fellows. And sometimes a

26:30 python, a tree python or something like that. But I didn't hear of anybody getting bitten, but, one chap

was lying in his bed in the Shed at Timber Creek and a snake crawled across his chest, you know he was lying there without his shirt on, I think he was terrified. He didn't move anyway, the snake didn't bit him so.. and we used to at

27:00 Bradshaw Station is a station that was built of galvanised iron and I think on dirt floors. That was the station homestead, and we used to sleep on the veranda, because it was all falling down and, up the roof they had the roof and then they had galvanised pipping just to hold it up and I think between, I don't know what it was for, there were some vines up there but you would

27:30 be lying in bed and see the snakes going along the top across the netting. And none of them ever attempted to come down and they didn't worry us much. And the crocodiles of course you had to be just, I mean you didn't go swimming or, basically you were pretty careful what you did about the bank of the river. Because the old crocs are very cunning you know if you do the same thing everyday he will be waiting for you there eventually.

28:00 He realised that, every now and again you know sort of like across the river but at that stage you might have been $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away on a log or something like that but you'd take an incredible risk I think. You know you wouldn't do it for fun. There's always stories of fellows betting them that they could swim across the river, but I dint think anybody ever did it, I don't know.

28:30 **Can you tell me Lance I guess about the patrols, the patrols you were doing? I wonder if you could tell me about the patrol you were on?**

You mean the horses.

Oh just the first patrol you went out?

Well, basically the first one I did was just go down the river and been stationed at a certain spot that they decided would be the place to

29:00 observe the enemy if they decided to land and just stay there, because basically you know it was sort of just like a little pocket of the Victoria River. And all you did really was just try and fill in your time and observe if anything happened. So it wasn't very exciting, it was very boring as a matter of fact.

How far would you have to trek to these stations?

Oh,

29:30 well 90 miles was the farthest down Victoria River from Timber Creek to Blunder Bay was about 90 miles. But we had this old boat that we got from Wyndham that had been beached when Wyndham was bombed and it got stuck in the mud and was bought across to Timber Creek on the Blitz and cleaned up and that was our motor transport

30:00 up and down the river. I can't understand why they didn't give us a descent boat. I mean we had a row boat , you can imagine rowing up and down, well you couldn't row up and down the Victoria River because the tide used to come in a wall about 3 feet high and there no way in the world, actually you couldn't even make headway in your boat let alone with a rowing boat. It was the most ridicules thing you had ever heard of in your life. The tide was quite extraordinary when it came in it just came in as wall about 3 feets high

30:30 just straight up the river. And it was tidal right up to Timber Creek and that's where we used to cross the river at Policeman's point which is just below Timber Creek above where the old jetty used to be. And there sort of a cause way there, rock causeway that at low tide which happened once a month you could cross there with horses or cattle. It would

31:00 just be up to about the belly of the horse, that you didn't have to swim or anything like that. Basically there wasn't the fear of being taken by a croc on your horse at that depth really, when you could see them coming. That the only place you could cross the Victoria River unless you swam. There was no crossing between the mouth and the depot other than that one there.

31:30 When Mary was up there of course that where they were crossing their cattle.

I was just wonder Lance given the landscape and the physical activity how hard was it I guess walking to the patrols, observation stations, how hard was that?

Well basically we didn't walk to the patrol station, we went in the boat down the river you see, they were on the

32:00 banks of the river so we boat it in. And when we were at Cape Dussejour we were taken to our observation post at the North West Corner as I said of Cape Dussejour. We had to land in there in the boat and that where we were stuck. So we did walk. The only time I actually walked I walked from Wyndham to Timber creek which is I don't know walked. The time I told you the

32:30 boat got swamped 125 miles we had to walk across Northern Australia there and that was quite hot. But walking didn't worry us. I mean I couldn't walk or run, I actually was like a black fellow, I could walk across the Territory without any boots on in those days. I used to be able to cut me soles with a razor blade they were just as thought as that. Now it can't walk across the carpet, without a bit of

33:00 effort. No walking didn't worry us.

How many of you would head down to the observation station?

4 of us. About 4 people all the time in each section. You'd be 4 people and a couple of fellow on the boat so it might be 6 fellows that go down. Then every month

33:30 or so they might come back, if they had any mail, bring you some mail, or supplies, you know a bit better to eat. I mean we were lucky enough that sometimes we got flour so we could have... woolly beef fritters for breakfast. Which we most probably had every morning for 6 months. But you had to sieve the flour to get the weasels out of it.

34:00 So, you had weasels in the flour. No I never was hungry people talk about starvation and things. But we always had something to eat. I mean we used to every now and again shoot a bull and carve him up or we'd only take the best cuts of course and leave the others for the dingos. We did occasionally salt the beef, some of the beef down and once you

34:30 salt the beef down you can do it for about a week, you can hang it in a tree and come back in 6 months, give it a bit of time soaking overnight. Then you can eat it, it's pretty stringy. No I was never short of tucker. The only thing I really missed was sugar I think. And I used to occasionally put sugar, oh jam in my tea to sweeten it up a bit. But that's about the only thing

35:00 I missed really. Most of us... well you were young and fit and that sort of things. We used to play a lot of games when were together, you know jumping and skipping and football and those sorts of things. Running...

What was your, if there was a daily routine?

One thing, there was no regimentation you see.

35:30 So in the regular Army you get up in the morning an you'd make your bed and polish you boot and you look neat and smart and then you're inspected and that sort of thing. Well hat didn't happen in the NAOU. You just well they called, we were like an untidy ravel I suppose whenever you talked about an army outfit. Because we just had our army clothes. But I mean it didn't matter if you shaved, well that was up to you, your own hygiene was up to you really. I mean

36:00 there was no business of cleaning you boots in the morning or saluting your section leaders. Usually there was a Sergeant. Where as if you were in the army the solider were segregated from the privates and that sort of thing. They had a different Mess. So really no there, it was, very easy life. Very easy life. I mean you couldn't go

36:30 on with regimentation with a section of 4 and you know you all slept in the same tent and told the same stories. You know you were always looking for something to read or a lot of us, were hoping that we would get a Woman's Weekly or something that had a crossword in it. Puzzle in it, something to do. So there was only 1 bloke that ever broke down with us and he,

37:00 he was married and he used to get letters from his wife and... I think he eventually was sent home. But other than that most people got on very well and I was fortunate because I'd dint have any responsibilities, so I wasn't upset about what was happening to my wife and children whatever it may have been. And it made my life much easier than a lot of people.

How much work would you have to do each day

37:30 **and how would you pass the rest of the time?**

Well it was very difficult. There wasn't much to do, yeh. Well I mean Cape Dussejour one bloke would be up the hill all the time, someone, would be getting the water, with the donkeys. 1 chap would, you always used to take it in turns of being the cook, y you see so every 4th day you had your job of

38:00 cooking. So that amounted to as I said woolly beef fritters in the morning and, open and give them a tin of woolly beef for lunch and a couple of dog biscuits or whatever you had. If you were lucky enough you might have some rice or something like that to cook.... some rice. But none of us knew anything about cooking rice. I remember one bloke he finished up giving everybody as much rice as he thought they would eat.. and he finished up with a 44

38:30 gallon drum of rice going everywhere. It was all over the top and everything. He had no idea you just gave each one a little handful you see. But we all learnt how to cook a bit, even to making bread. I remember I learnt how to make bread, if we were lucky enough o get a bit of flour and yeast. We used to make it in the camp oven, and it was a change from dog biscuits. But that

39:00 only happened after somebody had learnt how to make bread and we had the ingredients. But we didn't have bread every time.

How hard was it to keep your health up with that quite constant diet of woolly beef and biscuits?

Well it was funny because very few people got sick. As it said I told you before I didn't' see a doctor or

- dentist for any of the time I was up there. I don't think anybody every though about...
- 39:30 about their health to any great extent, it just seem to happen, but we did occasionally get some... grapes, no lime juice, I think it was in a time, you know which was wonderful change. And that was quite exciting if you could get a go at that you know, wed put a hole in the top and suck it out. I guess
- 40:00 as far as fruit was concerned we didn't have any. The only time we ever got anything was when we got back to Wyndham, the station at Wyndham the old 6 mile hotel, or pub was still operating to cater for any of the station fellow that came in. 6 miles out of Wyndham it was and the beer used to be bought up from Halls Creek, I suppose it came from Perth originally through Halls Creek and
- 40:30 Territory Creek to Wyndham. Of course Flinders used to bring it up in his truck and he, when it arrived it was 6 bob a bottle, that's what we were getting a day, so if you wanted to spend 6 bob, or your days pay on a bottle of beer well you could. But that of course only happened when we were at Wyndham. But Wyndham was a funny sort of place because it had been abandoned
- 41:00 expect for about 2 people. So there was absolutely no trouble in finding a house, you could sort of select any house you wanted to live in. And behind Wyndham was a big hill and I think every now and again somebody went up there and did some observation, but on the whole I don't think they worried too much. Because the bloke up at Cape Dussejour was suppose to have seen them as they came in before hand. Interesting one bloke was telling me about
- 41:30 after the war in Wyndham. He was a captain of a ship and he was, brining superphosphate or something into the wharf there at Wyndham, that was, the old original wharf was built, was burnt down after we were there cause it was a ship sunk right beside it. The Kalama Launch had been bombed and struggled into the wharf and sunk at the wharf and that was the wharf we used to unload petrol and things from
- 42:00 but....

Tape 4

- 00:31 **Lance I was wondering if I could ask you about the... I guess in the bombings in Darwin and Wyndham and where and what you knew about?**
- I wasn't there for any of it, I wasn't up there at that stage we arrived after the bombing. And I only, went into Darwin only once on the way home and, just observed some of the damage, what had happened along the water front but really, you,
- 01:00 it was over and that was a long time after the last of the bombings. And it had happened and Wyndham and Broome before I got there. Every now and then you would see a Jap plane go over but mostly only observation planes I think. The black fellows used to call them 'culunula', that the sort of way they had of, I don't know whether 'culunula' meant enemy or not but that was always a Japanese plan
- 01:30 if it was, that was always 'culunula'. But no chances of being shot up there were pretty slim I think.
- Can you describe some of the damage you saw from the bombing you saw in Darwin or Wyndham?**
- Well the only bombing I saw in Wyndham they tried to bomb the meat works, a little bit of damage there. The Kalama Launch as I said was sunk at the wharf.
- 02:00 They hadn't done really much, I think it was most probably more of a frightening exercise than any think else. Where as when you got down as far as Broome there were a lot, quite a number of Catalina's and things sunk in the water there. But as far as Darwin was concerned I didn't see very much, as I said it was so many months after I'd been there. That's where this chap I was talking about Ray Thatcher
- 02:30 was.. was there he left us and went around by ship and he got there for a few raids. That's why he was quite an interesting lad to talk to. He said he could see that, once he was in the street that he could see these Japs come over in their big yellow faces smiling. The destruction that they were doing.
- How frightened were the local people that you came across in towns**
- 03:00 **that they were going to be bombed or invaded again?**
- Well the only place I was in was basically Wyndham and there was nobody there. Because I remember meeting 1 fellow and he said he most probably liked to join the army because it was quite a dangerous job, so he didn't try and, other than, I know that once you got back to the Victoria River Downs
- 03:30 which was a long way, I think it was 200 or 300 miles from Wyndham they had dug split trenches there some of the station fellows, that were a bit worried about bombing. But they were never attacked. And I didn't meet anybody, as I say we were so isolated that you basically never saw anybody at that time. And but the fellows who were in Darwin, it was pretty devastating there

- 04:00 when the bombing was on but I didn't see anything. Now I places, that I saw that were knocked about more than anywhere else were in Borneo, like Beaufort and Jesselton, and they were just wrecked, because they were subjected to allied bombings all the time. But as far as Australia was concerned I didn't see much of Darwin.
- 04:30 **How much I guess, how... how frightened were you or how much did you expect that the Japanese, that you would see the Japanese from your observation unit one day?**
- As I said we were watching after them hoping they would never come. That's what it amounted to. But I never really though about it I'm not sure, you know the anticipation was a bit like landing on the beach at Labuan,
- 05:00 I cant remember that I felt, I'm sure I wasn't frightened. But that's most probably because there weren't many bullets coming my way. And... they say you know you've never seen a frighted man, you'd never seen a brave man. A lot of the great deed of value don't make any mistakes about that. Like I remember reading that old fellow.. I can't think of his name now, anyway
- 05:30 the last, there's only two VCs left know you know. Pain and what is the other fellow's name. I remember them saying to him how did you do it. Well he stood up and shot two machine gunners with two shots. And he said well they were making a hell of a mess of my shirt. Actually he couldn't have been shaking because he shot 2 machine gunners at 100 yard with 1 good shot could he. So I don't know whether he was
- 06:00 frightened they were going to shott him or not but anyway. That the story I think with that fellow. Some fellows are that determined, I mean my brother, my brother in law was in the Middle East when he was there with one of the men, won a VC he said for 10,000 pounds he wouldn't have put his head out of the hole. This fellow got up amongst all the shot and shelling and everything. So they were counting for those things.
- 06:30 **How frustrating was it being I guess in an isolated post when there not being any action?**
- Well you had to put up with it. It wasn't, didn't really worry me, I was young and some places I had my horses I could muck about with them... I don't think I was ever, I never got stressed as they say today. I mean they talk about stress, you can image
- 07:00 if everybody that was in the Army was as stressed as they are today. There wouldn't have been an Army at all. I never felt that, I think I was pretty easy going sort of a bloke and I suppose I was most probably lucky to have been with the men that I was with and the men that I was with sort of looked after me, because I was young and I remember playing in their local football team up in the Tablelands and they, I was only young and small and
- 07:30 playing against all the big fellows. And some of my big friends they used to Lancie, if any bloke gets a bit rough with you just tell me. So I always felt that I had a minder. Going around and that was a little bit like when I first joined the Army. When I went to the Northern Australian Observers Unit. They sort of took me under their wing. Unfortunately I could have been,
- 08:00 life could have difficult for me, living with 4 different fellows, 4 men that I had never met before in my life. But I got up there.
- How well did you know the men you'd be sharing the post with before you got there?**
- Well not very well. There was a lot of just say when I volunteered to join the Unit and we went to Ingleburn, I suppose I met them and said G'day to them and
- 08:30 we were being taught to do things. It wasn't basically until we got to Timber Creek and, I was in the 5th Platoon that I then got to know them. There were only about 20 of us there, 20 blokes, 5 little sections and I got to know everybody in it, and then of course when you went to a post with 3 others.. Well after a while you knew everything
- 09:00 about them and they knew everything about you. About where you'd been what you'd done and how many sisters and brother, whether you had money in the bank or not or whatever it was. No I didn't find it difficult.
- How much choice did you have in which 3 men you'd be spending that time with. Did you have any choice?**
- No,
- 09:30 you were just designated to a section. They couldn't say I want me or you, whatever it might have been. They just left it to Travis who was in charge of our platoon he won a Military Cross. Because a lot of fellows after the war, NAOU disbanded and went and joined other units. And Jack Travis he got a Military Cross somewhere. Tarragon I think but the chap that I...
- 10:00 I helped when we unveiled the monument at Timber Creek, Jimmy Maher, he got shot at Bougainville after that, in the hind leg, but one of on his legs, and then he fell over and broke the other one. So poor old fellow he was a bit hop pity hop when he got up there. I hadn't told you that either that I shouldn't

have been actually unveiling it it should have been

10:30 Ray Thatcher, my section leader, but he, was so determined to get fit and as I say he is 87 now. But he overdid the exercise and finished up in the Brisbane Hospital. That's the reason I did the job and he wasn't there poor old Ray. No I had no choice as far as who I went with, I was just delegated to a section and that's who I went with. And

11:00 when it came to, we stuck together all the time basically, except when Ray Thatcher, a fellow called Norm Donaldson, he took over but he was a corporal with us before Ray left. And his dead of course, he'd be well over 90 now.

Where there any sections that just couldn't get along?

11:30 Well there was this one chap we had in ours that couldn't get along. No I think on the whole most of them, you sort of didn't, I didn't hear of any distension amongst them really. You know I suppose we were chosen... for sort of that point of view that it was going to be isolated and most of the fellows were blokes that had worked in the bush, shearers, wood cutters

12:00 and horse breakers and wood choppers and all those sort of fellows. All independent country fellows, and we were used to doing it alone, going it alone and... the probation didn't worry them because they were used to hard work and thought conditions. For that reason most of us did get on.

12:30 We had, the horses and things like that. I made a bit of a reputation for myself, I was blowing my own trumpet at Timber Creek there was apparently a bullock there that no body had been able to ride and they said even the yellow fellows, well they call half cast up there yellow fellows. So I said that'd I'd have a go at him and I rode him and made a

13:00 reputation as a bit of a bullock rider. I remember writing home and saying I wonder what the gun riders think now that I've been able to ride the unrideable. And then of course I went and did that a bit after woods when I was on the Tableland, in Queensland, used to go to the rodeo and ride. Filled in the weekend.

13:30 If you were lucky enough not to get hurt when you fell off it was quite good fun.

Can you tell me about, you said you knew them very well by the end of the posting?

Beg you pardon.

The other 3 men in your section, I was wondering if you could tell me a bit about them and who they were and?

Well Norm Donaldson, I don't know what he did, actually at one stage early in the piece he used to have a property some where right

14:00 up in North Queensland. But that would have been in the early 30's because he was a lot older than I was, and I think the dingos put him out of business and what he did then I don't know. Peter Newman was, he was with us, he was a banana farmer and a, pretty good surfer and at one stage he told me he went to America and taught Ginger Rogers [American movie star] how to swim,

14:30 because he was quite a good swimmer. A swimming instructor, that was a bit unusual, he was a banana grower. Basically never wore boots he had these great big feet on him and he is still alive, he is 90 now Peter, I sometimes speak to him. Another bloke Bill Donohue he was a bloke that had trouble with, poor old Bill, I think he might of gone home anyway. He ..

15:00 had owned a pub in Queensland, North West Queensland. Jimmy Maher, Jimmy was a knocked about sort of kid he was only about the same age I was, and I don't know what he was doing then with his, he must have had something to do with the dairy because at Timber Creek he found a few cows that were quite enough to be milked and he milked them. So I think

15:30 he had something to do with the dairy. But he was only 18 so he hadn't done very much. And now he is a publican. And Ray Thatcher he had a property, his father had a property at Forbes and after the war, he drew and block somewhere up in the Pilliga Scrub, went cowering, now his got quite a decent block in

16:00 North Star where he done quite well as farmer and a grain grower. Got a couple of sons.

I wonder for those, it's quite a long time to spend isolated with only a few people. What would you talk about day to day?

Sometime you didn't talk about anything, they say, what do they say, keep you mouth shut, no think before you

16:30 open you mouth. So, is suppose sometimes something to say a lot of the time, but no... well people used to learn things from books and Ray actually was a great man for poetry, he used to love his poetry and he taught me a few poems like the Red Creek Overseer and those sorts of numerous things.

17:00 And no I don't know I suppose it's a bit like living with anybody else, over a period of time. You can sit there and say nothing, cant you for a long time until you get an inspiration. I cant sort of, I... no I

suppose after a while you sort of run out of stories don't you. I mean you can't think of

17:30 anything more to say.

How annoyed would you get with each other?

Well you couldn't because I never ever saw anybody have a gist fight, well a couple of blokes, the big fellows that did, but in our camp never. There were, we had 2 big, very big men, one was a wood cutter, champion wood cutter from Queensland, big fellow and we had another bloke he was a,

18:00 he fought a bit in the Sydney Stadium, and he was a boxer, big fellow, and he was a great shot with a rifle or pistol or anything like that. And he and they had a bit of a go one day. But basically no, the only time I've ever seen anybody hit a chap was intentional. This fellow, Jimmy Maher was his name,

18:30 'Bluey' Maher, he's a good little horse rider but, this chap had a red beard, the only chap in the Army that I've ever seen with a red beard. Because he was allowed to grow it because of his skin was so fair and the sun was hot. And he got a very bad toothache, and there was no way, the dentist was 100 miles away or something. So he'd made Clan Muldoon, who I mentioned before had bought the horses down with me from Victoria River Downs.

19:00 When he wasn't looking hit him as hard as he could and knocked him out. And they had a shooping pinchers, pliers, and got his tooth out, pulled his tooth out when bluey awoke his tooth was out and he was feeling a lot better. So that shows you how they had to improvise and Clan always said it was the worst thing he ever had to do, hit his mate so hard.

19:30 There was quite a funny story about.. Merv Garner was the big fellow, the wood chopper, and his mate Jack Muldoon, that Clan's brother, and they went into this crossroads hotel at Liverpool having a few beers when we were at Ingleburn, and there was a big fellow in their abusing the bar maid and Merv went up to him and said hey

20:00 you want to cut that out, you don't want to speak to a lady like that. And this fellow said do you want to make something of it and Merv said yes and put up his fists and this fellow hit him and down he went, bang, and he didn't move. So he had his mate with him this big fellow and the mate went over to Jack Muldoon and said what about you. And Jack said yes I'll have a go too. So this fellow hit him and down he went. So the both these chaps had been knocked out in two hits. Well it turned out

20:30 that the women that this big fellow was abusing was his wife and he was the heavy weight boxing champion of Australia. So they picked a bad moment. And they came back to camp and all they had was a bit of a mark on the back of their head where they had hit the concrete floor. But those two fellows were in the NAOU. One was as I said was as hearer he was a great bloke Jack. And the other fellow was a wood chopper.

21:00 But I can't think of any other funny stories I can think of I don't know. Of course they had the Battle of Britain when we were, or the Battle of Brisbane when we were going through there when the Yanks had arrived and, it there were a lot of fist fights and things going on then. They reckon we won I don't know whether we did or not.

Did you ever get into any fights in the army?

No,

21:30 I used to do a bit of boxing but I was only once, within my weight, I was going to, a bloke asked me if I wanted to box at this stadium they used to have on the Tablelands. I said no id dint but I used to spar a bit, I was only a peanut, I used to only weight 109 stone. No I never wanted to fight anybody.

22:00 And luckily no body ever wanted to fight me so we were alright. But we had one chap Lance Timmons, I told you about him, he was a North West Boxing Champion. He was a fearless bloke he used to when he got drunk he was a beggar to drink, he was only about 18 but he was a tough as a boot. He used to heel the horses, the horses in the line,

22:30 when he got dunk he'd rush in like a cattle dog and grab it in a head lock and slide down like that and the horse would kick over his head. And he was the sort of chap that would go to a show and he'd ride a buck jumper to when whatever it was, and he'd was just as likely to go, then to go and drink that and then he'd go up and have a go at the boxing too. And he died not so very long ago, but he was a

23:00 great rider, but he was a fearless little bloke. You couldn't imagine him doing that but, he must of, I don't know whether he tried it when he was sober, but can you imagine doing that. I couldn't anyway. It's a wonder he didn't have the imprint of a shoe on his nose or something isn't it. Lance Timmons, his father was a horse breaker in.

What I guess

23:30 **personal items were you able to take with you, when you were out?**

Nothing except I had a mirror, you wouldn't believe it when I was in the army I didn't shave. So that was a wonderful bonus as far as I was concerned. Because those, not so much when I was in the NAOU but when I was in the regular Army they were very particular about shaving and doing all those

numerous things, so fellow you know had to shave with cold water and everything else.

24:00 I didn't ever had to shave so I was very lucky. So I dint have to worry. But the only thing I was really, really liked was a toothbrush. I didn't care if I didn't have a wash for 6 weeks but I liked to clean my teeth. And so you know my toilet accessories were 1 toothbrush and, usually had a bit of soap so that I could use that for toothpaste, but other than I didn't sort of carry anything.

What

24:30 **I guess photographs or books were you able to have?**

The only, books that I got were books that were sent up to me from, when I was upstairs, when I was up in the Territory, the only books I got or papers were those sent to me from home. We didn't supplies or anything. So you know we were hoping we might get the old Women's Weekly, the big pages,

25:00 with a few stories in it and you've got a cross word puzzle and numerous things. Not like the one is today. No books how to... how to find you way by the moon sun and stars, or something like that, I remember I had that book, Mother had sent it to me in case she though tit might be handy. In case I got lost. I think she thought I was going to get lost up there.

Was it

25:30 **useful?**

No I didn't learn too much about it really. I sort of relied on somebody else or the black fellow. To show me how to get around. I don't think I was a pretty good student when it came to those sort of things.

I wonder, were you able to write mail and send mail and that sort of thing?

Yes, we could when the

26:00 boat came once a month or something like that. You could send a letter and hope that you'd get a letter but it was taking about 6 weeks to get, say from home here to the Territory to us. About 6 weeks, so things would change a little bit in 6 weeks. But it was good to get news from home and,, I was as you know in those days, well this place was 10,000 acres and Dad was here with his 3 sons gone

26:30 and 1 of my sisters Lorna, was up in the Queensland, with the Red Cross, what was designated as a war area so he had 3 of his station hands, and Lorna who was a great help gone. And they were having a job to carry on, to do the job, and the rabbits were bad in those days. People don't realise what the rabbits were like. We it wasn't until, although release myxomatosis that we got on top of them.

27:00 They were, we did nothing in the summer, winter but chase rabbits and then the summer and people have no idea the number of rabbits there were. The paddock up here we didn't count ours unless we sort of drove them, which you would do occasionally, drive rabbits into corners, and the most I got in one afternoon was 1700 in one paddock. And just up the was a place called, Nerang, which used to belong to my great grandfather as well, in a 400

27:30 acre paddock they caught 17,000 rabbits, you couldn't believe could you, 17,000 rabbits. So that why we lived with a rabbit drought nearly all the time. Well they were trying to cope with the rabbits and, blow flies because you had no deterrent in those days, but to really to, keep the blow flies in check. And.. foot rot and all those numerous things that sheep get so it was very difficult for them and

28:00 I used to get news of that. I suppose I felt sorry for them because I wasn't there doing it.

What would you write home?

I would just tell them what I was doing but without mentioning too many things. I mean you very difficult, to make a letter up if you were in the same place for a month and not doing much isn't it. I suppose it's a bit like being at school, Dear Mum and Dad, how are you? I'm well thank you.

28:30 I don't know, actually Mother kept all my letters, nearly all my letter which are quite interesting to read now, you know you've sort of done things that you didn't realise you'd done. I kept some of hers, not all of hers. Not nearly as many of hers as she kept of mine. I didn't realise she was doing that until I came home and, also the ones that I'd written to my sister.

29:00 My sister who is alive now, she was one of those collectors and she collected everything and now she reads them and sends them up to me, we have a laugh at them.

Were you ever home sick?

No, no I wasn't. Well I'd been at school for 7 years, 8 years, I don't know I would have wasted time. It really you think, it really was,

29:30 don't you 7 years heavens above I could have been doing something useful. But I suppose the discipline was good. I'd give anything, if I reported to Dad or anybody that I'd been in trouble and got the cane well he said most probably you deserved it. And that's the only sympathy I got and I think that's the way to go about it too.

30:00 No I think most of us had pasted being homesick when we were up there. I can understand married men, having angst for their wife's and there children and things like that. But somebody said to me you ask him what you talk to him about and I said once well basically sport and sex that's about all we had to do, when we got down to that that was about what we used to talk about I suppose.

30:30 **How many tall stories were involved in?**

Hey I beg you pardon, I shocked you.

No, that's okay both those topics I guess lead to tall stories being told and I just wonder that sort of stories they told you about sex or sport?

Well, this is another, one of the funniest stories I've heard. An old soldier

31:00 and he was in the Middle East and he told me this story he said he was... he was 18 or 19 and the Sergeant one day said know you fellows will soon be in action and no doubt some of you are going to get killed but before you do how many of you have had the or haven't had the experience of sleeping with a women. Which I would like you to have before you die. So half put up

31:30 there hand and he said well in the morning we will go down to Maisey's house so in the morning they lined up and all these fellows, these young blokes marched down to Maisey's house and this fellow was third in line and he was standing outside the door, 2 blokes had gone in and he was standing out the door wondering what the hell was going to happen and he looked around and the rest of the men had run, so he turned and ran too. So he said he didn't know anything about it until he.

32:00 He was a remarkable man because he was finished up, in the coal mines in Nagasaki when they dropped the atomic bombs. He was taken as a prisoner of war after that. Taken back to Japan. Anyway he got through the war but, I thought that was a funny story. So that's one of the tall stories. Well it wasn't a tall story but a true story.

What were some of the stories

32:30 **that the fellows were sharing?**

Well I can't think of any, really, I can't think of any really tall stories that they told. There was no sort of receptors with me. No people tell us these stories and just like there's a book

33:00 written that'd I've got out there my time in the NAOU and although I was there I mean this fellow embellishes things to such and extent that you wouldn't think you had been there. But that's sort of like a tall story. I can't think of a decent tall story I could tell you.

That's okay, I guess what were the stories that, not the tall stories, that the stories that you could tell about sex and sport,

33:30 **what would you?**

Well I couldn't tell much about sex because I was only 18 or something. No I dint' have any tall stories because at that stage I was young and hadn't sort of been around at all. I hadn't, till afterwards I stated to train race horses and, then I got into the racing palace and got to know a lot about the

34:00 jokes that went on at the race course and things like that and I hadn't started to play polo that all happened afterwards. So most of my life started, basically after the war as far as doing those things. I was pretty young and incident I suppose you could say while I was in the army. I listened to all these

34:30 amazing stories that these other fellows would tell. Not ever had experienced that I didn't know whether they were true or not.

What were those stories that they were tell you?

Well they used to tell us about their exploits, their sexual exploits and all these numerous things they used to talk about mainly. What do they say, it neither here, was fairly

35:00 apparent. I heard somebody say the other day there's no man than can avoid a women and it appeared to me that that was the case and from the blokes that I listened to in the army.

Were there any women in any places that you were?

No only black kids, the black kids were very keen on trying to get rid of their mothers too, "Do somebody wanta belong me?", they used to say.

35:30 I couldn't think of anything worse. No I can't think of anything except I remember I gave one a pipe once and she was, one of my friend told me she was going to be my girlfriend forever. Poor old black Mary she was.

36:00 **Did any of the men have relationship with the?**

I would say so, I would say so yes. And a lot of them were very sorry, that they did I think later on.

Especially when we were in Borneo there was a lot of fellows contracted disease there. I remember it was a ship that took most of them back to Australia,

36:30 called the Scagerat. And we used to call it the Shagger Crate. And I though what a terrible boat to, imagine going back home and being, taken home on the Shagger Crate, what a stigma it would be on your life. No so that I know they, were there. They just couldn't resist the urge, but there was fear wondering what was going to happen too many of them. Fortunately in

37:00 those days medication controlled a lot of those things. But it doesn't anymore apparently.

Was there a stigma, I guess apart from being on the ship but a stigma amongst the men, toward men who did sleep with the?

No I don't think so I just though that they were, most probably though that they were, just bad luck. Yes but the grace of god, goes me, goes I whatever the word may be.

37:30 No it would be interesting to know what percentage were but I didn't know what percentage. That sort of basically what happened. And of course then the war was over and there was fraternisation with the blacks, with the you know the Malayan and those sort of people....

38:00 the.... they had a heck of a time with Japs you couldn't imagine how thin people could be and still live. A lot of those Javanese that were imported as labourers and, I remember I counted something like 15 in the back of a jeep trailer, which is only the size of a jeep trailer. There was plenty of room for more too,

38:30 they were just like matchsticks. How they lived you would never know. They were bastards with the way they treated people those Japs. And now they fall over backwards, somebody is up there looking after them, but I guess it's good to have them on our side at last. But I don't think the younger generation realise just how atrocious they were, animals that's all they were, well they were cannibals as well as anything else.

39:00 **When you were in the Northern Territory.**

Beg you pardon.

When you were stationed in the Northern Territory how much of a hatred for the Japanese did the men in your unit have then?

Well they never came in contact but I mean, they used to just refer to them as Japanese bastard and I think what they really wanted to do was perhaps get a chance to have take their

39:30 thoughts out on them to a certain extent. But none of them, the ones I had been with had any contact with the Japs at all up to that stage. Some of them had come back from the Middle East and so they, contact with Italians and the Germans. But not with the Japs they didn't. People didn't appreciate really just what they were doing, we were not been told.

40:00 It sort of only lately that you're reading, stories of what really did happen in many instances at the time.

What were the four of you in your observation post going to do if you did see the Japanese approaching?

Well the first thing was we had to report it. And then keep in contact with the Japs but not confront them unless absolutely necessary and just sort of show them

40:30 to find out what the story was, how many of them there were so they could call in their planes or whatever it might have been to counteract the invasion. That's what it amounted to, but I think most probably inevitably we would of all been killed, there was no doubt about it. So we were very lucky that it didn't happen. We had plenty of fire power but, only 4 of us, so we had, Tommy gun and a automatic

41:00 gun, a machine gun and a Bren gun and a couple of rifles so we had plenty of ammunition and.. that most probably wouldn't have helped if, it goes to weight and numbers.

Tape 5

00:32 **Lance, just a few more questions about your time with the Northern Observation Unit, I'm wondering, we were talking over lunch about the nick names for the unit and what you were know**

01:00 **as, was, being a fairly un-regimented sort of outfit?**

Well we were known as the Nackerroos, NAOU was commonly called the Nackerroos, somebody coined that phrase that name and that what we were know as, I don't sort of use it but actually... I think there was a lot of fuss being made over the NAOU in comparison with what we did, as I said somebody said to me

01:30 how was it was it tough. I said really no it wasn't, because I didn't go to the real war until I went, to I joined the company the Engineers and then I went to war. That's when I felt that I was doing something before, I suppose I felt that we were wasting our time but I guess that if the Japs had come we weren't but as it turned out I suppose we were sort of a safe guard, that's what it amounted to really. And if people could sleep

02:00 knowing that we were on duty, or they hoped we were on duty. We had surveillance along the coastline. If you look at the map which I was trying to find for you, it will show you that we were sort of supposedly watching the coast from Cape Dussejour on the Cambridge Gulf right round to Birdum basically in the Gulf of Carpentaria. 450 men so there weren't very many of us over those thousands of miles.

02:30 **And why do you think it was believed that the Japanese would land or come down through the Victoria River for example?**

Well because they felt that that, that was the best places to get in really, I mean you could, a lot of the coastline was so desert and rocky that there was no chance of landing a force there unless you landed, just, as an observation post or something like that, but I think that they felt that Cambridge Gulf

03:00 was the logical place to come in the Victoria River. Then the Daly River further up and get around to the Roper River and all these areas where, would be the logical place for them to land if they did land. And I don't think there is any doubt they would have landed. I mean if they sort of got through to Moresby and places like that gods know where they would have finished up. New Zealand for starters and most probably

03:30 Australia. So we were there hoping to make sure that we knew if they were landing. Because there was talk at one stage that a Brisbane line, whether that had ever been established I don't know, but they were talking about the scorched earth policy throughout Queensland and a lot of Australia actually, the southern part of Australia. If the Japs did land it was suppose to be a... a line above the Brisbane,

04:00 as was know as the Brisbane line which I say was going to be a scorched earth policy. And you know that everything within that would be burnt or destroyed or whatever it might be and any white people were going to be withdrawn inside that line. But nobody really quite knows where the line is. It's always been a bit of a, some people think it is a myth. But I think it was a reality at one stage when things were pretty

04:30 desperate.

And who told you about the Brisbane Line?

A lot of people knew it was just hearsay, back in the days of the army, and I have tried to find out since and got my niece in Wollongong and other people to look for me and really, people have written stories about the Brisbane Line but no body really knows where it was and, there is some evidence that they set up tanks

05:00 and things somewhere between NSW and Queensland, and there was a story that the line would have then followed down the Murray River and anything sort of West of that or North of that was going to be turned into this scorched earth policy situation. And nobody has been able to establish exactly where it is or where it was.

05:30 If it ever was we're not quite sure. But I believe that there was one.

I understand that your outfit was effectively called Bushrangers or what other terms were you called?

Not to my knowledge anything, Nackerroos and the bushrangers they say. Because

06:00 basically there wasn't much disciplined as far as army discipline was concerned. As I explained before I don't think there could be. We were actually working on the principal; I think most probably the Boers, during, the Boer War. That amounted to commando set up that was it was suppose to be think, that what it

06:30 turned out to be. See really it, any body in A Company, or B Company or C Company had no idea what the other fellow was doing, the other companies were doing and you didn't ever come in contact with them. So there could have been 300 fellows in the Northern Australian Observers Unit that I had never met and didn't know anything about. And the same with us. That was different to sort or a normal unit, regiment or company

07:00 whatever might be, knew most people or knew them by sight anyway. This one you couldn't you'd have no idea. If he said he was with the NAOU, you hadn't met him before you wouldn't know which company he was in or what he'd been doing. So for me to speak of the whole, I could only speak from my section really and we didn't see very many of the other platoons either.

07:30 So we were really a little self contained unit, outfit.

Well given that and given the difficulties of your isolation how, how successful do you think you were with what you mentioned earlier with the plan to deceive the Japanese?

I think that if they'd have come we would have been, we would have

08:00 done what we were supposed to do. There was a lot of panic. Initially when, Herring or who ever it was, came back from the Middle East and discovered there was no surveillance at all in the North. That's when he decided that something should be done and that's when he, seconded, Major Stanner, who as I said before was an anthropologist and knew a lot of the country and he was given a honorary mayorship or something like that I think. And he was the one who

08:30 actually decided to form this unit. As, he felt it was, it could operate similarly to what the Boers did in South Africa. And it was his inspiration that it started that way.

And how daunting did you think your unit was, in meeting the tasks that was set for you?

09:00 How daunting?

Given the scope that you had to patrol, the scope of the area that you had to patrol?

Well I suppose we did it to the best of our ability. I... see basically we were a separate unit. A lot of people even to this day have never heard of us. If you tried and get compensation to say that you were in the NAOU, there is probably no records kept at all. Except,

09:30 what is hearsay in the books that have been written. I wouldn't think there were any army records left at all. I know one chap who wanted to claim compensation or something from the army for, falling off a horse and he wrote to me. Well he was a... radio operator with us. I don't think he'd ever been on a horse in his life. So I didn't second him or calibrate with him at all. And he had no record,

10:00 he couldn't go back to any record to show where he'd been in hospital or hurt himself falling off the horse. So of course he wasn't able to claim anything. I know trying to get a manifest of the people who were in certain sections now, the only place that there is any record of what happened is in the museum in Darwin, the Larrakeyah Barracks Museum and basically even if you look up our,

10:30 manifest and see what happened at Timber Creek, no records at all. So you didn't know who was there, and no body knows who was there basically except those who were there. And that was the idea it was suppose to be secret commandos. And that was the story. I don't think, you

11:00 said daunting, I don't think you would use the word daunting. I don't think it was daunting. I suppose a menial sort of a task. Perhaps you might say.

Well you mentioned you relationship with local aborigines. I'm wondering if you can tell me a bit about

11:30 **George the tracker.**

Well all I can tell you about him was we used to see him when we were, he was at Timber Creek and we were at the depot which is only 2 or 3 miles apart. And we used to see George and George came, with Clem and I when we went up the Victoria River, to bring the horses down and during the time coming down, we'd have our meals with George and George would tell us numerous stories about

12:00 aboriginal customs and numerous things like that. He told us what a great horse rider he was and, supposedly never thrown in the Territory, but some of the Queensland horses threw him. And about numerous things he used to talk about... well I remember him telling me about... aboriginal women when they wanted

12:30 abortion they used to roll their tummies around on a log and things like that. And... another one was... a contraceptive aid that the men used to use was what they used to call 'whifflecockin'. Which amounted to putting the bone from, the leg or the arm of a kangaroo down your pants and putting a hole at the base and not allowing that

13:00 hole to heal up so that when you ejaculated it would all sort of drop out through that hole. And of course if you wanted to do a wee or anything like that you just held you finger over it, and that was a couple of little customs that he told me about. He was a good bloke, he was an athlete too. I don't think he was quite as fast as lightning but he though he was I think.

13:30 He was a great tracker. When I went back to Darwin years after, 40 or 50 years after I tried to find out some of the historian, in the police museum we couldn't find his story at all. I though it would have been interesting to find out what he did after we left. But he might of, I don't know whether you saw that photograph of me with his daughter.

14:00 In our album up there, but she was so dark that, actually you had a job to see her in the photograph. And I remember when I went to see her she was working in the old police station, which is now a museum, Judy is her name and I said to Judy I told her who I was and she said... my Dad he did tell me about you young fellow.

14:30 And I said oh has he and I didn't know whether to kiss her or just to embrace her. So I thought I'd just put my arm around her. But she is black, she is as black as the ace of spades. But she remembers me and I was hoping I could find out something about her Dad but I couldn't. And you will have to have a

look at the photo, it's out there somewhere, I think Mary's got in the album I think. Then I think

15:00 the last time I went back which is... all 3 years ago when we were at the monument thing I went and looked for her but I think she got herself married now. She flown away. I'd never find her again, well I don't suppose I'll ever be up there to worry about it.

Well it sounds like you learnt much more than just tracking from George?

Oh yes, sure, sure there

15:30 is no doubt. And.. but that was one of the problems of course, you see you weren't suppose to fraternise to any great extent but I mean he was with us when I, when we bought the horses down so, at lunch time or whenever he sat down to have a meal or sat down at night to have a yarn or smoke around the campfire, we'd ask George questions and George would tell us. George was pretty good at English, he wasn't too bad.

16:00 Whereas his mate as I said 'Lightning' he couldn't speak, he was real a male, he could hardly speak English at all, and unless you spoke a little bit of pigeon to him he wouldn't understand much.

And how would you react to George telling you that story of contraception?

I just thought it was interesting. I don't think I had ever heard the term 'whistlecock' before. I didn't

16:30 know anything about it, but, no I think there is a lot of people in Australia now that most probably haven't heard of it either, don't know anything about it but it was pretty original wasn't it? Well you know it's the old.... the old men always had the young girls....

17:00 I suppose they used to, there job was sort of breaking in young women, the old men. And they used to do it with, a special stick, a pretty crude sort of operation. But now that you asked me I can tell you about something else that George told me. The young, the older women always had the younger men or boys, and

17:30 the old fellows had the girls. And one bloke, I don't know whether it was just the one bloke whether he was a witch or not, not a witch, whatever you might call him, a 'pagotcha' man you might call him. Whether it was his job or just anybody did it but I know that's what they used to do. And I guess that was quite interesting, quite horrifying really, but interesting that I didn't know anything about it or

18:00 hadn't, thought, or wouldn't thought about things like that.

And what else did you learn from George?

Oh nothing really I suppose other than what a great tracker he was and, well I couldn't, well you can be a rider but some fellows are better than others and naturally George was

18:30 a good rider and, I was a mediocre sort of rider so, if I wanted to learn anything from George I had to practice. Like being a buck jump rider you have to practice just as much as you've got to if you're a tennis player or a footballer or anybody else. So that about, I can't think of anything else I would have learnt from him I don't know. Cause.... intuition their tracking, I mean of course

19:00 their bought up to it from the time they can walk. I mean they see things that we can't see and... they take notice of everything that moves. Whereas we accept them most of the time. You can say, him bin, whatever he might be in bin. He would know whether it was Gen or who it was that walked along there. Whether it was a Gen or who it was that walked along there. That bin Gen bilong or Billy or whatever bin there. It was quite amazing what they could do. And... being of course

19:30 the old policeman up there they couldn't, the Taz Vettas and Gordon Stotts and all those fellow wouldn't never have been able to get on without them. Because they had to tack these aboriginal murderers and misdemeanours around the Territory and basically all they did was contact with the blacks or tracking.

20:00 I can't think of anything else I should tell you.

Well can you just explain briefly?

I've told you something I've never told anybody before.

Well thank you I really appreciate it. That is a very interesting story. I was just wondering perhaps you could tell me

20:30 **like what was a typical day that you spent with George?**

Well really I didn't have that much to do with him other than we were bringing the horses, really there wasn't very much to do, except you got up in the morning and you, we had our breakfast and saddled up our horses, and put the pack saddles on and we'd trod off and if the horses weren't there, and George would eventually find the

21:00 horses, the horses that weren't hobbled or had a bell on them, he would find the horses and bring them along behind us. And then they would trod along in front after that. He would most probably be outside in front and leading and we would be just over along behind him. But really no Kathy [interviewer] I

didn't learn anything else from him really.

But still you speak with a great deal of respect. Why

21:30 **did you respect him or in hindsight reflecting back, can you tell me about why that respect?**

Well I thought because he was, I just like him because of what he was, really. He's a very nice fellow to talk to friendly sort of bloke, very capable at what he did and I guess showed friendship towards me. Cause a lot of the blokes were pretty

22:00 off hand and a lot of them were sort of bordering on being mild at that time. You would see a lot of them would be walking around the Territory just with their loin clothes on and the spears, carry their spears and their women and things like that. They tend to just have a lap lap or skirt on. And, they were arrogant sort of blokes, that, the niggers. I've seen them actually,

22:30 well when we were down at Blunder Bay there was quite a descent water hole there but the, sometimes these big black buggers, or niggers I should call them. Would be carried across the water of the back of these little gins so they didn't get their feet wet. So they were male chauvinist too I suppose. I mean perhaps that's where it all started I don't know.

23:00 **Well you mentioned earlier that you were not supposed to fraternise. You just explain that?**

Well... I think most probably was, giving them food and tobacco, which they were basically, they got their tobacco rations from the station and they got their food from the station store,

23:30 and they were sort of given a certain amount. You know tea sugar and a bit of meat whatever it might have been. And they certainly got a bit of tobacco every now and again. And that's how most of the stations were run and the black boys, the stock men used to sleep up in their. bures or huts or whatever you might like to call them. And they'd live up there with there gin. Then they'd come down and start their work in the morning, wherever it might have been and if they were out in camp

24:00 of course they'd camp, they always camped away from the white man. Away from them but that's what they didn't want us to do to get to mate with them and I guess most probably warning the blokes not having nothing to do with the women because that could be disastrous. As far as not only your health was concerned but I suppose you health was that you didn't want to get belting or something from the black fellows. And it might have amounted to more than

24:30 just a belting to. So those are the thing we were warned not to do. So I basically never got to know any of them other than George. As far as that was concerned. But as they say a lot of the other, were mighty sort of blokes, ignorant, they were very good at what they did at throwing boomerangs and spears and tracking and numerous things like that.

25:00 **And yet you just described at how good they were a tracking and it also sounds like very generous with their assistances?**

Yes, on the whole they were. Well especially the police boys.

25:30 There was a lot of them, you didn't really know whether you could trust some of the them. But you knew you could trust the police boys. Although usually the greatest rove, became a police boy, because it was often the greatest criminal was the best tracker of the lot. It just how he made his

26:00 trade, I suppose he kept his trade doing what he did. They always used to say the best trackers were the boys who had become mister miners. I don't know, I think, I don't know what George ever did I never heard. I know Tiger, there was a chap called Tiger, not a very nice sort of a bloke and he was a tracker sort of bloke but he

26:30 also, he'd been accused of murdering white men I think and, think back in the 30's that was not uncommon. If you got away a bit. Well these males sort of fellow, take the kidney fat out of you and make you strong.

Well I'm wondering do you know and you might not, if the

27:00 **or how the aboriginal, men were being paid for their work?**

I think initially up there they didn't get paid at all. They were paid in kind. Food and tobacco. I don't think they got any money, I don't know, I don't really know how they acquired their skirts and things the women and the men's

27:30 attire. I don't think they were paid in money. I think they got it in kind. And after a certain, weeks you got a pair of trousers or boots or whatever it might have been. Because a lot of them didn't wear boots even in the stock yard. They were bare footed. Well Mary can tell you the story of the fellow they called Cassidy who was working on Bradshaw,

28:00 and I saw him work and he was the most wonderful stockman I had ever seen, he was just like a monkey he was so quick, he jumped over the fences and, but he, there was a Brahman bull on Bradshaw and he wouldn't go with the mob of cows and he apparently was riding a young horse, so he got off tied the

horse up, took off his boot and picked up a stick and defied this big bowmen bull. Now bowmen bulls can be pretty testy and

28:30 apparently he just defied that bull and the bull chased him and everything else till eventually Cassidy won and the bull turned and followed the mob. And that was a demonstration of not only incredible bravery but also, tremendous stockman ship. To think that he could have lost a bull, because the old bowmen bull as you can imagine they can either be very placid or incredibly wild, the bowmen cattle.

29:00 And there were other bulls up there where Mary was and they were actually putting in 10% of bulls so he had 1000 cows in the corner, you'd have 100 bull, something which you'd never do down here, I mean you'd have most probably 2 bulls per 100. Whereas they had 10 and there were a lot of pretty testy ones but this Cassidy, he was so quick and

29:30 so agile, he was an amazing boy. Some of them were like that, they were incredibly quick.

Were you, told us that you were very young you were 18 when you..

19.

19 going up North, now looking back on those, that time how do you

30:00 **think that time up in the North changed you and helped you grow up?**

Oh it did help a lot, because I was only used to being with other than the popple at home, the station hands that d Dad ad had here working, the only people I'd been with at school were school boys really. You hadn't been out in the world. But when I got up there I met all these fellow that had all these different jobs and told all these stories and

30:30 I had to pull my weight and I never cooked anything or never done anything like that. When I was at home someone cooked all the meal and I used to just sit along. And I had to chop the wood, I didn't, my turn to chop the wood and start the fire in the morning and cook breakfast. I think it did me good. But it certainly I wasn't a completely new chum when I, having been up there

31:00 I then went and joined the engineers. I'd been around for a while so I knew some of the lurks, because I remember I unspent to drink and... my brother we finished up being quite drinkers. I had never been to an outdoor picture show before and a chap Billy Stock, his a friend of my brothers and

31:30 so he befriended me, and he said well go to the pictures tonight Lance and that was up on the Tablelands, just out from Atherton and I said oh that's good so he said well we've got to go and get something to drink so we went to the pub in Atherton and he bought two bottles of sherry 1 for me and 1 for him and that is what we consumed during the evening and me being a non drinker you can image how I was after having a bottle of

32:00 sherry during the film. that helped me grow up too I suppose, because I unspent to drink because I didn't like it much and then when I saw all my friend drinking it and having a lot of fun I though oh well I'll try that have a go, cause I used to give my beer away. If we were lucky sometime if you were lucky enough you would get 2 bottles of beer a week. And I sued to give

32:30 mine away cause if didn't like it then eventually I found out that people were getting a fair amount of enjoyment of out of 2 bottles so I took it on and enjoyed it ever since. But a bottle of sherry is pretty hard going when you just, you don't drink at all, I enjoyed it going down I suppose but not too much when it was coming up.

When you were with the observation unit

33:00 **you probably didn't really need to polish your boots that often?**

We never polished them.

How in what way did you feel like you were still part of the army?

Well I don't know whether we did actually, really that's a good question. But I suppose we felt we were up there for a purpose but,

33:30 well actually you didn't feel that you were in the Army to an extent because as I said you didn't have any regiment... problems to put up with, I suppose you'd call them problems if you had to do all the things that you have to do when your in the Army. I don't know really I don't quite know. I suppose it just became a job, it was a job and

34:00 we were getting paid, but not very much. Yes when you think 6 shillings a week, 6 shillings a day. I remember after the war coming home and down there, just down the road is a culvert with the swaggies and the drovers used to ride and do things like that and they said well have to black ball the Cudal pub because they are charging 1 and threepence

34:30 a bottle of beer. One and threepence, and we were paying 6 shillings a bottle for it. It gives you some idea of the inflation rate in the Territory at that time. Yes, yeh, no no I don't think, as I said it was probably just a job. Sometimes very prudent other times it wasn't. But

35:00 basically it was the mosquitos and things and the heat, as Mary was just complaining about the heat, well I spent 2 summers up there and, well of course it's just as bad in New Guinea or any where else. You undid your mosquito net and you'd be lying in a pool of sweat at the bottom of your bed. That's how hot it was. But you just couldn't be there without a mosquito net.

35:30 It just what you had to have irrespective of what you carried, you had to have a mosquito net.

And what other ways did the weather, either assist or hamper you work?

Well it was very difficult to get any, mail or supplies through say from Katherine or anywhere through there because the roads were unmade in those days and the truck were getting bogged and they had to cauterise the road and do anything else. I remember once going

36:00 out with the horses and trying to pull out some trucks with the horses... but the only way we were getting thing sin the middle of the wet season. You see the ground got so boggy you really couldn't drive trucks or anything over them. There were no main roads of course. And it was very wet for animals. Eddy Connelen chap that used to have the airline use dot fly in occasionally and bring mail and things like that for us. As the

36:30 airstrip was trafficable most of the time. So it was a bit of a pain in the neck, the river was nearly always in flood so you couldn't really attempt to go on the river, especially with our old boat that only had a top speed of 8 knots, the tide would come in quicker than that so you couldn't make any progress at all. So sometimes you'd be, as I said a lot of weeks between seeing the boat and not.

37:00 It used to rain a lot, I think that somewhere wrote that we had 19 inches in 11 days once where ever I was. I can't remember, I can remember writing a letter saying we'd have 19 inches in 11 days.

That's certainly very very wet.

It is wet that's right. Especially when you are living in a tent.

37:30 **How did you cope?**

Well in many incidents we, in some incidents we had, we made a little bit of a fireplace out of corrugated iron.. so that was our cooking stove to cook on and a bit of shelter for cooking and we used to sleep in the tent next door to it.

38:00 It was a bit wet outside as you can imagine. But really if the Japs had come then we wouldn't have noticed them because we spent more time in the tent I think than doing anything else.

And during that big rain, when you couldn't really go outside of your tent I imagine you must have been playing games or what?

Cards, playing cards. I reckon,

38:30 well especially, well getting away from there going back to Jesselton, I reckon I must of played cards for a month. Doing nothing, every morning playing pontoon. We used to play pontoon for money. You know 12, pontoon, we used to have a game of volleyball on the beach, we were right on the beach. The beach wouldn't have been as far as from here to the front gate out there. It was a good beach too. So we could

39:00 catch fish there to eat and it was just a holiday home really or we, we just wanted to get home that was the problem. And we played cards and I think most probably in the Territory if we hand nothing to do like that we would play cards. 500 most probably, in those days. Some of them used to play solo, on the whole 500 was for most of the troops.

39:30 Or if you had a big school, pontoon, 21. 3 around the table. It's a hard life.

I'm wondering if you were playing for money?

Yes we used to at, play for money at Jesselton. Not very big stakes, I had no idea most probably, I have no idea,

40:00 shillings or 5's or something like that. No, in, we didn't play for money, we just played to fill in time. Because as you know you can do that with card.

And did you ever think about, you know, the fact that you might have been missing out on hooking up with a

40:30 **girl at that age?**

Never the only girl I've ever, that wasn't, no none of that. But when I was up in Jesselton, no must have been, at Gordon Vale, we used to do on the Gordon Vale River, which is down on the flat from the Tablelands. We used to go down there and do river and

41:00 boat training and all that sort of thing. Great place, beautiful river to swim in and although I'm a Church of England I used to go to the, Presbyterian Church, because after church you got cakes and a cup of tea and scones and I met a little girl there and, I though she was pretty good and she took me under her

arm and she said well go to the dance at the church hall,

41:30 after I'd been going to church more often. Because I never went to church in the army, we didn't have, a preacher man at all and also I didn't ever see one and I don't think I ever went to church when I was on Tableland either.....

Tape 6

00:32 **Lance when we finished the last tape you were tell us about the girl in Atherton?**

Well it wasn't Atherton is was Gordon Vale, and I told you about going to the Presbyterian Church because I wasn't, going to get a cup of tea and scones and those sorts of things. And after doing this for while she said "There's a dance coming on at the local hall. How about coming along with me?" And I said "I can't dance"

01:00 I never been to a dance in my life. Well that won't worry, don't worry about that or something. I said "People will be looking at me and I will be a spectacle". And she said "No, nobody will look at you." So I said "Alright." So I went to the dance and she struggled around the floor with me I think. I don't know how difficult it was for her. Anyway we got on quite well and, and then of course I went away. So

01:30 that was very soon before we went away overseas. And it wasn't until 2 years ago, after 60 odd years, that I went back to Gordon Vale, because I'd taken, I knew the church so I went back to the church and took a photograph of the church but not knowing what her name was of course I couldn't find her. I was wondering if she might be, now she'd be as old as I am so she might be a little bit different I suppose. So that was

02:00 my first attempt at ballroom dancing. I suppose you might call it I don't know if you would or not. That was a break of the usual routine. I have often though I can't sort of place it but I think she most probably was quite pretty. I hope anyway. So that was my first attempt. And you wouldn't believe it after the war two of us went to Meribah's Kay School of Dancing in Pitt Street,

02:30 to learn how to do the fox trot and the Pride of Erin and all those sort of things. I forget how many.. How many days I attended but I think we used to go 2 or 3 times a week for a fortnight. I'm not quite sure. So I reckon I then new how to fox trot and waltz and Pride of Erin and barn dance, so I was equipped for like I reckon. Not that I was very good at it.

03:00 **I was wondering Lance, we've talked a lot about the Observation Unit but I was just wondering if you tell me when you, about when you left the Northern Territory?**

Well when I left the Northern Territory right at the end of 43 we came down in those days, they had a train line in Darwin through to Birdum, and we came down in cattle clubs, in the trucks,

03:30 that fitted out with bars so that the stock can't slip or not too good to sleep on but there was a lot of us anyway and we got as far a Birdum and we picked up the trucks again, the Negro trucks, and went through to Mount Isa, got the train there and went through to Sydney and.... that's when I applied for transfer to go to my brother, in the 2nd 15th Field Company.

04:00 Or the Australian Engineers, whoever, up on the Tablelands of Atherton. And I'm not too sure I might of got a bit of leave because I'd been up in the Territory, or Western Australia for 18 months, or 16 months. So I guess I went home for a while and then.... took off back up to Queensland again, so I really can't tell you

04:30 how long I was here for. But I know because of my name I was lost for a while, because there difference between Lance Smith and Lance Machattie-Smith was a bit too much for them. Although I was the same person they were a bit doubtful I think. So I spent a bit of time being lost at the showground at Sydney, and I know, this is showing how affluent I was

05:00 really, I suppose, a ridicules thing but two of us got a room at one of the Sydney hotels and we used to report in in the morning and then we'd go into Sydney and sleep at the hotel and report back at the showground in the morning, the role call. And we never got a job so then we'd go back into Sydney and sleep at the hotel again.

05:30 So that's how tough the army was at that stage. And anyway eventually that lurk finished, and we got picked up, and by that time I had been accepted to go up to the engineers so away I went. I was up there for 16 months I think.

What had your brother told you about the engineer that made you want a job with them?

Well he was a mechanical sort of a bloke. Actually he was quite clever because he invented a sight. They used to have what we called a

06:00 Bofors gun which is a light anti aircraft gun and he though it took them too long to load the gun and the sights were not correct, so he himself though out a new method of loading the gun and sighting the

object and he wrote and sent it into the army, or the Patent Division or whatever you send them too and found out that some fellow in Britain had invented

06:30 the same thing a couple of months before. So he was that way inclined, and the engineers, you'd do a set of, if you were in the infantry all you do I march all day. But in the engineers you, got different jobs you build bridges, you'd blow up things with explosives, and you'd do roads, and quite interesting work you were doing. But basically the same old routine the other fellows.

07:00 So he told me it was pretty good, so I thought oh well I'll join up and give it a go, because I didn't know where else to go and I certainly didn't want to be in the infantry. And he wasn't a very regimental soldier either my brother, he was, well I don't know once he was up in the North, at one stage I don't know whether you remember there was a lot of fuss over the

07:30 air force fellows flying down, South from Darwin to Perth, to Adelaide, and getting grog and flying it back up again. Well he got a ride down in one of those aeroplanes once and that's the sort of bloke he was. I don't know whether he came for a bit of leave for a day or two, anyway then he got the plane back again. But all they were doing was flying down to buy grog to sell to the yanks because the yanks would give you anything for them. For a bottle of

08:00 whiskey, 10 pounds for a bottle of whiskey, it was a joke. As it wasn't costing the pilot anything to fly down. That went on for a while I think. So that was sort of, he was an independent sort of character and he well he finished up being like that all his life. He just did what he pleased, it didn't matter what convention said he didn't sort of fall into line with them.

08:30 So that why I went to the Engineer because he said it was pretty good, unit to be in, interesting. So that's where I finished up.

Did you find that it met your expectations?

Oh yes, it was good, it was.. we used to do numerous things actually we were building a road across the, ridge from or the mountains from

09:00 Cairns up onto the Tablelands, because at that stage there was only one road, you had to farther South to get up. Now you go up, you used to get up to Teranda in the train, well there's a road up there. But we, I don't know whether that's the one we were starting on or not when we went away. So those sort of jobs were interesting. I got a crusty sort of a job, I got 2 shillings a day, specialist pay for looking after the air conditioner, no the air conditioner the air compression,

09:30 which used to drive the automatic drills and those sort of things. As long as I had my machine there and had it going all day, I used to just sit down beside it and keep it fuelled and all those sort of things. And 2 bob a day extra which was good money. And that was quite interesting, to do something a bit different, that's what it amounted to you weren't always doing the same thing all the time.

10:00 How much mechanical knowledge did you need to have?

Not very much, I used to be a bit of a motorbike man once and I had a motorbike that used to break down every day so I'd spend my time fixing it up so I had a bit of an idea, and a lot of the engines we had were not as larve as they are today. I had an idea if the points wanted cleaning or the plugs wanted cleaning

10:30 or something like that. I think on the manifest you.. You could have a certain amount of specialist, and most probably they had run out of specialists till they came to me and they said oh well we'll give him the air compression, its pretty cool. So that's what I got. So anyway, that's why I finished up at the Engineers.

What kind of training did they give you when you joined the

11:00 Engineering Unit?

Well just... well they taught me about explosives to start with, which is something you know gelignite was the only thing I knew, you put a bit, blokes that used to dig wells and things, used to use gelignite. I just comes in long circular sort of tubes and you put a, fuse into it and a detonator,

11:30 and they used to drop them down, or put them down the boar hole in the well and explode them and you got the gravel and picked it up and those sort of things, and then we had bridge building, we had what they called Bailey bridge, which was a English invention, a marvellous invention of putting a bridge across a wide span. And well they used... they used them in the

12:00 D-Day and places like that and we had them , there was no bit of the Bailey bridge that 4 men couldn't carry but if you built them up they could carry, 20 tonne tanks and things like that, they were great bridges. So learnt to do those things, and ordinary making. A lot of it was like farm work that you did around the farm, you had air compression and you dug holes and

12:30 put up bridges and blew up things and those sort of things. Everyday, you'd go for a [(UNCLEAR)] occasionally and those sort of things. I used to play football in the in the company team it was a bit of a lurk to because sometimes you got better tucker than the other fellows. They figured you wanted building up a bit

13:00 so they would give you better food, which I don't go along with entirely. But when I was there I quite accepted it.

I wonder if you could tell me Lance when you heard the news that you were heading overseas?

I was happy so pleased to be going somewhere. We had no idea where we were going of course. And it

13:30 wasn't a great trip as I told you before on a David C Shanks, because they, I think there were 3 or 4 to a hammock, instead of being 400 there were 1200 or something on the ship. Yes I was happy looking forward to it and the anticipation that I didn't have any idea what was going on. Just wondering what it would be like. But as I said I had a pretty easy run from there on.

14:00 The exciting thing really was travelling on that landing ship dock. It was like living in a first class hotel. In comparison with anybody else. It's quite a big ship actually, 16 thousand tonnes I think they were. They had a compliment of over 200 American sailors on it and I can't remember ever seeing any of them but I guess they were there somewhere. Everything is so

14:30 hazy you know really I you've got to get your mind jogged all the time to remember things and... some things I can't remember at all.

On that first trip away to Morotai, you mentioned the crowded conditions on the ship, were you sea sick or where any of your good mates sea sick?

No, some of them were, no actually I've been so lucky in my life,

15:00 I've been sea sick once years ago when I was small in Melbourne at Flinders and I had been in a gaol in the North Sea, I went once to Burgeon across to Newcastle in and it was terrible rough, and everybody was sick bar me I think. Across the Irish Sea and the deck was just awash, it was terrible people

15:30 being sick. So that tested me. No I haven't been sick. Cause they use to give us tablets I think, Iverson or something they called them to stop you being sea sick, whether they worked I don't know.

How did you find Lance,

16:00 **given that you were on 2 American ships on the trip to Morotai and the trip from Morotai. How did the American's treat you and how did you get along with them?**

Well basically as I said there were 230 sailors but I basically didn't see them. You see we had, what our personnel numbers were I don't really know, but as I said if there were 20 odd tanks in there, there would only be about 40 of us on it, 40 Australian's on it you see.

16:30 Look I can't remember anything, except, I don't even remember sleeping on the thing, which I must of because I was there for 10 days and I can remember you'd line up in the food and you'd nearly have a selection of what you wanted, from turkey to, whatever I might be to pork or something like that. Then you could have ice cream and numerous other things, something that was never heard of in the Australian Army or any other army I guess. No I basically

17:00 really, all I could remember, was the ship was a landing ship dock and I got Peter...to see if we could find out what it was, so we got in touch with the Embassy in Canberra and they told Peter to get in touch with the Department of Navy or something in America. And when we told them about the ship,

17:30 we got a whole spiel about the ship and how it was named and the photographs I've got it was wonderful. For nothing they were only too pleased to help. I though oh well thanks to the American Navy, and they called it the greatest navy in the world. That's how they finish up every sentence in their little pamphlet. The greatest navy in the world.

18:00 Then I guess I suppose I don't know where it went next time. I think by that time.. See that was about the last, Borneo was about the last beach landing. Ireland I think by then, but the war had finished then so there were no more beach landing so they didn't have to use it anymore. I suppose they used it for, for repairing ships as well.

18:30 The concept was quite incredible.

Lance can you tell me about I guess you mentioned looking after the air compression in Queensland, but what work were you doing in the Engineers when you got to Morotai?

I don't, we most probably practices a little bit of putting down mesh and things on the beach and going out to... to sea. See they used to have

19:00 a lot of their vehicles that were water proof so that you could drive them through the sea up to about the... the exhaust pipe. the exhaust pipe was usually out of the air, and so was the air intake, otherwise it was all sort of water proof and they use to practice going into the water and if she leaked they'd fix it up and look... I can't remember, all I can remember is being there in bed and hearing these giant aeroplanes, hotting themselves

- 19:30 up warming themselves up for hours before they took off, the Liberators and the Flying Fortress and things like, quite incredible. They must have used gallons and gallons of fuel before they even got off the ground. If you had a load of bombs you didn't want to sort of get half way up and then collapse, did you. So it was essential that they get them warm. That's about all I can remember about Morotai except when I came back....and
- 20:00 I can't remember all I can remember is playing tennis and I played against a bloke and I beat him and they said now you're the champion of Morotai. And I thought well I don't know how many blokes playing in the tournament, I might have been the only other fellow. Me and the other fellow I think. That's the only things I can remember about coming back to Morotai was have a game of tennis. Because at that time, when the yanks were there they had canteens and tennis court and everything else.
- 20:30 I can't remember a thing about it, not a thing, except getting on the ship to come home and now I don't know, and I've often thought about getting in contact with somebody to find out whether we arrived in Brisbane or Sydney. I still don't know but I'm sure that no one was waiting there to welcome me home. I don't think they knew when I was coming home.
- 21:00 **I think you mentioned earlier when you mentioned the planes that you could have been a gunner in one of them or?**
- Well we could have been given the job as a rear gunner in one of those big planes that were taking off from Morotai going on bombing raids. Yes you could have if you'd gone down to the, down to whether they were handling these sort of things. The American Air Force. I heard of
- 21:30 some of our chaps talking about it. I don't know anybody was very tempted but I know I often wish I did go because it would have been an incredible experience. To get right back in the tail and hope that no Japanese hero's arrived but I don't think there were many about, because when we were, landed at Labuan, there was only 1 Japanese plane appeared and it was soon shot down. There was only 1
- 22:00 so it would have been most unlikely to have been shot down in the Flying Fortress or Liberator whatever they were. Lots of things you wish you'd done and haven't done. Those things you've done and left undone.
- Can you tell me then, you've spoken of the journey from Morotai, but can you tell me about the Labuan landings and what you were doing**
- 22:30 **there?**
- Not very much except when I told you about going in and testing the water, jumping overboard and getting up and.. Walking onto the beach and I don't know whether I had a mine detector or not, but anyway. Then the tanks went away and we were doing something
- 23:00 manually, digging a hole or doing something and by that time some of the American big equipment was landing I remember and they came up with their bulldozers and things and dig it in half the time we were doing it. I remember talking to chap, what happened the Japanese retreated into a property and they were there for quite a few days doing a bit of damage and it was being heavily bombarded by. The
- 23:30 cruiser there, English cruiser, [HMAS] Shropshire it think its name was and the [HMAS] Canberra and they were shelling the foxholes the Japs up there. And a bloke came down from the front and I said what's it like up there, he said oh its pretty hot and he'd actually been hit with a bullet and I'm not sure whether he had a pencil in there or he had his, some of them used to carry a
- 24:00 steel mirror, to shave and that sort of thing, its only as big as that and the bullet had hit that and ricochet off. I said were they tall, they were big buggers, I think that they have to be Korean's and I heard later on that they were Koreans. Because the Koreans are basically taller than the Japs were, bigger men. I never forget that. And..
- 24:30 collaborated... but he was so lucky that the bullet had hit his, it was either a pen or one of those that he had that deflect the bullet from his chest. So he was a lucky boy wasn't he? In those days they battled along there for quite a few days. Because we were 7, I was on the island for 7 days before we left to go across to the mainland.
- What did you know, I guess when you go onto the beach about**
- 25:00 **where the Japanese were?**
- Well we thought there was no fear because the place had actually been bombarded for, numerous days and that morning there were shell and bombs and rockets, and everything else there was no way in the world basically unless they had been a long way underground anybody could have lived within quite a far, way up the beach. And that was basically unopposed, or some silly bugger I suppose most probably, the
- 25:30 suicide sniper or somebody might have been about but that was about all there was. So that's where I was lucky.
- How envious were the Australian Engineers, I guess the Australian Army in general of the Americans and their resources?**

Very, because they had all the money and all the girl and everything else. They had, the

26:00 equipment, the trouble was they were... not very careful what they did with a lot of it. People were being shot and they shouldn't have been shot and that sort of things. The old Yankee would shot you then ask why, sort of things. He'd say... that makes me laugh, because this Bruce my brother was in the Light Horses Ingleburn

26:30 and one of his cousins, Colonel Nutbarton, he was a wonderful old soldier who was in the First World War, he was at the charge to be a sapper and he was, in charge of one of the hospital in this war, anyway, he was a Commanding Officer of the 6th Light Horses and Ingleburn. And Bruce my brother was on card duty. So Colonel Nut we used to call him,

27:00 came around on his inspection tour which was protocol, and Bruce said "Come forth and be recognised", the password and Colonel Nut knew Bruce and he said "Bruce I don't know the password, I'm your cousin, you know Colonel Nut". Bruce said "I don't care who you are you've got to give me the password." And this is to the Colonel of the outfit. Anyway, after a while

27:30 Bruce let him in, Colonel Nut said come on Bruce, come on come, so we can go and have a cup of tea. So Bruce said right oh, but Bruce wasn't going to let him in if he didn't know the password. Now what was I telling you that story for.

You started talking I guess the Americans and their equipment and we just got sidetrack?

Oh well, that's right, what I was saying was they would shot you before they asked the password where at least Bruce wanted to know the password before he shot him.

28:00 Nobody in the world but Bruce would do that to the colonel of the outfit. And he knew who it was too. He was a bit perverse like that.

You mentioned the American's were a bit trigger happy before, and you briefly mentioned a story about one night when an American had thought the Japanese had broken through the lines?

28:30 It wasn't an American it was one of our chaps actually. When that did happen they broke out of what they called the pockets and some of them walked down the road and some of the infiltrated into the area, the area where we were, I wasn't there at the time. And they were causing a lot of consignment, fair bit of panic because they were jumping in the back of trucks and

29:00 bayoneting blokes and shooting them and that sort of things. And one of our chaps who was on guard one night... apparently there was some sort of a warning or an alarm and some of our fellows jumped up and this fellow, he had a bran gun, shot 4 of our own men with the bran gun. And that was a panic and then

29:30 you couldn't because it was night so you couldn't distinguish between our men and the Japs, so they told me. I was over on the mainland then, that eventually that if anything like that happened they used to jump out of bed without any clothes on so you could at least see them. And that wasn't an American it was one of our men that shot our own men. Poor fellow.

30:00 **Was that, men in your unit, the engineers that got shot?**

Yes, yes.

Were they the first casualties that the unit had?

Yes, the first casualties, there was no one killed. That in that unit, in that outfit they were. But there were casualties in the Middle East when they were not... not to my knowledge I think there was only 1 fellow killed I think.

30:30 Because, we were as I said the Japs were going back once we got there. And ours was a cushy [easy] job, there were a lot of, 2 other, most probably I'm not too sure, but in the Borneo camp I think there was something like 800 men killed there but they were all nearly all killed at Balikpapan and Tarakan, so we were very lucky.

How is an incident like the panic and the shooting?

Beg you pardon?

How does an incident like

31:00 **that panic and shooting affect the moral of the group?**

I don't know because I wasn't there, and I don't, well... whether they were caught up with it I don't know because the chap, the poor old fellow that did it would be sent home and the other blokes were dead, and... it rather amazes me when blokes, were

31:30 some of the blokes were getting shot and no one seemed to be getting too upset and they were often worried that they had to dig the hole. That's how it.. Oh well poor beggar. But those fellows had been

used to fighting like that it couldn't just stop and be upset otherwise there wouldn't have been a war they just couldn't have gone off. Just had to accept it. But I was never in a position but I know the position that they would have been in.

32:00 It was just a bit of a nuisance that the poor fellow, bad luck he got shot and, because those infantry fellows they used to accept that. I remember a big friend of mine in the engineers had been in the 2/4th Battalion in Tobruk and places like that and he said, he used to say to me Lance if your numbers up its up so don't get too worried about it there's nothing you can do about it. And that how a lot of them accepted it.

32:30 Everybody gets shot and if you didn't well whoever was looking after you was looking after at that time.

How easy was it to take that advice and not worry?

Very easy from this fellow he was a great big, wonderful bloke.. We used to call him Usuf after the Arabs, he was a great big fellow, Joe Crawford was his name,

33:00 wonderful bloke. And from him it was very good advice. Finished up working on the road down around Wagga, poor old Joe he would be dead now though.

Can you tell me Lance you have mentioned also the work you were doing in Borneo on the railway I think?

Yes well that was only repairing the damage that the

33:30 allied bombing had done and they were saying basically from... a lot of Borneo there were no road it all relied on railway lines and where we were camped was the only dry place in the country. It was gravel quarry which they used to balance on the railway and we, just had to straighten the line out and repair whatever had been knocked about and.. as I was saying we put jeeps on the

34:00 line to use it a bit so that we had a bit of transport and some of the chaps, infantry blokes who get to go out and patrol would be carried up the line as far as we could go or something like that and then walk. The lines were not as heavy as the lines around here, the big 80,000 pound lines or something, the were easier to handle and it wasn't 100%

34:30 job but it was adequate for the, what we wanted, the purpose we need the railway line for.

And what was your actual job in repairing the railway line?

My job was to look after the blokes who did it because as I said I learnt to speak a little bit of Malayan and my job was to go along with the blokes the 4 or 5 fellows who were all Malays and tell them what to do and

35:00 it was a pretty happy sort of a team and I was telling the story before. One bloke would knock in the dogs with the hammer and somebody else would fix up the fish plates and somebody else would do the palliasses and they all had a job and I don't know actually how they got paid, I don't know whether they did get paid. I suppose somebody paid them I don't know. But that was my job and overseer.

35:30 And I suppose little Carmen used to come along behind me and help me tell me what they were saying which was a help. But I don't know he could speak a little bit of English, he was only 10 or 11 or something. I often wish I had gone back. They had a tour back there 30 years ago and I often wish I had

36:00 gone back to see him. He was sort of a little bloke I had been able to get in contact with again. Although he would have been 10 years younger than me so he might still be alive. But I don't think the life expectancy was too great out there.

How different was the, I guess the climate and the landscape in the Pacific Islands to where you had been on the Gulf?

36:30 How did it compare?

Yes

Well it was nice and green, different story altogether. Where as the Kimberley's can be.. Stony and rank and covered with rope grasses and things like that Spinifex, well this was all nice and green. The hills were green and the jungle, thick jungle, rubber trees, rubber plantations, oh yes good spot, nice spot.

37:00 They always describe it as a, like the felt hat Borneo, the big crown in the middle and then the brim all around the outside. Whereas this is sort of tropical, I don't know... it wasn't well you never saw any stock there, I don't know. There were a few...

37:30 buffalo, that's about all you saw doing anything. Not a paddock, a lot of paddocks full of grass. I can't remember now if I ever saw any animals. But I suppose I did, but the only thing we ever saw were the Orang-utans. As they call them the man of the jungle Orang- utang. They could give you frights because they were fairly big and used to be upright and

38:00 if you heard them creeping about in the jungle you weren't quite sure who was there. And that's about

the only thing I ever saw. That I can remember, most probably a water buffalo doing something. Because that's what they used to do most of their cultivation work.

Were you and the Malayans armed at all?

Beg your pardon?

Did you carry arms at all?

Yes we all had a rifle,

38:30 by that time I, but I had a Tommy gun at one stage, by that time I just had what every second fellow in the army had a Lee Enfield .303 rifle well that's what we all had, I had. A pocket full of bullets I suppose, a few.

Did any of the overseers or yourself ever have any trouble with the Malay workers?

No.. I think they were just very pleased that we were there to help them.

39:00 They had such a doing from the Japs, and anything was better than what they were putting up with, what they had to put up with. No I never. I didn't hear of anybody ever stealing anything, not like the wogs [ethnic people] in the Middle East and places like that. They would steal your rifle away while you were asleep and numerous things like that. They were always cunning whereas these blokes were basically genuine sort of fellows, people.

39:30 **What were the difficulties I guess, you mentioned in the Northern Territory there were mosquitoes at times. What were the difficulties in the, on the railway?**

Well, you asked me that I don't remember even if I had a mosquito net then. I'm not sure. Most probably did,

40:00 look really I can't remember that. No I don't know there were really... it was not, we didn't, well I didn't have much to put up with really. The fellows up the front were putting up with it all.

You read a lot about tropical diseases,

40:30 **malaria and?**

Well we took our Atebrin I'm sure without the Atebrin tablets we couldn't have won the war because every 2nd fellow would have malaria. It's as I say I was in hospital for a while in Papar, a place called Papar, which is sort of heading up from Beaufort and they thought I had dengue fever or I don't know whether I did or not but there's a great history of my medical report with my

41:00 service record, there somewhere. Mary was reading about it last night. I don't really know that the only thing, no we were most on Atebrin and there were not very many people got malaria because of the Atebrin. People wouldn't take it because they reckon that... any fool that wouldn't take it they reckon that it was going to make the impotent and all those sort of stories that they used to.. That some bloke would come up with those sort of stories. So you just

41:30 had to put up with the consequences. But you could easily tell if you hadn't been taking it because after a while we were all yellow, everybody looked yellow. And anybody that hadn't been taking his tablets of course wasn't. So you couldn't actually deceive anybody really.

Tape 7

00:31 **Lance before we stopped for a break you were tell us you hand a Enfield .303 Enfield rifle.**

The Enfield yes.

I'm wondering it you ever had to shot?

Anybody no, no I didn't shot, never shot an individual with my rifle that's whey I felt that I had a pretty easy life as far as the army was concerned. Well I was never confronted

01:00 by the enemy personally. But in the event of it happening I would have a rifle, would have some arm. But no I didn't have to.

And how prepared did you feel personally about that?

Well I guess most probably if it was the case I would have been quite prepared to have shot them. I don't think there would have been any doubt. It would have depended a little bit on who I had to shot but I wouldn't have no compunction about shooting Japanese,

01:30 if I'd have know he was a Japs. I just thought the only good ones were dead ones. Because they were feral animals and we used to refer to them as.

Well perhaps you could tell me why you feel so strongly?

Well you know basically one of my best friends was a POW in the 8th Division, he was on the railway line

02:00 and he was terribly badly knocked about and he told me all these horrific stories of how they were treated by the Japs, the number of people that died. They had no sentiment at all, he actually at the end of the war, wouldn't even get to anything that was sponsored by the Japanese. And he was a great racing man he wouldn't get to a Japanese meet, if it had a Japanese cup on which was one of the

02:30 sponsoring cups, later on. And when they, we knew they were cannibals, they were eating a portion of our men that were shot, and were dead. And... that's basically the reason I myself didn't have any contact with them but the people that did, it just gave me the image that I imagined of what they were like.

03:00 **The campaigns in Borneo almost towards the end of the war were quite controversial**

03:30 **in fact... some were carried out against Australia Army Command wishes and there had been a lot of talk after the war about how unnecessary some of those campaigns were?**

Yes that's exactly right, because there was no where the Japs could go, they could have be bypassed quite easily and... it cost quite a lot of Australian lives and

04:00 allied troops lives. There was no where the Japs could go, they were hog tied, they had no air support, there oil wasn't go to do them any good. The oil wasn't completely necessary to us then. I think it was most probably MacArthur ego trip really. That he wanted to decimate them before he got, cause he was bent on landing in Japan of course to finish them off.

04:30 But we had the atomic bomb which saved millions of lives. And I have no doubt that it was warranted. I don't think there is any doubt that Borneo was unnecessary.

Well I'm wondering, well you might be able to respond more with having thought about it for a long time rather than how you felt at the time, but you've just

05:00 **described the campaign as being a bit of a Yankee push.. But it was also supported by [General] Blamey, how much of that were you aware of at the time you were going off?**

Weren't aware at all. I don't think we ever gave it a

05:30 though. It was just that something we felt that the allied were doing and we were going to be a part of it. It wasn't really till afterwards that I gave it any though that it was completely unnecessary. Because we, basically I don't know we though, we really thought how important that it was to the campaign, wether it was necessary to go in or not. At that stage I think most people felt that there had to be a landing in Japan to finish the war. And that we imminent and I think most probably they felt that this was a stepping stone to that

06:00 campaign, I don't know. But as I say the atomic bomb finished all that fortunately, otherwise there would have been thousands of other men all killed. So I didn't realise that Blamey was in favour of it and I guess most probably he was prepared to send his troops in with [General] MacArthur's that he might have been. He just felt that he had to support MacArthur, as far as the

06:30 post public relations.

I am also wondering how that might have been connected to the need to liberate Java or the liberation of Java, were you aware of that?

No...I just don't quite understand the question.

07:00 **Well because it was invaded by Japan, the Japanese, and I'm wondering if there was an allied push to liberate Java.**

No I don't know anything about it.

Well the jungles were very

07:30 **difficult conditions and poor condition for the army.. How prepared do you think your unit was when you went to face that jungle?**

Well I suppose the only thing we ever had to do with the jungle was in far North Queensland really. And as it turned out really...

08:00 the jungles.. Well didn't worry us because we were always bringing up the rear most of us. That's what I've been saying all the way along the line, the infantry fellows they had to go out there and make the pace and make sure the world was safe for those who followed on. As far as we were concerned, we were never, the jungle never worried us because we weren't in the jungle to any great extent.

08:30 I mean we were not pushing through the jungle to get from A to B, when we finished, eventually

finished going from where we were, we went up the railway line. So we didn't have to go about the jungle at all. And the men.. well that's where it all came, the men who had been in the jungle in New Guinea and

09:00 places like that were much better able to cope with jungle conditions than anybody who hadn't had experienced it. And there was no doubt that when a lot of controversy was regard to General Bennett getting out of Malaya, but most probably him getting out enable the rest of the Army to have a bit of an idea of what jungle warfare was all about. I mean

09:30 the Japanese had perfected it, they just out land or fellows and they had motor transport they rode pushbikes they did numerous things that nobody ever thought of doing. And they were the... the blokes that knew about handling the jungle but... I don't think we knew anything about it really. We were fair weather soldiers, that's what I reckon. The army I was in.

10:00 **And when you were going to Labuan to do that beach landing, what were you expecting?**

I don't know what I expected, I just sort of, there had been a lot of landing that had been disastrous, like the Guadalcanal and Okinawa and those places, there were thousands of blokes killed on them. That was before they developed any technique of beach landing and...

10:30 whether that was upper most in my mind I don't think so because I don't remember ever basically in fear or trembly of what was going to happen. I think it was just I was wondering, anticipation, what was going to happen. And, when we got there as I said it was a pleasant surprise because basically the landing were not defended at all.

11:00 And then after you go on shore they reiterated many times before the infantry took over and they looked after us like minders.

Well you mentioned earlier on that you felt like you might have been one of the first from your unit on the beach?

That's because I had to jump overboard, yes.

Can you tell me

11:30 **what your role as a sapper was?**

As a sapper, well basically most probably as they had a couple of engineers on each tank.. Was to make sure actually that the beach wasn't mined you know with mines. And that the Japs then, were using magnetic, not magnetic,

12:00 porcelain mines so you couldn't pick them up with the mine detector so it was quite a tricky business actually, and even though if you swept the path of your tank, with your mine detector it would be possible that it couldn't pick up a ceramic mine. Because there was nothing to activate them, there was no metal in them at all. So that was basically the job,

12:30 to get the tank off, the beach and then I can't remember what I did I don't know. But I remember being up in the Island somewhere and meeting this fellow as I told you about, that had just come down from the front and that what I was suppose to be doing anyway.

And can you tell me why a sapper is called a sapper?

No I don't know,

13:00 never been asked that question and never though about it. Can't imagine why it was called a sapper, just I don't know whether the letter mean anything or not. No I'm sorry I don't know. Have to find that out.

13:30 **I understand that your engineering unit was attached to the 9th Division?**

Yes that right the 2/1st Australian Beach Group we called ourselves. Attached to the 9th Division that's right. We were what you called core troops. Corps troops are sort of attached to any body that sort of wants them, any division who wants them.

14:00 And when they decided to form the Beach Group I don't know how many other engineering companies were in the beach group but there was another company that I know but... I suppose we were just an incidental up there and they gave us a job I don't know but that's what we turned out to be eventually.

14:30 And as I said we did our training on the Tablelands and down at the beach.

And how did you, did you mix with the 9th Division Troops?

No.. we used to keep to ourselves, pretty much the only time I think we met anybody was if we played football or something like that, but on the whole no.

15:00 No you just... I suppose if you were next door to anybody you would know who you were next door to but unless you had some relationship with the company or Regiment then you stuck to your own very much. My sister married a fellow who was in the 9th Division at Tobruk and I

- 15:30 met him, he was married at Atherton before we went away and he'd been in the Middle East at Tobruk as I say and he was back again and I met him at Weston and that's about the only other bloke I would have talked to in another division I think.
- 16:00 **Well you've told us that you were still overseas at wars end and then spent some time on the railway lines?**
- No, no that was, I spent the railway time on the railway line, before war finished. But when the war finished I was at Papar and as I said I was brining in prisoners of war, Jap prisoners of war from us the river in my boat and then
- 16:30 somehow or other I finished up in Jesselton, I don't really know without a job basically, except the usual duties every now and again and playing cards. The war was over but the problem was getting home and I explained before. You could get in but it was pretty hard to get out. I don't know what they were worried about, jobs
- 17:00 I suppose I don't really know.
- Well can you tell me a bit more about that job that you had looking after POW. I understand that you also looked after some native people who had been poorly treated by the Japanese.**
- No, I don't think, I'm afraid that really wasn't me.
- Well tell me then a bit more**
- 17:30 **then about your contact with the POW?**
- Well when we were on the, we had these 2 folding boats down the river at Papar, we used to go up the river and the boys, would bring, or they would surrender themselves, the Japs would come in and then we used to then bring them down the river and they would be taken to a compound and we used to come up the river in our little boats and spend
- 18:00 the night up there with the bloke who was in charge eof the operation, I don't know what rank he was, a colonel or somebody and we would pick up the number of Japs that were assigned to our boat, which might have been 10 or 15 or something like that. We would drive then down to Papar where they would be unloaded and put into the compound and we'd then go back up the river again. I really don't, I suppose I didn't even speak to them, but we had them in the boat with us, but
- 18:30 I don't know the only thing I can speak in Japanese is to count a little bit but I don't know much about Japanese, I never spoke to them.
- Well I believe you had, well you mentioned that you had some difficulties getting back home to Australia and that you came home in stages and that along the way you had to bribe your way home a little bit.**
- 19:00 **Can you tell me about that?**
- Well I told you that Kathy, I told you that haven't I going up to the man in charge of movement orders and offering him \$200 or \$300 to get me on an aeroplane to go anywhere but to Japan. And he said you will be on the plane in the morning. So I turned up there and I was on a plane, and we flew, I think, well I know it is 1000 miles to
- 19:30 Morotai now whether you can do 1000 miles in one hop in a DC-3 I don't know but anyway, I eventually finished up in Morotai I know that. And then tried the same thing in Morotai but he couldn't put me on the aeroplane but he got me on the first ship he could get me on and that's how I came home. And I guess I gave him something too. All I wanted to do is get out of the place and get home, I certainly didn't want to get back and be an
- 20:00 occupation force in Japan and I think they were there for quite a long time. The last thing in the world I wanted to do. But a lot of those things are so hazy, I have no idea really where I landed or anywhere else. All I know is that's how I avoided in the occupation forces in Japan. That's unfortunate that I hadn't' had enough
- 20:30 points, because all my friend has gone home because they were 25 points or whatever it was and I only had 24. There was no way I could avoid getting out of it other than to sort of I suppose escaping... the authorities I suppose.
- We've heard from other army boys that they would often**
- 21:00 **use nick names to refer to each other. I'm wondering if you had a nickname and what it was?**
- Yes, when I was in the NAOU they used to call my macadam because I used to, I told them a story about my father... in the old days when he used to make the tea for the shearers he used to have 9 or 10 shearers
- 21:30 over there in the sheering shed and they used to get their tea in a big pot with a sort of spout on it like a

giant teapot any way the spout fell off one day, and Dad made the tea in it, in the kerosene tin, cause there were plenty of kerosene tins in those days, clean kerosene tin.

22:00 And they went on strike they wouldn't shear until he got new one... and I don't know how long that took, but anyway, I suppose a day or two and they called him macadam because they reckoned Dad was such a hard man and they called him macadam after the macadam roads, the macadam bitumen tops so some of them used to call him macadam smith. But..

22:30 Some of them used to call me Clancy, Clancy of the Overflow, came down to lend a hand, I guess that just an adaptation of my name Lance. And that's about all I think. Macadam and Lancey, Clancy I can't think of anything else they called.

23:00 **How do you think looking back now, how do you think that your time in the army changed you?**

I don't know whether it changed me at all, but it made me grow up and I learnt things that I didn't learn before and... as I

23:30 learnt to get on with my fellow man to a certain extent I suppose and learn to have a drink and learnt to.... cope with the maddening throng and how to get a beer when you were 10 feet back from the bar when everybody in those days, beer was pretty hard to get and you knew many places like Cairns or Townsville and places like that they would only fill up one

24:00 one container, the container you handed over they'd fill that up and that's the only one you got. So that's when the Blameys came into being of course when they started just cutting the top of bottles and you had a Blamey, well you got a full Blamey full of beer. Whereas if you had glass you only got a glass full. Well I had a Blamey, which was just a top, I used to cut the top of the beer bottle with a bit of hot, hot steel, which was the shape of the bottle, and shake to the top of the bottle,

24:30 just lie it on the bottle and get it hot and dip it into water and it would break off so you had a beer bottle which was a glass, so you had, that was a decent beer. But you learnt how to cope, once you got to know the barmaid or something like that and buttered her up a bit she might give you a beer above the heads of 10 other fellows at the front and little things like that and. I suppose knocking about you went to

25:00 places like night clubs and all those sort of things that I'd never been to before. Well I suppose lot of things in life. Can't think of..

Well you've mentioned that you felt like you were an innocent young boy and I wonder how you felt like your innocence was broken or changed?

25:30 Well basically only by stories, stories that I heard, well what I was telling you about the black fellows, things, I just couldn't believe it. Perhaps I think chaps telling stories about exploits and about, shearer and all these, millions of things that were common place to some people and

26:00 were foreign to me because I had just come out. I was wet behind the ears as they would say in many incidents. I mean you can be... king pin at school but when you get outside in the world you are just another bloke and then you've got to prove yourself again. I think, well I wasn't big enough to enforce anything on anybody,

26:30 so basically I used to just go along with most things. So on the whole nearly, everybody you knew was a decent bloke basically even though he might of gone to a different school or he hadn't gone to school, which is unfortunate enough to be a labour all his life or whatever it might have been and.. And other thing is you learnt is you never want to brag about being born with a silver

27:00 spoon in mouth [coming from a privileged family] because... it didn't go down very well with many people you wanted to play it pretty cool. Never wanted to talk about what you had or, whether you had your boots cleaned for you. I made a mistake once in telling my boys once that when I was at home living over at Boree Cabon I used to put my boot out and somebody would clean them for me. That was the greatest mistake I ever told anyone

27:30 so I was basically spoilt I suppose you could say. But those are the sort of things you'd keep to yourself. I don't think I can tell you anything more Kathy.

Well I'm just wondering looking back what do you think is there perhaps one story or one time that stands out as being

28:00 **your proudest memory?**

I suppose when I rode the bullock in the yards at Timber Creek. That was something that somebody else hadn't done. But other than that no I don't remember anything that was remarkably, while I was in the army I can't believe I was proud, I just went along with the crowd I guess. Did what I was suppose to

28:30 do and try and keep out of trouble. I remember once when I first joined the army the sergeant said to me "Smith I wonder what your mother would think of you now". Apparently I'd done something I shouldn't have done or something ridiculous. I think he treated me a bit like a kid which no doubt I was. I think Mother was most probably a bit worried about how I was getting on too.

29:00 **And why do you think it is important to remember those times?**

Well it's an experience you couldn't buy... and I the friendship I've made with mates and things like that you will never make again. Some where along the line and you go the RSL club

29:30 you can have a yarn with blokes and I know people who, get restless about talking about it but as we were saying, Australian's remembering made a difference and you know most fellows that have been in the army now and sort of getting on a bit. No I wouldn't have missed it for quids if they. At times you thought it was an awful waste of time but the experience or,

30:00 even if you paid for it you wouldn't get it. I don't think the 4 years I spent were wasted. Unfortunately at times I felt that I should be at home helping but I wasn't and....

30:30 **We've had many stories about how people didn't talk about their war time experiences when they returned home?**

Yes, yes.

I'm wondering if you were able to talk to anybody about your experiences away?

I never ever did, as I told you about going to England with that friend of mine that had been a POW and I'd been at school with him and I went to England with and I didn't know until he died. And he never asked me and I never asked him.

31:00 These 2 other chaps that I went with, 1 was a spit fire pilot and the other fellow was a Wellington bomb pilot and I don't think I knew I never ever asked them. It was quite extraordinary that there was no discussion really at all. All you basically spoke about was really getting home and going to Maisey's Bar at the Carlton or somebody's bar in Australia or whoever it might have been and having a good time and a few beers. And that's really all it was about.

31:30 Nobody said "How did you get on?", and I often wish now that I had asked them. That brother in law that I was saying was married on the Tablelands, well he had, well everybody in Tobruk for the length of time had a pretty tough time but I never ever asked him, what I was like, I didn't even ask him once. The only thing he ever told me that he was running one day in a bombardment and he said to the bloke beside him... it pretty tough

32:00 mate and the bloke answered him in German, so Dough said I pulled out my revolver fired a shot at him and missed him, threw the gun at him and continued to run. So that's the only thing he ever told me about being in Tobruk and I never asked him. So... So you know there were a lot of stories that have gone untold unfortunately. I had another

32:30 brother-in law that wrote a wonderful story. It was a story that could have been told at an Anzac Day. And Bill wrote it unbeknown to anybody else and he finished the story just as though you'd walked in the door and he dropped the pen. I just finished. It wasn't until he died, he died a couple of years ago, but he had written this story, but it was a wonderful story. He had never ever spoke about his experience but he'd put them down on

33:00 paper. And I gave it to Serena to read, but I don't know whether she did because I thought it was a wonderful story. So he actually never spoke about his experiences personally to me and I didn't really know. I knew he'd been in New Guinea and he'd been in the Middle East and all this but I didn't know what his experiences were they could have been like mine and yet he had a pretty tough time and never said a word.

33:30 **Yes it does seem a shame looking back, that you weren't even able to talk about it with your family?**

Well I don't know whether they ever asked me or.... Well you see Jim and Bruce had been in the army and nobody asked them about it.

34:00 And one of my sisters was on the Tablelands too and.. No I was much more interested in the present, I was interested in my horses and motorbike and something else. As far as I was concerned the war was forgotten and I always felt that I hadn't really done much, so.... I wasn't prepared really to

34:30 spice it up a bit, I suppose play it up a bit. I always feel that I was there but I really didn't do much in comparison with a lot of other fellows.

But nevertheless you did help to win the war?

Well I was part of the army. I suppose yes well there's a lot of other people like me, I suppose similar to where,

35:00 I guess everybody in the company I was in basically did the same thing.

We were talking over the afternoon break about the frustration of feeling like you weren't doing enough can you tell me a bit more about that?

No not really,

- 35:30 basically I think that was felt more after the war then during the war. When you read the stories of heroic deed and the trial and tribulations that a lot of the troops went through and then sort of felt that we were inconvenienced occasional but that was about all and then... thinking about my fathers reaction when he didn't wasn't able to go to the
- 36:00 First World War and felt that he was, he felt that he hadn't sort of pulled his weight I guess and a lot of his friends had been killed and he was basically he felt that he was fit young man and I though, he always felt that was a bit of a stigma. But I basically at the time I didn't think of it but at the end I felt basically...
- 36:30 a lot of emphasis was put on the Northern Australian Observer Unit and I felt that basically... we were there but there was no enemy to fight. Hardship was not great, people wrote a book about it as though we'd all been to Gallipoli which of course we hadn't been.
- 37:00 And as I said before if the Japs had arrived, of course it would be a different story but they didn't. Anyway that's the way I feel about it.

Well I'm wondering if one of your grandchildren came to you for advice about, joining

37:30 **up and serving, what would you pass on?**

I would say yes if you want to go. That's a little bit like I felt about Iraq, if people are saying, its bad luck that they have to go and all this sort of stuff. I said a lot of those fellows would be chafing at the bit to get over there and have a go. And I was so please that John Howard let them go or said they were going. I bet 99% of them

38:00 were pleased to be there too. I mean as one fellow said what do you think we joined the army for, not to sit at home and be compensated every, if you get a sore toe or something. We were only too happy. When we joined the army we realised that, you could be shot, you could be killed and this is what war is all about, but were not going to find out if we stay at home. And I'd say that

38:30 if, the trouble is, in so many of the army's that chaps that join the army now are no hopers and if you get in to top echelon it's most probably quite a good profession. It's a different story, it's so sophisticated now isn't really. You most probably want to get into another service I think, perhaps the air force or the navy or something like that. But I don't think, the

39:00 infantry most probably play a big part and always have played a big part and will continue to play a big part in wars. I would advise them perhaps not to join the infantry. If they wanted to, they were that way inclined I'd say yeh go for your life, you'll have a lot of fun. I was....a lot of friends, a lot relations, a few of the unfortunately killed,

39:30 one bloke was killed the day the war ended, a cousin of mine he was a Bomber Pilot and my twin actually Bill Reynolds, we were great friends, we went to school together, and we were born on the same day and he was killed, he was in the air force he was a pilot, in March I think it was '45.

40:00 Doing something that was completely unnecessary as we were doing at Borneo just patrolling and island with... the Japanese were surrounding that had blockaded and there was now way in the world, was he needed to be there and he got shot down by ground force so he was unlucky. But

40:30 if theirs going to be a war I guess there's got to be casualties. And I think if Tom said he wanted to joining the army I'd say well go to Duntroon and join the army. I think there are most probably better professions.

Well were coming to the end of our session is there anything else that you would like to say or you feel like there is something we might have

41:00 **forgotten?**

No I don't think really. No other than when Mum and Dad were married, Dad had Little Boree built which is the big house up the drive up there. It was in

41:30 1915. Mother was a Victorian, she was actually at the university doing Medicine when Dad, met her... actually it was his step mother came to England on the ship as my grandmother to be and Mother were also going on the ship to England and she though well this is a good sort of

42:00 girl I'd better take her back and meet.....

INTERVIEW ENDS