

Australians at War Film Archive

Gavin Ralston (Toby) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/703>

Tape 1

- 00:30 **Toby, thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview today. So the first thing I wanted to ask you is just to give me a summary, a brief sort of four to five minute summary of your life to date?**
- 01:00 Well I was born here in Seaham in the house in 1928 and stayed there until the house was burned down when I was 11, in 1939 and then we moved to, as a consequence we moved to Maitland for six months and stayed nearly 10 years because
- 01:30 soon after the war started. And then my parents built this new house and moved in there in 1948 and I worked for the old man until, prior to that and after that, until I joined up in
- 02:00 1951, September, and joined the army and then came back here in 1953 and I've been here since, until now. Does that cover it?
- That's pretty good. Thank you. Now you mention that you've been living in Seaham for almost all your life.**
- 02:30 **How would you describe this part of the country and the kind of life that you've had here?**
- Well Seaham was, when I was young, was a fairly small village with a fair few families, nearly all the families were
- 03:00 dairy farmers, or worked for dairy farmers. It had gone, the village had gone downhill I numbers since the first war time about, partly because they were being killed and partly because river transport had been superseded by road. So the population, as an example
- 03:30 population of the school had dropped from 60 to when I was at school of about 15. Now, it's quite the opposite but dairy and timber was the prime occupation, whatever the word is. Does that sort of cover it for you?
- 04:00 **So when you say superseded by roads?**
- Well, we were on a river and there were ships going from Sydney to Newcastle at the head of this river Clarence Town carrying
- 04:30 timber and milk and my mother's groceries even when she first came here. And of course, the lorries put an end to that probably just before the last war, second war
- So how did that sort of work, things being delivered and transport by river?**
- Well, our milk used to be taken down
- 05:00 in cans down to the river and that went to Raymond Terrace then later on to Hexham each day. But the timber boats just called in to saw mills along the river and at Clarence Town
- 05:30 eight miles away by road. We had, oh, and the other thing of course was horses were superseded by trucks. We had bread and meat delivered here, even before the war, which was daily, it doesn't happen nowadays. But horses
- 06:00 were superseded.
- Things were delivered by horse or by river?**
- Both.
- So how would you describe the kind of activity that was happening on the river? What was it actually used for?**

Well, there were little steam boats coming from Newcastle especially

06:30 and carting people too. Up to the head of the, the end of the navigation port, which was at Clarence Town. I can't explain it very well, or I haven't, I mean. What else can we do?

In those days how long did it take to get from Newcastle to Seaham by boat?

07:00 Three or four hours. The milk boat came from Hexham which is this side of Newcastle a bit. It came twice a day when I was a kid. I suppose that was a two-hour trip for them.

07:30 And it would have stopped at 20 little wharfs belonging to each farm. Each farm had a wharf. I don't think I can expand on that very much. No, well my parents went by ship from Newcastle to Sydney because the roads were so crook when they first came here.

08:00 You'd go down at night time. But that's before I remember.

You'd go down of a night from Newcastle to Sydney?

Yes, but I don't remember that.

What kind of community, you describe that there were wharfs along the river and each property had a wharf. How close knit was the community around Seaham?

How close knit.

08:30 I don't think it was really except when there were - I remember there were big, capital B, big days, school days and sports days you know

09:00 there might be 6 a year and everybody would turn up to the park or the school but people were working 7 days a week on the dairies and there wasn't a lot of money either. Not a lot of money. I think, the first war wrecked the village. There were about a third of the 20

09:30 people or about that number, joined up about a third of them were killed that sort of wrecked things somewhat over there compared with one being killed in the last war.

In the Second World War?

Yes.

So what kind of impact did the first war have on the village?

Well I'm only talking,

10:00 not at first hand, of course, but I was just told that things changed drastically during the war because of fellas being away, young fellas, young men being away, and the casualties. Later on lots of little selections, I think they were called

10:30 little farms, just folded. Little farms, little dairies, lots of them. They must have been poverty stricken anyway compared with a few bigger ones such as this one, bigger, I don't know how we go.

So can you kind of give me an

11:00 **overview of what kind of activities and cultural work - just give me an overview of what was being done on this property at that time?**

Which time?

When your father, in your father's time?

Yes, I can. Well, he came in 1922,

11:30 when he was 21, the previous owner had been killed in 1917 when he was in Belgium and it was a dairy then and it had gone downhill because of a gap of nobody doing much. It had been, diverting, it had been quite a famous

12:00 vineyard until about 1914. But when the old man came here he cleaned things up and fixed the fences, fixed the buildings and bought some more cattle and built up a reasonable dairy with a share farmer family.

12:30 Instead of four or five little houses on little people, little people, I didn't mean that, little projects of vineyard workers. And so he had the dairy going and gradually built that up so that it supported well

13:00 eventually it supported me as well as him and the share farming family. The share farmers milked and share farmers were a definition, they milked the cows and did farming work. But it later changed that a bit. That gets up to the second war

13:30 but of course, and the fire. The war and the fire changed all that.

Before we get on to the second war and the fire. What did you know about your dad's experiences in the great war.

He didn't go to the first war.

Oh, I thought you said he did.

No, a cousin owned this place and he was killed. The old man had two brothers who went to the first war but he wasn't young enough,

14:00 old enough. So no, he went to the second war.

He went to the second war. O.K. So he had the property and during that time he went to the war. So when you say the impact of the war you mean the second war. So tell me about what stories you heard about the first war from your cousins and father?

14:30 Well, from my uncles of course. My mother had a brother who was very talkative and so we went from 1914 to 1919 with him quite often, including Gallipoli, but the other two,

15:00 my old man's two brothers, they were both in Gallipoli too, none of them were at the landing. But I heard, I suppose only one uncle told me how crook things were. My father's brother who was in the Light Horse in the Charge of

15:30 Beersheba, he told me about that charge but not anything else much. Mum's brother told me about - I don't think they told me about the crook things very much, and they must have been they were all - he told me about the funny things in France I suppose

16:00 rather than the sad things. They all joined up again in the second war, so I don't know, they were all pretty funny weren't they. No, we didn't hear much about trench life or - it must have been pretty awful. But they were all, none

16:30 of them were wounded, they all got sick the three of them at various times but, oh, no, one was wounded at the Charge of Beersheba he was shot through the arm. I forgot about that. But they all survived, I think we just took it in our stride I think. I don't think they were very talkative.

17:00 And I don't know why you would be either because it would have been so terrible.

Where did you get the impression that it was really terrible?

Well, I'm a reader as well. I had relations at the war and it still gives me the horrors to read at times. And I've become more interested

17:30 or became more interested as I got a bit older and was more interested in what Dixon Carmichael would have done prior to being killed because I've got some of his records, letters, so I suppose it's just being interested in politics and an interest in history, I think.

In terms of

18:00 **the second war, your dad was involved with the second war. What was the sequence of events, did the fire happen first or did he go to the war first?**

I might go backwards one step in that he joined the Light Horse militia I think it was called then in 1934 or 5 and the fire

18:30 burned the house down in January 1939 and he went to camp, the regiment, 16th Light Horse based in Maitland, went to camp in the beginning of 1940. Maybe even earlier than that, but anyway

19:00 they went for camp for three months at a time and it was going to be for three months and then it was another three months and it was full time until 1945, the war ended of course. But I think he might have got out just before the war ended 1944 beginning of, end of 44 or the beginning of 45, I've forgotten.

19:30 But there was no, the house had had it before the war and it took years to get some money and get some building materials to build a new one.

Do you have any memories of your dad's involvement with the Militia?

Oh yes, I do, because I think I was a nuisance

20:00 because I used to be allowed to join his squadron, troop, on weekend camps occasionally, camps, bivouacs they were called, yes. But there were no horses by then, it became a motor regiment,

20:30 it was lorries so I could sort of, I could get away with it, or he could get away with it. Well, he was an officer and I think he could sort of wangled things. But I must have been a nuisance.

So how old were you at the time?

How old was I? I was eleven or twelve, eleven, ten.

21:00 **Did the other sons of militia men go to bivouacs and camps and things?**

Not that I can recall. Oh, I don't think so. I think it was, I think it was - well, I don't know about other districts but, no, not in this district, no.

21:30 **So what was it like being the only young?**

Oh, it was only for a weekend or - it was very exciting. I must have been a damn nuisance I suppose. When they were in camp early in the war, in Armidale at the showgrounds, I

22:00 we, my mother and sister and I went to Armidale for a few months but I got sick of the school and didn't handle it very well so I went down to the showground and hid in the cook house for a week or two. I mean by the day, instead of going to school. And the cooks used to look after me.

22:30 So I suppose that was being a nuisance too. Oh, well I'd become friends with the cooks during the, prior to the war, at bivouacs, and so I used to climb the fence and if there was an inspection on at the camp

23:00 they hid me somewhere and then I used to, at half past three, at school time, at knock-off time, I'd go home and pretend I'd been at school. I don't know if that needs to be recorded as something positive.

For posterity's sake. Where would they hide you?

Oh, in the meat room or the cool room. There was no refrigerator and there was

23:30 hessian, keep it out of the flies I suppose as much as being cool. I don't know if my old man knew if was there or not.

What would you do during the day?

What would I do? Oh, I don't know. Eat and cook, you know. Stoke the fire I suppose, I don't really recall being useful.

24:00 I was useful, this is skite, but I was useful with one of them during the war. He was a prisoner in Malaya and wrote to him a few times and he got a couple of my letters, that was probably useful unintentionally.

24:30 I don't think I can tell you any more about the militia.

In terms of how old you would have been when you were hiding in the cookhouse during school time?

Oh, I was at primary school, twelve, eleven, twelve I suppose.

So what do you think was more interesting

25:00 **hanging out there than hanging out at school?**

I really don't now, I must have, I just didn't like the school, I suppose I'd fallen foul of school teachers at the Armidale Demonstration School, it was called, and you couldn't run in the playground that sort of upset me

25:30 so I thought I'd be different. But it all became a bit more serious after that, the army part of it, because the old man was in camp all the time and went away, defending Newcastle, and thereabouts, and then to Queensland and then to New Guinea.

How much did you see of your dad

26:00 **when he was full time in the camp.**

For a couple of years we saw him quite often, when he was camped down near Newcastle, at Belmont, actually. They thought the Japs might land, or somebody did. We saw him quite often then, he came home

26:30 every week or two, you know, just for a few hours. He was a squadron leader so he sort of had a bit more leeway than Joe Blow. I can tell you a one off thing if you do want to hear it about how we defended Newcastle.

27:00 Shall I go on? The old man came home one night to Maitland with a Vickers machinegun and set it up in the sitting room and my mother and another woman made a pattern, you'd call it, out of,

27:30 of a cover, to cover the machine gun and to keep the sand out of it when they had them on the beach. And then the old man went home and they made a dozen calico covers to cover these guns that they had on the beach around Belmont, Swansea

28:00 area. But that would have been, not many people had a Vickers machine gun in the sitting room. We thought that was a bit of a thrill.

Did you ever get to fire the gun?

Before the war I did.

Can you tell us about that?

No, well, it was just,

28:30 it was before the war when they had weekend bivouacs. Sometimes they were at Seaham, based on the, they used to camp in the School of Arts hall, the Maitland Squadron and they used to shoot with the Vickers machine guns out in the bush here. And I was allowed to have a go.

29:00 And another time, I camped with them in the back of the car down near Lake Macquarie. I didn't fire the machine gun there but fired a 303 rifle, a few shots. So, I don't know any more.

29:30 **How much experience had you had with guns prior to that?**

There'd always been guns to shoot rabbits or birds, you know, a little rifle. I think everybody took it as normal for kids to be shooting.

30:00 There was nothing, that was just something that happened I think. We used to shoot in the back yard in Maitland, you know, in a suburban house back yard. Nobody was fussed about that. It'd be different now, wouldn't it?

30:30 No I think that sort of gets us through the second war. The old man went to New Guinea, they broke the regiment up in 1943 I suppose, and they were in camp at various places in Queensland at that time and they went

31:00 so that he had no job and he got a job at, dropped his rank, and got a job taking reinforcements to New Guinea and was there for, in part of 43 and part of 44, for about ten months I think, he wasn't in action but they were camped in Lae.

31:30 **How often did your dad come home before he left?**

He didn't, not for, once he went to Queensland and then New Guinea, no, we didn't see him for a couple of years I suppose, 18, oh 18 months perhaps.

That time you described when he brought home the Vickers gun

32:00 **did he bring his uniform home and...?**

He was in uniform the whole and, oh yeah, there was never any, there was never any, there were never any civilian clothes times to go on leave

32:30 or anything like that, no.

Did you ever get to try on his uniform?

No, I had to get my own. No, I don't think we, it wouldn't have occurred to us. No, I don't think I can be any more useful than that. He came home and was sick in hospital

33:00 and we didn't know he was home in Toowoomba or Warwick, I can't remember, one of those had a hospital and he was there for a month or so with dengue fever but I don't think he was too bad. He got malaria after he got out of army.

33:30 Same as, I did took, after we'd been discharged. Anyway, that was the second war.

Tell me about your mum, how was she responding with your dad being away for so long?

I don't know and I don't think we sort of thought about it much. I think she was probably lonely, well of course she would have been. She kept,

34:00 she kept herself busy not only with work and my sister and I and school but she used to work in, for a couple of years or more, worked in a shop that the Red Cross ran in Maitland feeding not only troops but civilians

34:30 paid, it was a money-making thing, shop. I think it was called the Red Cross shop. And I think the money might have been meant to be ear-marked for prisoners but I don't know how they would have done that and I don't remember how often she worked in it, you know, as a bottle-washer, waitress, whatever. And she also,

35:00 and others, I mean, she didn't do this on her own, and others, they made camouflage nets. You know what I mean by that? And they made those in a hall next door to where we lived actually. And I don't remember how, whether that was every day you had to turn up, perhaps, I don't know, making these nets.

35:30 **How did they make the nets?**

It was, it was coloured, probably jute I'd say, about as thick as your electric wires there and with a, like,

- what's the word,
- 36:00 with a shuttle, what do you call it?
- A needle.**
- Yeah, when they've got a loom, I can't think of the word.
- Weave?**
- Weaving, yes. Squares of net made out of these course strings, for want of a better word. It was probably two inch
- 36:30 by two squares, I mean that's what it finished up like. I think everybody knows about camouflage nets. Back to my mother, no, I don't think we sort of took a lot of
- 37:00 gave it a lot of thought probably. She went down, we all went down to Sydney to live for a while in 1944 probably, to my grandmother's, her mother. My mother's sister had come out from England during the war, God knows how she got here. I mean, she came by boat but how she wangled that I don't know.
- 37:30 With her four-year-old child, getting away from the Germans. So I suppose they sort of held each other's hands. It was my mother's sister was married to a Pommy sailor. She went back before the end of the war, too, I don't know how the hell she did either of those trips, got away with it.
- 38:00 But they evacuated a lot of kids from England to various places during the war of course, including here I suppose. But I don't think we were old enough to be too fussed about the old man being away and I don't think we sort of worried and gave Mum much of a thought actually, probably.
- 38:30 I don't know, well, everybody, there was lots of people in the same boat, you know. We weren't Robinson. You know everybody around had somebody at the war, a friend or relation. We had plenty of relations too so, I don't think we thought much, I don't think we were terribly worried about it other than will the Japs land or the Germans beat us
- 39:00 I mean we were fussed about that but I don't think we were too fussed about individual people. Not as fussed as we should have been, I'd say.

Tape 2

- 00:43 **So tell me about your younger sister?**
- My sister, is a couple, or two years younger than I am.
- 01:00 Tell me about her did you say? And she, we got on reasonably well, but she lives in Tasmania and has a husband and a few kids and has been lucky as I have, having the right genes, and still reasonably fit.
- 01:30 She went to school in, is this what you're on about, she went to school as I did, here in Seaham for a few years until we had to move to Maitland, after the fire. And then she went to the High School, as I did, in Maitland for a few years and then we went to school in Sydney
- 02:00 for a couple of years. And then she did kids nursing, Karitane [mothercraft], there's another word, you know Karitane nursing, if it wasn't that it was the equivalent, and minded other people's kids. More than that, when the mother just had the kid and brought her home from hospital that sort of thing, went to live with them.
- 02:30 Until she got married, while I was away, in 1952, she was married. And she's a grandmother. So I don't know, that's about her history I suppose.
- So what kind of things did you guys get up to when you were little? Did you hang out much?**
- 03:00 My sister and me? Yeah, we were, we played together here fairly well. I don't know what we did very much but we were not
- 03:30 we didn't go visiting other people's houses. This is before the fire, partly because of distance I think, but we were pretty isolated except for the share farmer's family and they were much older than us so I don't think we did anything really exciting
- 04:00 except walking, around the farm or feeding the cows etc. I don't think it was terribly exciting childhood. Oh, we had ponies so that was a (UNCLEAR) and we used to go and ride around the cattle with the old man. I'm not sure how often but
- 04:30 when we got to be 10 or 8 or something. We had two little ponies anyway. We had bikes, we went to school, sometimes walking, sometimes pushbike but, no, we weren't terribly adventurous I don't think.

So tell me some of the pranks and

05:00 **naughty things that you used to get up to when you were little?**

We had, it's not quite answering your question but, I think we both enjoyed and didn't realise quite how hard the fire and the war was on our parents, and we quite enjoyed living in town and going to a bigger

05:30 school and having kids to play with nearby, compared with here. And, we had push bikes, we just sort of went our own, as long as we were home for tea, we sort of did visiting whenever we felt like it and I know my mother wasn't too fussed that we'd come to any harm.

06:00 And nobody did either. I don't know about pranks. No, we weren't very adventurous. We were very disciplined, had been disciplined. You know, if the old man said do this or that or don't do it, I suppose, and all that, that's what happened, there weren't many arguments. So we were probably

06:30 pretty, fairly meek and mild really.

How did your old man discipline you?

Oh, verbally most times but, you know, belted with a leather belt occasionally for whatever transgression or being cheeky, that was a (UNCLEAR). So,

07:00 no, we weren't downtrodden but we weren't fairly adventurous I don't think. Meek and mild covers it. Probably still does.

Were you close with your parents?

Oh yes, oh, yes. But we weren't

07:30 gregarious I think is the word I suppose, a gregarious family. Part of that, I think, was upbringing and partly because, they were Sydney people my parents, and then came here, and also, you know, didn't have a lot of money. Didn't drink much didn't gamble much and

08:00 war time of course wasn't a very hilarious making time, it was for some people, not for us, for a lot of people. Pranks, no, I don't think we were, we were pretty lacking in initiative probably.

So what did you get disciplined for? Can you describe a memory of when you were

08:30 **in trouble most, the time when you were most in trouble?**

Oh, it would have been if we, you know, if we were careless or hit the ball through the window or something like that, you know. Not careless, but not careful enough to put it another way. No,

09:00 it didn't happen very often.

Can you remember the time when you got into trouble the most for something that you did specifically?

No I can't I don't think there was anything, no I don't think there was anything really dreadful. I was probably in trouble for wagging school in Armidale,

09:30 as I talked about because that would have caught up with me, or did. Upsetting my old grandmother, perhaps, you know, but nothing very drastic, no.

So can you describe for me what happened with the fire and the impact? Can you describe that event and the impact that had on your family?

10:00 Well, I can't describe first hand what happened in that we weren't here. And that's probably why it did happen, that the house was burned. But there was a bush fire burning to the west of our place and the west of the village, ten miles maybe, for a week or more

10:30 and we were on holidays at Forster, the whole family. And, we took it too cheap, obviously, or the old man did, and there was a family here a hundred yards away, you know, with half a dozen kids, grown up kids, so I thought he thought every thing could be coped with.

11:00 And the fire came one particular day, one dreadful day, a bit like, very like the Christmas Canberra type of day, this year, last year, last year. Terribly strong winds, terribly high temperature, very early in the day and the fire just took off from the west and came through the villages and burned this, burnt several places, houses.

11:30 And we were told by the share farmer that they thought everything was right, that the fire had gone past the house towards the river but something blew into the gutter, which had rubbish in the gutter, and the house was very old, it was 100 years old,

12:00 it had shingles, timber shingles underneath the iron and the leaves in the gutter caught fire and the shingles caught fire and there was nothing anybody could do about it. It was made of stone, that was

another reason why we thought the house would be safe because it was made of stone. But once it gone underneath the iron and the shingles, there was nothing anybody could do about it, and there were other

- 12:30 buildings around here, stables and cellars and machinery sheds, they all went west and all the fences. The share farmer's cottage didn't though, made of timber, neither did the hay shed which was on the west, made of timber and old, because people were there. And those Canberra houses would have been burned, as many of them been burned, if people had stayed where they were too,
- 13:00 says I. So it was devastating in more ways than just the house and the only thing we had were our clothes and a few toys, a bit of jewellery, but other than the house going
- 13:30 the devastation for the old man was, the other devastation was there were no fences to speak of left. And no feed for the cattle, of course. So the cattle were shifted, do I go on? The cattle, some of them stayed here to be milked and fed and the younger ones and dry cattle were taken somewhere else where there was a bit of feed.
- 14:00 And lots of money would have been spent, and time, building a shed but building, rebuilding fences. And then sort of coupled with the fact that the war s obviously going to happen. The money, money-wise it would have been a real
- 14:30 bit of devastation. Had the house insured but I think, all the fences and all the sheds and the house, I think it was eleven, I don't know about contents, eleven hundred pounds, whatever that might be now, but by the time the war was over
- 15:00 and the fences were done there wasn't any of that left to rebuild this. So we had to sell land. My old man wasn't a gambler or a borrower so that sort of added to the difficulties. The school was burned
- 15:30 down. The school house and the school, both made of brick, they were burned down and a few other houses to the south and the next door house that would have been on this place originally, made of stone, it was burned. Nobody was killed and not many stock were lost so there were positive things.
- 16:00 And the places, the hall and a couple of houses near the hall, holed and timber, weren't burned because people were there and that's a big lesson still to be learned by some people. There have been no houses burned in Seaham since then. We've had some fires.
- 16:30 But we're pretty fire conscious. There wasn't the organisation then that there is now either. But the big thing was that nobody was actually here at the house.

Can you just expand on that? Why is it so important to be near a house if it's burning or there's a big fire?

Well, I can but

- 17:00 I don't say it wouldn't have burned but plenty of houses can catch, have caught fire and fences around houses and people have been there and been able to put it out before the wind catches sparks and burns the joint down. And the big demonstration and proof of that was in London
- 17:30 during the war, with incendiary bombs, there must have been hundreds and thousands of places on fire and people put them out, plenty didn't of course, but we've had a couple of decent fires here since the '39 fire and no place has been burned
- 18:00 down. And I think the lesson was that somebody wants to be around because sparks can blow for a mile or two or whatever. The fire jumped the river here, which is a 100 yards plus yards wide, you know, the '39 fire.

So how much of an impact had the depression also contributed to things before the fire?

- 18:30 Oh I think probably pretty big. The industry, the dairy industry, was in the doldrums as well, part of things in general. So the income from the place would have been pretty minimal, from the farm. Depression, you know, we always had plenty of
- 19:00 tucker and clothes and a car. My old man was left some money as well as the place, by the fellow who was killed, so that helped with cleaning up fences and getting things in reasonable order, early 20s, prior to the depression being really bad.
- 19:30 But I don't think there were any, there weren't any holidays or things like that. The share farmers of course never had a holiday until they retired. But I think that they, they had a reasonable house and reasonably off I suppose but they
- 20:00 stayed here, well the ones that I can remember, can in 1930 and that's in the depression, and they'd lost their farm, the father had, at Glen Innes, and he came here with no money and 8 kids. And gradually the kids got married
- 20:30 and left them or whatever but he stayed 16 years, he must have been reasonably happy, reasonably well

treated. And the next lot, well that got through the war too. I think things would have been hard but we weren't, my sister and I weren't really conscious of it

21:00 and we didn't, another reason we weren't conscious of it, other than age, was that we weren't on the road or in town and so we didn't see unemployed people. My wife did, she lived on a farm too, and they were off the road, but she lived with her grandmother in Taree town and

21:30 she said that there were plenty of people there wanting a feed or chop the wood in exchange for a feed which didn't happen here, that I know about, I mean the old man might have given people a hand that I don't know about, you know. So it had minimal affect, for us, for the kids anyway.

22:00 **So just jumping forward a little bit in history. Can you describe the day when war was declared, the Second World War, can you describe that day and where you were and how you found out about it?**

Yeah, well, I think we were, well, one, we were in Maitland

22:30 at the house, we leased the house there, and we had a wireless and we were pretty conscious that it, we, the family, and not just us, that things were crook. I think we, we had a wireless off the track a bit, but we had a wireless with a car battery on it not,

23:00 not electricity, because we thought we were going to come out here to live at Seaham again and there wasn't any electricity at that time, that's a diversion, no, we would have heard, we did here, but I'm not sure in what order, we would have been crowded round the little wireless listening to the news four or five times a day probably.

23:30 No, that might be an exaggeration it would be three times a day the news seemed to be on and nothing else much, you know, you weren't allowed to use the wireless, for frivolous things. That wasn't any shock, the beginning of the war, because politics was a thing we,

24:00 people local and otherwise, politics was a conversation in the family always, as long as I can remember, newspapers the same and the wireless the same and the news. And I think we were, we the family, and that would have been prompted by the old man, no doubt, were

24:30 quite convinced that war would break out, we'd be fighting the Japs and the Germans fairly soon, you know, whether that was next year or this year or next week. But by the time, well, there was no attempt to make, build anew house in 1939. It wouldn't have just been money it would have been because I know the war's going to happen and we don't want any further complications, you know.

25:00 So, yeah, we would have heard, Oh God, yeah, but nearly everybody of my age onwards would have been very conscious of it but the reaction, not the reaction,

25:30 but the consequences would have varied fairly there. Off the track, but the consequences or the thoughts on the war would have been varied, would have been varied, would have been, but families who had people, who had family in the first war

26:00 would have been very conscious if not fearful compared with these people who didn't have somebody at the first war. And there were plenty that didn't, but you know half the population must have had somebody at the war, but the others half didn't, the first war I mean, but the reaction and the

26:30 interest in the war would have been coloured somewhat wouldn't it. And ours more than most probably. Anyway, that's my, I think that sort of covers it.

You mentioned before that your mum was involved with making camouflage nets and various other activities

27:00 **that were being done. Can you describe what sort of war effort was being done in the area and what other activities were happening at that time?**

Yeah, well there were a lot of, yeah, there were money-making activities, everything from raffles to fetes to collect money for the Red Cross of the equivalent. There was a big effort

27:30 that seemed to go in spurts collecting aluminium and paper for, what was it called, salvage was the key word, salvage collection I suppose. But the aluminium was going to make another spitfire and I don't know what the paper was going to do.

28:00 Make some more newspaper I suppose. And we used to go around shops and people's saucepans sort of disappeared to go to the salvage store or depot, depot is the word I suppose, in Maitland. What else happened?

28:30 I don't know. Rationing of course was a big talking point but that's not going to, oh, I suppose it's part of the war effort isn't it. That didn't fuss us a lot except for butter but that was a,

29:00 that was a, I suppose, the whole population was involved in the rationing and its, whatever it meant to those various families, whether it was food or petrol or clothes, of course. But that's hardly, I don't

know, I don't know whether that's a war effort,

29:30 that's a war necessity I suppose. I don't think we really knew any hardship really if we thought about it. Shortage of butter. People did a swap for sugar or meat or something but it didn't,

30:00 I don't think we were terribly, as a population I don't think we were too badly affected and we as a family weren't too fussed by it I don't think. It was a good thing politically, after the war, when Menzies decided we could stop petrol rationing, that was a big electioneering

30:30 ploy perhaps might be the word. We got some money during the war, too, that was something different. The old man, it must have been, there was some sort of, this is not making the war effort, it was making the kids, it was almost making an allowance out of pay, there was some sort of, some sort of

31:00 welfare, I can't explain it, but some sort of child endowment would be the equivalent now for everybody I think, for every kid, maybe, maybe beforehand it was something else, somebody else will tell you. Maybe it was income based but anyway we got money put in our bank accounts. But I'm off the track.

Did that have anything to do with your dad being married and in the army?

31:30 What do you mean?

Having the child endowment?

Oh, he, yeah, I didn't, we weren't, money wasn't talked of much. We wouldn't have known, the two of us kids wouldn't have been told, it wouldn't have occurred to us I think. We would get a shilling a week

32:00 pocket money or whatever it was. But as official money, no we wouldn't have known about it. Until after the war the old man got some money unexpectedly from the army, army pay, after he got out, and he gave us a present, he gave us a watch

32:30 because he got, I think he got some extra money, I've forgotten, I think because they decided they diddled him when he dropped his rank from one rank to another and therefore dropped his pay. They gave him some back pay, I don't know how it happened but we got a present, the two of us kids I mean, I suppose he did too.

33:00 What was your involvement with the war effort?

Other than collecting paper and aluminium. Minimal. I was only 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. Oh, I joined the Air League but that was occupational therapy for somebody

33:30 and a bit like the boy scouts for anybody else I suppose. I don't know, we were, I think, no, I don't think we did anything very positive other than collecting rubbish, aluminium and paper, we didn't make nets or whatever.

So tell me more about the Air League?

That was a boy scout equivalent and some of us went to, I suppose we thought, you know, we'd all join the air force and we went to a place in town, a store in town and some old fellow taught us how to, not only make model aeroplanes but Morse code,

34:00 learn Morse code and recognise aeroplanes from a card, pictures of them. You can imagine, you know, 27 different sorts of aeroplane flying over Maitland but anyway I'm sure it was

34:30 meant well but it wasn't very positive. I joined the cadets when I went to school in Sydney for a couple of years, the school cadets, and then I joined, I was at a boarding school for a couple of years in Sydney and I went to, and I joined the cadets and then I joined the Air Training Corps,

35:00 you could join that under age. You had to be, you had to be 16 perhaps, 16 I think, and so I joined that prior to that, a few months before that and then that came unstuck because I did a, it might have been 17, no 16, because I did a medical to confirm

35:30 it and failed. Well that's what the piece of paper said. So that made me pretty unhappy, made me unhappier still at school, and here I am 100 years later still ticking over. I think somebody didn't want me to be in the air training corps.

36:00 I tried to join the navy then, you could be 16, under 17 anyway, so I got references with great difficulty and fronted up for a medical there and failed that because you had to be 5'5" or ten stone and I couldn't make either

36:30 of those either. So that was all, but at that time the war was damn near over so they obviously didn't need me. So I came, the old man got out of the army and I came home and worked here.

I wouldn't mind actually asking you a few more questions about the air, sorry the air school,

37:00 **Air Training Corps and also about cadets. But we're right at the very end of this tape so I'll**

just, well just swap.

Tape 3

00:44 **So, Toby, tell me about the attraction or the interest in flying?**

Well, I think that, my attraction, I think that nine out of ten boys would have been

01:00 pretty keen on the idea of flying and I think the volunteer rate for air force was 3 out of 5 wanted to be in the air force rather than the army. And I had, I had a friend at Maitland, or a family, whose son was in the air force and was flying

01:30 in England, so I thought that was another, another reason to join the air force and of course it never happened.

Had you spent much time in the air?

Had I? No, no, I hadn't. Probably only one or two flights

02:00 from an air strip at Newcastle Aerodrome which I know the sports ground I think. No, I hadn't but I think lots of people wanted to learn to fly. My old man did, too, he was going to learn to fly,

02:30 that'll be a depression problem. He was going to have a good car, I'm off the track, have a good car, he had a Buick because of the money left him, and a race horse, and that never won any races, and he was going to learn to fly. So the depression arrived and so did I and so that put the kybosh on all those things. However, people wanted to be a fighter pilot

03:00 didn't they? So everybody had to be in the cadets at this school that I was in and that was pretty, pretty boring and so when I was old enough for air training corps I

03:30 opted for that but that came unstuck.

So tell me about, just before we talk about cadets, so in terms of, what was the aircraft that you flew in on the couple of flights from Newcastle that you were in?

Oh, that was a monoplane,

04:00 a biplane, a tiger moth, I'm pretty sure. You know, you could, I think you, you know, paid ten shillings for a ten minute flight or whatever it was. So, flying around, giving joy rides before I remember, I didn't remember that,

04:30 around Australia, but, no, this was just a tiny little plane.

So was it some sort of a kind of entertainment sort of thing people would go and do it as a joy ride?

Oh, as you still can. The Newcastle air club, of course, couldn't fly out of the middle of Newcastle nowadays so it's still a Newcastle air club and based

05:00 on the outskirts of Maitland, at Rutherford. And you can go there to fly. But the only time that I've flown with it since, in the club, in little planes other than the war, my war, were in flights from Rutherford in a super

05:30 phosphate cropping plane and, what's the word, you know, aerial fertilising and similar, a couple of little planes there. There flew once in the army in a little plane, anyway off the track, you're talking about the second war anyway.

So you went to boarding school was it? Where was that, and what school was it?

06:00 Well I disliked it so much I'll tell you. It was at Scots at Bellevue Hill. I'm think, I'm not sure why we went for a couple of years, except that sort of, in retrospect, it may have been because there was a bit more money available and the old man was in the army and the dairy was a little bit better but also I suppose in the back of their head

06:30 it might have been that we went to boarding school because I might not have been working at school enough here and also maybe in the back of their head maybe the old man might have got skittled perhaps, I don't know. But I was there for a couple of years and disliked it and I think it was mutual.

07:00 And the housemaster was the OC [Officer Commanding] of the air training corps and he and I didn't hit it off and that's why I failed the medical I think, but I don't know. So I've failed a medical since, also, so maybe he was right. So, I didn't get to be in the army,

07:30 the navy or the air force. And the war didn't last long enough too for me to get any of those things. So I

joined the militia after the war, the CMF [Civilian Military Forces], or whatever you want to call it.

Before we expand on that, what did you mean by your father may have been skittled?

Well, I meant he might have been killed, you know, and therefore it might have been simpler

08:00 For my mother to cope if I was, or we were, at boarding school and she was staying with her mother, at that time, in Sydney. I don't know, that's just a guess.

This was still during the war you started to go to Scots?

Yes, '40, '44 and '45, I was there, yes.

So,

08:30 **why did you hate it so much? Why was it so awful?**

Well, I'm a shy person, I told you that. I didn't know anybody. No, I think, basically, shyness. And I got on reasonably well with a fair number of people in Maitland and, you know,

09:00 I was sorry to lose sight of them during school time. And, oh God, I don't know, I hadn't been restricted like that before. I don't know, it was a shock to the constitution to say the least. I thought it was dreadful.

09:30 **How old were you at the time?**

15 and 16.

So how did they restrict you? What kind of things did they do?

Well, I was boarding, so, at the school, you know in a school-run

10:00 house and so it was, that was restrictive and you were meant to play sport every day and Saturdays you played sport and Sundays, if you were very good, you could get a leave pass to go and see your grandmother or something. I don't know, it was all just a petty shock to the constitution.

10:30 The restrictions, I would think nowadays, thinking about it now, and I, you know, I wasn't any great shakes to them at sport or scholastically I suppose, I remember those things didn't come easily. But I think basically it was the shyness. I didn't know anybody in the army later on and I coped with that so I don't know,

11:00 oh, I wasn't as shy. And lack of money, that was the other thing, you know, to go shopping on Saturdays or go to the pictures or something like that and I didn't have that available.

Did you have anything to do with the other blokes at all? What were they like?

Oh, I became friendly with a couple,

11:30 I wasn't completely ostracised but a fair few I didn't want to see again and I never do. And a couple of masters the same. I wished I'd been bigger, I would have said a few words occasionally when I was game. No, it was just

12:00 I think it was probably a waste of my parent's money and a fairly unhappy time for me.

Boys can be, or kids can be, quite cruel when you don't fit in and stuff, not even when you don't fit in but when you're a new kid. What were some of the things that happened like at the new school?

No, that didn't, no, I don't think the kids were ever unkind to me.

12:30 No, I don't think, I don't think I was bullied if that's what the thought might be. No, I don't think I've struck that. No, I think some kids did get bullied

13:00 and that upset me somewhat and I wasn't big enough to do anything about it. By teachers as well as by senior boys. However, that's me.

How do boys respond, I mean I know that girls are very specific with this kind of thing, but how do boys respond when you don't have lots of money to chuck around, to go to the movies

13:30 **and do things like that?**

How did they respond? Oh, I think, find your own way Jack, I don't know, I don't think anyone, I don't think anyone, no, no one, they didn't hold anything against me and I wasn't the only one short of dough,

14:00 I'm sure, but no, I don't think that's worth pursuing, just a chip on my shoulder probably. I've always been broke, until I got the Gold Card. No, it's not quite true but I've never had a lot of money.

14:30 **So tell us a bit more about cadets. What kinds of things did you do in cadets?**

Left down, right down and so it goes, you know. I went on a parade to the Garrison Church for the, I don't know what we were celebrating, but the Duke of Gloucester was

15:00 the governor-general I suppose, then, and he must have been going to church. And I went on a, I went on a parade there by virtue of being in the cadets and, and I also went in kilt too, what's more, somebody else's,

15:30 somebody must have been in the band, I can't play anything so I don't know what role I was meant to be there but that was quite a "Let's be Different" day. I don't know what the hell I had to do but I'm sure that's where it was.

Why did your parents choose Scots?

Choose?

16:00 I'm not sure, maybe it was cheaper than some of the others, I'm not sure about that. But cheaper, I'm not certain but maybe because the old man had a brother who lived nearby and one or two of his

16:30 kids were at Scots and the first person, you'll laugh, the first person I met was a second or third cousin who introduced himself, knowing that I was arriving I suppose. He subsequently married my sister. So that, I suppose, some good came out of going to Scots.

17:00 But maybe because the old man's brother was living nearby. My brother-in-law, I don't know where his mother was but, I didn't know it then, his father was a prisoner. Not in Long Bay but in Germany.

17:30 He was captured in Tobruk.

Did you ever get his story?

Some of it. The prisoner bit, my brother-in-law's father. A bit, he'd been to the first war too, he must have been a harem scarum fellow and he said he was captured because

18:00 he went too far on a patrol and the Germans got him and, yes, I did hear a bit but I don't know whether you want to have it on. But Jimmy Rain said that, years later, that he had to get in touch with the Russian Embassy, before the Ambassador left

18:30 Australia during the Petrov Affair, he had to get in touch with the Russian Ambassador and I said, why, and he said, oh, so I can get my Russian war medal or whatever you call it. Because, he said, I was with the Russian Army for three weeks or whatever, in Romania, just near the end of the war

19:00 he'd been in Austria working in a, not in a camp, but in a forest attached to some Austrians. I don't suppose he was on his own, but anyway, and he'd cleared out before the end of the war and ended up with the Russians in Romania he said, but I think it's probably true. But

19:30 that's his war story.

Do you have any recollections of Sydney? Any memories of Sydney anything that sticks out?

I could draw a map of the harbour once. We went on a pleasant day from school, a geography lesson by ferry around. Oh yeah, yes, I knew it reasonably well, I thought,

20:00 but I hadn't been to La Perouse until ten years ago so I didn't know it very well, really, did I. My grandmother lived at Hunters Hill and I knew that pretty well, riding around on a pushbike but so no,

20:30 Sydney. Yeah, and I used to go from school, I used to go to the Domain on Sundays, you'd go to the Domain to listen to the spruikers. And on Saturdays, I didn't have any, God I'm harping on that, didn't have enough money. On Saturdays,

21:00 on Saturdays I went to the Synagogue at times but that's when they performed. There were a lot of Jews at Scots at the time and, I don't know whether I went with one or just knew about it. Anyway.

So tell me about the synagogue?

I went there and I've got a Jewish-looking nose somebody told me

21:30 but there were a lot of Jews at Scots and a lot of Jewish kids that have got out of Europe at the beginning of the war and lived around Double Bay and Bondi. So I used to go, I used to think it was interesting and I used to go to the Domain to hear the spruikers talking about

22:00 how to cure their kidneys or what a dreadful thing the Communist Party was or what a great thing the Communist Party was. Have you ever been there? Whose interview is it? I don't know, that's one of my better memories of school I suppose.

So was that quite a common thing that spruikers would be in the Domain just on a soapbox or something.

And still there, yeah, like Hyde Park corner

22:30 in London. Yeah, there were thousands of people there at times for some particular reason. I suppose election time there were more people talking politics. I think there must have been an election soon after the war or during the war, during the war I suppose, the end of the war I suppose,

23:00 otherwise I wouldn't have been there.

So do anything stick out, any of these spruikers particularly, someone that, you had a favourite or anyone stick out in your mind or make an impression on you?

Oh, I think, down with communism or up with communism or my life story and how I cure my various ailments, quack remedies.

23:30 **You sound like you were quite political even as a young, not political in a subversive sense but it sounds like you took an active interest in what was happening and understood those things politically?**

Oh, I had no option if you lived in my house and, oh, gee whiz, before the fire I had to go up to, to,

24:00 my old man should have given me some more pocket money. I had to go to tear down a placard or whatever it was called, that as tacked to a gum tree up near the road that belonged to somebody's party that he didn't agree with. I had to go and do that. Oh, yeah, politics was, it would have been in his childhood too.

24:30 His old man was a, they weren't ever politicians, but he spruiked politically.

Did yo ever consider spruiking yourself?

No, I'm too damn shy.

Were your family religious?

No, no. My mother,

25:00 no they weren't. I think their parents would have been believers probably. I don't know whether they went to church. No, my parents didn't go to church, they were Protestants. My mother said that the minister came here for

25:30 lunch, she must have gone to church I suppose, invited him back for lunch, soon after she was married. So he had lunch and said, thank you very much, it was better than I expected. So that was the end of that but, no, non believers.

So how was it viewed by your Jewish mates that you were interested in going to synagogues?

26:00 Oh, I think because of, one, being they were different, but no more, they had interesting "my life story", you know, how we got out of Yugoslavia or Austria or whatever. So, that interested me and I'm a fairly good listener I think rather than a talker, god, you'd never guess.

26:30 I think that covers it.

Was the synagogue down in Bondi?

No, no, down in Elizabeth, Castlereagh Street, oh no, yes, that's right, it was in the main one, it goes right through I think doesn't it. Castlereagh to Elizabeth or

27:00 is that right? I think we went into the Elizabeth Street entrance and I suppose it was something different.

I'm going to have to as you to describe that experience?

The women upstairs, they wouldn't have, anyway, up on the top deck and the men downstairs with

27:30 hats on and I suppose, I suppose some of it was in English but I can't, I can't remember that part of it. I can only remember the chanting, well I don't know what word they used, their equivalent of

28:00 on rolls, rather than a book, and they gave me a loan of a thing which I've forgotten the name of like a white, got a feeling it might have been silk, like a scarf to put over your shoulders. It must have been, if you didn't have your own, there must have been a

28:30 supply of those for the poverty stricken people or the Christians, I'm not sure. Anyway, it's sad isn't it?

Why it's sad?

Well, I don't want to, I don't want to sound too hard done by or whatever, you know

29:00 my life was pretty good and sedate compared to a lot of those poor people whose relations had been exterminated. I don't know how much we knew about that at the time but they would have known I suppose...

Did anyone talk to you about those experiences?

No, they didn't. About the Germans killing them?

29:30 No, not really, no. I had a friend who wasn't in that category at all at school. His father died while we were at school, he was in the Navy and his father was killed and that sort of upset me a bit because I was friendly with him. But didn't know the family.

30:00 He may have been English, too, I think. May have been on his own. It wasn't until after the war I realised, long after the war, I realised how unthinking, I don't know about feeling, undemonstrative we were as a family

30:30 about other people's casualties, problems, problem's not the word but, you know, problem because of casualties, devastation, but God there were a lot of them.

Did you ever go back to your Jewish mates homes like for Sabbath or to spend the weekend or anything like that?

While I was at school? To one.

31:00 His father was in the air force and they lived at Mosman and, oh, another one, a local one at Bellevue Hill and I went to, so that's not right, and I went to my aunt and my father's brothers family

31:30 once or twice, they were pretty strange. They weren't very hospitable but maybe there's more to it, maybe it was me. No, I think we were an undemonstrative family and unfriendly.

32:00 Yeah, that covers it, we weren't, we never did have people staying with us for any length of time or very often. I mean we had people, but seldom. And I think it's just we had the Ralston make-up I think.

And how did that experience compare to your mates' house in Mosman, your experience of family?

32:30 Say that again?

How did your experience or understanding of family differ when you went to your friend's house in Mosman?

The family at Mosman, the bloke, I'm not sure, the boy was at school with me and he was a,

33:00 he must have been odd too. Maybe we were odd because our parents were in the services. Oh, no, there must have been plenty of those. His father came home, oh God, his father came home, this is how crook school was, his father came home from New Guinea, air force, and the house master wouldn't, had doubts about giving him

33:30 all the weekend off. So I wrote him out a leave pass and told him to clear out to Mosman. I'm off the track now, but that's one of the things that sort of got my goat about school, the school set up. So, his father gave me a

34:00 reference so I could join the navy. Maybe that was because I got the leave for the kid, younger, only a year younger than me I think.

Did you get caught?

No, I don't think anyone would dare. I don't know, it would have been known but I don't think anyone would dare get upset about it.

They were a

34:30 **Jewish family but he was in the air force?**

No, he wasn't a Jew, no.

Did you ever go back to your Jewish mates houses?

No, I don't think I did, no. I went to one who had a Jewish name but I think he was a Swiss I think. No, I don't think I did, no.

35:00 I think I wouldn't have been easy to get on with. Going back to people's houses, you can ask me later, was different in the army because we had people who did that sort of thing in a big way.

Was there a lot of money around Bellevue Hill, around Double Bay

35:30 **area at that time?**

I don't know, I wouldn't have been in the position to know at that time, but I doubt if there would have been. Cheap houses because people were frightened to live there for a while when people thought the Japs were going to arrive. There wasn't,

- 36:00 no, it would be hard to know because there weren't many cars on the road simply because of the war and petrol, let alone the money to buy them. My old man's brother had a large car but it was a 1927 or 1928 one, you know. And the kids, the kids were, and I suppose
- 36:30 there must have been enough money for these kids to be at school, and boarders, you know. So, I don't know the answer to that but plenty, no, there wouldn't have been as it is now.

Can you describe what Bondi was like?

No, no, no. Because I didn't go there, I only went as far as,

- 37:00 might have gone out to Bondi on a tram for a trip and didn't stop but no, Rose Bay and Double Bay were my, as far as I went. I had a grandmother, the old man's mother lived in a, at the end of the war, last few years of the war, and the last few years of her life, lived in a boarding house, I suppose you might call it,
- 37:30 but Boarding House will do at Rose Bay. It might be like a semi nursing-home set up now. But she was a very old woman and I used to go to see her. That was the other home I used to go to, go to the nursing home. She was ninety something or other.

I just want to ask you one more question about the,

- 38:00 **your Jewish mates at school. You mentioned that you didn't know really what the context was, there wasn't a lot of information coming in but what did you know, what was the maximum that you could tell us that you knew at that stage about how the Jews were being treated in the war?**

Well I don't, I think people of those families would have known

- 38:30 but we didn't talk about it much. Very little, if any. But the people in Europe and, say, England, closer to the action, I don't think we would have known anything other than just rumours about them being knocked off. The same applied, not answering your question, but the same applied with, we were never
- 39:00 sure how our prisoners were being treated. We had a fair idea that things weren't too bad for most of them but we couldn't be sure in Europe. But our thoughts were not of the Jews being knocked off in Europe but our blokes being knocked off by the Japs. Because that had happened
- 39:30 before, you know, that message had got back before the end of the war, well and truly, because of the nurses in particular being killed on Banka Island. But I think the Jews problems
- 40:00 I think were just rumours as far as we were concerned.

Tape 4

- 00:44 **O.K. You mentioned before that you knew rumours and various things about how Jewish people were being treated during the war. What were some of those rumours that you'd heard at that stage?**

That's while I was at school.

- 01:00 I don't think I'd have been really aware of it if I'd stayed in Maitland and not gone to that school but at the school, at Scots, there were kids, Jewish kids from Austria and Yugoslavia, I
- 01:30 think German, Germany, maybe, maybe Polish. And the Yugoslav bloke that I first talked to said that his parents had got the last plane out of Yugoslavia,
- 02:00 whether this is true or not I can't be sure, I can't know, but he thought the rest of his family would have left it too late and would have gone west probably but there was paper, there were paper anti-German articles, I suppose,
- 02:30 saying, telling us that they were being, they, the Jews, were being very badly knocked about and ill treated. And I don't think I was aware of it but earlier, at the beginning of the war there were schemes, which didn't do too well I think, of Jewish kids, Jewish families, but Jewish kids in particular
- 03:00 and we knew some, a couple, who had got out by, to England, by some organisation, not Red Cross but a Jewish organisation of friends or however they do it and I think that that's probably how some of these people that I knew got out, that they had sponsors here.
- 03:30 But I can't be sure of this. But we were pretty aware of it just through paper, newspaper articles, that there were concentration camps, well, that didn't read too well right from the beginning of the war and I suppose before the war if we'd look closely.
- 04:00 We were very anti-German at home, long before the war started but some of that would have been

because of the anti-German, expansion, war talk, some of it would have been left over or a carry over from the first war probably. But that's in retrospect.

04:30 The kids at school didn't talk about it and I don't think they wanted to but I think probably we didn't show them a great deal of sympathy probably. We weren't terribly, we, Christians, I don't think we were marvellously sympathetic to Jews.

05:00 Plenty of people are still not, you know, well, it's been the case for a couple of thousand years hasn't it. So that might not be surprising. They didn't get knocked about at school but they got, they got one or two of them were picked on, not bullied by other kids, but by, yeah, by other kids,

05:30 by prefects I suppose. Not physically but mentally and verbally and that if they transgressed. And there was an idiotic thing, God struth, an idiotic thing I don't know whether it happens now but you write out, I must behave myself or not look out of the window or whatever the hell. I must do my homework 50 times or a hundred times or some damn thing, but you'd get

06:00 100 times rather than 50, you know, sometimes. Oh God it's dreadful isn't it. So no, I don't know, I can't be very helpful. Except all we knew that, nobody was having a great time in Germany, especially the Jews.

What are some of the things that the prefects would say to the Jewish kids?

They'd say to them?

06:30 I don't, I don't think they were calling their pedigree into question, no, I don't, I don't, it was a strange mixture. No, it was just petty would-be bullies I suppose. The worst bullying

07:00 that I had anything to do with was not Jewish it was a kid that had come from the coalfields here and had been to the high school with me. And he just got picked on by a particular teacher so it wasn't just an anti-Jewish thing. And no, God, his name was Jacob so he was probably a Jew anyway.

07:30 No, so I can't help.

One last question just on that. What was the general impression or viewpoint about Jewish people at that time?

General population?

Yeah, general people that you had contact with and the impression that you had that people in the broader public had about Jewish people. You said there was an anti -Jew?

08:00 I don't, I don't, I think that half the population would have thought they were money-grubbers and the other half would have been sympathetic and that's probably the case now. Jews, the Jews caused the war

08:30 and the problems Germany had, there would be plenty of Germans tell you that to this day I would think, I guess. And I, my parents would have been anti, anti-Jewish and Anti-catholic but not, but not, not vehemently,

09:00 not to do anything about it. They were anti-catholic, off the track now, but they were anti catholic, my old man's parents, family, because, in particular, because of the anti Empire, anti, during the first war, anti England

09:30 by Archbishop Mannix in particular. The anti conscription business would have really had a hand in that. But I can't help much.

Your dad was pro conscription?

Pro conscription? Yeah and a lot of people were not. Yeah

10:00 he was and he said that his, he went down and told me one childhood, boyhood story of his was being down on the back of a truck at the rocks, with his father, giving a pro conscription talk and being pelted with tomatoes.

10:30 The old man's father couldn't, no he wouldn't have been driving a truck, I don't know, the old man must have been bodyguard I think, he would have been, you know, seventeen year old. He was too young to go to the war but the two other brothers were away.

Why do you think your dad was so passionate about conscription?

11:00 Well, passionate might not be the word, but pro. I think he thought, he thought that everybody should pull their weight I reckon. And that was, I mean, the first war casualties had been so dreadful and things were, you know, the numbers were needed. Let's get it over with

11:30 I think, let's pull our weight.

At that point when you were at school at sort of 15, 16, your dad was in New Guinea at that

point? Is that right?

It was.

12:00 **I like what you use to stoke the fire?**

Sorry?

I like what you use to stoke the fire?

That was in the old house. One of the few things that I rescued.

Oh, sorry, we're back on. So hang on,

12:30 **father, New Guinea, school?**

Yeah, well he was, he was either in Queensland or New Guinea while I was at high school here in '43 and in Scots in '44.

So what

13:00 **at that stage were the general impressions about the Japanese?**

One, we'd decided by then we'd win but they were dreadfully anti and we were very fearful of the poor cows that were prisoners, people who fought them. And by then

13:30 '43, there'd been a lot of, a lot of our blokes had been to New Guinea and come back again, and plenty hadn't, but had come back again and told us how crook it was. You know, 85% of casualties in the 7th Cav [7th Division Cavalry Regiment] at Sanananda in

14:00 two or three weeks, you know, it says something doesn't it, sickness and deaths and what have you. No, we were extremely anti Jap and we were, we had second cousins or closer than that even, whatever you say,

14:30 second cousin will do, who were prisoners and, one, we didn't know whether he was alive or dead and he had been killed. Another one was just missing until the war was over and he did appear so we were extremely

15:00 interested in that. But I don't know, I don't trust the Japanese even now, you can cancel that if you like, censor that. We had, you know, we knew a lot of prisoners

15:30 and a few of them got back, who have got back. But we, family, had a friend down the road whose family had semi adopted, brought up, a niece of these people who'd been killed

16:00 she was an orphan, been orphaned, and she was killed by the Japs machine gun in the surf at Banka Island. Anyway, so we had a pretty early taste of, that was in 1941, so we had a few years

16:30 of thinking about her and the bloody Japs.

Can you expand on that a little bit more about what happened to her?

Oh, well, it, yes I can but, I think there were about a dozen, there might have been twenty, thirty,

17:00 thirty nurses maybe got on a ship in Singapore as the Japs arrived and the Japs sank the, an aeroplane bombed it and sank the ship just of Banka Island which is sort of not far from Singapore and some of them were

17:30 killed, of course, the crew and the girls and I think about a dozen, but it'll be in the history books, about a dozen survived and got to the shore and the Japs, handsome blokes, and the Japs who were on the shore on the land told them to walk in the surf

18:00 and just shot them, machine gun. And one, one survived. That sort of put us off a bit and I didn't think I'd be so fussed about it.

18:30 So, that's why I'm still anti Jap, or one reason.

How were they described as enemies during that time as soldiers?

Our people. I don't think you could, I don't think I could be as descriptive as that. Oh,

19:00 I think they, our troops you mean, describe them? I think they would have thought they were pretty, pretty clever and needed, the whole lot of them needed wiping out I'd reckon. But the atom

19:30 bomb would have done a great job. Not only by killing a lot of Japs but shortening the war I'd imagine.

But in terms of how they were viewed as soldiers and as people. What are some words to describe how they were perceived?

Oh they would just think they were bloody swine.

20:00 But I don't think, no matter how crook or wounded the Japs were I don't think anybody would have had any sympathy and there wouldn't have been too many Christian thoughts about them, I'm sure. But we as a family didn't have to cope with, well, we didn't know where the old man was really or what he was doing

20:30 but as it happened we didn't have to have much of a worry about that just about close family.

Toby, just talking a little bit more about that POW, that woman, the women that were machine-gunned in the surf.

Just a Bullwinkle I think as a survivor.

21:00 She, I don't think there's a lot to say, you know, whether of course, whether she was lucky, lucky in inverted commas, being killed rather than starve for a few years well God alone knows, one never knows. But it was a pretty crook thing to do.

21:30 You wonder why they would have done it, anyway they did. Poor little thing. The family went back, further along the road, and his wife, to Banka Island in about

22:00 ten years ago maybe. I suppose it was probably, probably 50th anniversary. I'm only guessing, it would be ten years, a bit more, to put a monument on, whatever. I'm wondering whether I've got the wrong woman survivor, too, it was the one survivor from the [AHS] Centaur wasn't there,

22:30 I'm wondering whether that was Bullwinkle, but anyway it was one survivor out of (UNCLEAR) a survivor out of the surf and got herself to, and a bloke she befriended, they got to a camp on the island and were hidden away for a while,

23:00 well, she was this girl. And the men, they were killed.

Toby, I want to ask you a difficult question. In terms of describing that event and the way Australians were treated by the Japanese. How would you

23:30 **describe the kind of ethics that a soldier should, in your opinion, use in a war situation. How should a soldier, an Australian soldier, behave?**

Oh, I don't know, I don't, well I suppose if you're one of those

24:00 blokes in New Guinea who struck Japs and knew about the Banka Island business you wouldn't have any ethics at all about what the hell I suppose. But it's not a, I don't know, I can't see Australians being, visualise Australians being sort of exterminators like the Germans were and the Russians

24:30 and the Japanese. I can imagine you know killing somebody, prisoner or otherwise out of rage but how you could systematically do that I'm damned if I know. I don't think Australians would be like that. You get, I mean you get people killing each other at Parramatta or somewhere but I don't think it's, I don't see our people

25:00 ever systematically knocking off people quickly or slowly like they have done. They certainly wouldn't happen now. It won't happen now of course by our people because of communications and televisions, would it,

25:30 let alone ethics. No, is that the question you mean?

Yeah, I think that's along the lines. I guess I'm trying to work out for my benefit how you would describe good conduct. How a soldier should behave, how a

26:00 **soldier shouldn't behave in a war situation. What's appropriate and inappropriate behaviour?**

Well I suppose, well I don't know, my war's a strange sort of one wasn't it, and I wasn't there at the beginning but we were trained, we were trained in my line of it, to kill people weren't we. So I don't know, whether you call that ethical is another thing but

26:30 we only, for an example, we only captured one bloke, our company did, not my platoon, and there wouldn't have ever been any thought of maltreating him, I'm sure. But if I'd have

27:00 captured some fellow at Banka Island I would have skittled him, I beg. But, no, I'm not sure, well I mean you're setting out to kill people if you strike them. I never did so I don't know much about it. I didn't have to do that so I don't know.

27:30 I'm the wrong person to ask I think.

But as a soldier, like, you know, what's the line, like what, where would you say, I mean I appreciate what you are saying about war in itself, you've been taught to kill people, is that ethical, but just even in terms of being a soldier, you know, is there a way of being a soldier that's better than another way of being a soldier

28:00 **just for my benefit I'm just interested if there is a distinction or all is fair in love and war kind of thing?**

Well, I think the only exercise is to win, isn't it? And if that means, and they're not likely to win unless people get killed but I think,

28:30 but you're not killed cruelly maybe. I really don't know because, as I said before, I haven't had to cope with that situation and neither did my old man. I'm sure his brothers killed plenty of people but I don't think they would have relished it,

29:00 other than the fact they were out to win. And the other bugger's out to win to, to knock you off, I mean I've had people trying to knock me off and they didn't succeed. So, I don't know whether that answers the question but I'm not in a position to know about killing people

29:30 that I know of.

But you're a soldier too and you were trained to do that?

Was I?

You were a soldier and you were trained to do that?

I was trained, sure, sure.

So you are in a position to.

Self preservation is a fair incentive, that was one of the reasons why we were trained.

30:00 That would be a big reason, yeah. But I don't think I'm adding much to the history if I can't know much about that subject, killing.

30:30 **But as a soldier, you're trained to kill as you said, so how does a man be trained to kill?**

How? We weren't trained very mentally but I don't think we were trained very well actually at all. But we were trained in weapons, to use the weapons that

31:00 were available or given us, effectively, and eventually were reasonably proficient in their use. Also, a big part of training if you are going to survive let alone do any damage to anybody else is to be reasonably fit and we were.

31:30 Yeah, we were physically fit. I don't think we were mentally fit enough and I think probably the people nowadays are. We were never politically motivated I don't think, and I don't, and of course, the second war blokes would have been

32:00 because things were so damn crook. The whole situation was so devastating and potentially completely devastating. A lot of people were frightened about, you know, this place here being overrun or (UNCLEAR).

32:30 So, training, I don't know whether that covers what you were.

It's a very broad question and we'll come back to it later. I just wanted to, just on that theme, what was your dad like when he returned from the war?

Physically and mentally. Oh, he was O.K. Oh, he was O.K. except when he got sick,

33:00 malaria, and he was, mentally he was O.K. Well, we'd won the war. He was forty-four when the war ended and I think that New Guinea had been pretty hard for people his age I think.

33:30 But there were plenty of others that age but, no, he was O.K. mentally. They weren't complainers, physical, that sort of wasn't in the make up. No, he worked pretty much

34:00 on the farm here, pretty well, so I don't think it had a lot of damaging effects. But anybody who survived reasonably fit, mentally and otherwise, just the fact of winning was a bit of a help compared to the Vietnam

34:30 set up. But I don't, no, he was all right, lived to be eighty something so he can't have been too bad. Does that answer your question?

Can you remember and possibly describe the first day that you saw him, the first time you saw him when he came back.

35:00 **What was that day like?**

I can, I didn't know he had a sense of humour. Yes, I came back to my grandmother's from school, from Scots and walked in and the old man was standing with his bum to the, no,

35:30 facing the fire such as it was and he turned around and I said, Jesus Christ, and he said no it's not son,

it's your father. So that was the homecoming. We didn't know he'd been, I don't know whether we knew he was in Queensland or not, I suppose we did but that was the first time I'd seen him for a while.

36:00 So that answers it I'm sure.

And how did the rest of the day go?

Ah, I don't, I've told you already, I'm undemonstrative. I don't know, that was the end of that I think. You know, have a cup of tea. I don't think there was any drama about it.

36:30 You know, somebody coming back from a POW [Prisoner of War] camp or whatever, that would be a bit different. I think probably we did know he was in Australia but I can't be sure of that. In a, for a month before that, when he was in hospital, I can't be sure of that.

Did he ever sit you down and tell you his

37:00 **story?**

No. No, you mean about being in New Guinea? Oh yeah, but there wasn't a hell of a lot to tell. He set up a, yes, but he set up a reinforcement camp in Lae and was training people to do

37:30 something more dangerous I suppose. I don't think there was, I don't think there was a lot of excitement or interesting work. A friend of mine said they saw him looking dejected in

38:00 Moresby I suppose. And they asked him what he was doing there and he said he was too bloody old, he was being sent home. So, that was the end of that. Too old for the job and the war was nearly over I suppose, you know the numbers were right. People could get out

38:30 of the army if they wanted to I suppose on a few grounds of age, having a family, how long, if they'd been in for one year or five, I think they must have had a point system, and whether they'd been OS [overseas], and probably industry, you know if you were a

39:00 dairy farmer you would get out, well he needn't have gone in for a start. But I think that he got out early because of a few brownie points.

Tape 5

00:41 **Toby, thanks again for allowing us to chat with you. Can you start by sharing the CMF days, why you joined?**

Why I joined. Well, I think it was, well I think for several reasons and one of them

01:00 it would have been just a normal, an obvious thing to do, right, because the CMF was just kicking off after the war and in view of the Lighthorse for the old man, and the war for the old man, the CMF sounded something interesting, and army oriented

01:30 as I was, for me, rightly or wrongly. 1948 it started I'm pretty sure. Reasons, I don't think, oh, other reasons of course, it was something a bit different to farming. We'd met somebody different and

02:00 do something different I suppose would be the answer. Oh, hopefully that there'd be a lead into proper army if there happened to be another war. I'd say that would cover it.

Was it compulsory, the CMF?

No, oh no, no. It

02:30 was, it was before compulsory training and I joined and I went into Maitland once a week at night time for a fair while, for free, to an NCO's [Non-Commissioned Officers] course, school, lectures, potential NCOs. And a weekend every month

03:00 which was meant to be obligatory. Having signed on to and joined up. A weekend a month and a fortnight camp a year and I did another couple as well.

So can you tell me what you did each week?

The week, one was a lecture in the drill hall for potential

03:30 NCOs, by a permanent army bloke who was attached to each squadron. This was an armoured regiment, 12th 16th. A lecture by the warrant officer on whatever subject from mapping to theory driving, I suppose, gunnery. And

04:00 also we gave, occasionally, our turn came to give a lecture on whatever subject. I don't think it happened, the first lecture I gave it wasn't anything to do with, it was about farming I think, rather than

army, I think. Rather strange. But that was, and that was unpaid and

04:30 about I don't, no, 20, 10 or a dozen of us would turn up I suppose. The weekends once a month was paid eventually and allegedly obligatory once you'd signed up. And I did that for three years or until I joined the army.

And what did you do on the weekend

05:00 **period?**

Weekends, we, more lectures, more drinking, drove a truck around that was part of the, part of this supply, was there. And we had a couple of tanks in the back yard of the drill hall and we started them and drove them like

05:30 10 or 20 yards maybe. We had a lot of lectures on maintenance and theory of gunnery I suppose. We had a lot of wasting time, too, of course, and more beer. I think that about covers it.

06:00 We must have gone to a, no, I don't think we did any firing at all until we had two weeks camp each year.

So with the tanks, what tanks were they?

They were ex North African campaign, Matilda tanks, 1942 models. They had two sets of guns.

06:30 One of them had a two-pounder anti tank gun in it and the other one was a three-inch, I think, (UNCLEAR) was the other alternative and a machine gun. The wireless was, and a wireless. I don't think there was anything else. They went but only just.

07:00 And then the flood wrecked them, the flood went over them, 1949 flood I suppose, nobody thought to get them out. They started again eventually but it wasn't a great success story.

So what was your role with the tank?

Well, I was a, I was a driver. I went to,

07:30 I went to Puckapunyal which was the armoured school for, I suppose, a fortnight to a drivers, another bloke and I went as potential drivers, and another two from Maitland, and two went to do a wireless course and two, gunnery. But I went as a driver,

08:00 potential.

So can you share with me, if you were in the tank right now how you would actually drive it, just take me through the process?

That particular tank of course. Well, it was pretty modern, just built 1942, the driver was on his own in a cockpit for want of a better word

08:30 with the batteries on one side and steering arms like a bulldozer for the tracks. And it had a, it was called an automatic but pre-selective, pre-selective automatic gear box and it had half a dozen gears, forward ones.

09:00 And you selected first say, or second, and then you kicked a pedal, with one foot on the accelerator and the other one you just kicked this pedal and that magically got it to move, go put it into gear. You'd put the gear lever into gear, it wasn't just like a car with, you know, those forward

09:30 and sort of changed itself, you had to manually change into gears. You could shut yourself in with a look-out through a little visor, it was pretty damned hot. The cover sort of slid on a rail I suppose, back, like a

10:00 cockpit I suppose would be describing it. The other crew were in a turret, the gunner and the wireless people, bloke. That was, visibility was good and we could go, I don't know, about 15 miles an hour I think, something pretty terrific.

10:30 I don't think there's more to it.

It's a three-man tank, is that what your saying, Matildas?

Yes. The crew commander would have been the wireless operator and then there was a gunner.

And the Matilda, was it easy to stall, hard to drive?

No, it was very easy, I thought. .

11:00 No, it was very easy. I'm wondering about the 12, 15 miles an hour whether it could go a bit quicker, but no, 15, it seemed like you were going like hell, it was very noisy. But we did a lot of driving at Puckapunyal, at the school.

In the Matildas?

Yes, and at that time in an armoured car and a,

11:30 that was an automatic one, a gear box one, and a scout car and a truck, we sort of, I think we graduated from the most difficult to the easiest, I think. But that went well.

Given that tanks are so noisy, how did you know when to change up a gear?

Ah,

12:00 no different to you driving a manual car. It just, I mean, I think that just the same as you would have known in a manual car to change from first to second. It just would have been obvious speed-wise or what,

12:30 and also, what the hell you were trying to do. Whether you were trying to sneak on to something or between something or slow down. I can't remember them stalling, that's, I don't know I can't remember that happening. I don't know why it wouldn't though. It was forward drive so maybe it didn't stall.

13:00 Maybe it just grunted to a halt. I can't, I'm sorry about that, I can't remember, I've got a licence. We did a lot of, a fair bit of driving at Singleton too, at the camps, and firing too. Firing was bad for the driver and that's why I'm deaf and I've got tinnitus I think

13:30 rather than from the permanent army I think.

So explain to me the firing process?

Firing at, firing at Singleton, with the camouflage, or the anti-tank gun was from a stationery position. Obviously for the health of the inhabitants of Singleton

14:00 I suppose, and at a fixed target which was, you know, wheeled out of the, out of the road, out of the tunnel and nobody had, including the drivers, nobody had ear muffs or anything sensible. The machine guns we could fire on the go

14:30 when we did exercises. This only happened a couple of times in a fortnight but that was all pretty exciting at the time.

So were the machine guns used to actually, in a sense, to shoot people or were they just used for ranging the gunshot?

In these, if it was

15:00 true to life, you mean. No, no they were to shoot smaller targets but, yeah, as a machine gun as in any other situation it was for people, yeah.

So was there a drill when you were at Singleton, a firing drill, what would happen?

Well it was a big,

15:30 big day and the dozen tanks would be lined up and I think we would only fire one tank at a time so we got some record of whether you were accurate or not. And I can't remember how many shots we would have fired but maybe, you know, ten or a dozen, maybe twenty.

16:00 I don't think we fired the machine guns from that position. I think that was only when we were moving on an exercise, tank attack type thing, out in the hills, and we were firing more or less straight ahead. But I can't think that we were firing at anything in particular, at anything in particular.

16:30 I fired in front of another tank once, close, or told my gunner to, to stop him, to stop this other one or to alert him to the fact that he was going to run into the, into a big, what do you call it,

17:00 anyway, down an embankment and crash and he hadn't seen where he was aiming, where he was travelling to. And that worked, but that was a, we didn't fire at him we fired just in front of him to alert him that there was something strange happening, for us to do that.

So you fired a real round?

Oh, yeah, lots of them.

No, in that occasion

17:30 **when he was in front of you going for the ditch?**

He was in front of us and he was going to go into the place where they had this railway line for the target, where we fired the big guns from. You know, it was a stationery position. They had this, I don't know, 20, 30 foot, like a railway cutting, and this bloke was of the track, mentally or

18:00 he wasn't watching what he was doing anyway. I think they must have tracers in them, I think that must have been what would have alerted him rather than bullets close to him. Anyway, that's just skite.

No, it's actually a good story to explain communication between the tanks?

The wirelesses were hopeless. Nearly all of them, hopeless.

18:30 I think they'd been in Libya too and they weren't good at all, coupled with the noise, but I think just ancient. That was a big problem.

So to warn this tank, did you fire a big shell or the machine gun?

Oh, no, the machine gun. It was called a BSA [Birmingham Small Arms], I think it was 30 calibre. And I don't know who made it, oh, British.

19:00 I'm sure it was called a BSA, a lot of motorbikes as well, probably.

So the radios?

Pretty often no good and in this case obviously it hadn't worked or he wouldn't have done it unless there was some - and I didn't, it wasn't, I didn't fire the gun

19:30 but my gunner bloke did and he was very good. He came from a farm. Anyway, that's ancient history.

And important history. Tank attack, what's that, you said you did of them during training, tank attacks?

Well, it's all theory in that there was nobody,

20:00 we weren't, we weren't trying to shot some target even I think with the machine guns but it was coupled, it was very hard with communications being crook, but also it had been planned ahead on a map reading sort of exercise I suppose. You'd go from A to B in

20:30 you know, two tanks that are leading and two drifting behind and to the side a bit. I mean, that's what I mean, but I'm not an expert on tank warfare by any means, thank God. I went to, later on I went to a tactics

21:00 school at Puckapunyal and I learned a bit more on the theory side of it but I'm not an expert on tank warfare. And you'll find some, you will obviously be interviewing some.

And you shared with us that one side of your ears, your left is it or your right, is a bit deaf?

Oh, they both are, yeah.

Where were you seated in respect to where the gun

21:30 **went off?**

It was just here. The big guns, yeah, oh they were just, the barrel would have been, you know, two or three feet above me I suppose. And the end of the barrel four or five, six feet forward I suppose.

22:00 I mean I'm deaf, it could be cumulative, no doubt, but it's not only deafness, the damn tinnitus I have to put up with. But whether it was from then or cumulative I don't know.

Did the Matildas have any common problems that they'd always go wrong or malfunction?

Apart from the wireless,

22:30 tracks broke occasionally but no, they were pretty reliable. And this was 1948 to 50 or whatever and they had, in fact, come from Africa I think, I'm pretty sure, so they must have - they took them to, at least one lot, to New Guinea

23:00 to Bougainville I think. One of the, our colonel in the militia, was a Colonel Ken Arnott, and he'd been in the Light Horse with the old man and he had a tank, I don't know a regiment or squadron, I don't know how big it was, I'm pretty sure it was in Bougainville with Matildas I think.

23:30 You think they'd bog wouldn't you. They were 25 tonnes I think they were. Anyway, I'm waffling.

No, no, what you're doing is sharing with us how they operated because they no longer are used any more.

Those particular ones are not used any more, no, but I think, they were superseded by the Centurion

24:00 and I drove one of those one day for a few hundred yards or a mile in Korea when I managed to stall it. But that was pretty superior, it was a Rolls Royce engine. I was going to say they had a Leyland in the Matilda but I'm not sure now, it was a Daimler

24:30 gear box.

In respect to the Centurion and also the Matilda, how did they handle comparing the two of them?

Well I only had this one go with the Centurion and in fact it didn't have a gun. And they were using it,

this particular one, I just got a lift from A to B one day. And it had,

25:00 one of the big difference was it didn't have automatic or pre-selective gear box, it was like a ten tonne truck, a five tonne truck, but it, well they're probably automatic too aren't they, but like my manual car, and I know I made a noise with the damned thing and stalled it and the Pommies

25:30 weren't all that pleased with my effort, they said I could change over now. But, that was the only time I've been in one. We had them, Pommy ones and, I think maybe the Canadians had them. The Inniskillen Dragoon Guards was the Pommy ones. Anyway, that's

26:00 some years ahead.

So what is, I don't quite understand, a pre-selective gear box. It's not like your normal manual car is it?

No, but probably the Jaguar might have that, present day one might have that as an alternate. I don't know why, I don't know why it was, I suppose it was less expensive to make

26:30 but you actually picked a gear rather than just forward or reverse. You picked and then this pre-selective gear box actuated, it was actuated by a foot kitting a pedal like a clutch but you just hit it. I don't know how it worked whether it was on a spring-loaded,

27:00 spring-loaded band tightened on to that particular gear drum or how it worked but I didn't have to make it. Not as good as a, just automatic, like when you forward or

27:30 reverse much slower of course, too, slower to act. To get from first to sixth or whatever.

If World War II had continued for another five or so years would you have applied for it?

Well, one, I wouldn't have had any option, would we? It would have been called up wouldn't I.,

28:00 and I wouldn't have thought that was strange. Yeah, of course. Oh, I don't, yes, of course. But I don't think I would have been given any option. It would have been quite, I don't think it would be quite like picking the 20 year-olds by their birthdays or something.

So was your dad

28:30 **pleased when you joined the CMF?**

I think so, yeah. I think he would have just thought it was strange if I hadn't, it's nearly the same. Oh yeah. I think he would have expected it I think. That was my holiday for the year anyway. I think he kept paying me. I mean

29:00 I'm sure he did.

Were there many World War II guys in the CMF?

Yeah, a few. I don't know why the ones that have been, I don't know why some of them would have, the ones that had been in action kind of thing, nearly all of them had that were here in Maitland. I don't know why the hell they would have fronted up again except that politically things

29:30 weren't much chop. You know, the Russian threat seemed to be pretty ominous and, you know, are we going to have another war I suppose was at the back of their minds. Colonel Arnott was our first colonel

30:00 I've forgotten the next one but the squadron leader was a bloke that had been in the Light Horse with my old man, at the same time, but younger. A couple of others and they'd all be in action so I think probably, one they'd got away with it, their war, without much harm, physically harm but two I think they were pretty worried about the damn Russians

30:30 I think. There was some problem also at about that time with the, in the Middle East, a la now, I suppose, but I've forgotten details of that, that worry. The Suez thing was after that wasn't it?

31:00 **What was the community's feeling in respect to communism?**

By the thinking voters, well, worried and very anti. We were very suspicious about some of our politicians. I don't know whether that's the word

31:30 but worried about no matter how patriotic or otherwise they might be. No, it was, it was pretty worrying I think. The slumming between socialism and communism. The wharfies and the coal miners and whatever, they hadn't endeared themselves to our politically thinking people,

32:00 family, you know, or friends. They were pretty dreadful.

Were the unions associated with communism?

Yeah, until the - yeah, I don't know whether all unions but I mean the communism and, the communists, and the Catholics were sort of daggers drawn

- 32:30 and that was, hence the split in the Labour Party which the DLP [Democratic Labour Party] was split off in that the Catholics eventually beat the lot of them in a decent, well, I suppose, un-crooked
- 33:00 elections. I think eventually the comms were outnumbered for the top jobs. We had a communist running the, a political appointment, one of their first, how about this for libel, one of the first Australian communist party members was chairman of the, of our
- 33:30 milk board. There were three members. Do I go on? A farm producer member, a consumer member and a chairman. And the chairman was one Jack Ferguson. You'd read about him in the communist literature and he, you know, that's the sort of thing we're up against. We thought, we meaning Liberal Country Party type voters, thought thinkers.
- 34:00 Anyway, that's a bit - I don't know whether Jack Ferguson's sons are now these Fergusons, or grandsons in parliament or not, I suppose they are. Anyway.

So what was said about Jack Ferguson and the others by the people?

Well, I don't know what they people were saying but, I mean our family

- 34:30 were so bitterly opposed by being run, or would be dominated if they had their way, by people like that. And the coal strikes and the electricity blackouts, you know, didn't go down too well at our place. I suppose most of our friends were fairly
- 35:00 similarly, well, they were, fairly similarly affected and some more outspoken than others would be the go. Of course, we weren't elected to these cushy jobs ourselves either don't forget. But no it was pretty serious when the place was held to ransom by the wharfies, and Jack Sharkey's another one.
- 35:30 It was like the start of World War II, everybody in our fraternity were talking about these sort of things and worried as hell about it and riled by it.

So in respect to communism you were more worried that the enemy was within rather than without. Is that what you're telling me?

The enemy was, and Russia was,

- 36:00 you know, supplying the, in the background. Russia had us very worried and the whole damn world, I suppose, other than maybe China. People wanted a bit of breathing space and it didn't happen at the end of the war. That's my,
- 36:30 well this is my opinion anyway, I can't speak for anybody else. I think your parents would have been just as worried.

No, that's helpful, you paint a good picture. What did you understand of Russia and communism at that time?

Well, I think we were, despite no TV,

- 37:00 I think we were well enough read. When you mean you, meaning my family and friends. I think we knew what swines they were to other people and what a, I think we were politically aware that you didn't get much of a vote or, what's the word, a democratically
- 37:30 run government. And we knew that, a bit like the Jews that we were talking about earlier, we knew that lots of people had cleared out and lots of people had failed to clear out because they were such swines of people to their opponents, opponents,
- 38:00 people who would vote against them, I can't think of the word. I think we probably thought we could run the world better than anyone else but it didn't happen did it. No war. We were dreadfully upset about the Russians getting the atom bomb, you know, that sort of
- 38:30 made it more of a worry. Getting it, perfecting it, by milking the traitors that were around. Anyway.

When did you discover that?

Oh, I think it must have been soon after the war. I can't put a date on it but

- 39:00 long before Philby and Burgess and co., you know, Ferguson and I can't think of the other bloke's name, the husband and wife, were traitorous Pommies. Very soon after the war wasn't it?

Tape 6

- 00:46 **Just going back to the communism within this country?**

Don't forget I'm not a politician?

No, no, I didn't ask you to be. But in respect to the country,

01:00 **you had some people who sat in communist positions?**

Who were communists and sat in positions of power. The milk board was very powerful, not just politicians in government, but powerful in our industry in that milk was fixed, you know fixed price

01:30 job and the consumer would have to be looked after wouldn't he, compared to the producer. So that's where, the producer's representative and the consumer's one who was an ex gas employers union person and Ferguson who was the railway workers I think. So they'd be experts on dairy wouldn't they and they'd be experts on

02:00 looking after the socialists, not the capitalists. And the same, we were so heartily sick of electric strikes, blackouts because of power, you know, it could wreck the country pretty easily without

02:30 sort of blowing anything up.

So there was a general community fear and the Korean War was coming and had come?

Another lot of commos, yeah.

Tell us about your memories of that starting up?

Well, I can remember, I can remember the first day it started and thinking

03:00 here's my chance, I'll be in the army now. Whatever I thought, but, you know, that's what would happen and I don't think we knew much about Korea until then. We knew very little. But, I tried to join up there and then and

03:30 failed. It didn't happen. I don't know whether they didn't want, I don't know whether I jumped the gun or not but anyway, or whether they thought they could handle it without any more. I can't remember when recruiting or recruits were called for. I can't remember whether that was right at the first weeks or not. But I tried to

04:00 join up pretty early on, in Maitland, and I, and I didn't get called, I didn't get any more word. I went to the government medical officer for a medical and then I heard no more

04:30 for ages and so I went to Sydney and I went to, I think, Marrickville, think and said I wanted to join up. So I did another medical and this time they decided my heart would be good enough, probably, and so I started in '51.

05:00 I was very fortunate, you know, I wasn't with 3 Battalion at the beginning for whatever reason.

Are you saying you failed the first medical?

He said I, the local one, yeah, he said you're O.K. except you've got a heart murmur or something like that. So whether that put the kybosh on it or whether it was just

05:30 they didn't want me for some other reason or had plenty, I don't know. I didn't ask anyway I just went to Sydney. It was nearly a year later I suppose.

And why were you happy not being with 3 Battalion?

Oh, they must have had a really crook time the first, well, they did didn't they, the first year and I would have been a reinforcement to them if I had have got in early. And they had such a

06:00 rotten time with the, not only with the chinks but the weather and the equipment. So I was damn lucky to have missed out on that winter I suppose, as well as the action. I didn't think so at the time, God, but I know I'm right. We had it, we had it very easy.

06:30 **Did many fellows from the CMF that you were training with at the time actually get in with that particular call up?**

From here, no, no. We weren't called up.

No, no, they'd volunteered?

Oh right. No, no none. No, nobody locally with me. Another fellow as going to come and then we crashed his car and that complicated thins so he didn't.

07:00 There were a couple at school in Sydney but I didn't know, didn't know at the time and they weren't with me either. So I went on my Pat Malone [alone]. I got a card from one of them today that I joined up with.

And what did your dad say on the initial time?

07:30 Oh, good luck, son. I don't know, he wouldn't have, he would have just thought it was a normal thing to do I think. You know, not logical, he wouldn't have been surprised, he would have thought

08:00 it would have been pretty funny to stay in the CMF and not go I think probably, and that's how he felt about a few of the ones ten years previously who were in the CMF and decided they were in an essential industry as well when the time came but that sounds terrible. No, one bloke, one local bloke

08:30 who'd been in Africa during the war congratulated me. Everybody else thought I was stupid I think, except the family, and some of them said so. No, I think the family weren't at all surprised. Oh no, one grandmother, no, that's wrong. My mother's sister, mother, she didn't think, she didn't agree at all.

09:00 And I think probably because frank, my uncle, had been away so long and she was fearful, I think. He was all right, anyway, I mean he's all right. But that's only a guess that one. That was in September '51 I joined up.

09:30 **So, did people think Korea was worth fighting for?**

No, I don't think so. Anti-communism I think, I would guess. No, I would think it would just be a case of being anti-commo and the fellows with me, and me it was an adventure

10:00 sort of going to happen any day. And we were right about that. Something different. Everybody was employed, I think, who I joined up with. A lot of them had had a lot of jobs but I don't think that anybody joined up because he couldn't get a job or hadn't had a job.

Share with me joining up then, going down to Marrickville

10:30 **and what happened?**

Marrickville, paper work, I had a crook weekend, the first one I think it was. An x-ray, I've got a feeling I had an x-ray at Marrickville but I might be wrong about that, a lung x-ray and then the next move was, there were about, there was a hut full of us,

11:00 twenty, fifteen perhaps. And we went down to Woolloomooloo for a medical and I think that took all day and as well as a medical, a mental one there too, I had a dictation

11:30 test and if you couldn't spell, well, the cat sat on the mate, well, you'd had it I think. But then somebody told me that, and we were camped in this hut at Marrickville, in civvies of course, and somebody told me that my x-ray was no good and come back Monday.

12:00 So that was a nice weekend. Anyway, I got another x-ray and it was clear, it was the technician's fault or the camera or something. So then we went to, we must have been there only a couple of days I think. I don't know why we were there longer and we went to Ingleburn, still in civvies, and

12:30 I don't think we had any gear at all. It took us about a week at least to get the boots and the webbing and shirts and things. We just hid in a, four, five or six of us, hid in a room or two at Ingleburn, out of people's way for a few days. Pretty ordinary,

13:00 permanent army blokes were having a bludge. One of the blokes that instructed us, a corporal, had been in Korea but it was pretty ordinary before we started, only doing left and right turns and to do those for six months wasn't much fun, or whatever it was.

13:30 Anyway, that was a big disappointing. Some of the people, some of the blokes who'd been at the war, the second war, did in fact get shunted off to Japan reasonably quickly I think. And nobody took any notice of my

14:00 previous experience. Nobody took any notice of my CMF thing or I hadn't put it in, I've forgotten which, so I just stayed. Learning to let and right turn again which wasn't much fun until, yes it would have been six months, until March we were there, I joined up in

14:30 September. By that time we went as a battalion.

So in the six months I'm sure you did more than left and right turn?

We went, we went to Long Bay rifle range a couple of times. Twice I think, but if it wasn't twice it was only once.

15:00 And we threw two grenades only. That was the first thing we did. God struth, and they must have run out of all the money and ammo during the war. After we went to Ingleburn for about half,

15:30 oh no, maybe two months out of the six. Somebody complained about lack of water, hot water, or something ridiculous. So we were packed out immediately and sent out to tents, in what we call Green Hills, out near the present Holsworthy camp were there'd be plenty of water in the river and cook-house

16:00 was beside the wood heap down there and we were in tents. And we did a lot of marching and we got very fit but we didn't do any, God, we did very little shooting which I thought was all, I thought that was going to happen every second day, you know. I got in a rifle team

16:30 to fire, to shoot against the Pommy marines from, a ship was in Sydney, but that was, they showed us

up, very easily. I don't know, but, we were, we got very physically fit.

17:00 Bayonet drill. And we got to know each other, a sort of tent with about, there was six of us in a tent I think and I got to know them, and vice versa, pretty well, we got on well.

17:30 Most weekends, leave, depends whether you knew the fellow that had the car hidden in the bush, this sort of thing.

You described yourself during your boarding house days as a shy boy. How did you cope with six to a tent?

Oh well, I wasn't.

18:00 Well, I was, well, O.K., no, no, I got on well with nearly everyone, you know, I've got people that write to me still and I see. No, that wasn't any hassle. I mean I got off side with some and some I

18:30 you know I don't care if I ever see them again or, you know, but that's the case everywhere isn't it?

So what happened when you got off side with some?

Oh, there was no brawling, no, it was just, you know, stick with my half a dozen friends sort of thing and they did vice versa. Grog was a big divider. Dividers not the word, sounds a bit harsh doesn't it?

19:00 I had a home to go to and it took a few ours to get there whereas some of them would go to town and go to the Gresham and spend a day, spend a weekend on the booze, you know which wasn't my scene. Sounds condescending, somewhat. I feel guilty, too, in that I didn't ask anyone home, ever.

19:30 You know, and some people didn't have homes to go to that I knew pretty well so that was a bit of a shame. One bloke I see quite often, he painted this, his mother lived at, only child, lived at Coogee and that was an open house

20:00 for our platoon. Sort of a granny flat at the back and I went there a time or two, a couple of times and a send off party. But I feel a bit guilty not being a bit more hospitable myself, however.

The grog was a divider because some blokes would go to the pub?

20:30 Oh, for me, yeah.

Because?

Oh, well that's probably the case now. It wasn't that I didn't, it wasn't that I didn't talk to anyone or vice versa. No, the people who I didn't like still bludged tobacco off me and vice versa, you know. But, no, they shyness, sort of went by the board. I can thank the army for that I suppose.

21:00 **Bayonet drill. You spoke of that earlier, what is that?**

Well we had, we had two poles with a bag of, two poles on the ground, with a bag of,

21:30 stuffed with straw or whatever pretty tightly and you'd, we had no, we had bayonets on rifles, we only had rifles then and we had to, you know, do the usual thing we've seen in the pictures, you know, of putting the bayonet into this bag and pulling it out and

22:00 turning on further to the next one. It was hard work but I think it was all, well, you need to know how to do that but it was all a get fit and fill in the day program, I think. I spent a few days down at the cook-house cutting wood up, that was just as exciting, and

22:30 just as useful probably. However, we didn't have any, at that stage, throughout this two or three months, we only, it wasn't until two or three months that we were really formed into a battalion and had platoons and have officers. Prior to that it was a shemozzle,

23:00 I suppose, with some permanent army corporals and one or two sergeants sort of hovering around at, what do you call it, company headquarters. But then officers arrived at Green Hills. That made a difference.

23:30 Smartened us all up, verbally. We got a good one who threw his weight around and got off side with everybody for a while and then having got, managed, made his presence felt

24:00 got on side, I don't know whether he got on side, I suppose he did, we got on side with him perhaps reasonably well. And he was good. So, that's Green Hills.

Given that you, briefly as you described it, worked with some grenades and rifles, what accidents occurred?

Accidents? None

24:30 when I was there but somebody got, somebody got burned I think. I've forgotten how it happened. I don't think anybody was hurt with grenades or bullets and certainly not anyone when I was there and

we, in our platoon,

25:00 had, when we were away even, had nobody, w had one bloke wounded with, an accident with a grenade fell of somebody's belt but nobody shot himself or shot anyone else and we didn't,

25:30 and we didn't have anybody - and nearly everybody else did, we didn't have anybody walk into a minefield that went off. We went into minefields though. No actually, I think it was partly because by then pretty good discipline, I think.

Just the story with the fellow when the grenade fell off

26:00 **was that clumsiness, was it not attached properly, what happened there?**

I don't know I wasn't there but they were coming back from the out post up a steep hill in the, steep hill in the snow and ice I think he just slipped and it came off his belt. He was just peppered, or somebody I suppose fell in front of him, I don't know, I wasn't there

26:30 but he wasn't skittled, I think that'd just be really bad luck. But it wasn't just luck, I think it was fairly good weapon drill I think, weapon training I think.

So after Green Hills?

27:00 Oh, yeah, well we did something very technical after, we went back to, oh, I went to school but also we went back to Ingleburn for a few days before we left. But I had, I had the best bit of training and the best bit of

27:30 luck for me, I suppose, as it happened. I went to a, I was picked to go to a, I'm waffling on, to an intelligence course, with about 10 others and I don't know how they were picked now, you know, would you like to go or you'll go, I've forgotten. And

28:00 at Ingleburn, for I don't know, 10 days perhaps, and so any rate, I coped with that quite well and successfully and then went back to my platoon of course. And Burke, who was the platoon commander, said, well, you'll go to,

28:30 you'll go to the intelligence section now. I said, well, no, I don't want to do that and, you know, we talked, by that time we were getting on all right. And, he said, well you can, I'll, he said I'll back that if you'll take coming on to platoon headquarters as mortar corporal,

29:00 lance corporal. That's what happened.

So, the intelligence course?

Oh, map reading, writing out messages in long hand, map reading I think largely. There was an intelligence section in the battalion who

29:30 you know, I suppose they looked at maps and supplied maps for patrols and counted the shells that came in and there must have been a, there must have been a lieutenant and a sergeant and, guessing, half a dozen others. I thought I'd like to join them a bit later on but, too late.

30:00 **Why did you not go into intelligence given that you had the opportunity then?**

Oh, I just thought that would be leaving the friends I'd made and I was still after the excitement I think. I thought it was going to be too dull I supposed compared

30:30 with being in the platoon, and I was right.

So you were then given?

So I, Burke arranged that I take on this platoon headquarters and two-inch mortar team and I said, can I pick my two, my two others,

31:00 and he went along with that, too, I don't know why he did and that letter, that card was from one of them there now. So that worked out pretty well.

Who were the two blokes you chose?

Who were they? One was an ex, Mick Londrigan, was an ex, telecom you'd call it now, but post master

31:30 general's office, whatever office, the mail exchange he worked out. And the other on was Les Yates, from Sydney, from Bowral, who was a telephone linesman. He'd been in the air force for eighteen months or so during the war. He got to

32:00 Cape York when the war ended. She he's a little bit older than I am.

And they were ten mates of yours?

Yeah, Mick left me after a while and did a swap with another bloke but

32:30 we stayed friends in the long and unfortunately, he died in his fifties I suppose, a heart attack. Les is crook but O.K.

So what was the role in the mortar?

As it happened practically pointless but,

33:00 in our, by the time we were in the line it was stationary and we were in trenches and there was no movement other than patrols. So the only time we used the mortar was to put up flares, just once or more times to see whether the Chinks

33:30 were on their way in or to frighten them off from coming in. And the other times we just had it on the side of the trench to guide our blokes in from a raid that one of the other companies did. So we didn't, it wasn't used much at all.

34:00 Never took it with us, you know, went in, our platoon, but our company never did a company raid, attack, whatever. They wouldn't have taken mortars anyway, the other ones, so there was, just carried rifles or Owen guns

34:30 and grenades. And wirelasses, that was the other thing that we got landed with, for patrols. One of these blokes or I would have the, have the wireless rather than the platoon commander or whoever was running the patrol. Didn't always have a damn wireless, even.

35:00 But anyway one was taken one of platoon headquarters would be carrying it. So that was real useful. The other job we did as a team was to, somebody was always on a telephone of course from platoon headquarters

35:30 to company headquarters and to, to the outposts. So somebody was, somebody from platoon headquarters had a job doing that. I don't know whether there's anything else, two-inch mortar, that's pretty useful, useless.

36:00 **So after was that the end of your training.**

End of it, we've got ahead of it haven't we. End of it, we did, oh very, no, no, no, back at Ingleburn we had a day of not only cleaning the camp up and taking stretchers back but a bus arrived and we practised getting on a bus. You wouldn't credit it would you?

I'm lost, why?

Oh God knows, I really don't

36:30 know, I thought it was an insult myself. God struth, and then the big day came and we got on the bus again, all on our own, and went in to Liverpool Station and got a train, I think we were allowed to do that on our own too, to go to Sydney.

Who was the one behind ordering the practice of bus routine?

God knows,

37:00 it wouldn't have been, it wouldn't have been my platoon commander and I, I don't think it was just our company I think it was the whole damned battalion, that would be the colonel, I suppose, I don't know, (UNCLEAR) it doesn't, it shouldn't be, you get a sense of that I think, but it's true.

But what was the process of practising?

Perhaps, I don't know.

37:30 That's why it was nuts once more I think. I don't know, I just can't imagine, it was the most idiotic thing I've ever, ever done in the army I think. God, perhaps we had to go in a certain order perhaps. Don't dwell on it.

Well, let me ask, what were the other really dumb things that the army did, or made you do?

38:00 Well, the dumb thing was the lack of training with live stuff. It shouldn't happen and that wouldn't have been, and that must have been from on high somehow, there must be guns and ammo by the millions around the place that could have been got hold of. I think it was pretty poor.

38:30 And we were better off than the poor damn Poms that came up and saw us some of them in one position we were in and there were call ups and their lack of live shooting was about on a par with us or worse I think. I don't know, I'd like to have been, I'd like to have been running it.

00:46 **Now your wife has betrayed you.**

Has what?

Betrayed you. She says there's a story about A Company up?

Oh, this is when we

01:00 got back to Ingleburn and we were going to catch the bus - are we on - properly this time and Bob Hughes one of our platoon, our platoon, woke everybody up in the hut at about three o'clock in the morning, you know. God knows for what reason. Quick, everybody up, you know, get dressed, whatever,

01:30 A company's up. Therefore we had to get moving, two or three hours too bloody early so that's a family hand me down saying now. He finished up as a sergeant or whatever in the army, permanent army, but he finished up as Judge Samuels who later became governor a couple of governors away, ago

02:00 his door opener, letter opener bloke. I don't know whether Governor Samuels knows that (UNCLEAR) won the war or not but anyway. A Company, yeah. Yeah, go on, something more serious.

So after initial training what happened then?

Other than catching the bus.

02:30 Well, we got the, we caught the boat instead. We arched through town, through Sydney, in March, the beginning of March, and we got on the Devonshire which has been, should have been pensioned off 50 years before. Hammocks, tables were let down, or benches not tables.

03:00 It was dreadful and other than being sick for a few days we got to Japan via Manus Island. I think, I think I read that we picked up water there but I think we must have picked up or put down people as well, I don't know who they were. And then we went to, after ten days or so total, we go to

03:30 Kure harbour, port in Japan and then they, we unloaded ourselves there and I don't know how we got, by trucks I suppose, a few miles away to a place called Kawajiri which was on the harbour, waterfront and

04:00 it may have been a, it was a large flat area, it may have been a demolished bombed flat naval base or something like that and we stayed there, in tents, we, the whole battalion, one battalion, the first battalion, I remember, stayed there for

04:30 three weeks about. And we did a lot of exciting things like drinking beer and going to beer halls for the first time in our lives and went, I went to, and some of us went to Hiroshima to see what the wreckage was like after the bomb, you know, it was still wrecked.

05:00 We went to Kure, there was an army hospital, and we went there to see blokes we knew who'd been wounded. And we marched up and down hills around Kawajiri before getting another boat to Japan, to Korea, to Pusan.

05:30 I'm not sure, I think we, God I don't know, did we get the boat from Kawajiri, anyway it doesn't matter to the South of Korea anyway, to Pusan. And then we got on, there we

06:00 got on a train which took us, guessing, a couple of hundred Ks up to, past, up to Seoul, I'm going to say Seoul probably, but sometimes 'Sooul', but we always call it Seoul, I don't know why. And then we went a few miles from there, ten

06:30 miles maybe, north and camped in tents for maybe a week but perhaps less. Didn't do anything. And then we were given an area of hill, each company, to dig trenches and

07:00 dig bunkers to make a second or third line of defence. It was called a Kansas Line, partly I think it was to train us to still get fit and stay fit but also it as a fall-back position if something had gone wrong and they'd been pushed back from the front line.

07:30 And it was probably, it was probably ten miles behind the front line. At the southern end of the Gloucester Valley where the Gloucester Battalion had been knocked about and mostly captured or knocked off. And we dug trenches and

08:00 platoon positions there and made ourselves hoochies to camp in. We must have been there for April, May, for about a month I suppose. Didn't do any, well we did a couple of exercises with, with the

08:30 tank regiment. That's not right, Inniskillen Dragoon Guards with the Centurion tanks. We did a couple of nights I suppose defensive raining in defence in a different place on top of a different hill to ours. Otherwise we spent the time digging,

09:00 digging these trenches and gun emplacements and our bunkers or hoochies, we called them. Until we went in the line on 18th or 19th of June.

So, just with the training exercises was that you versus the

09:30 **Dragoon Guards or?**

No, in co-ordination and there must have been another English battalion, too, I think, but I can't remember who they were. And sort of to get into, something that never happened to get into an exercise that was

10:00 bigger in magnitude, in numbers, than a platoon or a company. It a battalion and another battalion and the tanks sort of working, co-ordinating. I'm a lance corporal so I'm not really privy to what the hell the exercise was about.

Sure, not really worried about what it's about, just what actually happened?

Well, we spent a few days, you know,

10:30 living in a different place each time. Four or five days, I suppose. Carting our gear, trucks and back, over I don't know, seven or eight miles I suppose. Mostly on roads and then we'd, sometimes on hills at night time. With our gear and camping in a different place each night which was different

11:00 to what we'd ever done and whatever did, in fact, happen actually. But just in case, there was, it was got to be a movement, what's the word, a mobile war again.

Were you using weaponry?

No, carrying, no, only carrying them.

Just in respect of Seoul,

11:30 **what was the poverty in the community like?**

Look, pretty awful but we'd seen, we'd seen a, well, Pusan was a mess too but we didn't see much of that. But on the railway line from the two cities, beside the railway line there were destitute people living, you know, obviously destitute living in cardboard humpies and

12:00 it was pretty obvious it was a mess. We went down there, a few of us one day to Seoul, and oh, it was just sort of a wreck. A lot of it burned I think rather than bombed, you know, flat, a mixture, I suppose.

12:30 Pretty obvious, so was Hiroshima but that was years and years before, you know. Tokyo, for that matter, there were blocks and blocks of not a house standing.

So what are your memories of Hiroshima?

Burned tin humpies and

13:00 I don't remember very many people, I was only there for a few hours. There was nothing that you'd sort of want to hang around to look at. I've got a prisoner, an ex prisoner of war friend who was taken to Japan to work and he's a pacifist but he said he was very pleased when they dropped the bomb, and it wasn't far away.

13:30 **How did you relate to the Japanese people when you were there?**

Well, we didn't have anything to do with the men who were in the farms, you know, just outside the gates. When we passed I don't think we said g'day even and the women were all in the

14:00 beer halls, all seemed to be run by women and manned by them. I don't know whether they were all on the make, they were all girls you could buy or not, but it was all, I don't recall seeing men in them but women were waitresses, girls and they all wanted to be, wanted to be

14:30 all friendly and were. And, I don't know, we thought it was pretty exciting I suppose and nobody thought much about it.

Did men in your platoon/battalion take advantage of the girls?

I don't know whether they did, some would have in Kure, but there wasn't a lot of time spare for that but some would have.

15:00 On leave later on in Tokyo, yeah, lots. Not in Korea to speak of but, I, I wouldn't know, I mean a couple did but they were pretty frightened of, we didn't have much time there, spare time I suppose, but they were so damn squalid and lice-ridden and we'd been told everybody had the Jack and so

15:30 it wasn't much getting together there I don't think. And I'm not an expert on it.

So you arrived in the line on the 19th of June?

Yes, and it was quiet, it was in a low position, it wasn't good if anybody, if the Chinks

16:00 decided to do something. We were looking up at them across a valley, I'm guessing seven or eight hundred yards away, at least that. And we took over from the Leicester, Leicester Regiment. It was fairly crook in that the trenches

- 16:30 and dugouts weren't much good, weren't that marvellous and it rained as well so that made it pretty crook. And so we did a fair bit of improving there and digging and I had a rotten hoochie, which was only a one-man show, you know, it was about 6 feet
- 17:00 by, oh, probably 6. It was fairly crook. Platoon headquarters, the platoon commander and the platoon sergeant shared a big one and it was waterproof and we had the wireless and the telephone and things in that, and it was waterproof. But it was very quiet there.
- 17:30 I don't think we had, one of the other companies did, but I don't think we had a shell. We had a few shots, single rifle shot at a sniper having a go at us. But we did a fair few patrols there. I did
- 18:00 my first patrol there, an ambush patrol at about, six or seven, including me, I think and we went out through one, another platoon's position, and found a place down in the valley to stay the night and came back up
- 18:30 in the morning through our, to our platoon area.

What was the point of patrols?

Well, one, for the whole time, one was to keep, to stop the Chinese doing the same thing and getting closer and closer and, two,

- 19:00 if they had a patrol coming to us, hopefully, knock them off or grab one. The big thing was, exercise, the whole time we were there was to get a prisoner. You know, and the yanks wanted us, wanted the battalion to get a prisoner every second day which was, you know, quite ridiculous and General Daley said so,
- 19:30 the first day. Because we knew who, well we didn't, but the intelligence people knew who the hell the Chinks were, what outfit they were and how many. So it was to capture one was the big thing or, mostly, other than that it was to give them the message that, you know, they weren't to come any
- 20:00 closer, you know, that we'd be on to them. We had, we had in each place and we were in one, two, three, four places, we had outposts, so called, in front of the platoon positioned maybe, it varied but, two hundred
- 20:30 yards plus or minus I suppose and two or three blokes would be there all night, always. I mean, rotated but somebody was there all night from just as soon as it was dark enough to get three until dawn to alert the platoon if somebody was
- 21:00 coming our way. And there was a telephone down to it always. No wireless, the wireless wasn't all that crash hot there either. But telephones always seemed to work, I mean, unless they got, the line bust.

So how often did the Chinks come into no man's land?

I think they were probably doing the same

- 21:30 almost as we were doing. But they got cheekier and cheekier with, not with us, but with, because we were doing these patrols, we meaning our battalion, when battalions that didn't have patrols out they got closer and closer and the Canadians were very bad
- 22:00 and lax and the Chinks were right on to them. And later on a good example of that is the Yank marines, about the time of the Hook battle, the battle which 2 battalion excelled in, the yanks must have been very lax there and the chinks were right up to them before they
- 22:30 could do anything about it. Because they hadn't been taking patrols out. But that's what we were doing, I think, just to make sure we owned the valley. That was normal patrols, the ambush patrols, fighting patrols and so forth. Our fighting patrols
- 23:00 never did run into anyone. No, that's not true. Burke did, the platoon commander, I wasn't with him, and they had a victory of sorts in that, no, I wasn't with him so I don't know a lot about it, first hand about it. But he, it finished up with, he withdrew and two Chink patrols got
- 23:30 stuck into each other. He was, Burkie was pretty pleased about that. One of the other platoons in our company ran into them a couple of times and they got a prisoner once. The only one in twelve months.
- 24:00 But we didn't, we didn't fire a shot out other than at a rat, I think. Oh, we tried to get a bloke with a, we tried to get a bloke who we couldn't see anyway, with the anti tank bazooka, a rocket launcher. They thought there was a sniper in a hole
- 24:30 probably in a vertical one we thought but I don't think we were accurate enough or good enough to do that so he was probably laughing. We didn't run into anyone but we got pasted by mortars and shells a few times. However,
- 25:00 lucky us. Us, is generally meaning my platoon but some of the times it's the company or the battalion

you must register.

The Americans wanting you to capture obviously a Chink every couple of days are you saying you only got one once a year or?

That's all, well we were in the line six months, our battalion, and we got one.

- 25:30 They killed a fair few but it's prisoners we're talking about. I don't know how many, other companies knocked some off but it was quite ridiculous and we were taken over, that's not right, our last position was taken over by 3 Battalion and I don't think they got any in that next few months.
- 26:00 But, I don't know what, you'd have to ask David Butler, he'd have more of an answer on why the American general, I think his name might have been Cade, I think, I don't know whether he wanted to train these people or get rid of them, I mean, I'm not privy to these things, or wasn't, I mean.
- 26:30 **Obviously the Chinese were trying to do the same thing. There was a story where an Australian Captain was captured?**
- Yeah, well that was a different set-up in that, well, he went out to Captain Greville
- 27:00 went out to, he had a team of blokes to make a track through a minefield that was just in front of our place and the Chinks, I don't know whether the Chinks took a gamble on the mines not going off or what the hell but they obviously jumped at a run
- 27:30 I'd guess, Greville, and got him and got another one of his blokes and knocked one bloke and wounded a few. He's been interviewed by, last year, the year before, hasn't he, I met him in
- 28:00 Brisbane last, this year for the first time to talk to, other than yes sir, no sir, left, right. But I went out with him before this exercise he was on,
- 28:30 on this mine gap clearance thing, I went out with him that night but he didn't want me to, and then he, then we came in, and that was just a reconnaissance, and then he went out again with his team but he didn't want me, he said he knew the way. So I was lucky.
- 29:00 **And that was that time that he got captured?**
- Yeah, I went out after that, you know, we heard a shemozzle, I was attached to, I was attached to one of the other companies, Don Company at that time, whose acting platoon commander was Don, not Don at all, Des Cochrane who later became
- 29:30 premier of South Australia. And Des Cochrane, I was attached to his platoon, they had taken over from us, from our platoon, and I was attached to him to show his mob where the outposts were and where the water was, you know, spring water and you know, whatever.
- 30:00 So I went out with his, with a patrol from his company that night after we'd heard the shemozzle of shooting and god knows what and helped bring in the blokes what were left of Greville's. We got, we got mortared on the way out.
- 30:30 But, no, a few, and a few wounded but, that was pretty crook him going west, yeah, he must have had a dreadful time.
- That would have been a good trophy for the Chinese, capturing him.**
- My oath, yeah.
- 31:00 Oh God, it shouldn't have happened, I mean he must have been busy doing his job there but he was relying on, he was relying on a couple of patrols further out I would imagine having their ears open, I don't know what the hell could have gone wrong. Except I suppose the chinks just ran through a minefield and nobody expected that to happen.
- 31:30 Maybe they'd put them up I don't know. Maybe they were anti tank mines and the trouble was, there were minefields that were not only badly, in bad order, in that the fence around them had been knocked down, but also they hadn't been, other people told me this
- 32:20 and Greville included has written it, that they weren't mapped properly by whoever had laid the things a year before or six months before, Canadians or Pommies, ours would have been, I mean, our blokes, I don't know whether he put any down even. I think he would have been trying to fence them and pick them up. But they also, it was complicated, I think
- 32:30 there were at least two sorts of mines and some of them might have been anti tank mines which a Chink could run over probably, without them going up, I mean. The other, so I don't know it's all a bit of a mystery but the other, the only other, the good luck of mine was not only he didn't want me to go out again but he, I was meant to
- 33:00 be the smart ass guide and I led him over a little, well I don't know how big it was, or how many, but half a dozen or twenty-seven little, a heap of mines in a bit of a gulley and we walked over them. So

presumably they were all, nothing happened, except a clatter,

33:30 and God, no, but Greville picked one up and I don't know whether he gave me his gun or what, his Owen, but anyway, must have done, and carried the damn thing in. Must have done, it was dark, he went out again at midnight so it would have been ten o'clock at night, I suppose. Brought it in to see what kind it was, I suppose.

34:00 And to this day I don't know what it was anyway, because I never saw him again, oh, until the other day. Oh, you know, I saw him in Canberra but not to talk to. I'm a bit shy about him, I don't want to talk about the war with him to that sort of degree.

So was that usual for someone to grab a mine and bring it back to have a look at it?

Oh, God.

34:30 I don't, maybe, maybe he'd looked at it and knew what it was, I don't know, or he just wanted to check but it surprised me. We walked in together, I don't know what the hell he did with it. When I met him at midnight I didn't ask him anything about it, it didn't occur to me.

35:00 He must be a brave fellow.

And how did you accidentally find yourself walking through the minefield?

No, it wasn't minefield, it was just this cache of them that somebody had left. Either they were superfluous or they'd been lifted from a minefield somewhere else and dumped there temporarily or otherwise. No, it wasn't in a minefield. I'd led him in through a wrong bit of a track, this little bit of a trench or valley and where somebody

35:30 had hidden these damn things, or you know, left them. Oh, I'd got off the track by I don't know a couple of yards.

And just in respect to when he got captured and going down and collecting the wounded. What was the process there, did you stretch them back, what actually happened?

No, we, no, a couple of them, a couple of them

36:00 had got themselves back with a, on foot, you know, wounded, with an unwounded bloke and I don't know, don't know how many wounded were still there when we went out. And a couple of our patrol that went out were wounded but only slightly. And they were on their feet, including the corporal that was later killed probably.

36:30 and the fellow that was killed, we carried him in, no, we didn't have any stretcher we just man handled him. A fellow by the name of Syd Carr but, I don't think they, I don't think they kept mortaring

37:00 us on the way in. But I'm not sure, they certainly frightened the hell out of us when we were going out. The corporal got a piece in his face. I don't know, that's the end of that story. So I rejoined the platoon the next day. No, one more day because I stayed to try and, no, it doesn't matter

37:30 that day or he next but I stayed for a while anyway. I went up to Company Headquarters to try and tell them my side of the story, like, tell them where it had happened, like, try and point it out, pin point it. And they did, in fact, find Greville's gun, Owen, they didn't take that and maybe his pay book.

38:00 I'm not sure about that but the Chinks hadn't taken his Owen. A big enough prize without it. So that's another one of my good luck stories.

Tape 8

00:42 **So tell me about the connection with the stun gun?**

Well, we are going are we. Well we had these boxes, I think they were like, guessing, wooden boxes

01:00 eighteen inches by nine by nine, explosives in them and we had them in front of, it was probably a precursor to claim on mines, in front of the outpost and if all else failed you could, we had an electric thing, a trigger, putter-offer, in the trench in the outpost and you could

01:30 set this charge of gelignite or the equivalent to knock somebody down so they told us. I don't know whether it was ever used or no. No, I don't think anybody ever came up to our place and got away with it.

So it was designed to be?

It was designed to be a knock-down thing rather than a bullet, you know,

02:00 a blast. I don't know that's what they told us.

Was anybody?

We never used t. I don't think Chinks every came to our outpost. And so that was a brownie point.

Just on that issue, can you just, for my benefit, describe for me why it was

02:30 **ridiculous to do this kind of, I think you described it as you were requested to have one prisoner a patrol why was that the case?**

Well, you'd have to ask the yanks really because apparently the, I will answer it, apparently the intelligence sources of all sorts knew

03:00 which Chinese unit was across the valley from us and therefore how many there were and on and on and God knows why the Yanks wanted us to do that but they were in charge of the whole exercise, war, not our, it wasn't just our battalion or division even, commonwealth division, say so,

03:30 it was the Americans that were saying it. And General Castle's saying it can't be done, the Pommy, and General Daley, the Australian Brigadier was saying it can't be done and it wasn't done, as well as being pointless, but, nevertheless, there was at least 3, two big company patrols of

04:00 a hundred blokes and a smaller one of Don Company, perhaps half their company, went, in one case went a mile up a valley passed Chinese lines to try and get a prisoner. And they lost people of their own, of course, and didn't get one. Soon after we got in the line

04:30 A Company, A Company went up, in daylight for God's sake, a hill straight opposite our first position, we watched them doing it, to try and get one and all they succeeded in doing was having a fair few casualties and didn't get anybody. You know, they killed a few Chinks but didn't get one alive. It was all pretty rotten.

05:00 But we had to kow tow to the Yanks I think. I'm a lance corporal don't forget. We went on, back to reality, my platoon, 7th platoon, we did several, two or three, reconnaissance patrols,

05:30 which was two or three blokes, to the other side of the valley, to the Chinese side and we decided that we could hear, on the next bridge, a hundred and fifty yards away, we could hear the Chinese digging, or bashing posts in, or doing something noisy.

06:00 So it was decided that we would go and grab our outpost, it must be on this bridge Is this answering your question roughly, so after this two or three reconnaissances which we got away with, Burkie, I and I think one or two others, we then, twenty of us

06:30 out of the thirty at least, went, we even had an exercise, you know a trial, rehearsal of how we'd go about this raid. And we went on a very round about, nearly all the platoon, round about track,

07:00 what's the word, route to get to this (UNCLEAR) through other people's positions, miles away. And to cut a long story short, the artillery was firing to muffle the noise that we might make and that went off because it was premature we weren't anywhere near the objective. Anyway, to cut a long story short, we got down this bridge and

07:30 there wasn't anyone there. So, damn me, there were trenches and it had a good name called Graves Burr it was and we went back the next, either the next night or the next, two I suppose, I've forgotten which and we went straight across. And there was still no one there

08:00 when we got back. That's how ridiculous it was, if they'd been waiting for us the second time we would have been in big trouble with no prisoner, we would have lost all our people. It was quite mad. This is from our place, across the valley maybe four or five hundred yards, if you were in a straight line, to Graves Bur from our platoon, down the hill a couple of hundred yards, across the valley, four hundred yards say,

08:30 on to this field, paddy field in the valley and a creek. But it was a very technical exercise the first time we went miles away. All for, all for nought. But that's the sort of thing that happened there. I mean, other patrols doing the same thing.

So, just to get my head around it, so there were

09:00 **two types of major things being done. The patrols, and that's patrols in order to get prisoners, and then also trench warfare?**

Yeah, and also other patrols that went out such as my first one, which was you know minor but it was major for me, went out say to theirs or our side of the valley, whichever you like, you know, it varied,

09:30 and laid up was the word, stayed out for x number of hours hoping the Chinks would send out a patrol to wonder what was happening and we'd knock them off.

Is that Stand To?

No, no, that happened, no, that's quite different again, no, it's quite different and that was dawn and dusk because that was, especially

10:00 dawn, that was when, one, things might be lax at home and, two, somebody might try and jump us because we wouldn't have patrols out because it was going to be light shortly. So we wouldn't be game to have people out in the valley in the day time, or in light. But they might have come across, as our blokes came in from the valley, they might have come in, that's why you had to Stand To

10:30 just before dawn and, I suppose we had one at dusk.

How guerrilla style was their form of...?

How what?

Guerrilla style was their form of defence, like when you were walking through on these patrols. Did you know where they'd be, were they going to jump out at any point or?

No, no, but our hearing,

11:00 at your age, our hearing and sight were, was pretty good compared to it now. No, we got frightened by, it could happen in, in the last place we were in there were little trees, sort of about man height I suppose

11:30 on our side, on the hillside. And we went out one night and something took off through this scrub and made a hell of a noise and whether it was a pig or a pheasant or a Chink, nobody knows because we didn't see a thing but that's, you know, that was a bit scary.

12:00 So we were, no, we were, had our eyes skinned all the time. But as I said, we never ran into them. The other platoon who got the prisoner, they didn't get far out of our position, they were next door to us, you know, a few hundred yards away, two hundred yards away, they had joined

12:30 their platoon had joined ours. They got down the, just to the bottom of the hill, and this is another bloke's story not mine, but the Chinese thought they'd ambush this mob but one of them stuck his head out and McCrindle

13:00 challenged him and asked him whether he was a Canuck because he had a cap on, the Chinks had caps and so did we at that stage, or the Canadians did, the Canadians, we didn't at that stage and the bloke ducked down, of course, so they chucked grenades at this mob and did them over and they tore off, the Chinks but they left this one bloke behind. That's how they captured him.

13:30 so that was good management and quick thinking on McCrindle's part and McCarthy and they took off after the Chinks and on the way back to rejoin the other few blokes found this poor little cowerer hiding, and grabbed him.

14:00 I mean, that's what was meant to happen but they had very good luck. And they were smart too, to see these Chinks rather than get ambushed themselves. They were hiding behind, a thing about as high as that, oh a bit more, you know, a paddy field bank, the Chinks were.

How dishonourable was it for them

14:30 **to be captured?**

I don't know, how vulnerable?

Dishonourable.

Oh dishonourable. I don't know, he was only a little tiny bloke, I've got a picture of him there. He told me, somebody told me that he'd been promised that when he got home he could have, be presented with an acre

15:00 or two as a reward but I don't know. A lot of Chinese to give an acre to I think. So I don't know whether that was the case, he was frightened as hell. But McCrindle and McCarthy they took him back to Battalion headquarters and

15:30 McCarthy got an immediate military medal and McCrindle got one later. So that's, that was a success story but there weren't many of them.

So what happened to this guy, this prisoner?

The Chinaman. Oh, I don't, Oh, he'd finish up at god knows where, division headquarters I don't know. The intelligence

16:00 people would get hold of him and they'd find nothing that was useful, I'd imagine, you know, he was 17 or 18 or whatever he was, except that he was alive. Oh, God knows what happened to him.

You were awarded a medal as well?

No, well that was just, no, but that was a so-called , as you know from others, period, being
16:30 a good boy for six months and being lucky.

Can you expand on that?

No.

Come on.

Oh, I've been lucky and hadn't put too many feet wrong and we had a,
17:00 a disastrous, probably to cap it all off, was a disastrous day light patrol, our platoon. They thought some
Chinks had, somebody thought, had come in past one of our outposts at night and hadn't gone back.

17:30 Whether anybody had, or whether a pig had, God knows. This is right and next morning they, this patrol
reckoned they, this outpost reckoned they hadn't gone back and we were told to go and see whether
anybody was hiding up on our side of the valley.

18:00 And so that was pretty pointless, too, and we got pasted with mortars and shells and one bloke got
killed and the platoon commander slightly wounded and

18:30 I got away with it again. The fellow that was killed, he didn't get killed immediately, unfortunately, came
from Orange actually. And I tried to, anyway, he wasn't quite killed and

19:00 we got, and the fellow who gave me that and another bloke arrived eventually with a stretcher and we
got him out of sight and got a helicopter. But he died, thank God. So, I think that was my most
hazardous day at the office.

So can you just go back to that

19:30 **and can you possibly expand on it just a little bit more in terms of just telling me the kind of
terrain that you were in, what time of day it was, what you could see in terms of trees, where
the other guys were, all the detail like you were walking me through visually so I can get a
picture of what it would be like to be you in that event?**

Well it was, one it was daylight and it was, you nearly always patrolled,

20:00 I will answer it, you know 99% of them were night time but this one was because they thought the
Chinks had come over and stayed over. We were sent off about, oh God, I'm only guessing but I suppose
nine or ten o'clock in the morning. And it was hilly, a few trees, but not very big hills

20:30 and not many trees. But we were visible to the Chinese. Guessing, seven or eight hundred yards away,
might have been closer, on the other side of the valley, because we were still on our side thinking, you
know, they were meant to be holed up. And

21:00 so they saw us and they would have wondered what the hell we were doing. So they pasted the platoon
that was nearby, that had this outpost, and knocked them about with mortars and shells and then turned
and saw us I suppose at the same time. And they mortared, mortared

21:30 us, oh, lots of them. And Burke didn't know he'd been hurt and wounded and he took the, he took the, I
told him that the bloke had been killed, beside me, and he took the rest of the

22:00 platoon, oh maybe a dozen, eighteen, fifteen of them or more, over the ridge and hid them and came
back and we got the wireless he and I or I'd got it, Bob was carrying it, and we got,

22:30 eventually, we couldn't get anyone to talk to us, the aerial was bugged and was gone and we got some
wire and tried that and eventually two blokes turned up with a stretcher and somebody had, in fact,
heard us but they couldn't get back to us. And, so,

23:00 you know, these two blokes and Burke and I carried this bloke towards a, towards a helicopter, an
American one I suppose it was, I don't know, and got him aboard and just hiked home and decided there
weren't any Chinks on our side of the valley.

23:30 And we were a bit devastated to say the least and bloody annoyed and then Burke went on leave, a few
days later, he's the platoon commander, and found he couldn't walk and

24:00 he had a little piece of steel in his ankle joint. He didn't know it. But anyhow, that's what it was and they
did an X-ray or whatever and took it out. He stayed in the army forever. So that's the saga for that one.

So, can I ask you a few more questions?

Yeah

24:30 go on, not too many.

O.K. This guy that got shot, mortally wounded, was right next to you?

Oh yeah, he was very close, he had the wireless. And I, I shouldn't admit this but I was

25:00 counting the, I'd heard the damn thing go off, or one of the mortars go off, being fired, and I had a habit of counting how long it takes and I'm pretty sure I was, if not on the ground, damn close to it by the time it landed. And he, I don't know he was here to the chair away, but he couldn't have got down

25:30 even if he'd heard the damn thing coming. You could hear them once they were very close, I think I could.

What's the noise, can you tell me?

Well, you know, it was like, it had fins and I think it was going. Phew, phew, phew, you know, when it hit the ground it went off. But they sent over, they sent over bigger ones later on when Burke and I were waiting around for

26:00 this damn stretcher and he was game, he patched Bob up with all the whatsanames we had, you know, field dressings, pretty pointless.

How long does it take for a mortar to go from?

Oh, I'd decided about 8 or 9 seconds in this case, I'm pretty sure, but, I mean this is 50 years ago,

26:30 I might be making all this up inaccurately. And that particular one was a little one but there were bigger ones and I don't know whether they shelled us with an artillery gun, like a 25 pounder or whether it was a bigger mortar but they were going over us towards our company headquarters. It was very noisy when they went off, I don't know what the hell they were.

27:00 But I think they stopped once we started carrying this fellow out. I don't want to give them the benefit of the doubt but I think they did. That'll do.

Can you describe for me what, what kind of damage it did to the other guy?

Oh, head, and he had other, a wound to the leg

27:30 or something but, no, his head was knocked about. So, I hope his parents don't hear this. I went to see them but I couldn't find them when I was in Orange a few years ago, I don't know what happened to them, a couple of years ago.

28:00 They were pretty devastated of course. However.

This is a difficult question. This maybe a difficult question to answer but was that your first experience of something like that, something extreme like that in terms of war?

28:30 No, no, it wasn't, no. We had, we had a couple of blokes killed and a couple pretty, well, wounded, and a few others knocked about and some blokes knocked down

29:00 a bit before that. A shell got them, it must have been a couple of weeks before I think. That was pretty - but I wasn't as close to them, I don't know what I was doing but, you know, we were in a trench, trenches

29:30 and a shell and these blokes were in the open and, it must have been the first shell they fired, otherwise they wouldn't still have been in the open, on the edge of the trench, the front one, and the bloody shell got them and one hit, I don't, and

30:00 knocked some roofs off and things off. They were badly killed, you know, completely killed. The other blokes that were wounded, one bloke came back to us, one didn't, they got over it and a few got semi concussion I think from roofs falling in at that time.

30:30 We had a trench that was on a forward slope of this ridge and trenches and hoochies on a forward slope and on a back, some were out of sight of the people across the valley and some weren't. So, no, it wasn't a first but the closest to me.

31:00 **Toby, I want to ask you a few more questions that might be difficult to answer so if at any point you want me to not ask them, just, I'm going to gauge it from you, O.K., because I'm quite inquisitive about this situation.**

Well, no more deaths.

No more

Well, there aren't any.

I just want to ask you about your fellow soldier

31:30 **that you saw being hit by the mortar. What, can you describe for me what happened, how you helped him and how he responded to that attack. What happened?**

Oh, well we couldn't be any help, we left him where he was. We knew we couldn't move him. Well, I thought he was dead.

32:00 And then he made a noise and Burke and I by this time, me having told him he was dead, we were trying to get the damn wireless going, I'd taken it off his shoulder pack and we were, you know, about five yards away, in a bit of a dip which we thought was a bit safer. But this bloke was lying up there and we went back and bandaged

32:30 him up. Didn't know about, didn't think about his damn leg or it didn't register. And Burkie bandaged him up but it was a pointless exercise. We couldn't move him, well we couldn't have moved him sensibly, could have dragged him I suppose but, you know,

33:00 we were just aggravating the whole situation and we thought we'd get a, well, we decided we weren't going to leave him there, dead or alive, or his gear, the rifle and the wireless so we thought we'd hang around. I don't know, we didn't talk a lot, Burke and I, you know, because he knew what we were on about.

33:30 But eventually someone from the rest of the platoon, seeing as we couldn't get the damn wireless to work, somebody would arrive back with an ambulance or a stretcher or a truck but, there was bugger all we could do to be helpful. The other blokes in the trench before they were just completely killed

34:00 and badly knocked about. They'd all been with me when I joined up. I think, no I don't think you want to dwell on it. There's nothing more to say about that poor cow. One of the positive things that I've done.

34:30 You want to hear a good story after a tragedy? The friend that I got the card from this morning, from Bowral, he's married a war widow, he knew the girl, knew the bloke and the bloke came from Yass. And the fellow came to see Les before we went in the line and

35:00 soon afterwards was killed in 3 Battalion and Les said, do you think I should write to Alice and, they got married when I came home, and had a kid of their own and she had one anyway so that's a good story isn't it. Out of a tragedy, I mean.

35:30 So, I don't know, I think I'd better shut up.

Can I ask you any more questions about it? Can I ask you one more question about it?

Go on. I've waffled then.

No, you're not waffling at all. Actually, I've got two more questions to be really honest. You were awarded a medal based on that situation you described us?

36:00 Well, it was just, well, that would be just part of it, it was, as I say, periodic, it was for the six months and the Queen had one spare.

Humility is a terrible thing. Can you just do a bit of what you would call skiting but we'd call truthful? Can you just tell us, can you expand on that any further?

Oh, about the bloke being

36:30 killed.

Just about the medal and what were those major things?

Oh, I did a lot of patrols, I'd say I did more patrols than most of the blokes but no more than some. No more than that fellow that gave me that and I wasn't in charge of any of those dreadful

37:00 things. I did a couple of things that some of the others hadn't done. This sounds dreadful, just fill in, such as the thing that I was talking about but the night out with Greville's mob, you know, there was nobody else from my platoon within a mile or two so that

37:30 just sort of accidentally happened. And, I obviously got on, got on reasonably well with my superiors I reckon. I don't think I was sort of too much of a trouble so hence the spare medal. That was a thrill.

38:00 **Do they get, does it get recommended when you receive a medal, does someone put you forward for it?**

Oh, you mean, down the, I don't know who did probably the platoon sergeant rather, and maybe that first Lieut, we had two lieutenants, the fellow that was wounded didn't come back to us.

38:30 We got another one. And I suppose the company commander, oh yeah, he knew me well enough, yeah. And then it was recommended by, I got the paperwork there, recommended by Brigadier Daley and then the, as they all are,

39:00 by General Rowley who was, a la Cosgrove now, I suppose. But, yes, I'm lucky and it was a thrill and it was a thrill saying g'day to the Queen. And I get a dollar a week for having it, or a fortnight and

39:30 Anyway.

And what?

And I was going to say and then I'd dine out on it with you. But oh no, I don't think it was anything, it wasn't for something drastic, individual thing.

40:00 **We're right at the end of this tape so we'll finish that one.**

Tape 9

00:41 In my pay book it says that I belonged to RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] but it also says Special Force for two years so I was with the regular army but I joined for two years and then

01:00 when I came home, we came home, those who didn't want to stay on, sign on for regular army six years, I think rather than three, the authorities said, well, we'd been away a bit over a year, the authorities said

01:30 well, you can terminate your time now if you want to. So I had some leave and the old man offered me a job back on the farm and we decided we wanted to get married and I got out after 19 months so it was a very short army career.

02:00 And I didn't join the CMF again.

Can you expand on maybe the reasons why you decided not to join the regular army or CMF.

No, I just don't think, I don't think its any expansion, just I thought I, I just thought it would be a pretty awful life being a civilian, a

02:30 civilian, a junior soldier at home I thought it wouldn't hold much appeal. It wouldn't have been, it would have been dreadful. And a reasonable place to work in here.

How much did your experiences in Korea influence that decision?

03:00 Oh, I don't think just the Korean part of it, I think, just, I don't think it was that exciting, adventurous, whatever the word is as I'd imagined it was going to be. I didn't think there was much going for it and the war was damned near

03:30 finished or stopped, that war, and I wasn't going to go back there again. So there wasn't anything more adventurous and I wasn't smart enough to be a spitfire pilot was I and I didn't like discipline much and I still don't. Yeah, another question.

How did it not live up to your expectations

04:00 **of what you thought it would be.**

Well, I'm not a, I don't like being, it's just my make-up, I don't like being timetabled or disciplined much. I can put up with it, I obviously could couldn't I but I don't like it and I'm not bright enough

04:30 to have become an officer or a gentleman or a more exciting, more useful life. You know, that wouldn't have ever happened, so, farming. So we got married and lived happily ever after, mostly.

This is another hard question

05:00 **well maybe not that hard but something that I, I really want you to think about before answering which I know that you have with every other question that I've asked you today. How much of an impact do those kinds of extreme experiences of war have on you. The ones where you saw another mate hit by mortar shell and then die and also men that were shelled and wounded**

05:30 **and killed close by you as well?**

How much of an impact? Well it's so called forgotten war doesn't apply to me I suppose but I don't have the jitters about it but I sort of give it a bit of thought. Not necessarily those

06:00 particular instances but I suppose the big impact is, and not only the war but you know a reasonably healthy, happy marriage and reasonably, quite healthy and bright kids, I think the impact is just a reinforcement of how lucky I am and have been. And have been

06:30 with my genes as well probably I suppose. I don't know, that's a funny way of answering but I think that is hardly an impact of the, you can't say it's an impact of the war only, on anybody's life I suppose. But my luck's still holding, our luck's still holding.

07:00 As long as the damned, we won't get on to that, as long as the country keeps ticking over reasonably well.

With, just in

07:30 **terms of, just to sum up, how would you actually say, you'd sum up your experience in Korea?**

Sum it up? Well, I got a thousand pounds out of it and I wasn't hurt.

08:00 Oh, luck, again. I'm glad I went, I think I was probably more useful than useless. To sum it up this is the tack your on and I met some nice blokes who I still see and my wife said

08:30 she'd marry me when I wrote to her so most of the things were positive. But most of all my luck I think. I don't think I can answer anything more positive than capital L for luck.

I want to ask you one thing which may not be a

09:00 **sum up question as such but just coming back to something you mentioned earlier, you said that in Tokyo you had five days leave in which the men**

That's dropping back now.

Yes, sorry about that, that you had five days leave and there was a lot of R and R going on. What actually happened in those five days?

We had two lots of leave.

09:30 **Five days after four months and not everybody could go at the one time of course, and three weeks after, we spent a lot of money in Tokyo in a leave camp and everybody spent a lot of money bar two I suppose and, on grog and women.**

10:00 **In the five days, I would have spent most of the time drinking. That was after our shemozzle earlier we talked about. And on the three weeks I was sick for some of the time and was too stupid to go to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post]. I would have just drank some more and did a bit of sightseeing.**

10:30 **I can't tell you anything about brothels. Saw my first TV, for God's sake, that's an interesting exercise, sumo wrestling. No, sightseeing, a bit of that but oh it was a damned good spell and it felt safe, of course. A clean place, clean clothes,**

11:00 **lots of hot water and showers and Turkish baths and things. It was a pretty pleasant experience. I don't think any more, I don't know, we had a lot of laughs. Didn't have any of those in Korea, you know, laughs because we were having fun drinking, I suppose. But I don't want to**

11:30 **dwell on that.**

So what kind of bonding and mateship happens, you said there weren't a lot of laughs in Korea?

Well, because we were too damn busy, you know, or sleeping or digging. We didn't talk very much to each other. I'm a stick beak and I

12:00 didn't know much of people's life stories and vice versa because we just didn't, and by the time we sort of did our daily cooking and cleaning and patrols or whatever we didn't sort of have a yarn very often. But we got to know each other well enough to know that,

12:30 you know, that Joe Blow wouldn't let you down, didn't have to talk about it. No, there was very little swapping of life history or pedigree assuming anyone would want to know but I think it was because we were so busy

13:00 and you can't, you know, you couldn't talk on patrol. Well, in the line we were meant to be not talking out loud so, and in a blanket, in a close, not as small as my first one but in a place of 6 x 10 with three blokes in it, I mean, it's not all that, you're all pretty matey but it's not all that

13:30 conducive to having a bit of a conversation except about oh, put the tins on the fire for a feed, or lend me your Owen gun I'm going out tonight. So, Tokyo we could do that. I mean, we didn't swap stories there either. You know, we swapped women and drinking stories but not political or home

14:00 conversations. Well I didn't anyway. No, I don't think we did, pretty irresponsible probably. Anyway, it was an experience.

So how does morale retain a certain buoyancy when you're in a situation for several months and there's no break and?

14:30 I think we, I think most of the blokes, one or two wanted to go home to mum and one or two did and a few didn't want to stay in the line any longer but they didn't want to go home, you know they got other

jobs as drivers or whatever. I don't think, I think we just eased into it and

15:00 our platoon was so lucky we weren't, we were knocked about a bit but, don't know, we only had a couple of bad jolts, two or three, but I think we just took it in our stride. Some of the, I told you I was a shy sort of person and there were a few others

15:30 like me but there were a few other roughish that nothing would have upset them probably. You know, who'd had a rougher upbringing than I, you know, the circumstances. And I don't think anything fussed them and I don't think we would have let on if we were terribly upset about anything.

16:00 No, just sort of slumped along I think. It was a pretty strange mob to have done what we did anyway weren't we. I mean, started off doing a pretty strange thing, everybody having a job and then fronting up for this exercise. So we must have been, we must have been different to most of the rest of the population perhaps, maybe we were

16:30 sillier perhaps.

Did everybody have similar reasons for joining up?

I think they all would have had, I don't know, but I think they would have all had the reason of let's have an adventure I would say. I have one bloke, a friend up in Sydney, I asked him why he

17:00 joined up the other day. And he said he'd gone from one job to another and he thought he'd go to Brisbane because his brother was living last, one of six or whatever. And he met his brother and he was in uniform and so he thought, I thought to myself, well that's not a bad idea so he went and joined up next day. So, you know, we are odd. But maybe that's why

17:30 we, that's why we still see each other quite often. I mean, I see quite a few of my platoon. Butler had a heap of friends he sees no doubt at Duntroon, well I know he does at Duntroon graduates reunion, we all did something a bit different to

18:00 the Manly rugby league team, I'd say. They all get together and have their fun. I don't know. You think up a better reason and let me know.

Are there any interesting anecdotes or incidences of troop mateship

18:30 **that you can share with us from that time in Korea. Any little human tales?**

Other than Les knowing Alice. I've been to, well, Les and I did a pretty hazardous thing, when years go

19:00 Mick our other mortar crewman had had a heart attack, if not two, and recovered. But we went off to Longreach to see another bloke, the three of us, another bloke who was in our platoon. God knows what would have happened if he'd had another heart attack at Goondiwindi or something but we did strange, hazardous things like that.

19:30 I had a, well I had a big thrill a couple of years ago of course which you and the other tax-payers paid for by being picked, hence the reason being here, to go back to Korea. And I met some more people on that safari

20:00 that I keep in touch with, a few I do. But that was a big thrill, it wouldn't have happened except for the war, or happened because of the damn war. I don't know who picked me for that. Oh, yes I do, I know who nominated me but I don't know who the final arbiter was.

20:30 But that, that's one of my old age thrills I suppose.

So not everyone was selected to go? Not everyone that fought in Korea went back for the commemoration?

There was only twenty-five in Australia. Army, navy, air force for the two years ago one. And Veterans Affairs paid for us,

21:00 looked after us well. And, allegedly 50 years, 50 years after they ended the war was the reason for going. And I got a Christmas card from one of them today,

21:30 too, from Western Australia. So that was one of my prizes for, superannuation we'd call it maybe. No, it was a good trip.

Can you tell me who nominated you?

I was nominated by,

22:00 yeah, was nominated by the secretary at my battalion's association, or New South Wales secretary, a fellow named Herb Stacker, the bloke that joined up in Brisbane. And he, I don't know how many he nominated and there were only

22:30 two from my battalion, two, yes, two. The other one was Colin Carne from Canberra and the final, I

think I must have been nominated by somebody in the regimental association, too, I think, who, you know, I see on

23:00 Anzac Day but I feel a bit, I felt a bit guilty, thrilled but a bit guilty because we'd done, we, 1 Battalion had done so little compared with 3 and 2, during the war. A couple of widows must have had a rough,

23:30 who went with us, must have had a rough mental time I'd imagine. One of them belonged to, I'm waffling, one of them belonged to a bloke who was killed, who I didn't know but in our battalion was killed in the last place we were on and she met her son over there, he went privately, and they met up

24:00 which was good, I suppose. Good's not the word. Anyway, I think I've run out of steam.

No, I'm interested to ask one or two more questions about that. So, do you know the reason why you were nominated?

Well, I was, there were several reasons and one was I hadn't been back

24:30 before and, two, did I want to go back and, three, was I fit enough to go back and, four, I suppose, I hadn't upset anybody and when I see the fellow that nominated me,

25:00 he nominated himself too, made me feel a bit more guilty, but I go to Sydney for Anzac Day and see people who may or may not have been on the committee. I didn't pull any strings but I didn't know the minister or chief of staff or whatever

25:30 so I think it was only battalion and regiment associations and blokes must have been on the committee, a committee, who recommended, I don't know how many. I did know how many at one time but quite a lot. But, so, I don't know how it happened after that.

So what was the experience like of returning to Korea?

Oh, it was a thrill.

26:00 It was disappointing, too. It was a thrill to get the free trip and the luxury and that sort of thing. A bit sad, I'm not a great, I'm not a great cemetery goer but I could cope with that all right.

26:30 I quite liked being told how marvellous we were by those people, you know. It was quite, it was good to see, it was good to see Seoul and Pusan, I mean I should hate to live there, obviously clean and well fed and we saw lots of little kids in two or three places and they were all a different

27:00 shape to when we were there and looked well and were happy in the circus, so that was good. I think I was there under false pretences as far as being, I can't think of the word, but anyway, I did appreciate

27:30 representing or being a representative of my battalion but I felt a bit guilty about that because there's other more deserving people I'm sure. Anyway, another part of my luck.

28:00 I don't know whether I can expand on that.

You mentioned earlier that, when I asked you about what impact Korea had on you, you said that, and I referenced those two extreme examples, how much they impacted on you and you said, you did say that they did impact you

28:30 **but there were other things that you thought about. Can you share with me what those were, what those are?**

Well I think of the political thing, of course, harking back to, I suppose was the big thing, other than the fellows and I think that goes without saying. People that I've met, know now, that I wouldn't have known otherwise but the other thing is

29:00 the political, anti communist situation which was part of the exercise of the war. And, so was Malaya and so was Vietnam and eventually, for a variety of things including standing up against the damn communists, they are a spent

29:30 force compared with 50 years ago and I sort of think that's a positive thing to think about. A lot of patting myself on the back a bit but I don't think the communists know about what I think. I think it was useful. Not too,

30:00 not too sure whether our battalion did a lot towards it but the Chinks didn't sort of, didn't overrun the place again so, we mustn't talk about them like that. No, that's all I think about I think. I don't like people saying "the forgotten war". I think that people didn't,

30:30 didn't give it much thought probably. The war part of it, fighting part, but it's not an expression I, I'd go in for because I do think about it and I think most of our blokes do, too. So, it doesn't matter what other people think, or don't think. Righto.

Why do you think it's called the forgotten war?

- 31:00 I think, I think it was just too remote and small and most people are, 50 per cent, oh I wouldn't get, I wouldn't make it obligatory for 50 per cent of the Australians to vote, so therefore I don't think they think well enough about world politics. God,
- 31:30 let me be a dictator for the day, a week. So, I think they just slum along and let other people think about it. That's not answering your question. I don't think the Koreans think of it as a forgotten war, I'll bet. God it would be awful to live there but all the houses would be
- 32:00 waterproof and a fair bit of tucker in the house now. We used to feed the kids in the first place we went to with leftovers. So, anyway I think about that part of it.

Just a sec, there's a kitchen - so you were?

- 32:30 Harking back to that bloke in Queensland and he and I drove into, we decided we were going to get out, together, and we drove into Marrickville to sign on the dotted line or get our money, all those complicated things. And we drove out, up to half a day, out the circle, out the gate at twelve miles an hour
- 33:00 you don't dare do any more. And Lofty said, you know, I really did think that at least the colonel or at least a general would take us into his room and say thank you. Instead of that the sentry of the gate made us drive around because we doing thirteen miles an hour or whatever. And it's quite a thought isn't it.
- 33:30 He also said, re the forgotten war, one more story of his. Have you got room on the tape? Lofty told me quite recently, he said, he said, we were marched through Sydney when we came home to some park and I've forgotten where it was but it was somewhere up near Central I think, to pick up our gear. And he said, I got a taxi
- 34:00 and told the fellow that I wanted to go to Turramurra and he said two things, one he charged me an extra whatever it was to go over the bridge because it was such a long way to go to the North Shore and, two, he said, he said, I wonder what all the diggers are doing in Sydney today. And we'd just marched through the damn town. So, he didn't know about the war.

- 34:30 He's also got a chip on his shoulder, this fellow, worse than I have, but it's quite a thought isn't it.

The first example that you gave, of making you drive around at a certain speed, was that after a certain event or you were there for something?

I should have run over the man. I had a utility

- 35:00 by then and I picked up this bloke and we signed all the whatever we had to sign and picked up our pay I suppose. Got in the utility, got our discharge papers, probably, but, you know, we were out of the army, and I drove round this damned circle of, it said twelve miles an hour and I must have been doing fourteen, and this damned sentry said go round again, and I did and I'm sorry now I did, I should have run over him.
- 35:30 But that would be another reason why I wouldn't like to stay in the army as a private or a temporary lance corporal. I was a temporary acting I think, lance corporal, and got another shilling a day.

Did the sentry know that you'd been in Korea?

Did he know? Oh, well, he should have. I don't know what other reason would we be there. Had a medical

- 36:00 but, no names, I was too stupid to say I had a crook back or crook guts. Are you well, yes. We had an x-ray I will admit and that must have taken, you know, ten minutes I suppose. I've kicked myself since for saying, you know, I feel unwell I've got a bad back or whatever. But that was
- 36:30 pretty perfunctory.

You can't retrospectively, you can't retrospectively kind of say, oh, well actually I got malaria after the event?

Ah, they paid, yeah, they paid you, oh, I went to hospital and nobody knew what the hell was wrong with me. Yeah, they paid medical expenses for that but, they, you know, the government, Veterans Affairs

- 37:00 paid the hospital bill. But anyway, no, I'm not too worried about that it's just the annoyance of it.

What about the others, the other troops that you were with in Korea did they have similar experiences of the war being sort of muffled or sort of forgotten by the general public?

- 37:30 I think, they didn't talk about it as such but I think that came to the, I think that would have been the feeling brought, brought up by the unveiling of the war memorial for our war in Canberra five years ago
- 38:00 or whenever it was and I think that would have stirred a few people that it had taken so damned long to have a hunk of rock there. Which it did but I don't think I sort of worried about it much. That was a good reunion. There were a

38:30 fair few people I hadn't seen before, for 50 years or whatever. I think that sort of, it got lot of publicity didn't it so it sort of prompted it a bit, thoughts on it.

Tape 10

01:00 **Can you explain to me, in terms of your knowledge of war, and all the wars that we've talked about, the Great War, Second World War, and Korea, how do you feel your experience of Korea differed from the experience in Vietnam?**

Not having been there for a start.

But having known other vets and reading and things

01:30 **that you know about those conditions?**

Well, it's not going to be in order, chronological or sensible even perhaps. There wasn't the complication for us of national service call up. So that didn't arise. It did arise for the

02:00 Yanks I think but certainly the pommies, a lot of them were national service and I don't think they thought much of it and I don't blame them, they were very poorly paid for a start. We were well paid, you know. Compared to Vietnam. I think ours was, I think ours

02:30 would have been not only a minor but smaller in area involved, smaller in numbers involved, especially Australians. I don't, I don't know whether we thought that we were going to have a win or not. I don't think we did

03:00 by the time we got there it was just going to be a truce of some sort we were looking forward to but I think the Vietnam blokes, after some years, must have thought that it's, they were just on a really unwinnable, depressing, crook situation I would

03:30 think but you see I don't know, we weren't, I don't know about that. I think they were, I think that would be their, that would be something for them to answer. It must have been crook for front line, for infantry fellows all the time I suppose. And it must have been just a damn waste

04:00 for a lot of Americans who were there in such vast numbers not doing anything in particular, oh, you know, fighting. But somebody's going to hear me and say that and, one you weren't there Jack and two they're going to be dead right aren't they. We weren't politically motivated and we should have been I think. By somebody else, by

04:30 somebody in a superior position should have given us a lecture before and after or two or three or four. We had an education officer, this is how ridiculous it is, who came to see us, I'm off the track, came to see us, before we went into line, we were digging the trenches, the Kansas Line, and he brought us a bundle of Women's Weekly's.

05:00 Burke told him to go away and get lost. I mean, you wouldn't read it would you. So whether the Vietnam blokes had that sort of problem I don't know. You asked what ridiculous things once before.

Can you explain what the purpose of that was?

Oh, dear or dear.

What was the purpose of that?

05:30 I don't know, keep himself in a job I suppose. Education officer, we never saw him again, I don't know what happened to him, he lost his leg with a bit of luck.

Was this meant to be about the birds and the bees?

I don't know, did I know about them?

No, no, no, was that what the magazines were about?

No, you know, I don't know, your trash magazines that come every Saturday from Kerry Packer's.

06:00 No, nothing. Or, I don't know, we didn't get to look at them we virtually sent him home. But that's all a waste of time talking about an idiot like that and the idiots that sent him. But Vietnam, no I don't think you should ask me about that, you know, I don't know enough about it.

The only reason why I ask you

06:30 **is you referred quite extensively to snatch patrols, night patrols and day patrols and reconnaissance patrols when I asked you about, was the enemy covert, I mean a lot of the stuff at Vietnam, from what I understand, they were also doing a similar kind of warfare but how, they talk about things like a covert enemy and it's not about when you're in combat as in**

07:00 **when the enemy reveals himself and what's so, from what I understand, so traumatic about their experience is the not knowing, it's the waiting and the walking and in that moment that is what's so taxing on one's nerves.**

Yeah, sure. And they went on long patrols didn't they, you know, days and weeks, which didn't happen to us. And in daylight too. I used to

07:30 be, I didn't want to be seen, the daylight business knocked us about but I used to quite like, not the patrols, but on outpost duty I used to like full moon or half moons or whatever because I reckon I could see the bugger before he saw me but that wouldn't apply to the Vietnam blokes who were sneaking

08:00 through the jungle stuff in daytime and then they were lying up at night time weren't they mostly. No, it must have been really bad but the people that, one fellow I knew, gave me a boost on tracker dogs, that's an interesting exercise

08:30 that they had there, stories. No, I really don't know enough about Vietnam other than what a rotten job it was and you wouldn't know who the hell, who the enemy was which we did by the time it became stationary. 3 Battalion, they would have been, you know, in the retreats

09:00 and advances they wouldn't have known what side a lot of blokes were on I'll bet either but anybody that came towards us was hardly likely to be coming to surrender or swap sides so we would have know.

You said before that day patrols messed you around a bit?

Oh well the patrol when that fellow was killed when I talked about before. See,

09:30 that was just, not a, it wasn't only, it wasn't sensible for a start, in retrospect, but it was just a one-offer for us. Otherwise it was night time for an hour or two or twelve hours, not this day time business like the Vietnam

10:00 fellows had. The Malayan people too, and Borneo, they would have been day time jobs.

I would have thought that night would have been more scary?

Yeah but we, no, well it's harder to see but, noise, I mean

10:30 you haven't got to see anybody necessarily I mean noise is the other big thing. Night time scary. It became more scary for me because I think, maybe it was just fear but I sort of felt that my eyes had gone downhill. Whether that was true or not and I thought they (UNCLEAR)

11:00 but that might have just been me, or it could have been the snow, or I got sick of it all, you know. I had done that but exaggerated it. Night time, yeah. I had a friend who was a, pathfinder pilot and he,

11:30 he and I were swapping the being frightened things one day and I said I liked moonlight for the outpost duty and Norman said he hated flying through, in a full moon or whatever, across Germany because he could be seen so easily.

12:00 So I don't know what the Vietnam fellows do.

So what can you see when you're in a night patrol?

What what?

What can you see when you're in a night patrol, what kind of terrain are you walking through?

Well, most of the time, having gone down outside our wired in perimeter, another hundred yards

12:30 of little trees of whatever, down to the valley floor. It had been farmland and there was flat and some boggy, no trees much until we got over to their side and there was, there was a creek with trees, you know, quite big trees on but mostly it was, the valley was quite wide

13:00 and there were a couple of different ones. Two or three hundred yards wide and no trees at all so you could see pretty well, that's why the quietness was, for both sides, was so important. And darkness I suppose,

13:30 and non full moon, you know, we wouldn't have gone on patrol deliberately. To Graves Burr say for getting a prisoner business you'd never think of doing that if the moon had have been full moon or half moon.

And is it actually more taxing on your nerves knowing how vulnerable you are because you're in such open country?

Yeah, I think so, they put up, on both sides did,

14:00 they put up a couple of times when we were out, they must have heard us, and put up flares like a rocket, on a parachute I suppose, it took, it stayed up quite a while and we just froze and they either

couldn't see us or decided better of

14:30 it for some reason or another and didn't fire. Both time we went to this Graves Burr place, they must have heard us. And God know, I don't know why, maybe they must have heard us and cleared out, I don't know, but we were quite sure we'd, Burke and I and Les, were quite sure we'd, well I know we did, we heard

15:00 people doing something there. Maybe they just retreated for the night because they heard us coming, I don't know. Anyway, good on them.

So the whole, so how much of the sky does a flare like that illuminate and what do you do when happens, when you say froze, like?

Oh just in whatever position you happened to be in, even if you're standing, or that's what I did anyway, I think

15:30 that was the go. Movement would have been, as well as noise and visibility, hence staying stationary and the poor cow with the wireless and that sort of thing would have made a noise trying to move anyway, if you'd done that. If you'd moved. So that was pretty - well we were successful weren't we, nobody did

16:00 anything about us being there.

Like, how likely would it be that you would be standing?

We weren't crawling to get from A to B. All the patrols to get to a position we would have been walking, crouching but walking.

16:30 And stopping every, however often was appropriate. You know, we might only go 20, 30 yards and stop or have a listen and nearly all the patrols were led by the

17:00 platoon commanders, seldom by the sergeant. Noise was the, yeah, when we heard the noise and anywhere we just froze because you'd make more noise as well as movement.

So in a moment like that

But I've gone backwards six months

17:30 I think.

Is that a hint. I'll just ask you one last question. In a situation like that when the light flares up and you've frozen and you don't know if you're going to be shot at or what's going to happen next does it seem like adventure?

Adventure, no that's not the word. It can be, oh, I don't think you did give a lot of thought to it. You don't, well,

18:00 no that's not right, no, it feels like you are instinctively reacting without any thought I would think. Can I tell you a story that I think demonstrates this. I went on a 1st patrol with the second lieutenant we had.

18:30 You want to hear two stories. And he and I and another bloke and this poor kid had just come from Duntroon and joined us and we were all experts. The three of us set out this night and, to cut a long story short, when we got down, I told you about being in this little scrubby place, down the hill on our side, and this noise happened. And the three of us

19:00 followed it with our Owen gun and nobody fired, the key to it, and Dave said, Miller to me, years later, he said, you know that first patrol of mine, yeah. He said, I thought it would be my first and last because I thought you and (UNCLEAR) had both passed me with your Owen guns. And I said oh for years I've been telling the family,

19:30 I thought, that would be the first and last patrol I went on with Miller because he would have killed me. And the three of us have, at various times, had Owen guns pointed at each other and nobody pulled the trigger. That's the sort of reaction I'm trying to talk about what you'd do because I think we were pretty well trained. It would never have happened that

20:00 we'd pull a trigger if, you know, you're standing two yards away from one of your own fellows. But, in the meantime it could have happened. But that's, I think that's, I'm trying to tell you the instant reaction, without any thought. We didn't have much time to do much thinking anyway. It's like you're dodging somebody on the road. You don't give it much thought.

20:30 But when you're eighty you probably have to give it a fair bit of thought and you're too late.

Are you saying you were trained well enough not to have a sort of knee jerk reaction to you know pull the trigger?

We didn't even fire, that was the other thing. Whereas I think probably the Yanks would have blasted, I mean something whatever the hell it happened to be even if they couldn't see it. I mean that's just me

but we didn't do that.

What was the other story?

No that was the,

21:00 no that was the two sides to it.

How much contact did you have with the American troops?

Oh, very little, very little. I got thrown out of an American club in Tokyo, that's about the closest contact.

What happened there?

Oh, it was an officers club and the bloke I was with and I weren't officers. But that's of

21:30 no consequence.

Yes it is, did you take it on the chin?

No, no, no. They thought Australians was great until the other bloke was stupid enough to tell them we were only little corporals and not majors or whatever this fellow was. So we were asked to leave in a hurry.

What did he say to you?

No, I don't think he said anything very much, he made it very clear to us.

22:00 No, but contact, contact during in Korea was minimal until we, just before we came home, we went to a big ex American camp, you know, a tended camp, and I don't know where the hell they'd gone but we took it over, Camp Casey, and there were some yanks still left there to

22:30 see we didn't burn it down or whatever, but only a few, they were very kind to us. They gave us petrol and beer and whatever but no, not much otherwise.

You mentioned that the American knee jerk reaction would be to blow?

Well, I've sort of read about that in seen it often, read about it, I've not seen it other than on the

23:00 television or paper.

Do you think that's a true representation of what you understand American troops to be like?

I wouldn't be surprised. There must have been some good units but there must have been some crook, always will be, crook ones. Some better trained than others and they didn't, they had sort of a heap of, as we read about,

23:30 a heap of material compared to the Australians, so they can afford to do that sort of thing. Pretty stupid not to use a lot of metal rather than get people killed. That's probably what they believe in and that's pretty right.

So what would you say are the distinctions between the American troops and the Australian troops?

Now or at that time?

24:00 **Yeah, just broadly, oh at that time, or your understanding of it?**

Well, the Koreans were no good and, because by the time we'd got there they'd been thinned out hadn't they, they'd been knocked about so badly, to be a part of it. But the Americans, well, they didn't show up too well when you were talking to the people in 2 Battalion

24:30 who were at the Battle of Hook, the marines would have been one of their better units I'd guess. I don't think they sort of did too well there compared with our fellows. But I, I'm not an expert on what they, am I, so.

Were you at the Battle of the Hook, you weren't there at that point?

No, no, I

25:00 know a couple who were including David Butler and another bloke I met on the safari a couple of years ago and a couple of others. Yeah, they must have done a really great job, our fellows, especially when the yanks, well, let them down to some degree. Well that's what I reckon. I think

25:30 2 Battalion is badly unpublicised. Kapyong gets all the, not all, but a lot of the publicity, 3 Battalion I mean. And we don't, we didn't do anything so we haven't got anything to skite about.

26:00 **Which is not the case is it?**

Yeah we just stayed there, didn't get pushed off.

But how important is it for there to be a sort of oral history about, you know, for the home front for people to talk about it to be able to kind of have a kind of living history about the thing that you've just done. How important is that as a soldier?

Well, I suppose,

26:30 talking about it, the history of it do you mean?

Yeah, just like in terms of say just as an extension of a war being forgotten or perceived as being forgotten, how important is it to be remembered?

Well it probably, probably depends on a few things including how good you were and what you've done and whether you've got a chip on your shoulder because people are not

27:00 interested but, you know, people come here and have a meal or drink my grog and say isn't the garden lovely, they don't ask me about me (UNCLEAR) do they. I don't, it doesn't fuss me a lot. But I can see, I can see the Vietnam blokes

27:30 being fussed about being under, under, not estimated, but publicised a bit but I think it's gone overboard to be honest, or they have. It must have been a cow of a joint but it's pretty sad their stories you read,

28:00 by them or hear of them. The psycho stories, people being psycho upsets me, I just think it's too sad. If I'm brave enough I'll say too encouraged but I wasn't there. However,

28:30 I've finished my war.

Is that a common, how common was it for men you saw in Korea to experience trauma after the war?

You mean go psycho.

Well, not go psycho but to have sort of repercussions from what they experienced?

I only know one.

29:00 from our platoon. Some didn't last the distance but I don't know what they were like after the war. So I don't know, you know, I don't see everybody who survived. We were very scattered from very scattered areas.

29:30 You know, Norfolk Island, to you know, South Australia, you know. So I only see a dozen or know about them from the 30 odd, or it would have been 40 by the time we got reinforcements and others So, I don't know. I only know one psycho bloke and I saw him

30:00 a few months ago and I can't make up my mind about the poor cow really. So, I think a lot of these people, you know, we might do all sorts of strange things if we'd been farmers or taxi drivers, you know. We might all, ten per cent of us might be psycho

30:30 without having to go near a war. So I don't know, you'd have to ask, ask a psychologist, psychiatrist or whatever. We've got a very sad friend, now this has got nothing to do with the war I'd imagine but I'm not a medico, who's ex Vietnam and Borneo. But he's 50, ex schoolteacher and ex pommy and he was a sergeant and he's 58 I think.

31:00 And he looks and sounds normal and he's got Alzheimer's. Now, I don't, the authorities don't reckon that's from the war but pretty sad. But you'd only have to have Alzheimer's for a short while and all your family would be psycho wouldn't you. If you were that age. I don't, I just don't know. You're out of

31:30 my pretending expertise, I'm sure.

Well it's an interesting thing because in a sense, you know, you describing men and how they come out of war. How do you think you came out of Korea. Were you a changed man, what kind of man were you?

Oh, very positive wasn't I.

32:00 Oh, I don't think other than a backache and can't hear properly, I think I'm all right jack. But can I go back to the other thing for a minute, the Vietnam one. I don't know how anybody who war at my war, or at Vietnam even, can say things were so crook I've got a right to be psycho compared to the poor cows who were in Malaya

32:30 or in the first war in France in the trenches. You know, why the hell are not all, and they weren't were they, they didn't get much counselling. Maybe they were funny the lot of them but, God, what we had was peanuts compared to them. The bloke down the road here, I talk to, who's 92 or 93 with cogs that are coming unstuck

33:00 and I said Sanananda but it had nothing to do with the war, I expect my cogs will be unstuck long before I'm 93 and it won't be anything to do with the war.

Why is there a stigma associated with counselling?

A what?

Why is there a stigma associated with counselling, for men, who have come back from war?

Oh, I don't think it is now and I think it should be.

33:30 **Come on, tell the truth.**

No, I think they're sort of mollycoddled nowadays. Not just ex service but most people, you know, including you, the welfare, counselling and all this

Don't put me into any category, don't put me

34:00 **into any category, thanks very much.**

Oh no, but you're spoilt, you're living in a spoilt world and looked after. I mean if something goes wrong with you, you'll be looked after and it wouldn't have happened with your parents, they would have had to cope. No, I don't think, I think things are a bit too easy to blame somebody

34:30 else, something else I suppose. I just don't, I think it's gone overboard. I mean we are all very well looked after when your geriatrics as I am. I mean you don't have to be psycho to get money for my crook ears and a gold card to go and get a pair of glasses now and then. I mean, I'm terribly well looked after compared to my parents or your grandparents. Let alone

35:00 the poor cogs who went to the first war. We've got very soft.

So is it soft or sensible?

Oh, both I think. But if we get too soft we're going to be overrun by tough people.

We may not have any more war?

We might not stand up. I don't know, I think the last election showed a bit of standing up.

35:30 **So what would you, what would you say to future generations that are now coming, the soft generations, about war?**

Don't get fat. About war.

A message from you?

Stay fit and stand up to,

36:00 for yourself and your family and your country. And don't be frightened of learning that word patriotic and what it means, I suppose. That would be my, that would be one of my lessons but fitness is pretty, fitness mentally too, but not a fat slob.

36:30 **How would you define patriotism for our future audience?**

Oh, be proud of, because you're all fit, that generation's all fit and stand up right, fit and healthy, and are game enough to stand up for their country

37:00 and I'm not a religious person so I can't go along, I can't but I suppose if it's a decent religion stand up for that. Some religions are not too good are they. That's what I would say. And not have too many kids.

Any reason for that?

Yeah, too many people in the world now. Oh yes, I'm

37:30 quite certain about that.

Any standard number, preferred number?

Well I think we've got too many now, so it wants to be one or two for a while.

Tread carefully my friend, communism is coming into the dialect, dialectic here.

38:00 But I don't think, and I'm pretty serious about this population thing and some religions are not, people are not, some governments are not, I think it's quite a - oh and immigration for the country is another thing that should be a bit more sorted out. I'm a long way from this war.

38:30 **Any tips for staying mentally fit after going through a war and the experiences that you've been through?**

Oh yeah, get married and have one child and stay fit.

Any final thoughts?

Sounds a bit like the final solution. I don't know,

39:00 for posterity. No, I wish them well. I think it's very frightening, I'm very fearful for you and your generation and my, not my kids, but their kids. I'm very fearful that they might have a very hard time. So, on that cheerful note.

39:30 **Thank you very much. Anything else you'd like to add.**

Thanks for listening.

Anything else you'd like to add to the interview or anything?

No.

Thank you very much.

INTERVIEW ENDS