Australians at War Film Archive

Joseph Backhouse (Joe) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 29th August 2003

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/735

Tape 1

00:30 **Okay, Joe, well we're ready to start. If you could just give us an introduction to your life story.....**

Just a brief run over?

Yes.

Where I was born and where I've lived?

Exactly.

01:00 And where I was when I enlisted?

Yes.

Okay.

Okay, off you go.

Are you ready?

Yes.

Okay.

And you can talk to me too, and you can look at me as well....

,My life story. I was born in 1915 on January 5th in Broken Hill in New South Wales and I lived there with my parents until the age of 16 when they

01:30 moved to Adelaide and lived in the suburb of Walkerville, where I went to school for a few years until my mother died at the age of ten. I have three sisters older than me and they accompanied us on this movement. After my mother died it was a bit of an upheaval in the family because, you know, after you lose a mother things seem to

02:00 crash, collapse a bit. We were in a bit of a turmoil for a while there and then my aunty came from Western Australia and took me back to Perth when I was ten, oh no a bit older than ten. But no, I was still going to school. And over there I went to school and I left about Year

02:30 Ten . And then I went on to a farm. I, with my cousin, worked around Perth and in various jobs and then I did a course in mechanics at the tech [technical] college, but didn't finish it . We were living a good,

03:00 comfortable lifestyle. My aunty was fairly comfortably off and that allowed me to join the golf club and all of that which was a new horizon to me . Anyhow, when the war started, Perth was not affected very much. There was minimum military activity and

03:30 then I and a friend enlisted in the navy. We went to Fremantle and enrolled in the navy but then they were a bit too slow calling me up, so I joined the army and I was in pretty quick. I went to Norton, which is about sixty miles from Perth, and a big army camp. And we did

04:00 preparatory training as infantrymen in the 2 /28th.Battalion That went on for about six months and then on January 5th, 1941, we embarked on the, Aquitania the big Cunard liner, and went to Colombo. We disembarked in Colombo and then transferred to a

04:30 decrepit old Dutch ship called the Zealandia, on which we went to the Suez Canal. We were there for a couple of days in the Suez Canal in a boat, which was unusual, and we eventually got off at El Kantara which is midway between Suez and Alexandria. From there we went to a place called Mersa Matruh in Palestine and adopted the

05:00 normal routine for training and all that type of thing., We were on guard one day in our platoon, in the 14th platoon in C Company, and the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, arrived. He wasn't Sir then but Mr.Robert Menzies.and he was visiting the unit to

05:30 inspect it. He was on his way to London. Well, he arrived and he came early and this battalion commander was not present when Menzies decided to take on the inspection and he inspected us without the CO[Commanding Officer], Someone advised the commanding officer, Menzies had arrived and already inspected the unit

06:00 However they eventually met up. but that was a bit of an embarrassment for the battalion. Our then commander was Lieutenant Robert McGregor and he was killed shortly afterwards at. Tobruk. We continued our training there as we were supposed to go to Greece and Crete. But by the time

06:30 the division got to the desert the Australians and the allies, had been pushed into the sea by the Germans and the campaign was over. We then carried on with the training in the desert not knowing what was going to happen and we continued up to Tobruk. There was no mention of a siege at Tobruk at that stage. And about that time further up north the

07:00 German Afrika Korps arrived to bolster the Italians. The Australians had been giving the Italians a bit of a hiding. Then when the Germans arrived, that was different. They were real soldiers and they pressured the Australians and the allies right up at Benghazi, right up to Libya and

07:30 then the Germans got the upper hand. What was called the Benghazi Derby started. That was a rush of troops to get back to safety. Oh, a massive, massive number of troops. About this time our battalion had been put in some defensive positions, out at Tobruk. I was with the platoon that was given

08:00 the job of guarding the road. It was the only bitumen road down from north, from Darnah and I can remember I had two grenades and six rounds of ammunition. I don't know what we were expected to do with that lot. Anyhow we had to vet all the troops coming down and that was a bit of a hassle because they were in trucks and that type of thing.

08:30 We were on foot. Anyhow that was that. They all got back in okay and a couple of days later the Germans arrived and by this time our transport, cooks and other people had captured some Italian artillery pieces.

09:00 They'd been sabotaged by destroying the sites of the guns, but they could still fire them. Bit of guess work for the range and what have you, but the cooks and these people had these guns lined up and about two or three days later down came the Germans in convoy. Motor convoy. And they thought they were going to just drive straight

09:30 in to Tobruk. But when they got about five hundred yards away these gunners, the bush artillery gunners opened fire and the Germans got a bit of a shock and there was some British artillery too. They opened up and the Germans scattered. They went. They thought they were just going to drive in like

10:00 they had everywhere else. Right through Europe. Right down to Tripoli in Libya but they got stopped there. However, it wasn't long before they were organised. By this time the Australian General Morshead had organised the defence of Tobruk and that's when it started. And that went on for nearly six months for our unit.

10:30 During that time we had a couple of major attacks on the Germans, I think one attack in August. They were going to push the Germans back a little bit but they were unsuccessful. They couldn't move them at all. And we had 92 casualties out of about 130 that took part in that

11:00 show. We were kept very busy. We had patrols almost every night and that type of work. There was no entertainment. The city had been flattened. No entertainment at all, except a pleasant happening was the Salvation Army. They had

11:30 a truck with tea and they would come around occasionally and you could have a dixie of tea which was important really because there was nothing else to do except watch This went on until about October when our battalion was relieved

12:00 by a Royal Navy ship. One of the mine laying ships. It's a small ship like a destroyer. You sit round the deck and it's very fast. You do about fifty knots. And that took us to Alexandria where we went from there by truck to Palestine again and eventually up to Syria. Syria was

12:30 not too bad a country really. There was nice foliage and trees and orchards and things like that. Quite pleasant. And we were there for a few months. They decided that they

13:00 would train, some troops at skiing .as a nucleus if something had happened. They'd have a few trained ski troops so that they could find other people quickly if they had to. That's why we were there for about two months. Anyhow

13:30 I crashed. I think everyone had bad accidents learning to ski and I dislocated my hip and was in the British hospital in Hydra for a week. One week, and then I rejoined my unit and by this time they were

getting ready to go north again, heading for a different part of the desert. They were getting ready to go and we went back

14:00 to the desert and we only got as far as El Alamein, The British 30th Brigade stopped the Germans coming down. By this time the Germans looked like taking Cairo and the canal. So we quickly took up defensive positions and the

14:30 30 Corps. was a sizeable body of, British troops. And they stopped the advance and that went on for quite a long time This was in about July 26th . Our battalion was

15:00 the spearhead of a plan to attack the Germans and drive them right back to where they'd come from. There were many other troops, like British infantry battalions and tank corps, and everything was organised. Then on the night of the 6th, when our crowd went in and took the objective, no-one

15:30 else could support them. Things just broke down. The British tanks didn't even get started.. I'm not against the British, but that's what happened. And the troops on either side, they were British and they didn't do much and our crowd were annihilated. They were cut off and I think we had

16:00 five hundred casualties that night and that includes prisoners. They had no option but to become prisoners, you know. So, the fire power was tremendous, heavy. The Germans were really organised. Anyhow they lost the battalion and the next morning I didn't get to the

16:30 objective because I was in the section that was delegated to bring out prisoners and wounded. We didn't actually get to the objective and then next morning everything was over. They said "It's finished, 3rd Battalion's gone". And only three truckloads of 2 /28th Battalion troops went off to reform

17:00 We went back to Palestine and they reorganised and reformed the battalion with reinforcements and transferred some other units; and they were back in action in six weeks which was a pretty good effort. On the second trip back we went back toEl Alamein again for all kinds of patrols and desultory

17:30 fighting.. And then the big one started in October when the British had 2,000 troops. Prior to that, Churchill arrived and he organised a change in the British generals. We then got Montgomery and Alexander. Alexander was in charge.

18:00 Things happened and we got equipment and it was pretty good. Bit of air support too which, in Tobruk, we never saw. I never saw a light plane there. Anyhow at Alamein things were different. Churchill straightened things out and he visited the troops at the front line. I wasn't there but a New South Wales battalion was. I think it was the 2 /17th.

18:30 When he was walking down the middle of the street, the bombed out roads, someone sang out "Give us a cigar,Winnie!". And Winnie walked over and gave him one. I often wondered whether the bloke kept it as a souvenir or smoked it. It would be a prize souvenir now. He was very pleasant and that was that. But he saw things would change

19:00 The big show on October 23rd, went for eleven days. We were not in the initial attack but we were holding an important position. And Montgomery's camper van was just at the rear of us, a couple of hundred yards away and with his planning staff. So, we had to keep an eye on him too. Anyhow, about half way through this eleven

19:30 day non stop campaign, day and night, non stop, we had to go and leave the 2 /24th battalion. They got a bashing at night time And the next day or the day after the fighting was very, very heavy. You've got no idea. All kinds. And we were advancing and I came across a dead Italian

20:00 and he was obviously a postman because he had many cards addressed to members of his unit. He'd probably been sent to deliver the mail. As we were passing I bent over and picked up a few cards and they were of friends,, from friends to members of the unit.

20:30 The battle went on for a few more days and when it was all over the Australians didn't go any further. The British and the New Zealanders came through us and continued the push right up to Tripoli and into Tunisia where they met up with the Americans. They crossed

21:00 the Mediterranean, landed at Anzio Beach in Italy, which was terrific fighting, I believe. We were part of the 8th Army at that time. The 8th Army continued on over the Arno River and they went towards Berlin. At about that time the push from London was over .Across the channel

21:30 was on and the Germans didn't know what they were doing. The Russians were giving a bashing and the British too. So to get back to our little bit- we, at Alamein, remained in our defensive positions and one of our fellows in the platoon found a keg of wine, a big keg of wine. Fifty four gallons, a tun,

22:00 you know, T-U-N, tun[large cask]. Mammoth amount. Anyhow we certainly opened that and got into it with dixies, you know. And we had one fellow there, he was kind of supervising , dishing it out when you wanted it It was a big keg like this. And when the contents got too low he couldn't reach the grog so he got into the barrel, boots and

22:30 all, and continued to ladle the wine out. We thought that was well done. Anyhow we had a good time

and everyone went to bed quite happy. But then I was sent to a tough tactics college course. British army course. I went for about a month. By the time I got out, the battalion had

23:00 moved to Egypt, ready to come back to Australia. The Japs were pretty active around Australia at that time in New Guinea. We went to El Kantara again and a cousin who was serving in the hospital with the army was there. I said I couldn't go in, it was

23:30 night time and all these troops had gathered around us at the barbed wire enclosure in the hospital . I said , I was her cousin and someone told her and she came to where I was but all we could do was have a bit of a talk. From there we went to, Port Suez and then embarked on the Queen Mary.-

24:00 the big tourist liner - and came to Australia. Our platoon on the Queen Mary was given the job of being in charge of an anti-aircraft gun right on the stern of the Mary . Twenty- forty millimetre Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun. We manned this all the way to Fremantle

24:30 but we didn't have any reason to fire because there was nothing doing. Well, the Japs were and Germans were present. We saw numerous big British naval ships. We went through them but they never touched us so we went to Fremantle and went ashore. More?

Yes, yes.

Okay

25:00 **An introduction to your time in New Guinea, and your training before you went over there.**

New Guinea? We, had a few weeks' leave and then we went by train to Tolga. Fremantle to Tolga, North Queensland, and we were training there for New Guinea.

25:30 After a while we went then to Buna and then the landing by sea was organised. Our battalion landed and I was with the Bren gun carriers. Then I left the battalion and went to the 9th Division Bren gun carriers, but they were dismounted and we did foot patrols into the jungle when I think the carriers couldn't be used. So, we

26:30 went along and accompanied the battalions to the landing and they had not much trouble until they got to the Busu River proceeding towards Lae and river was in flood. We were close by but not part of the battalion and they had trouble

27:00 crossing the river because it was in flood and people were getting washed out to sea. And on one occasion 17 men were washed out to sea and never seen again. One sergeant, who had been my sergeant, was shot. He got over but was promptly shot by a sniper and then it was a bit chaotic for a while. We eventually got over and proceeded towards Lae.

27:30 But by the time they got to Lae the 7th Division had driven the enemy away. By that time it had been decided that the Japs were assembling at Finschhafen and there's 5 000 Japs there I believe. They've told us there's about 2500 but there was about 5000 later. So,

28:00 the 9th division had to go and make another landing. They went by barges and some time later the fighting was very heavy there. I wasn't with the battalion, but they got it worse, I think. You know it was so bad that the tent, the hospital tent, the casualty clearing station had to be

28:30 moved to this white sand at the beach so that ammunition and the fire power would mainly go over the top. That's how close it was. We were there for three days. It was touch and go, nearly pushed in to the sea. There was an American there with a point five Browning gun and, I think he won a Medal of Honor because he really kept that gun going and up

29:00 on the final attack. Down the Song River on rafts they came at us and around boulders and barges. Three points they attacked us. You know we withstood it and for three or four days it was anyone's go. But, the infantry battalion had huge successes in killing Japs.

29:30 The 2 /28th,my old battalion had killed 500 Japanese in no time. It was just slaughter. Anyhow, eventually the Japs decided to get going and they went; and from there we foot patrolled after them but they were gone.

30:00 Our patrol went to a place called Gona which is sixty miles. We only got one Jap prisoner. Now I must tell you, before this, at Finschhafen there was an Australian Boomerang fighter flying around. We could see 'Sydney' on the wings through the canopy and it was Australian you see. And all of a sudden he crashed,

30:30 out towards where the enemy were., I couldn't go myself, but I sent a corporal [and patrol] heavily armed with guns and rifles and things and they went out. Terrific crash and noise and what have you, but eventually got the pilot and he was hardly scratched. Bit disorientated naturally with a bang like that

31:00 and they brought him back to me and I gave him a meal of some tinned bully beef and hard biscuits and by that time our boss, the RCO [Regimental Commanding Officer], had sent word to the RFF[??] and

another RFF chief came and took him away. Now going back to Calanara the SCO came along one day and he said to me, he pulled me aside and he said, “How would you like to go to OTU?” {Officer Training Unit]

31:30 Oh, took me completely by surprise. And I was a bit apprehensive. I didn’t know whether to say yes or no. So, I told him I’d go and then I was sent back to Adelaide which was quite an experience getting back. I’d only gone off for a couple of days when I met [someone] who turned out to be a very good friend of mine, from the 2 /28th and he was going to OTU

32:00 too. Quite a coincidence. So, at least I had a mate. So, we went back to Finschhafen and the Americans are wonderful organisers. You might not agree, but they are and they had created an air strip out of jungle that would take fighters, fighter planes

32:30 and DC3 cargo planes. They did it in three weeks. Tremendous. Anyhow we wanted to get a lift then to Port Moresby. We thought we’d try and beat the system. And we went along one day and we saw a pilot there, a Yankee pilot “G’day bud . What kind of aircraft? What kind of an engine have you got in the aircraft?” And he said:” I don’t know. I only fly them”.

33:00 And that was encouraging wasn’t it? Anyhow, a few days later we did get an American DC3 and they took us to Moresby from where we got on a boat to Cairns and then by rail to South Australia. Redwood car. It was at Witcharden[?], South Australia. Yes, so anyhow shall I keep going?

Yes, if you can.

Anyhow, it was quite an experience. Totally

33:30 different you know to, we had to spit and polish and you’d be watched all the time. The afternoon you’d go in to the mess and drink as much grog as you liked by the jugfull,but someone’s watching you, had to be careful. Anyhow, it was quite interesting. I liked the first two weeks, two months. It was infantry and that type of work that I knew about. Guns, weapons and

34:00 things. Then it got very hard for me, those four weeks and it got a bit academic towards the finish and I was having a bad time. A lot of people, it might surprise you, a lot of men were sent back to their units. They just didn’t have it and in fact I think of a hundred and twenty that started, only

34:30 sixty two finished. Now, as I said I was having a bad time and one day we were out in the Adelaide Hills and coming back the only truck ran off the road and next thing I woke up in hospital. I’d been knocked unconscious and I was put into an army hospital Enfield, near Adelaide. Anyhow, I was there and you know I got a bit sick of everything. So, when I

35:00 went back, I was sent to OTU and I had myself paraded after that to the CO. I was going to give it in. Yeah, so, I was paraded for him and he said “Take it easy” you know and told me to continue on. Talked me into it so I suddenly thought “Well, if I don’t give it a good job

35:30 you let your CO down who’s sent you there”. After he says this I thought, “Alright I’ll do something for them.” and he’d gone on to talk me into staying on - but he did say, “If at any time you feel like going back to your unit.” which I could have as a sergeant, “Come and see me.” So, I just continued on and graduated which I was pleased I did. Want

36:00 more?

If you can keep going for another few minutes?

Yes, anyhow from there I went to Canungra. – t he jungle training place. And that was a very physical place but I was fit. I didn’t mind that. And that put me as an instructor, in charge of some officers. At that time the Australian

36:30 army was abandoning munitions units and the officers from those units were sent to Canungra to be trained, toughened up to go with the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] units to New Guinea at Wanton. So, I was given the job of looking after the platoon and these officers. There’s about thirty to forty of them in one platoon and I was the junior

37:00 officer and I had senior lieutenants and even a captain, but I handled them. And then one day the captain said he was dissatisfied because we were coming home rather quickly. Canungra was a very physical place. In fact several ORs [Other Ranks] had died there through exertion and one thing and another. I never saw them but that was the story. And this fellow

37:30 must have been feeling the effort coming. We were coming back very late, marching along coming back to camp. And he butted into me and he said I was not clearing the gun properly and that he would report me and all this. Anyhow, I ignored him. Took no notice. Kept on going fast. And I never heard anymore about it. And I’m quite sure that they said anything to the commander

38:00 who was Colonel McDonald, a really tough man. Probably be sent out, you know, finished objecting to the physical side of it. However, I was there for two months and in that time they sent me to Sydney University to do a medical course. And we had to Doctor Harvey Sutton and a Colonel Ware as the

teachers. And we lived at Coogee in an old

38:30 residential place, big, must have been luxury place. Gardens, big gardens and what have you. And there were tents in the gardens. We lived in those things. Every day a tram, we had a special tram to take us to Sydney University and that went on for a couple of months. Very interesting, you know, it stood me in good stead. And then after that back, back to Canungra.

39:00 and then where did we go? Oh, yes by this time the AIF was getting ready to land in Borneo.

Tape 2

00:30 **We were at the university - when you did your medical course and then can we go on from there? What happened after that?**

Yes, okay we finished the course at the university and I returned to Canungra, near Surfer's Paradise. It's not far inland from Surfer's Paradise.

01:00 And the army had a rest area on the beach. A tent camp you might say on the beach set at what is now Surfer's and the army would send down a number of troops each weekend on a Friday afternoon and come back by truck Saturday. On one of these trips I went down and I was introduced to a young lady on the beach

01:30 who turned out to be my wife. We married within a week, five days. Got married and then I had to go back to camp and after much talk with the CO I got a bit of leave for five days, five day

02:00 honeymoon at the Royal Mail in Tewantin. And it was old, not like is in now. And when we got there the lady said " I must put you in a good room, coming back from the war". So, she gave us a nice room overlooking the street at the front, you know. That was kind . At the end of the five days we decided to come back, well we had to. I had to go back. Anyhow, at Cooroy there's no bus,

02:30 transport arrangements like now. You had the bus at Cooroy and then we caught a train. And that was a goods train with freight and logs and goodness knows what. And it didn't quite stop for the people to get on. You know we're running along. Slvy, my wife, she got on. And then found us a place in the train where there was a seat and she saw a uniformed hand and grabbed hold of it and said

03:00 "Come over here and have a seat". And that was a stranger. A lieutenant colonel who politely refused. However, I eventually got on and continued with her. But that was a bit of an embarrassment for her. However, I was moved which eventually took me to Borneo,

03:30 to Morotai where I was, as a reinforcement officer. I joined the 2nd /14th infantry battalion which is a Victorian battalion and they were already briefed to go on the invasion at Balikpapan, Dutch Borneo. Now, about a few days after the main body left. I went over

04:00 and then I joined the battalion as a reinforcement. I was not in the landing. And after catching up with the battalion about a few miles from the landing point, they were catching Manga airstrip which they'd almost taken when I arrived .So then I was given 12 platoon whose one section,

04:30 of the whole platoon was wiped up. A mortar bomb had landed, in amongst the wounded and the commanding lieutenant, killing four people and the rest, half a dozen were wounded and only one of about ten rejoined the battalion later, really knocked about. From there we went up to do boot patrol and moving forward. By this time the Japs were

05:00 on the run. They're going deeper in to the jungle and it was harder to contact them. At one stage , I had to take out a two day patrol, fighting patrol. Platoon strength. And we had an Isection [Intelligence Section]man. He was going to plot tracks and things like that [with] four carrier pigeons of all things, two signals and two carrier pigeons each.

And a partridge in a pear

05:30 **tree. Why did you have the carrier signal pigeons?**

Messages. Wonderful they are. We were, about four hours– it's a fairly long time with the scout, the forward scouts. He fired a few shots and it transpired that there were four Japs ahead so we decided to attack after looking,

06:00 organising things and then it was fairly successful. I took my section around to the rear of them - but we got into a bit of trouble so I came back and, made the full frontal attack, so that was successful but there was one Jap, holding out. And he was sniping at us from behind a tree with his rifle.

06:30 So, I rushed over to the tree. I was going to get him out and you know hit him with the pistol or something like that. But when I got there, the sergeant in charge, he was back a bit, he said "Now, a man behind me too.Give me a hand." and , there's a tree, huge forest tree with buttress roots.

07:00 And he, and Charlie went around the side and there was a Jap there crouching and fired his rifle. The bullet went through his hat badge. That's how close it was. It almost blinded him. It temporarily blinded him but he instinctively shot the bloke, killed him. But this other fellow he was still sniping away at our section on the ground on our left. So, I was going to grab the barrel of the gun and with

07:30 that he jumped out in front of Charlie and me. And he's, you know bailed up and as he jumped I fired. But I was a bit too quick and it hit the bark on the edge of the tree but at the same time this platoon sergeant and a corporal fired and killed the Jap. Otherwise I and Charlie would have been gonners. So, the result of that we killed seven Japanese and we had three

08:00 casualties. We had one shot badly, wounded badly. He was a Bren gunner and in the lying position he got shot in the chest and the bullet went down and came out the bottom of his stomach. Still alive. So, we had to make a quick stretcher out of the bush and another fellow couldn't walk. There was three wounded. One got shot in the thigh, leg or something. He could walk,

08:30 which was a good thing. Another fellow couldn't walk so we had to make T stretchers and then that made it tough going. Anyhow, we eventually took off, back again. And I released a message by the carrier pigeon, wrote a note - you attach it to their leg in a little capsule. The signal boys did that. I wrote the note but the signals did that and it's not easy to launch a pigeon in

09:00 jungle. You know you can't do it amongst trees. You'd go up in the tree and sit on a branch and get lost. So, we had to find a clearing. Not easy in itself. Anyhow he got two pigeons away with messages. And we, of course were walking back to camp, back to headquarters and anyhow I'd asked for assistance but we'd gone a long way.

09:30 Our battalion commander had sent out another platoon to help us carry the bag which, believe us, we'd had it by this time. So, anyhow it took a long while. We were ten hours getting back. Most of it by night. Slippery, wet, horrible, horrible going. And we got them back and , I told them about the wounded And the doctor was waiting on the road at half

10:00 past one in the morning and he looked at them and took them straight to hospital. And the bloke who was shot in the stomach died three days later .And that happened on the last day of the war. It was the day that the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and we took off early in the morning and didn't know about this bomb and had the CO known about it, he wouldn't have sent us out

10:30 on the fighting patrol. So, we learnt about it when we got back. We learnt that the atomic bomb had been dropped and the war would finish shortly. So, that was a bit of bad luck for the poor fellow that got killed. So, then it was just a matter of wait and watch our patrol a little bit out in front. You weren't aware whether the Japs knew that there was an armistice on.

11:00 And you expected to be attacked. So, that there was a precaution against that. We had five little patrols going around keeping an eye on things and eventually the Japs surrendered and we had about thirty or forty of them taken back to the prisoner of war camp on the airstrip there. They were taken back but then the battalion had to stay, more or less in the one

11:30 position and they they had a thanksgiving service at Baragan and all kinds of things going on and anyhow we used to swim down in the ocean. The whole battalion were down there one day and a convoy came along the beach. They had nothing, no togs you know, they were just swimming. A convoy came along the beach and Lady

12:00 Mountbatten was in the thing, coming to visit our headquarters. Oh, everyone got a shock. But she was marvellous.. She just carried on and waved at the boys as though nothing had happened. Incredible you know. All these fellows. But anyhow that was all right. Now the troops have got aircraft carriers to bring them

12:30 home as soon as they've finished. We had to wait and wait and wait and I eventually got back and it was eleven or thirteen months before I saw my wife again. I wonder how that would go down today?. So anyhow everything's okay you know, quite happy so do you want more?

Yes, absolutely. Well, you didn't tell us your wife's name?

Slvy.

Slvy.

13:00 Slvy. She's christened like S-L-V-Y and with other people it's Sylvia. Anyhow, we were in Perth and I didn't know what to do really. So a bit late getting back to Perth and many good jobs were taken so I got out of the army and then

13:30 re-enlisted because they were looking for officers who were subalterns for war crime investigations. So, I re-enlisted and was quickly back in the army. And they sent me by air. I don't know where to first. I think possibly somewhere

14:00 yes, somewhere in Cairns, Townsville. So, we're in Townsville and from there I went up, posted to some infantry battalion to Rabaul. Rabaul was a real frontier town , all troops and a lot of Japs. So, they

posted me there to this unit. But I was on my way to headquarters, 8th Military

14:30 District, as a war crimes investigator. And that eventually came about after being with the infantry for a few days. They gave me the job they said they'd give me and I was on that for quite a while. Investigating war crimes, which is very interesting. Then the executions and all kinds of things were going on and they said to me "You're an ex infantry officer, you take out so many boys and troops

15:00 and and form a firing squad". You know, some were executed by firing squad, others hung. So, I got about ten or fifteen lads and by this time all the older soldiers had gone home to be discharged. And these fellows were about eighteen, nineteen years old. They were very, very good soldiers and anyhow I trained them for this firing squad. Now I

15:30 must paint you the picture with Rabaul. It was a tremendous effort because they had by this time mustered, I think it was 110,000 Japanese from the surrounding islands. There were still some left in New Guinea and New Ireland and New Hanover and Bougainville and all that. They were all relegated in. We didn't have enough camp fencing. Rabaul had fourteen camps of about 10,000

16:00 troops in one, Japs all spread out around Rabaul . the logistics was tremendous you know. Got to be fed and all that type of thing. And they managed that okay and we got word that they wouldn't be able to send these troops back, repatriate them for three years. So, the army sent up a full battalion of soldiers

16:30 to be guards for these troops for three years. They even went to the extent of building a huge recreation hut and they had everything - a bit of accommodation and a bar and camp-out restaurant, all that real nice set up for the allies, non commissioned and RW[?]. .So, they had all that organised . But the Yanks as I said before being

17:00 the organisers they.,organised ships, anything that would float. Liberty ships, things like that. You know those purely cargo ships came and they took all, piece by piece, back to Japan and you know they had to discharge from the army. That was a magnificent effort on the part, to get all those troops back like they did.

17:30 The battalion was sent home again then and they just went and we had a compound there, a war criminal compound .We had about two hundred and forty war criminals and we had this huge number of prisoners of war but they were not all under our jurisdiction. They went as soon as they could get rid of them. But the war criminals, they made me cut

18:00 them, 2I/C [second in command] quarter master, urgent quarter master of the thing We had four Japanese generals, including Imamura, I think I told you about him. He gave me a cigarette case. It's over there. We kind of became a bit friends you know. Sounds, strange, but he was not a bad old fellow. He got seven years

18:30 for something or other. General Hitachi and he died of tuberculosis in a prison camp hospital. A lot of people dispute that. I read in books now where he committed suicide, but that's not true. I was a DOC [Duty Officer Commanding] part of my duty was to go around every weekday and inspect the

19:00 compound - not the living quarters - sergeants, the allies did that, sergeants and officers. So, I had to go to the mess, to the operating theatre, the hospital, toilets all that kind of thing. Keep up to date. But the Japs were very clean and there was never any problem. But this Hitachi fellow, he was in the hospital dying of tuberculosis so it's wrong.

19:30 I shudder when I read these books, because it's not true. He definitely died from tuberculosis. And at times the word would come through from Canberra to our CO, MD [Military District] headquarters really, that organised say a hanging or to get authority to hang so and so or shoot him. Whatever his punishment was.

20:00 They had me on this firing squad and I organised the lads. They were very good and the military police were in a certain position for these executions. I've got photos of the thing there. The gallows and the way they did it. The military put him [the prisoner] in a sitting position, bind his arms and

20:30 legs, everything. Blindfold him. And then I would have a ten boys that I'd trained you know hoping they'd do it cleanly. We were all out of sight and, the procedure was that they would see army mess set up tables in a line as soon as these lads arrived. They had to put their rifles,

21:00 line them up on the table, pointing at the target and we had to go out. The army was keen to keep the anonymity of the soldiers you see. Everyone didn't have a live round , one blank, well not a blank but inert and they did that, the troops did that and then a full colonel.

Can I just ask you something

21:30 **there, Joe? What's the difference between an inert and a blank?**

Well, the inert was a doctored ballistite. The idea is with a blank you fire it and it's like a penny cracker going off. You don't recall hardly a decent noise. The ballistite's different. It sounded just like TNT going off.

22:00 **See a soldier would know that he had the dummy round. See, you had to keep it so that he didn't know whether he killed the Jap or not. They were worried that it might worry him later in life, you see. So, the colonel, full colonel he would [load the rifles while] we were all outside. Even me. I didn't know who got the blank. I call it the blank but it was the dummy, probably better word.**

22:30 **And the colonel would then put rounds into the rifles, into the breech, not the magazine. Into the breech. Close the bolt and apply the safety catch and he did that to all the rifles, except one that had the dummy round. He'd mix up all the rifles so the troops didn't know which ones were theirs or not, and then they'd bring in the prisoner and**

23:00 **he'd be strapped in the chair and the last man to touch the prisoner was the doctor. In our company he would march out and put a disc…Do you want all this?**

Yes.

White disc on his heart.

A round circle?

A round circle, six inches about and then he'd march away and then the colonel -

23:30 - I had to watch him. There's no speaker, no orders given to anyone. And I was watching him all the time in case, and then when, he waited a while I suppose to give a bit of time in case there was a reprieve or something coming, let the prisoner free or something you know. He waited a while. Next thing he'd nod. That's all, not saying anything. Nod like that and I'd give the fire order. Just simply say "Squad Fire!" in a loud voice

24:00 and they'd all fire once and that was that. I was a bit worried and I thought," Oh gee, what if they miss him and cut his arm off or something". But they were superb and they were all young fellows and they did a wonderful job. In fact, some of the senior officers congratulated me to pass on to the troops that they did such a good job. But that was that. Now hangings, you've got a copy of the gallows there.

24:30 The hangings, the military police would bring them around and there was one officer first class, he was in charge of the military police at this time in Rabaul. And it's funny; I must tell you a little story about him. Harry Croydon was his name. They opened a prisoner of war camp down in New Ireland and by this time the Chinese, who got an awful bashing during the war, were brought back to Rabaul and they started

25:00 to build their own shacks, a Chinatown. And there was a lot of young ladies. And of course the troops were on to these young ladies you know. And it was forbidden, , no Australian soldiers were allowed into Chinatown. But that didn't stop them trying. And it was Harry's job, you'll laugh at this, it was Harry's job to keep the boys out. But at the same time he's got a young lady

25:30 himself. And he finished up marrying her. Yes. And Harry was turfing them out. By the way he's a big strong Queensland bloke you know. Gee, and he was turfing them out right and left at the same time he'd doing all right for himself. So, he finished up marrying her and she's living in Sydney. He died not long ago and she's living in Sydney. Two nice children and he settled down. One - the girl - was trained

26:00 at Brisbane hospital, as a sister, graduated. And the other bloke graduated from Queensland University as a horticulturist .So he did well for the children. But that was Harry… and where did I get to then? But that, and she was …

The box under his desk.

Can't hear her.

She says the box under his desk. Under Harry's desk. Under your desk.

Oh,

26:30 do you want me to tell you, this is rude.

Yes. And then we'll go back to Rabaul.

It's rude.

Yes.

Now, I was the Quartermaster and naturally I was in charge of all the supplies and we used to get a lot of supplies, not ship loads but almost. These traders would come up with stuff for the army and then one occasion we'd sorted out everything. The rice and the fish and tinned meat, all you know, all that kind of food for the Japs. Blow me down there's a

27:00 carton left over, big one. When I say big, about square like that . And no-one knew. I said to the CIU [?]do you know anything about this? He said "No, what is it?" So, I opened it up and it was condoms. Oh, couldn't believe it. No-one had ordered them. Someone down at Brisbane air must have been jumping the gun a bit. Anyhow,

27:30 old Tom he looked at me and he said," What did he send that for?" Anyhow, we had them and I stuck them under my desk in the office and told Harry the 2/IC. He was kind of the right hand man, you know. I told them now if any bloke wants any of these they can come and help themselves. I wasn't going to scale them out. So, they were there and I don't know what happened to them at the finish. But that was a funny little story. What else?

28:00 **Joe, I'd like to talk about Rabaul later down the track in a lot of detail if that's all right with you, because it's fascinating information for the archive.**

Okay, would you like a cup of tea now?

Well, just before we go there.

No, no I don't.

Oh, that's okay. What, just before we have a break. You, after the war crimes did you come straight back to Australia?

Yes, I came back and took my discharge.

28:30 I was nine years in the army with this extended enlistment and seven years overseas and Australia was a different kind of country altogether. After the turmoil of all the war years and proper upheaval. So many soldiers, Yanks and, in Brisbane there was a million troops at one time. It's an awful set up really. Couldn't help it. Had to happen. So, anyhow things in

29:00 Perth didn't seem the same. Australia didn't seem the same anywhere. So, I got to know the planting fraternity in Rabaul and I knew it fairly well and I went up and they gave me a job and I worked for him thirteen months and then got a property of my own, wife and I. So, that's how I came to stay in New Guinea for thirty years. But this fellow that I worked for he was a coast watcher.

29:30 Captain John Stokie was his name. He was a pre-war policeman in the Solomon islands and New Guinea and he really knew his way around. He had these plantations and I rather like the life you know, so I tried and I got one for myself. But Stokie being a coast watcher, I think he was delegated to do the land, you know the coast watcher for intelligence, and he had to land at night at Talasea on the beach by submarine. He had two native helpers and he had a one of the old bashing wire, wires. They were modern at that time but they're so heavy by today's standards. Wet batteries and all that you

30:30 know. Battery charger, part of his other supplies, fuel and all that. And, next day he got further, more carriers. Two boys could never carry it, it was so heavy. He got organised with another group of natives. He ran the mountains in the middle of New Britain for, about eleven or twelve, fifteen months or something. That's just the kind of thing those fellows

31:00 did. That was Stokie. So, anyhow I worked for him and he was good and I learnt a lot from him in handling labour and that type of thing. Then I got the place and I stayed, about thirty years on that.

What made you come back to Australia after thirty years in New Guinea?

Old age.

Okay.

It was 98 and I had a,

31:30 I didn't know at the time, but I had a carcinoma larynx. That's why I'm husky now and they fixed me up at the radium institute at the hospital and I was in remission. It's finished now. I've got no worries. But I was one of the lucky ones. Sorry.

Oh, just might bring you all the way back now to pre-war. What made you want to join the navy first?

Well, I used to do a bit of yachting. Not

32:00 not a lot. But I had mates who had, owned yachts. Only skiffs you know like sixteen footers and semi-raiders, that type of thing. On Swan River. Very popular past time. I used to go out for the weekend with them sometimes. Get used to the water and that type of thing. Probably that appealed to me.

After all your experience in the army are you glad you were in the army rather than the navy?

Yes, yes. I was quite happy. I'd do it all again.

32:30 **And what was your parents' reaction to you signing up?**

They weren't here. Parents? Mother died when I was ten. My father when I was, oh I don't know how old. But I was in Perth by this time when he was in Adelaide. I've lost touch with him.

That's right. You lived with your aunt in Western Australia. And how did she fare through the Depression?

Oh, she was quite

33:00 really well off for those days and her husband had a big grocer business. Wholesale in Perth. And he and his son, eldest, no second eldest son, they were the managers of it and she was fairly comfortably well off. In fact she had two cars, not one. The old Ford, one late Ford and so I learnt to drive on that when I was seventeen and I used to drive around the place you know,

33:30 church and wherever she wanted to go to friends. Quiet a good life really.

Did they look after you?

Ooh, yes. They were marvellous. I gave her full marks you know. She had four sons, all grown up, older than me and then she took on me. Deserved a medal, didn't she?

What were their reactions to you enlisting?

Oh, nothing. They had no reaction at all. They were marvellous. Treated me like one of their own. I used to

34:00 visit them and you know everything was quite nice, quite normal.

Did you write to her when you were away in service?

No, she died in 1937. And that left me again without a mother influence. Never mind. Yes, she was a good old lady. I reckon, don't you think? Taking on an extra bod?.

I do. So, what was your reaction to

34:30 **going overseas the very first time?**

Great. Everyone wanted it you know. They liked it. Yes.

And what had you heard about the building up of conflicts in Europe at that time in Australia?

Well, , I can't understand Europe. These lowland countries of Europe like Holland and Belgium and France even. They just capitulated. Hardly fired a shot to

35:00 defend their country, bit like Singapore. I shudder when I think of Singapore. Just capitulated you know. Surrendered. I didn't mind that part. They should have done something, made some effort. They didn't. So, I was rather disgusted with that lot. And the Germans got it easy for that part of it. Easy. And our battalion at Tobruk

35:30 generally, they were the first to stop the Germans.

What had you heard about Hitler?

Oh, nothing only propaganda I suppose. What you learn in the papers and see on the film. No television, you see a newsreel occasionally. Bit of what he was up to. But we always thought he was a bit of tyrant you know, a dictator. He was never

36:00 spoken well of; and Mussolini wasn't either.

The mate you were going to sign up and go in the navy with, did he sign up to go with you too?

I don't know. I lost contact with him. I don't know where he finished. But I went on alone. I was alone when I went to enlist. This Arthur, I was telling you about him. I met him to go to OTU. He joined the same day so I knew him. We used to go swimming with our

36:30 teams and so I knew someone at OTU. That was comforting.

So, was Arthur with you all the way after that or did you, did you have anybody with you all the time. Any good mates through the whole time?

Well, I did in the 2 /28th. Now I left them and I went to the carrier company and they were Victorian based, mostly Victorians

37:00 but they were good lads and like mates you know. Fitted in quite well. And then after I was commissioned I went to a completely new battalion. But I fitted in. Everyone, officers there and everyone accepted me. Colonel in charge and it was a good show. And they were a very good battalion. They were one of two battalions that did the hard work on the Kokoda Trail. 2 /14th and the 2 /16th which is the West Australian battalion

37:30 and they did all the hard work after they were stopped by the militia at Segiri in the early parts of the Kokoda Trail retreat and anyhow these battalions did that. But we were pushing back. And that was very tough going for them. Do you want me to tell you a little something that you should, it's very rude really?

Yes, I'd love to hear it.

Okay, it’s not filthy rude.

38:00 It’s true. Anyhow, the troops of 2 /14th - and as I served with them later I know all about it. What they suffered. And on the Kokoda Trail at times dysentery was very bad and they didn’t have time to take their trousers down so they cut holes in their trousers. That’s a bit rude but I hope you don’t mind. You can delete it if you wish. But that’s what they told me.

I wonder if they got a cold bum?

38:30 No, not in New Guinea. It’s a hot place. But that’s what happened.

So, what were your first impressions of the Middle East?

Well, it’s entirely different of course. The third world. Arabs you know, different to us. For instance a bus would be going along and an old one would be sitting on top of the bus or hanging out of the windows, or up on the steps, and the bumper bar up the back. When we were going up to the war all

39:00 these Arabs were coming down in bus loads and they were all everywhere. Anywhere they could get. That was Arabs’ mentality.

Did they treat you well, the Cypriots?

We don’t fit in. No fraternisation at all. We had guards everywhere we were. While we were in Syria, Elizabeth [archive researcher] asked me this, she brought up the word entertainment and she said, “What about brothels?” So, I remember one

39:30 time when I was on picket, you know what a picket is? It’s a mobile foot patrol to keep the troops in order. Like the battalion will send out a picket line when they’re near a big town so in case someone gets too drunk. They pull him into gear. I was on picket. You were regimentally dressed with side arms and you walked around the town. You weren’t allowed to drink or anything you know, you walk around the town. Anyhow,

40:00 we came across this huge brothel and anyhow I couldn’t believe my eyes. The queue outside was fifty yards long or more so it took me quite a while to walk the length. I went up to the head of it of course and saw the, what was the (UNCLEAR). I didn’t come in, couldn’t go in. There’s a door and they’re all lined up at the door. Anyhow, when they wanted a new client I suppose you would say, the

40:30 Madam, you know the Madam? She’s in charge of the girls. She would open the door, push the bloke out, get another one. That’s a bit rude isn’t it? You’re not going to leave it in are you? Oh, my god!

Tape 3

00:30 **Okay, Joe if I could take you back to Tobruk and before you mentioned in some of your first days at Tobruk that you actually lost your CO. He was shot. Can you tell us about some of your first days in Tobruk and**

Did I say CO?

I think so.

No.

No? Who were your superiors?

No, I think the only time I mentioned the CO was where I was being runner,

01:00 big fight on and I was in this fox hole with him.

Oh, well not …

We never lost him there.

No, in a fox …

We did lose on in El Alamein when that cannon went off. He went too.

You would have lost quite a few at El Alamein, I imagine but okay well we’ll just go back to Tobruk but can you

01:30 **tell us, you mentioned an operation?. Or actually just day to day life in Tobruk, can you talk to us a little bit about just living day to day under siege like that?.**

Well,

With the Germans, how did you survive?

It was a very mundane life where you just had to put up with being shelled and bombed and all that type of thing. It was incessant. All the time. And

02:00 there was no way you could be entertained or go to amusements or anything like that. It was in the front line all the time. Either that or you could go, sent out to unload cargo from the ships at night which had only come in, in the pitch darkness and throw the cargo out. And Salvation

02:30 Army they had a truck in Rabaul, oh Rabaul, in Tobruk - and they'd bring out tea, wonderful really you know, to the front line. Give a dixie of your tea. Very sand coloured, all in dust you know and never mind - it was nice to get it. And I've always appreciated them for that you know. Under most hush, hush

03:00 circumstances.

What did you know about the Germans before I guess you ran in to them? What did you expect?

No, they were good soldiers. Very good, very determined you know. They've got a different attitude to the Italians. The Italians - I don't think their heart was in it. But the Germans were another kettle of fish. Bit like Australians and they were a different enemy altogether.

03:30 But they were fair. There were no atrocities that I know of, not like the Japanese. It was shoot or kill or be killed by the Japs. But they were good soldiers, efficient and at El Alamein, we took some prisoners that had been serving in the Russian front. In the snow and all that. Came out to the desert. It was a

04:00 bit of a change for them, wasn't it? So, yes they told us that they found Russians who had never seen water coming out of a tap, primitive blokes you know. Never seen anything like that. That was civilisation. They hadn't caught up with it. But I've got a few stories from them. But apart from that never saw it, you know,

04:30 had time or the opportunity to talk with them

Joe can you tell us what you get up to on a typical night patrol in Tobruk? Describe one of those?

Yes you'd be allocated, they'd pin point the target during the day. The artillery observation post might give information to our platoon commander or company commander and you'd get the position, position of an enemy

05:00 post. You couldn't have a full scale attack. It was a raid. Around the perimeter was a barbed wire enclosure, picket, you know the picket fences. Iron picket fences, posts and a lot of barbed wire and for the engineers it was their job. They do that kind of work. They would open the wire at places. They knew

05:30 where to open it and you could walk out . Those dark nights and you had to be very careful of mines, landmines. They had detectors and they'd put spots identifying where the mines were lying and you could keep your feet away from them. And to come

06:00 back, you had to give the pass word. It was closed after you went. After you had your raid, or whatever had happened. Might only be reconnaissance or fighting patrol or something but as you come back you'd be challenged and you had to know the pass word which was changed rather frequently. But it was like work of art, you know I don't know of any occasions where the troops

06:30 were injured through that. Bit difficult, you had to have a compass, know where you're going and besides the compass we always had the North Star. You've heard of it?

No, tell us about it.

You can only see it in the northern hemisphere and it's almost due north. And it never changes. They say it might change a little bit but not worth worrying about and it was like

07:00 looking at a friend of a night you know. Through your nights it would stand out and we always knew where we were by it. Nice day and you'd get out and they'd have no buildings or trees. You could get lost. Go the wrong way.; But we always knew where we were with the North Star. We learnt that and it helped us a lot. Apart from

07:30 that it was mainly on compass, compass back you know. We frequently went on patrols.If a tank got knocked out or Bren gun carrier or something we'd go out and have a look at the condition of the tank. If it could be recovered, get it back and use it. Repair it and use it

08:00 again. And an officer in charge would put in a report on it saying what it's condition was like. If it could be recovered they'd send out an undercover vehicle to tow it in, get it back again. Dangerous job, but they did that. And I tell you what; in Tobruk I saw my first what we now call semi-trailers. They were low loaders they called them.

08:30 British army had them. They were what they called in those days low loaders because the tray at the back was fairly low compared to others and they'd run the tanks, two tanks on these things and tow them like we do now. That was the first time I saw a low loader. When the Yanks were clearing the air

strip at Finschhafen I saw my first bulldozer. It was only small compared to

09:00 today but gee it's amazing how they turn big trees with it.. And a coconut tree doesn't look much but it's got an awful lot of surface roots. Little hair, little roots you know that go, millions, oh hundreds of them. Very hard to shove over and you'd see them trying to shove it. No way, and then he'd get construction with a blade to start dipping it into the ground and cut the roots, cut the roots you know. All the way around

09:30 push it and down it would go. But they did a marvellous job. Out of the big jungle three weeks to build an airport and they had Marsden matting. Marsden matting is very strong. I suppose it's steel, sheets are about eight feet long. About this wide, see two and half feet wide, and they've got rungs on the side and then on the ends and they interlock. You lay one, and then you interlock the other one and

10:00 they go the whole of the airport with this because jungle ground, when it's first opened up, is very soft and you know it's very fertile ground. After the sun's been burning it for a while it gets a bit harder. But they had this whole air strip and it was very, very interesting. When the planes would take off it was just one big rattle. All this metal under the wheels you know.

10:30 It was awful, an awful noise but when we were in the plane taking off the DC3 that's not very fast but the noise would deafen you and that's the rattle of these Marsden mats. But they would never have done it otherwise. That's the Yanks. I give them full marks with their engineering.

Yeah, it's pretty good isn't it? Like a big jigsaw puzzle really.

Pardon?

Like a big jigsaw puzzle, putting the matting together.

Yes, yes and there were thousands of it.

What did you reckon of

11:00 **the British soldiers in the Middle East in Tobruk?**

They were good. We had what's called the Royal Horse Artillery. And I still see on the television the other day in Iraq somebody had his name Royal Horse Artillery underneath. So, it's still going and it's been going since, oh I suppose centuries. They still call it the Royal Horse Artillery and they were fine. They were fine soldiers and good marksmen and you know they did everything

11:30 right and then we also had the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers. This is probably something you don't know about. They were machine gunners. Vickers machinegunners, you know the big guns, they were medium or the CICs, but they're water cooled and they could, like artillery, fire over your head. And they were fine soldiers. But the reason why they were in the

12:00 desert, before the war - Palestine was a protectorate of Britain and they used to have uprisings occasionally with the Arabs and the troops. These militant ones, you know that kind of troops were there to keep order and apparently this mob and Northumberland Fusiliers must have got a bit too hard, putting down this particular riot or whatever it was

12:30 and they were sentenced to five years feudal as punishment. That meant that they couldn't go back to England for five years, none of them. So, the war, while they were serving their five years the war came up, you know and they were stuck there. But they were good soldiers, yeah. They must have been there a long time. Whether they got permission when the war finished or not I don't know. I hope so.

They would have been used to it. I guess.

13:00 **It's amazing.**

Yes, it it. It's a long way to be away from their friends. It's a long time isn't it? And their wives or whatever. But I always thought the British were good soldiers. They got lost a bit, at El Alamein, I'll say that, but they were good soldiers. It's just that they weren't organised properly. See, in open warfare you hear of the start line. You probably have heard it, you may not but the start line

13:30 is actually real. It's a tape laid by the intelligence section of your battalion. It's a wide tape about six inches wide and white and prior to an attack, you line up a battalion. How do you get them in a straight line? You can't unless you've got your feet on a line or something like that, you see. That's the object of it. Now they

14:00 lay this, hundreds of yards long, this tape in the sand. And that was your start line. And of a night, see all these tapes were white and at night time you'd go out and in the sun or no the moon you could see where you were. But can't do that in the jungle of course. But in the open warfare that's what they did.

14:30 **And so from lining up your battalion would it actually be a start line for movement of troops?**

In action.

Yes.

To attack. Yes. It's outlined for all of them. All the infantry. Your, ancillary troops like transport and mortars and they were in their positions.

With the night patrolling you were doing, if it was a

15:00 **fighting patrol. I mean you were out hunting for....?**

Both. For fighting patrol or reconnaissance.

You were just telling us about your fighting patrols in Tobruk.

Fighting patrols - well you'd go out and you'd get into position. You could dimly see where they were you know, if they were quiet. You could never, no coughing or

15:30 lights or silver watches or anything that might shine in the moon and give your position away. Things like that. And then the lieutenant or whoever was in charge would give his orders, what he wanted done. And it's just a case of attacking them. But a reconnaissance patrol is to get information. You go out and have a look and see, try and get their strength. How many's there? You might have to get a prisoner. That's

16:00 happened. I was never in one of those patrols but often they'd come back with a prisoner, grab him so that he'd talk to them. Get, interrogate him and get a bit of information. On a reconnaissance patrol they just wanted to find out what was there and how many and location, position. That's the difference. But

How close would you get

16:30 **to the Germans on a fighting patrol?**

You either win or you don't win. Attack them in their positions. Eventually. Yeah..

Can you talk us through the tactics of how you would approach them at night?. I mean obviously you'd..

No, it's something you'd work out at the time because there's no stereotype way to

17:00 do it. The layout may be different, to change from time to time. So, therefore there's no plan. You go in and you use your nous. Attack, come across something, deal with it.

So, what was one of your, most effective fighting patrols you did on the Germans. Can you talk us through one of those?

Yes. I was on a fairly big one once. They killed a quite a fair

17:30 few of them, I've forgotten now, and they brought back no prisoners.. It was at Tobruk that just same thing, deal with it you know. I tell you at El Alamein the gun, most, most terrible weapon we encountered was an 88mm anti-aircraft gun. Now that

18:00 may sound strange, aircraft. But it can be used as an anti-personnel or anti-tank. The barrel can be depressed and the ammunition for this has got a nose cap and it can be regulated to set, so it will burst at a certain range. You see aircraft, these bombs, shells

18:30 are being used for anti-aircraft. You see black puffs up in the air. The smoke is usually at the height the planes are flying at, so they'll get the shrapnel. Now they depressed them and used them against the troops. Oh, they were terrible. The speed of the projectile is much faster than artillery. The artillery you can hear coming but not these. These burst over your head

19:00 before you knew it. And you'd get shrapnel everywhere. I've seen blokes, I saw one bloke, he had a decent sort of a slit hole, fox hole, you know and sand bagged on one end. This end has got to be open and a bit of shrapnel must have burst there, and shrapnel went in to the hole and killed him. So you can be unlucky can't you? But that's the kind of thing. It's horrible.

And what would it do to fellows who were above the ground? What

19:30 **would that fire do to fellows who were on top of the ground?.**

Yes if you get hit you stay hit. And on one, I don't know if I told you, but on one of the attacks a fellow in our battalion, he had both legs cut off with an 88mm. Sudden thing. The British had 4.7 I think, the equivalent. Not exactly, but the same, used for the same

20:00 purpose, anti-aircraft guns but they never used them for personnel or tanks. But the Germans did ; they were innovative you know. They'd get stuck into it. Good soldiers. Yes, but it's a fearsome weapon,, I can tell you. It was. That was the worst we struck. Oh, and of course the Stukas. In Tobruk they'd

20:30 dive at you. And you look and you see the bombs; they release the bombs coming out of the belly of the plane and you know you either get hit, or too close. But those sometimes exploded fairly close but never got hit, I never, got covered in sand and I think a bit of a shrapnel hit my webbing or something and

21:00 that happened all the time. No respite, it was on all the time in Tobruk, either shelled or, and then there was another little reconnaissance plane, Heinkel I think or something. It would sometimes come around our area every afternoon to have a look, see what we were up to, getting information. And we used to shoot at it. I never hit it. I don't know

21:30 but some blokes reckon they hit it. They'd use tracer bullets and you'd see them bouncing off the plane. They must have been armour plated. You know that sometimes they had a bit of a humour. They'd drop a few grenades out the window. They were enemies but good enemies you know. Bit of fun.

Would they conduct patrols at night as well?

22:00 Yes, but not like the Australian. Australians were very good at it. Constant, on all the time. Not in the one spot. They'd go all around you know. Different battalions. Like the one platoon or one unit and you'd get it every month or once every so often.

Yeah, the Australians had quite a reputation for harassing the Germans quite a lot at night time.

Yes, and that's how they did it. At night

22:30 , they had the wind up the Japs, the Germans. They didn't know when they were going to get hit and where, but they stood their ground. They were all right.

Can you tell us about, I guess the set up inside the perimeter for you in Tobruk? I mean, what it looked like.

Yes, there was, the front line?

Yeah.

Which is AS-ON, they

23:00 call it AS-ON formation. And then that's the red line. Then further back, a bit further back is, I think it's the blue line which is BS-ON and that might have different troops of different categories like transport drivers or someone who could go in to action and be ready. Then of course you go back and you're back at battalion headquarters where the cooks and, casualty clearing station, things like that. They're combatants but they're not actually, they don't' have to go into action unless necessary. That's how you do it you know. AS-ON, BS-ON and that's like a second line of defence, the red line. So, we were well organised you know and General Morshead, he was a very fine general in Tobruk. And in

24:00 El Alamein.

And where would you sleep at night?

Oh, sometimes you couldn't of course, but never worried about sleep. I'll tell you the water was scarce of course and you'd,have a bottle of water. You know the water bottles they carry on your hip? One of those full a day. Now the morning, this might sound a bit dreadful. But I had a little tobacco tin; you know the ten ounce tins of tobacco, Log Cabin?

24:30 I had this empty tin and I tipped water into the tin, cleaned my teeth.. And then I'd spit the water back in to the tin so I could shave, bit of water to shave. Ordinary soap, no shaving cream Have a shave but the razor blades were not like they are today. They'd only last about one shave. Oh, never mind. We managed.

And how long

25:00 **did you have to hang on to them for before you could get a new one?**

Oh, you could only, you had to get several packets at a time. We only got five shillings a day and a married man he only got the same and he had to allot his wife two shillings a day and then he could keep three. I'm not sure about children, whether he had children now. But I wasn't married at that time. I used to get

25:30 five shillings a day and now they get three hundred dollars just for going for a ride overseas, don't they? A day. Good luck to them. Things have changed.

You mentioned an operation in Tobruk that I think there was about a hundred and thirty men in it and you lost quite a few.

That's in Tobruk.

Yeah, can you ...

I, I think it was 92

26:00 Yes, we lost 92 - I'm talking about wounded as well.

Yeah, yeah.

Ninety two out of a hundred and thirty we lost that night and my job that night was a runner. A runner

goes out with the commanding officer They didn't have these modern phones where they could ring up. They had to run a wire, signals. They'd run a wire from here

26:30 to wherever they wanted it to go back you see and if, something happened [to the wire] then they'd be put out of action and they would send a runner. And I was a runner that carried a message to wherever he wanted it taken to. And that's how I know what went on . I was in the same big bunker as the [the CO] was, sitting up the back waiting for the message. But he acted good. I'm surprised

27:00 at the colonel but he was cool. He knew what he was doing under fire. We lost a brigadier, Brigadier Godfrey at Alamein.. Bomb, shell landed right on his bunker. Killed him and his other blokes too. So, they weren't all, the lower ranks that got killed. The top blokes got it too sometimes.

27:30 **Did you lose any mates in Tobruk?**

Yes, I did. Alamein mostly. Bloke I'd known for many years was killed on the night, not the big show but 26th July he was killed and another day we were hanging around in the front line and all of a sudden a plane came over. He was out of control. He'd been shot down. And it landed just down in no-man's-

28:00 land out here. In front of us and a couple of days later word got back to me that he was a friend of mine who used to play football up in the Nedlands in Perth, Nedlands football team. He was the pilot of the thing. He was killed. Oh, quite a few you know killed over there. Another bloke was killed in the air force. The name Aimes. He was a friend of mine and he got knocked off somehow.

28:30 They're really hit hard that way, but you survive.

Were you close by to any of them at the time?

Well, that aircraft one, he was a few hundred yards [away] you know. Comparatively close, but we were quite safe. And the other bloke that got killed in this big attack at Alamein, well anyone could have copped it you know. I wasn't actually with him. He was in a different company to me.

29:00 So, I don't know how far he was away. But a lot were killed. And that was when the battalion was annihilated. Five hundred went off in the night. One night, you know, I was one of three truckloads of troops left to go off the next morning to re-form. To make the line duty. Does upset you, you don't like it but……

29:30 **How do you keep going when friends around you are getting shot and killed on a daily basis?**

Well, it doesn't happen very often but when it does you can't stop. You can't, not in that kind of warfare .You can't stop and give him any first aid really. You've to

30:00 leave that to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] blokes and the band. The battalion band are stretcher bearers in war, in action. The stretcher, the band, the big bands you know. Army bands. They're stretcher bearers and they were there you know to carry out the wounded. But there's nothing the ordinary bloke can do. You, unless you get him, he's under fire or something and you can pull him in to safer ground. Something like that. But there's nothing, you've got no way

30:30 of treating, even though you've got a field dressing;, apply a field dressing but you can't stop yourself. You're open to enemy fire. So, you just keep going that's all.

I've read that the Australians in Tobruk would sometimes nick off with some of the German

31:00 **artillery or left over tanks and things like that. Did you see any of that?**

No, I don't think. I don't know about that because there was no fun and games, if you know what I mean. The only time I know of what, might have been an isolated incident using German weapons. The only time I can recall is when we first started in the artillery. Italian

31:30 artillery, the smaller types you know. They were used by Australians. In fact they fired the first shots in the defence of Tobruk, our battalion. And I think somebody else had a German machine gun just that they'd captured you know, used to use it. Like with the Yanks. We used to get their Browning machine guns.

32:00 They were good guns, in the islands. Pick up one, just been discarded or something, but I don't know of any tanks been taken and used. I don't know. Could be. But I've never heard of that before.

No, that's fair enough. That's good. Good to know. Joe, oh sorry I was just going to ask if you could tell us about that first defensive position that the Australians put up against the

32:30 **Germans when they first arrived in Tobruk.**

We were, as I told you, on duty guarding the road. One of many. All we had was six rounds of ammunition and two grenades each and we'd pull up all the trucks coming down as Banghazi Derby they called it. Massive rush of troops getting away from the German onslaught. You know, Tobruk had not started then

33:00 as such. The siege had not started and we were letting them in and it was a bit hairy. These trucks are pretty high and you're standing on the ground and you're trying to identify them. Anyhow, we let them go, straight, you can tell the boys you know. And that went on and then the siege had to start. We had to. Germans bypassed us, went right down to Bardia. Almost into Cairo

33:30 and we were stuck up there. That was the siege. Our bush artillery it was called was already set up on the Derna road and when the Germans came down the road they thought they were going to drive straight in and they got a hell of a shock when these guns started shooting at them. They knocked out seven, I think it was seven or nine vehicles or

34:00 something.. The rest were treated and went to get more reinforcements. But they nicked off. Now at one time we were getting shelled. We were in the front line while I was in C Company in the front line and coming from our rear we saw these shells. We thought it was our drill. We

34:30 didn't know who was doing it and it landed quite close to us. Now on to the wrong target. And you know after suffering about ten or twelve of these huge explosions there's one that didn't, there was a dud that didn't go off and it was a sixteen inch naval gun shell. That's what they'd been shelling us with

35:00 by mistake. Now their target, we could see, was about a mile or so. You can see a long way in the desert flat. Congregation, assembly of a large assembly of German trucks, and that was undoubtedly their target. They were on the wrong bearing. We were getting it but it not too good.

35:30 One day these British planes, fighters and we were sitting along the line like this and they startled us, British fighters and we thought oh, god couldn't make it out you know. It's bad enough getting the Germans doing it. Anyhow, we learned later that it was South African pilots on the plane that got the message and strafed us.

36:00 They didn't kill anyone. Still it's not good.

You've got enough to worry about without that. So, once you'd given the Germans a bit of a shock in Tobruk when you first arrived, were the Australians dug in at that stage?

Well, they

36:30 were yes. Now,in parts of Tobruk, the Italians who occupied Libya pre-war had built large concrete defence positions. We occupied those where they were available. They went right around the semi-circle, there was a big semi-circle. The sea's at the back here. They went right around. You had to dig holes mostly but in places there were these huge gun emplacements and

37:00 you could sleep in them, They were quite big and little bits of niches or nooks or something off from the main passageway. A bloke could sleep in there if he had to. But no they're firing positions, you could fire from these positions as well, so they were already prepared but we had to dig our man holes of course, fox holes. In Alamein we had no assistance with that at all. We had to do our own digging where we could.

37:30 Couldn't in many places; it was hard rock or very stony country and you couldn't dig it and you just had to get behind them and a bit of gorse, a clump of bushes and hope for the best.

Did you see any fellows, who couldn't cope with the constant siege at

38:00 **Tobruk? Who ...**

No, not really. But I know of several being shipped out because they went a bit nervous, I suppose. They had the wrong constitution or whatever the problem was, you know. They were shipped out and eventually discharged.

Okay, we'll pause there.

Tape 4

00:34 **This might sound like a silly question but with all that sand how did you cope with it in your ears and your toes? Did you have a problem with all the sand there in Tobruk?**

Yes, I did. We did in Tobruk. See, it's a long time to be in a siege like that. And the only time you had a chance to have a bath or shower was in the sea when

01:00 you relieved and go in the salt water. There's no fresh water available, As I said, I used to do my teeth, but there was no way you could wash yourself and your hair. I had it cut off but you'd go with your scalp like that and your fingernails come off with sand everywhere. And it was in your ears and your eyes. You know your eyes would get moist and they'd have those dust things hanging out their eyes

01:30 almost. Not too good but you just did it and never worried too much about it. You got used to the other bloke looking rather funny. So, you didn't worry about it.

Do you think about those days in Tobruk when you go to the beach?

Not really. It's just part of the scheme of things. Very often we went in the water and we had to get out quick because there was

02:00 fighter plane, jet, German fighter planes coming along, strafing along the beach ,so it was best to get out of the water. So that's what we did.

Do you know of anyone that actually got killed while having a bath in the sea?

No, really no, I never. But they were lucky.

Can you tell us, after Tobruk was it a very different experience going in to your next

02:30 **operation?**

Well, it was a different kind of warfare. More fluid you know. Mobile, more mobile. Tobruk was a go out and come back kind of thing. But there you knew you could advance, stay on, you would build up where you went to.

03:00 The fire power was worse at Alamein. I told you about the 88mm. That was horrible. And they had plenty of planes and Stukas. The Germans were well equipped compared to us.

You were telling us before when we were changing tapes about your mate in Alamein. Can you tell us that story again?

Which one?

That he got shot in the stomach, I

03:30 **think.**

Oh, Arthur, yeah. He, he got shot, bullet got him. Didn't go straight in to his stomach but it must have been a graze but he was badly hurt, pretty badly hurt. He never rejoined the battalion for a few months. .He was injured badly but he was walking. See, if you could use your legs and got injured somewhere else you're not losing any blood, well you're walking wounded you know. And

04:00 he was like that. He got a bullet in the stomach but he survived alright. He finished up coming to OTU with me. Arthur, he was a ladies man, lady killer. Beaut looking bloke. They loved him. And he could sing better than Nelson Eddie. Ever heard of him?

I've heard of him.

Beautiful, he was a film star, a very good tenor. Arthur, in my opinion was as

04:30 good as that.. Know all that? Have a few drinks, the ladies loved him. He was a good looking, tall bloke.

Did you go out with him on the town?

Yes, but he was always successful and I wasn't. He was a drinking mate of mine. And the other bloke that got killed, Roy Hancock he was one of us three, three of us.

05:00 But Arthur was a funny man. I could tell you some funny stories. If you want some naughty little stories, are you taping this?

Of course.

I won't mention names. I've told Francis and Bruce about this. He was so, this is awful. He was so that way inclined when we were in OTU in Seymour we had the big, fairly big mess, and we had ladies, young

05:30 army girls like cooks and waitresses and all that kind of thing. It happened that Arthur was going to get this and you'll be shocked at this. I'm sure Francis and Bruce were. But Arthur was going to get married, West Perth. After he graduated he was going over to get married and I was going to be his groomsman, not best man but groomsman. So, anyhow

06:00 Arthur had an affair with this young lady and I said to Arthur, I said "Hey, cut it out; you're going to get married". "Oh, no worries,". he said," I've got to get in to practice," He said "The more practice…,".. do you mind me saying this? "The more practice I get, the better I'll be". Oh, god he was a blooming tiger, this bloke. But wouldn't

06:30 listen to me?. No, he was a funny bloke.

Did he go and get married?

Got married. I went over and she was the daughter of the chief of police in Perth. Yeah, nice, very nice girl and they had a family too. He's still on deck Bob, spoke to him not long ago didn't I? Arthur? On the phone. Oh, but he was a character this bloke. But, just

07:00 they were attracted to him, like flies to a honey pot or something.

What did he have that you felt you didn't have?

Everything as far as girls were concerned. But he had a nice personality. He was a good conversationalist. A good singer and that was important and he was generous, take them out you know and look after them but he was

07:30 a reliable sort of a fellow, but not to his wife or his would- be wife. Oh, my God. It's terrible isn't it? Cut it out. "Get out Joe," he says," the more practice I get the better." Oh, Jesus. I hope that's not on.

What about you? Were you much of a dancer?

I used to dance but no champion. Arthur,

08:00 he didn't have to learn to dance to get the ladies.

He just had to open his mouth.

Oh, gee. Never mind.

Joe, looking at some of your old photos when we had a cup of tea, I noticed how sporty you looked. Is that why you were chosen to be the runner?

No, I wasn't a runner. I used to play football, play golf.

I meant the runner when you were at Tobruk.

08:30 **If the wire in the phone broke …**

No, a runner - he doesn't have to run as such. He's the runner because he's taking things from A to B.

So, he can go slowly?

Yeah, go at any speed. But mostly you've got to hurry up because you're under fire. No I wasn't a runner.

Did you play any sport while you were in

09:00 **the army?**

No, never. Oh, boxing. We had a boxer, a doctor. He was the fellow that put the disc on, Jim Ellis. Captain Ellis. He was a boxer, doctor ,and he used to get the boys in spare time. Oh, he was quite good and I used to get mixed up in that kind of thing. We had one fellow there. He was a South

09:30 Australian and he was interpreter. He used to interpret for me quite often interrogating Japs and he was a good boxer. He was a South Australian and he used to win his grade fights down there, you know. He was quite good. But apart from that we played baseball and cricket but not regularly, I didn't. The army had it after things straightened out. In Rabaul the army had a team in the local association

10:00 there but I never played. I was only there to make up the numbers. If they didn't have a team they'd ring me up.

Did you ever come to fisticuffs with another bloke?

No. Never. No, no. No, I never, never struck out.

What about when you were a kid?

Oh, kids yeah. I learnt to fight early because of my name., I was called Backhouse and

10:30 rude names.

Why? Maybe it's my generation but Backhouse, what does that mean like toilet?

Toilet. You look in the Macquarie dictionary you'll see an out house toilet. American version that is. When I went overseas there was a Pommie bloke and his wife. They were a nice couple from somewhere, I don't know, forgotten now. One of the big

11:00 places in London. And he couldn't believe me name was Backhouse. He thought it was a toilet. Truly ,and then I went to America afterwards and I thought "My God, they'll know more about backhouses than I do". But what can you do?

So, do you think that's why you got in to boxing?

No, no, no, no, no. No, I never got into boxing. I only did it for the exercise and I

11:30 had a bit of a spar for the sport of it. I used to run a fair bit. Out of bed early of a morning and run along the road and funny thing you'd see. I don't know whether you know natives but work with a native. I'm talking about years ago. They're probably educated a bit now. But years ago, work to them was foreign. They just didn't do work in their village. The

12:00 wife, she'd tend to garden and the baby and collect firewood and generally run the house, everything. He didn't do anything. Hunting. They used to hunt with pigs and bow and arrows and those things, but that's all they did. And when I used to run along the road early in the morning and I'd come to some notice, I'd probably walk in to a bout of work or whatever and they'd look at me and think "Good God, this bloke's been chased or he's

12:30 ding bats or something". Truly. And I resisted. I used to do it every morning and I thought I felt a bit of an idiot because I knew what they were thinking. This bloke's running away from something. All I had on was a pair of shorts and boots. Anyhow, they got used to me I suppose and a few other officers at the headquarters started to come with me like I could see it was worthwhile exercise. But that is

13:00 true. It works fine. Well it used to be.

It must have been tempting to run with your arms going, no?.

Don't know. Funny old world isn't it?

Yeah, so when you were in Alamein ,what was the major difference for you? Tobruk to Alamein?

Well, I suppose it was an unconscious of

13:30 being not hemmed in, you know. You've got your backs to the water and that did worry you but I suppose that was a big difference. At Alamein we could walk to the coast and have a bit of a shower with just a couple of blokes at a time. Bathe in the sea. But I don't think there was any great difference except that it was enclosed; you know confined space in Tobruk.

14:00 That limits you. See, at Alamein you're used to trucks and things you know. Couldn't do that in Tobruk. The convoys in the desert were huge. When we were going up a battalion at a time there's an awful lot of trucks, one after the other and you'd see it snaking its way across the bitumen road in the desert. You know it

14:30 was tremendous. And so many trucks that were mobile, we had to be ready to stop in case we were attacked. De-bus quickly, is what they said. Never know when a Stuka was coming over or a Messerschmitt

Were you more under constant fire in El Alamein?

No, not really. I think Tobruk was worse. The Stukas were there,

15:00 all the time. But Alamein was probably, when we got it, was more heavy, more intense. Couldn't move.. Same at Tobruk but you know it was very heavy indeed .We survived it.

Were more

15:30 **men lost in Alamein as opposed to Tobruk, yes?**

Yes.

Can you tell us about some of those operations in Alamein that you had to go through? Tell us about the fighting.

Oh, it was

16:00 mainly long distance you know - artillery and aircraft and all that type of thing and then the final attack. They'd come in and you'd have to shoot them or take them prisoner. And see, when you're going to attack like that as I told you before,

16:30 they provide for sections of a platoon to take out wounded and prisoners. You've got to, it's no good just taking a bloke and saying, you're a prisoner. He might pick up a rifle and shoot you. So, you've got to have someone to take him back to headquarters and that's what happened. You get rid of them that way but, oh no, I don't think there was anything like the first war.

17:00 The bayonet was used in the second war but not like the first war, from what I've heard .There was less fighting, no doubt about it.

Did you use your bayonet?

No, never, never bayoneted anyone. No. You always had it, you know, but you never, unless you had to. I've been close at a time when a chap bailed me up closer than you and me in Borneo. I could have been killed easily then.

17:30 But we had our dicey moments in other places too. But no, half the time in open warfare you don't know you're shooting anyone. You know you're from a distance and they get knocked over and you don't know who did it unless it's really close.

What was your position in

18:00 **Alamein. Were you a gunner? In Alamein?.**

I was a sergeant in the Bren gunners.

In the Bren gunners, so did you have your own Bren gun?

Well, my blokes did yes. I didn't have one personally. I was in charge. I had just ordinary weapons. Everyone doesn't walk around with a Bren gun.

No, can you tell me.. how big a Bren gun is?

It's a light

18:30 machine gun, you see them quite often on the TV. It's smaller than a submachine gun, which is a Tommy gunner, and a light machine. It's a very light, small weapon. Used for close, close fighting. The weapon above that is the light machine gun which is a Bren gun. It fires a 303. The other one

19:00 fires a nine millimetre. It's automatic.. Keeps loading itself while the other magazine's on; it keeps loading itself if you hold your finger on the trigger, keeps going. Same with the Tommy gun. But you're just a bit heavier.

19:30 And they're longer and bigger. You see them quite often.

How much would they weigh?

Only about a rifle, the old Lee-Enfield rifle is ten pounds, which is pretty heavy .A Bren gun would be heavier than that. There's more metal in it, you know.

And how many Bren guns per platoon?

Three. And each platoon there is a lieutenant in charge, three sergeants, sometimes four,

20:00 three and then three corporals, one to each, one to each section and about ten men in each section. Think I told you when I took over 12 platoons in the 2 /14th the lieutenant got injured badly and four blokes killed all in the one section. And then the rest were wounded. And only

20:30 one out of those ten men came back, recovered enough to come back to the unit. All the others were evacuated. But there's usually, one officer. Three or four sergeants and three corporals.

So, how long were you there, on Alamein?

Well, we went for about five months, I think. All in all. No rest , no nothing.

21:00 **And it was six months in Tobruk?**

Yeah.

And then you came back to Australia?

Yes. I was there two years. I came back with the battalion, same battalion. Two years they were there altogether.

And were there more people hurt than not hurt?

No, I don't think so. Probably the case in the first war but not the last war. I don't think there was that, I don't know. I've never really checked the

21:30 figures. But in many cases, there were heavy casualties in our war, second war. But I doubt if it was. I don't know more the survivors than others. I don't know.

What was it like coming back to clean sheets and running water?

Oh, tremendous. Having

22:00 bread, fresh bread. Couldn't believe how nice it was . Bit of butter, never got that, no bread. Biscuits, hard biscuits you know. And a beer, there was no beer. It was a different life. It's quite nice really. You realise there's something you're living for, you know. But they were the big things I think,

22:30 and butter and that, simple things of life. Yes, you kind of miss them after a while, but you got used to it. You never thought of it. It never worried you.

So, what this 1942 you came back to Australia?

43.

43, so this is before you went to New Guinea obviously. So, how long were you back in Australia before you knew you were taking off again?

Oh, it was quite a while.

23:00 There was a bit of a lull in the fighting in New Guinea and in the islands generally. I'd say we came back in February 43 and then we were in October, the landing at Oivi happened in October so that's what about six months or so and in that time we were training on the Atherton tablelands, jungle warfare, that type of thing but that was in October 43 and

23:30 then Finschhafen and it continued on from there and after about four or five months, may not have been that long, I went down to OTU. And then,

But in that time you met Slvy didn't you? When you came to Australia?

Yes. Not the first time. No, I met her when I was commissioned and I went back to Borneo. The last

24:00 campaign.

The last campaign, so it was just before the last campaign?

Yes, and that was in March 1945, I married her.

Right.

No, no I was away for the last campaign.

Did you keep up with your mates from Tobruk and Alamein?

Not now.

No, when you came back to Australia the first time.

No, , I never did that, no. Your friends were who were working with you, , all the spot all the time with them. But

24:30 apart from that, only some. Like Arthur I knew what he was up to sometimes, but only a few blokes you know. You're not interested in knowing them too well. You just treat them as mates that's all.

You weren't interested in case they died you mean or ...

No, just general living, you know as friends that's all. But they were all pretty good blokes. I never struck a squib [a disappointment]

25:00 amongst them.

Where did you come back to Australia to? Was it Western Australia?

Yes, our first time, yes. Got off the Queen Mary at Fremantle and then three weeks I think we were on our way to New Guinea. The second time, coming from New Guinea, was a broken trip you know. A ship and a plane and trains and things.

25:30 But ...

How did you cope with, I've heard stories about the men in Tobruk having to sleep during the day because of obviously fighting the Germans and their systems being all out of whack. Did you encounter that when you came back to Australia?

No, not at all, no the body

26:00 adjusts pretty quickly. You're quite right. It was broken sleep. And the flies. You've got to sleep in the daytime sometimes you know, flies and fleas. Never mind. You kind of cope with it.

How did you cope with the fleas?

Oh, I don't know. You're always knocking them off or getting rid of them. They didn't stick fast. They didn't stick on you too much. They'd

26:30 nip you and in Syria. God, the scorpions. When you're out on manoeuvres. The idea is to get up on a vehicle, on a truck and sleep. Sleeping on the ground, you're just as likely to get nipped. They get in the blankets and you don't know what's going on. If you're up higher they can't climb. Scorpions, they're awful

27:00 things.

Not all of them are venomous though.

Probably not, but they have a nasty bite don't they? Awful looking thing with that tail coming up.

So, how did you hear about going to New Guinea? You were back in Fremantle for three weeks and then you were heading off again. Did the army cable you?

No, did they what?

Cable. Did they sent you a cable or a letter saying you were off to New Guinea or ...

When I re-enlisted?

27:30 No. They told me. They told me report so and such a time to go movement which I did and I went by RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] courier which was a DC3. I think it was all the way to Townsville, then I had to wait in Townsville and we got another plane.

Was there a shift in Australia now that the war in Europe is actually coming to Australia, the Pacific is opening up and the Japanese are coming to Australia.

28:00 **Was there a different kind of feeling going on? For the men that you knew?**

No, I don't know about that. No.

The fear of Japan coming to Australia? A lot of people signed up then apparently - so I just wondered if you encountered the difference in attitude?

No, no worries.

28:30 I could have gone to Japan but I was quite happy to stay in Rabaul and be on war crimes and I was second in charge of the compound. That was quite good, quite good. Fair bit of work but doesn't matter. The CO was a brigadier in charge; he finished up in charge of BCOF that you're talking about, Japan, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. He was in charge of the

29:00 lot. And then we had Frank Duvall. He was a major. He was mixed up in war crimes too. Frank he was a very successful man. He was an industrial chemist pre-war and he served in infantry in the Middle East with the 6th Division and then when he came back he was the personal aide to the brigadier in charge. Brigadier Irvine, who

29:30 eventually went to Japan. Well, Frank went with him. He must have worked hard on something over there while he was in the army because after he came back he was knighted. He was Sir Frank Duvall in his efforts in re-establishing good relations with Japan. He married

30:00 a Japanese national and became very rich, very wealthy. In this business with Japan he was also mixed up with the early shipping of metals and iron ore and all that, metals to Japan. And I think he made a fortune. He was a multi-millionaire. So, he did all right out of it but he was a nice chap though. I liked Frank.

Why did you re-enlist

30:30 **after Tobruk and El Alamein?**

I didn't, no well I had no option really. I had to stay in the army then to go through New Guinea and also Borneo. After Borneo now you mean, why did I re-enlist?

Oh, I'm sorry I misunderstood. I thought you had to re-enlist before you went to New Guinea?

No, no we went to the two other campaigns first. Then, but things had changed so much in Perth you know. War time,

31:00 there's rationing and everything. Oh, the whole system changed you know so it was right through Australia, the world I guess. Not the same. They were looking for officers to come on the war crimes so I thought I'd be in that.

Can you recall your thoughts, how you felt about going to New Guinea?

No, never worried me. Never even thought of it.

31:30 Just went. I must be dumb.

Hardly. Well, what were your first impressions of the country?

Oh, beautiful. It's green. Here, it looks like a moonscape compared to New Guinea. Oh, it's the biggest; the first thing you get off the plane, not so much Moresby's a bit barren. But you get up to Lae and Bulolo and it's lush, green. Everything

32:00 grows. I knew a bloke …and he was sent up by Canberra, the department of the Prime Minister or whatever,to show the natives how to grow things and I had an occasion that he visited me. They love plantation life all these fellows. And he came out and stayed with me for a week. He and a soil an expert from Melbourne. He was a

32:30 soil expert this bloke. But this anonymous fellow he said "They've sent me up here to teach the natives how to grow things." and he said,"It's the natives teaching me how to grow things in the tropics. They're incredible you know". I've seen them plant gardens from cuttings. Sweet potatoes are grown, there's cocoa up there but sweet potatoes are grown from cuttings not seed like a potato. You don't do that with

33:00 sweet potatoes. It's a cutting. Now I've seen boys and women make a garden and they heap the little heaps you know where they're going to plant in the middle. They stick in a cutting, and I would always

think it was dead you know by afternoon in the heat. No rain. And you'd think you're wasting your time. Tobacco they'd do the same with tobacco. Cuttings and it would die, looks as

33:30 if it's gone, finished. And anyhow, blow me down you go back in a couple of weeks and it's all standing up, growing beautifully. Probably get a bit of rain, but they don't water. That would be foreign, that's work. They don't irrigate in other words or do that kind of, just leave it to nature. But that's the kind of country that is the tropics..

It rains every afternoon there doesn't it?

Oh, yeah. Especially at Lae, very, very heavy.

Is that where you landed Joe?

Yeah, first time.

34:00 Yeah. So, it was very heavy there but the natives they can certainly live off the land. They've everything.

I'd love to talk to you more about your time in New Guinea. I mean you spent thirty years there didn't you? Thirty years? Well, we'll come back to that later and find out what you did and all that kind of stuff. I was just wondering if you could tell me when you landed at Lae, where did you go from there?

34:30 Well, this is in the army?

Yes.

We were in the landing at Lae and we took, not me but the troops I was with, captured Lae and then we went to Finschhafen and that was sticky. Around Sattelberg is a two thousand foot high hill. There's a mission on the top of it and the Japs occupied that and we had

35:00 to take that and not only me but a lot of other troops too. And Tom Derrick, you may have heard of him. Sergeant Thomas Derrick, he got a VC [Victoria Cross] but he wasn't in our unit. He was with us, but not in our unit.. The fight was very bitter there. And so at Finschhafen too. No good.

What about the taking of Lae, how long was that? And can you tell us a little bit about what happened?

35:30 Well, the Japs were on the run then. They were short of supplies and getting killed and wounded and things were not going well for them. And we had, it was like a pincer movement. The 7th Division flew in by air. The artillery flew in by air and the troops landed with their guns right on the spot you know

36:00 and we came in the other direction, light division came in the other direction in a pincer and they shot through. They evacuated. But there was a lot of casualties, yes. So, it wasn't a lasting stand. They could see what was happening and the generals wanted a retreat I suppose.

Okay, so they took off for the hills and

36:30 **then. How long was that battle of Lae? Was it a couple of days?**

Yes, that's about all. They just kind of marched in.

And then Finschhafen, you mentioned was sticky. Can you tell us about … Finschhafen, can you tell us about that campaign?

Yes, we went up by barge. It was about sixty miles. I suppose they call it west

37:00 of Lae and we went by barge. Other troops had gone before. We were not in the first wave of landing, landing at Finschhafen, but the fighting was on. And others went by and, they landed in a different direction and they kind of formed a pincer movement, you know. We were here and another crowd were coming

37:30 here. But at Finschhafen it was touch and go. We thought we might lose it. I think I told you that even the care, hospital was moved from the hospital down on to the beach, below the high water mark. You know the drop in the sand and that's how bad it was. Point blank firing, artillery pieces. Three days. Yeah.

38:00 Anyhow the Japs eventually got beaten and they took off then and that's, when I say, we went up.. They didn't have much after that.

Did the Japs ever bomb the hospital?

No. Not to my knowledge. No hospitals. See they were not organised like the Germans. Not in our part

38:30 of the fighting. They may have been like I say at Pearl Harbor or wherever. They did a good job there didn't they? But they were nothing like that. I think at Darwin there's about two hundred planes, wasn't there over time?. Something like that - but when we were there I think that they were largely defeated, you know. After the battle of the Coral Sea, the Yankee Navy and

39:00 the Australian Navy sank a lot of Jap ships and that was putting the writing on the wall. Now General Imamura he was in charge of the whole of the Japs in the Pacific. I knew him well and I used to talk about this and he said that there was never a plan for those troops to arrive or invade Australia. Never. And I

39:30 believe him. He said they, they might eventually come here but there was no plan at the time of the battle of the Coral Sea which was a deciding factor in the ending of the war. He claimed that they were not on their way to Australia. A big, big convoy it was and they were going to Moresby and they were decimated by the Yanks and the British. Australian Army, Navy and then I

40:00 think a lot of them landed at Konedobu? Did I tell you about? Are we still on New Guinea?

Yeah.

The war crimes?

We're going to get back to that.

I'm in no hurry but I just remembered something. About war crimes.

Yes. Tell us.

Now

40:30 my wife came up to Rabaul and lived near me where we had all the Jap prisoners. Now she learnt there that a friend of her -it's in my book - a friend of hers by the name of Mavis Parkinson who she went to school with as a kid, primary school in Ipswich had joined the Uniting Church and they sent her

41:00 to Epping in Victoria to the Uniting Church training school where they teach people how to become missionaries. And Mavis was trained to be a teacher and sent to New Guinea and a friend, woman by the name of Bayhaven. She was a nurse, sister. Now when the Japs, this is 1942, when the Japs first

41:30 arrived they came down on the beach and they caught Mavis and May and beheaded them. Cut their heads off. Shocking. On the beach at Gona. Now I don't know whatever happened with her. They, see that was early in the war and you could never find out who did that really. See, in the case of Newton. I'm getting a bit on to this but I won't

42:00 tell you too much of this.

Tell us later Joe because I want to get it on …

Tape 5

00:34 **Okay, Joe could you tell us in as much detail as you remember just about your initial duties at Rabaul to do with the war crimes?**

Yes, when I arrived in Rabaul I was with the war crimes. At headquarters, Eighth Military District War Investigations. My job, not only me but our job on

01:00 that, I was not a legal officer. We were under the command of the legal officers. We would, if they wanted information about a certain aspect of war crimes, as to who did it and all of that information, they would brief us and investigate and we would go out, find this fellow and

01:30 find out what we could about it. About what they wanted to know about. And that was mainly our duty for quite a long time. Got to know numerous Japanese and things like that.

How did, how did you find the Japanese in terms …?

Oh, very cooperative. They, well I don't suppose they were telling the

02:00 truth in a lot of ways but as far as their demeanour and so forth it was quite respectable. Yes. No problem with them at all. Courteous, yes but I'm not sure about whether they were really truthful all the time. You never know that, do you? I think a lot of times they, answered the questions. You got the

02:30 answer you wanted.

Can you tell us about some of the war crimes that you were investigating in terms, what sort of information you were looking for?

Yes. Oh, it mainly was to do with murders. We worked on

03:00 the Flight Lieutenant Newton [an Australian pilot beheaded after capture by the Japanese] case for a while. But what we could find out with him was all his accused were deceased later on in the war. But we had to do a fair bit of investigation to find that out. The units were concerned and their, their present

status. So, they

03:30 could do nothing about that because they were executed or they were killed during the violent stages of the war. We were very disappointed that we couldn't find out something about that. We worked on the Sandakan death march too. Quite a lot of people started out on that march and

04:00 only about six finished. I recall that one that finished was Sergeant Bill, Sticpewich,, South Australian fellow. He was lucky he got through. I think he went and hid in a village, native village or something near the finish. So, he got out of it. But there was a terrible loss of life for that and all it, for no reason really.

04:30 Anyhow Baba, General Baba was held responsible and eventually executed for that crime. We had Tashiro, an interesting character. We had him in our compound. Now pre-war he was a resident of Rabaul. He must have known

05:00 that the war was imminent and we went back to Japan. Now, he led the invasion fleet back in to Rabaul harbour, and really advised them on local knowledge, natives, all that. And he was an expert at that. He was a marine engineer

05:30 and he used to do pre-war work on the slips, the slip ships and things..Tashiro he was called a naval civilian. That was his rank, that's a rank. I could never work this out but they assured me everyone I spoke, all the Japs that I spoke to, that was a rank, naval civilian. And he was in charge of the Rabaul

06:00 area. Everything. He didn't have the day to day running of the units or anything like that but he was the number one personnel. I got a lot of information. I've got it on the video, what's the name of it? Video,

Monitor?

No, oh no, no.

06:30 Can't say it at the moment. Never mind I'll get it.

It'll come to you.

Yeah, that was a ship that was supposed to have had about a thousand prisoners of war and civilians, local civilians. And it was sunk by an American submarine

07:00 up near the Philippines and all were lost. So they say. But I've always been doubtful about that one because, not only me, many investigators. Because Tashiro, he would admit other crimes. I always thought that these people, I suppose they're on the, Montevide o Maru

07:30 , didn't embark. Tashiro, I interrogated him many, many times on this and he would never admit that there were people on the Montevideo Maru. There was a ship called that but, I'm sure that these people were not on board. Now

08:00 I protested that the army authorities ,or I suppose we, could accept that these people were on the ship. I protested and they said, other officers said to me to forget it. It's a good way to close the case for the benefit of their

08:30 relatives and don't know, be at peace. You know as to what happened to these people. Now I don't know why I should be saying this but that is my opinion and only mine but they didn't go on the Montevideo Maru. We dug up Rabaul almost everywhere we kept prisoners,

09:00 dug it up trying to find the remains of these people but couldn't find any human bones at all. Every bone we found was kept and later checked by doctors and they never found any We never found any human bones. But I'm still convinced that they didn't go on the ship, especially with Tashiro, they wouldn't. He had a perfect out. If they went on the ship, what could you do to him?

09:30 Nothing. But he wouldn't, still wouldn't admit it and he spoke English and good, pidgin. He was an expert on handling natives, all that. He knew, they had the right man in the right place, Japs. But that was one case that took up a lot of time. I had many more. I just can't remember at the moment.

Yeah, no that's all right Joe. Can you explain for us what an interrogation

10:00 **session was like?**

The what?

What a session of interrogation was like? Can you describe how it would work?.

Yeah, well I'd get an interpreter or we had female interpreters and translators. There's a bit of a difference there. One writes and the other's oral. And they were Melbourne. And I had a, Gus Stubridge[?] we were talking about him before. He was an interpreter, a lieutenant in the army

10:30 and he was all right too. And we would go out or get a prisoner out. The military police would bring the prisoner to our office at headquarters sometimes. Sometimes we had to go out and do it out, you know,

outside. First of all you give them a warning, normal warning that they're about to be asked some questions and anything

11:00 they do or say will be taken down in writing and may be used in evidence against them, something like that. That's their warning and then you ask, like questions where they served and the units they served in and districts where, all about it. About their unit, who was the CO and all the information you could gather about the unit. And that

11:30 type of thing. And if there was any mention of other people, well you'd find them later on and ask them about it. But it was along those lines that it's hard to remember now just exactly the procedure. but that was the gist. And they were quite lengthy some of them. We had these lady civilians. They were mostly from Melbourne. They had their own

12:00 quarters, in the headquarters, the ladies quarters. They call it the nunnery and they had their own mess, you know, big hall, everything. I know, when my wife first went there she used to eat with them during the day because it was handy for me when I was working, you know so, that was the procedure. At

12:30 one stage there was Sir William Webb,Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia was up there. They had some important Japs to be tried and he was there for that and we had very high QCs [Queens Counsels]. I won't mention names but Melbourne people. They were there on war crimes to prosecute or

13:00 on major crimes and they lived in the mess with us. They went to great lengths really to get to the bottom of all this. I'm not a legal bloke but you know they had some pretty smart legal officers on the cases. So, I think that's all I can

13:30 go there.

I'll have a go at a few more questions and see how you go. I might spark some memories. Do you remember, this might sound like an obvious question but for us, because we weren't there. Can you tell us what the layout of the court was like and how that kind of worked?

Yes. It was similar to a military court martial. You know how that's run?

No,

14:00 The Chief…. I've forgotten the term now but there's five judges on a panel and they sit up one end of the court and they conduct and of course they're the judges, they've got to take note of everything. Then they've got the prosecuting officer and the defending, usually a Jap in this case. There were Japanese lawyers

14:30 there and they would defend. The prisoner would be brought in and he had to have an escort of comparable rank. I was a lieutenant and sometimes they'd get me to escort a Japanese lieutenant. That was the system, military style. I don't know whether the Australian Army do it that way but that was the principle. An army court martial just

15:00 , forgotten the head of the court, but they were full colonels and some lieutenant colonels, and a couple of majors too. They were not on the court everyday but they were rotated you know. It's rather an arduous job just sitting there and listening and asking a few questions, really is. So, they change them over every now and again.

And on average, how long would a court

15:30 **proceeding last?**

Well, depending on the information of course, like it goes down here. But I'd say several days. There was no rush. No forcing information available at all from the Japanese. It was freely done and freely presented to the court.

And who would, I might have missed this before, but who would stand in for defence?

16:00 They did their own, you're talking about defending them?

Yes, yes.

Their own lawyers. Some came from Japan especially. I got a cigarette case there that came with the legal team and given to General Imamura and he presented it to me. It's there to show you, but they did change some. They did send the

16:30 criminals back. But the civilians who came from Japan, lawyers. They'd served a certain amount of time, a year or something and then another team would come out and these fellows would go back to Japan. But it was done in a fair and open manner. So, there was no guess work with it at all. No.

Do you recollect any investigations or proceedings to do with the Toll?

With the what?

With the Toll

17:00 **Plantation or the massacre?**

No that was all. When the war finished I was in Borneo. In the landing there and then by the time I got over some of these cases being dealt with. I don't think they ever found out who did that. It's a shocking thing, all those hundreds killed. And those that did, they were only the ones

17:30 that escaped in to the jungle. Hundreds of civilians and army people were massacred, some were in Rabaul. Don't know where. We did an awful lot of work in picking up places but [were] never able to find out. And you couldn't get witnesses, say native witnesses. Sometimes you could, but mostly

18:00 those natives that worked for the Japanese, they wouldn't commit themselves. I don't know whether they could have but they were hush hush about a lot of things. At one stage we got on to the Chinese too. We thought they might have had something and they even went to the extent of, they thought that these natives and

18:30 Chinese may be traitors but the legal opinion was given after a lot of thought that they could not try these people as traitors because they had no allegiance to Australia or the British Crown. They've got their residency up there. They had no allegiance and therefore they could not be tried as collaborators, that's the word.

19:00 They couldn't be tried because of that but we had the wind up some of the Chinese. They expected it to charged over it. Yes. But overall we had no trouble with collaborators or things like that.

Were many of the Japanese that were in trials acquitted? Were any of the Japanese that were actually

19:30 **up for the war trials, were they acquitted for what they had done?**

Yes. They were. If they were not guilty, yes. Couldn't be found guilty. There were. that's true. Oh, yes. Just because they were in court didn't mean that they had to be convicted.

It's fascinating Joe.

Well, that's what happened.

You talked to us before about

20:00 **how the firing squads would work but I was actually reading in your book and could you talk to us about how you trained your firing squads?**

Yes, I can. The firing squads, it didn't always work this way. But it's supposed those hung, were considered to be bad criminals. The gentleman's execution, if you could put it that way, is by

20:30 shooting. The Japs who committed heinous crimes, hung, no doubt. But it didn't always work that way. I've got a different opinion. As an example, Lieutenant General Baba in charge of the Borneo camp cadet

21:00 march. He was shot. And my firing squad shot him and that's how I know it. But I've seen it quoted in books that he was hung and that's not right. He was executed by firing squad and I knew him. He was in our compound for months and months and I used to talk to him. He was quite a nice fellow really, but he did an awful thing. So, that's how it goes.

21:30 **So, what was it that would allow someone like Baba to get shot when he was….?**

That's right. I said it. I think I said it didn't always work that way because he did an awful thing, but he still was shot.

Did it have something to do with the fact that he was a high ranking officer?

Probably, probably was. Yes. Gave him a gentleman's execution.

And can you talk us through the process of hangings at the gallows?

22:00 **How that would work?**

Yes, it was a normal trap door built like a raised building. They'd walk up their thirteen steps and it was a trap door with a rope. And as per executions, a lot like down here. The victim was weighed and if he was a light man he got a longer drop

22:30 on the rope. And the rope would go down.They adjusted the rope from the roller up top. You know they could adjust the length of the rope. A heavier man, he didn't have to go so far. And they adjusted the rope. There was a formula for that. I had a copy of it once but it was a bit too much to keep. And there was two executing officers, hangmen I'll say. One was our CO, I won't mention his name

23:00 and the other was… there were two majors. Ex-policemen in New Guinea who had done this. They hanged a Chinese, a native once. He must have committed a crime. I've forgotten what it was but it

must have been pretty awful because I believe it was a public execution to stop natives from doing the same thing. I don't know what it was over but this fellow we had, this major

23:30 he, he was a policeman and he'd done that in Malaya. He had a bit of experience. So, I don't know whether you need experience for that but that's what he had. Now, it was in the normal manner. To get them there the military police would bring the bodgie to the bottom of the steps. They're quite brave, the Japs, I thought. Many of them were. They'd walk up the steps and no problem you know. I saw a couple that had

24:00 to be shoved up and almost lifted, carried up, they had the wind up. But by and large they were pretty stoic about it, same with shooting. [With] firing squads you'd get the Banzai cry that means"Long Live the Emperor!". They all believe that the Emperor's God, and you'd often get that. They'd sing it at

24:30 night. It was probably the last thing they ever said. Now on one occasion when these majors were preparing: the fellow on the trapdoor was preparing the noose and the shroud or whatever it is, the blindfolds things like that. And the second in charge major, he must have got his hand too close and he got bitten. The Jap bit him. On the hand.

25:00 That was unusual wasn't it? So, anyhow they just carried on and of course he was executed. But there was quite a lot executed. I don't know how many, but some days we had several stretchers lying around . It all depended on Canberra. If they said execute somebody, well we'd do that because they'd been tried and it would be passed by the Governor General or somebody in Canberra before

25:30 we could go ahead with it. When these executions were coming, like if there was going to be one on tomorrow, , our CO had to notify the prisoner and also the bloke, the Japanese who's not in charge of the place but he's senior In this case it was General Imamura. And he tried to battle hard for his troops . I say

26:00 that because every time there was an execution coming up I'd get a knock on my back door [and told] through my staff, native staff, that I was wanted outside. I'd go out and say "Look General Imamura…" and he'd start talking to me about this fellow that's going to be executed and thinking I could get him out of it, which I couldn't .It was you know

26:30 decided in the court and also authorised by Canberra. Anyhow he was a nice old bloke Imamura but he did try to get his troops out of it.

What would he say to you? How would he try to convince you?

Oh, he said that he'd known this fellow, just an ordinary recommendation, he'd known this fellow for many years in the services and he was a man who wouldn't do a thing like he was alleged to have done. All that kind of talk but he

27:00 was a nice old bloke Imamura. We got on well. He was executed ,of course, but he wasn't a bad old fellow but I never liked him because of what he did. But he'd see me, they were free to walk about, you know. Even though it was a proper jail, barbed wire entanglements around. Native police cars

27:30 armed we had a hundred and thirty of those under the charge of a white lieutenant and they were on rotation to daylight. It was floodlit at night like a proper jail. We had a big reserve power plant, big Caterpillar power plant but we mainly operated off town power .If that went we had the other alternative. We had deep freezers and things like that. I mean, oh not a deep

28:00 freezers but big freezers. What else was I saying?

You were, well you were describing the camp and talking about Imamura trying to get his troops off.

Yes, that's right. He tried hard but there was nothing we could do.

I wanted to ask you Joe about the Japanese prisoner who ended up doing a portrait of you.

Oh, yes.

Can you tell us about him and how that came about?

28:30 He was doing other people, officers. And so he said he'd do me and it was done properly. He would do so much a day or at a time, not daily. You'd go along for one sitting and he'd do what he had to do. And then he'd say, "Come back in a day or so." or whenever and then they'd send for me again, bit more, have a bit more done

29:00 until it was finished. Now, he was a lieutenant commander and Kim, the author the book, he looked him up and he was on the internet. And he was a submarine commander, sentenced to ten years jail but I don't know what for. I never went in to that side of it.

29:30 But he must have had certain abilities you know, to be a submarine commander. That's quite a job isn't it? But that's how it came about and I think he just did it for the whole exercise or he never got paid for it or anything.

So, all in all how long did it take to get the portrait done?

About four or five sittings. So, quite a few

30:00 blokes had their things done. Baba, I regret this very much. He painted me, he wanted, oh I'm quite sure, he didn't say this but he didn't want to be executed and forgotten so he painted Rabaul Harbour. I don't know whether you've seen Rabaul Harbour. Pictures of it? It's a big, beautiful harbour. And it's ringed on one side

30:30 with volcanoes and a big volcano on the other side. And in the middle of the harbour there's two projections, come up from the ocean that, in past volcanoes they were craters you know. It's a beautiful scene. Nice and green all round and to see them from the hills. Looking at, there was one that really looked a nice sight. See the houses, buildings and so forth along the shore, wharves and things. Now Baba painted that

31:00 and gave the picture to me. It was on glass, thick glass, must have been an inch more than an inch thick. That size and I lost it. Oh, I've regretted that ever since. Someone pinched it, I think, but that would have been worth having, even though he was not a very nice fellow. But you know, the Japs they've got all their generals in a certain shrine in

31:30 Japan, Tokyo now. Or somewhere in Japan. And there, even when they're war criminals or not, they're revered. So I would have liked to have had that. My wife liked it and she wanted to keep it but it just got away from us somehow. Too old I think.

Was there much animosity at all coming from the Australian troops ,given what they'd gone through in New Guinea? With the Japanese and the bad business?

No,

32:00 no. At one time, this is on Borneo, my CO said to me. " The war's finished, So," he said "You get these people, these Japs to a compound." They'd built a prisoner of war camp on a disused air strip there and he said "You march them down and take them to this compound." and I did that .One guard with a

32:30 rifle and me with a handgun, that's all of. We marched down the road and we came to a unit, I won't mention where, what unit. But they're Australians and they wanted to attack the Japs. War's over, finished. Can't have that. So, I had quite a job to stop them. You know in the tropics they had these big water

33:00 barrets, they called them, but they're very deep drains. The road sits in the middle and it's good. It gets the seepage, off the surface of the road. Luckily the road I was on was bitumen. And the road had these big barretts and a driver jumped these barretts,, these young Australian blokes. And I had to threaten them. Like

33:30 I'd shoot them if they attacked. I just couldn't have that. I wouldn't have shot them to kill them but in the leg or somewhere but that's the only occasion that I ever knew. And another time when we were loading, as I told you before, the Americans sent many ships to take the Jap prisoners. They were prisoners of war, not, criminals, back to Japan. And we

34:00 had to count, check them on the boats you know. And there was an Australian bloke there, a big rough bloke. He was disgusted with me. He said "Why don't you blow them into the sea, into the ocean?". Well, I don't know what makes people think those things. Can't do that can you? We had no intention of doing that. But he was cross with me because I'd been sorting them out properly you know. Well, some of them got carried away. But just as well they didn't have any

34:30 say in the operation, in what was going on. They might have been war criminals.

So, how did you feel about the Japanese personally? In Rabaul?

No, I had no feelings really. I just accepted them as people. I got on well with the war criminals and other people, like ordinary prisoners of war. But

35:00 I had no dislike for them. Put it that way. I just accepted them as people and that's it.

You're a good man to have in Rabaul then.

Oh, I don't know about that but I thought it was the right thing to do. You can't take your spite out on people when they're prisoners. Goodness. So that's how we acted and a lot of the

35:30 Australian soldiers were like that. Although, I do know about a couple of war crimes which I will not repeat. But you know things happened and they shouldn't have.

That's a shame you won't tell us.

I couldn't. No, no. It's too, …

Can you tell us, you did mention to us earlier about the Americans fellow who was looking for ears?

What?

You were telling us

36:00 **earlier about the American fellow who was looking for ears. Can you tell us that story again?**

Yes. We were, this was at Finschhafen and one day, fighting had stopped and we're ready to go after the Japs up the coast. Eventually, we went sixty miles beyond Finschhafen, walked along it you know through the jungle and along the coast. Sixty miles. Now at one

36:30 stage there we were sitting down as a you'd expect; there were not many Japanese. They were on the run at this time. They'd had the hell bashed out of them and they were getting further in to the jungle and getting away. They were not organised really for fighting. So, we were cruising along up there. One day we were sitting down, not far from Finschhafen and a bloke comes up from behind us, an American.

37:00 I won't say where he's from. Tall, looked like John Wayne you know. Yeah, tall bloke. Anyhow, he said "G'day buddy", you know everyone's buddy, the Yanks. "G'day buddy, g'day what are you doing here bud?" There was a bit of a conversation like that and he said, "You've got any dead Japs around here?" "Oh, there's a few," which there were. See,

37:30 we didn't bury them. If an Australian was shot we'd get him back somehow, but with the Japs they just fell in to the jungle, amongst the rocks or just thrown off the pathway or wherever it happened. And there they stayed. But, oh yeah, so somebody said there's some over there. Three or four or something. So, Bud goes along and he cut off some ears. "What do you want ears for?"

38:00 Oh, God, and he said "Well my father's promised me that he will give me five dollars for every ear, Japanese ear that I bring back." So, he got his four or five ears and then he was going to get paid. But he may have got more than that I don't know, in the long run. But what they do, he would dry them in the sun, sun dried ears like they'd got sun dried raisins

38:30 and fruit down in South Australia. Well, he had sun dried ears and I don't know the story beyond that. I don't know. He belonged to the water transport. They had these big landing craft and they'd bring in our supplies and troops and things. Yes, so that was the story of the ears.

And you reckon he was cheating a little bit too?

Oh, yes somebody, one of my blokes said " Hey, Bud you're cheating. You've taken two ears off one man".

39:00 He said "That's all right. Dad'll pay me". Oh, God. What do you think of that? Make you squirm a bit.

Oh, doing this job for a while it takes a lot to make you squirm.

No, I was only joking.

Okay, we'll pause it there.

Tape 6

00:33 **Joe, we'll continue a little bit longer about the war crimes if you don't mind. And then we'll come back to New Guinea. You were going to tell us a story about Newton.**

Yes.

Can you tell us his story?

Yes. Newton was a flight lieutenant in the RAAF and he was a very I say very, brave man. He had a

01:00 fighter. No, a bomber and he did a lot of damage around Lae, Salamaua, the Sananda all around there. Anyhow, he was shot down one day. There was a crew. He was the pilot and he's got an offsider. They were shot down and landed in the water and survived. The Japs got them and they immediately cut the other fellow's head off. The offsider bloke. And Newton, they probably

01:30 wanted information from him and he was sent to headquarters. The Japanese headquarters.

Where was that?

At Salamaua which is near Lae, Salamaua. Now, he was at the headquarters for a while and interrogated and then he was sent back to wherever he came from. You know the unit there.

02:00 And they decided to execute him. They had to get their swords. You know the Japanese are mad keen about these samurai sword things that they have and this officer was around flashing this thing how he was going to cut off his head off. Newtown didn't know about it at this time., The day came that they decided to take him away and execute him and they cut his hair off and things, you know, got him ready and gave him his last drink of water and took him away on a truck to another area along the coast,

along the beach. And then at a certain spot, I don't know how they picked this spot but they decided that the

03:00 officer was a medical officer. He had the sword and he was going to do the deed. They stopped and told Newton that he was going to be executed with a Japanese, in Bushido style. You know, Bushido is a Japanese term for the way of the warrior. Does that register with you, the fashion of the soldiers?

03:30 And that's Bushido. You'll see it often mentioned. And that's what it means, way of the warrior. Now, they told him that, he was going to be executed with a sword with true compassion of the Bushido, Japanese way of doing things So, they took him away in the truck and they had, I have an eyewitness account here. A Japanese diary was taken

04:00 and the account I got, that was given to me by a legal officer in 18B headquarters, that he should take this. So, , I had it for years and years and I gave it to Kim and he tended it to the RAAF museum at Point Cook in Australia.

04:30 And I've got a letter there where they wrote to me thanking me for the copy. They hadn't had one. And this is like out of the diary of one of these blokes now. We could never find out if the four people responsible for the execution had been killed in the war. So, they took him and it describes perhaps in very lurid detail as the

05:00 execution how he was made to kneel and he stuck his neck out and got ready for it you know. And he was very brave. They said that., I can give you a copy later if you want it.. I mean it was a tremendous effort on his part, wouldn't be very good would it? And anyhow they went through all the gory bits and the time came when this

05:30 commander bloke, unit commander fellow for the execution, and he was made to kneel down and put his neck out and he was handcuffed and also they had an armed guard there, Japanese guard in case he played up and all and he didn't. He was just, resigned himself I suppose. It was a terrible thing. And anyhow, they, with one sweep they just took the head off and

06:00 that was the end of that. But I can tell you in more details than that, in the actual account.

Do you mean the gory details in Bushido style?

Well, he had his head cut off but the way the Japs describes. That the head fell off and the blood rushed out. You could hear water flowing which must have been the blood coming from the body and that the head fell in a certain place and

06:30 of course he collapsed on the ground ,but the head fell in to a certain position and it was so white it looked like a doll, doll's head you know. I don't like that but it was along those lines. It's in the diary thing there. And I thought that was a bit gory you know, anyhow they did that and then they buried him in a shallow hole, bomb hole and that was that.

07:00 Went back to their units. But some terrible things happened, eh?. We could never find out, well we did file it up that those four people had been killed subsequently during the war.

How did you come across the diary?

Oh, it was found on the dead, one of the dead. The author of the

07:30 diary was killed and this diary was on his body. So, they know, it was authentic.

Did they do anything other, with the Bushido style that you were talking about, did they do any form of torture before the man was killed?

No, not to my knowledge no, no.

You were also telling us about Slvy's mate.

Yes, now Slvy had a friend

08:00 and she went to school with this girl with the name of Mavis Parkinson and they went to, this is early on in life when she was going to primary school and the school was, I think was Baysview primary school, Ipswich. Here in Queensland. And she was a good friend of Mavis. Anyhow, when she up in Rabaul, Slvy was up in Rabaul. She learnt

08:30 that Mavis had suffered the same fate and it transpires, what Slvy could find out, was that Mavis, in the thirties prior to the war, had offered her services to the Uniting Church to be a missionary. And then they sent her down to Epping in Victoria, must be headquarters or something down there. Uniting Church, and they trained her

09:00 to be a school teacher and then she was shipped up to New Guinea to Gona which is on the Papua coast, , where the Kokoda trail comes out of the mountains, it's Gona. Well, she was at Gona apparently and she was with a friend of hers who, followed the same procedure but she was a

09:30 nurse, sister and they were together and they heard about the Japs coming and they went on to the

beach and then the Japs came and beheaded them both. Terrible. You know these young ladies were up there for the benefit of mankind. Health and education and they still got that. Just shows what animals they are.

10:00 They sank to very low depths, the Japanese did, during war time. However, that was it. Slvy, that upset her a bit and at the present time there was a plaque in the Uniting church in Ipswich. There's two now but when we first went there, we went to have a look at it. We used to call in occasionally when we were driving through and pay our respects to Mavis you know. And

10:30 there's one in the church the last time I was there, there was a big rock had been placed on the lawn in the gardens in front of the church. And on the rock there was another plaque in memory of Mavis so, she was well recognised you know. But no-one seems to know about this. I don't know why Ipswich should have made her a bit of a martyr I

11:00 think or some education scholarship or something in memory, I think should be done. But it was not and that was a terrible fate for her and of course Slvy got a big shock too, her friend going off like that.

Yes, it does seem that she was doing her bit, like Newton

11:30 **But he got the VC didn't he? Posthumously? So, yes.**

I believe also that Epping in Victoria. I don't know where Epping is, but I've never heard of it in Victoria until this - I know there's one in Sydney - but there's apparently an Epping in Victoria and they say there's a plaque there too for Mavis also. Grim days.

12:00 **Yes. Joe you'll have to forgive me for not knowing a lot about the war crimes but what did, you were talking about Baba, what did he do?**

Well, he was lieutenant general which is pretty high in the army and he was in charge of Dutch, British Borneo. In those days there were two Borneos. Dutch

12:30 Borneo and in the north, British Borneo. Now it was divided in the middle of Borneo. Now Baba was in charge of the British Borneo section. Admiral Commander was in charge of the southern part of Borneo. Now a lot of these

13:00 prisoners of war were sent from Singapore at the last stage of the war and, and put in a camp or compound at Sandakan. Now Baba was in charge then. He ordered that they be walked, marched to Ranau which is, I don't know how many miles but it's a long, long way. And they were

13:30 unfit. They were underfed and sick people who had to do it and the figures that I had on it, a lot of dispute or different you know versions of it now, but the figure I've got at that time was about two thousand prisoners - Australian, Indian, English, Chinese. The lot, all together in this big compound.

14:00 Now towards the end of the war I think the higher officers probably had a feeling that war was not going well for them. So, this Baba decided to shift this camp to Ranau which is a long way away and to do that they had to march. They were in very difficult country and they were unfit and unable to do it.

14:30 And those that had the Japanese kempitai, which is the military police, with them and, anyone lagged behind a bit, they got a belting to keep up and that was a most vile expedition I suppose. Anyhow, to cut a long story, eighty six survived. You get all kinds of figures, but the official one I had was six only.

15:00 And one of those six was an NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] called Warren Officer Sticpewich, a South Australian bloke. He was one of the survivors and I think he only got through because , at the end of the march, he kind of fell into the jungle or into the bush or something and feigned death and, either that or he was taken by a villager. A Borneo villager in to his village. There's two stories about that - but the only most likely is that he was taken

15:30 into the village by, and looked after by a Borneo villager. But as I said only six survived. Well, that's terrible loss of life and they say that they thought that the war was going to finish which it was.

16:00 . So, why they moved them I don't know. And that was the end, that was that and luckily they got Baba and executed him. But that was awful wasn't it? Two thousand.

There was, I believe there was this belief in the

16:30 **Japanese army that if you are, if you were a prisoner then you were less than scum and so they had no respect for the men who gave themselves up or were taken prisoner?**

That's right. That's true. Yes, see the Japanese, some were taken prisoner. They didn't like being taken prisoner. They wanted to die for their country

17:00 rather than be taken prisoner and that was true in New Guinea. They fought to the finish. It was either kill or be killed in New Guinea and no doubt other places too. It was a serious war and anyhow that was, as you say, they despised prisoners of war. And I suppose being European made them despise them more. Bit of

17:30 racial thing in that too, that's my opinion. Yes, so he got chopped, Baba. He was a brave man. He accepted it but he painted us, I told you about the painting before he died. He wanted his memory, I'm quite sure that's why he did it. He wanted to be remembered by me or somebody after his execution.

18:00 **How were the men, how were the Japanese men, how did they handle themselves in the court of law during the tribunal?**

Very, very good. They were no trouble. They were just, their military police, or our military police were around and they kind of brought them and took

18:30 them away but then they had this court. As I said it was an officer for an officer, an OR [Other Rank] for an OR, that type of thing. But they're stoic the Japanese. They don't show much emotion in lots of things and they accept life as it turns out, as it is. And they didn't react, I don't think, to any execution

19:00 order given against them or, accepted it. But no doubt in their body, in their minds they felt upset about it but you couldn't notice, you couldn't notice any difference to them. They were always polite, bowing and like the typical Japanese that you would know about. They were always like that very good. No problem at all. Even when they were in our compound, the same thing and they were treated as prisoners.

What kind of

19:30 **preparation were you given by the Australian army before you became involved in war crimes?**

No, no school. No tutoring at all. It was all commonsense but we were guided by these legal officers you know. They'd brief us and that was it.

So, were there any other races besides the Japanese?

Yes, there were, no, no.

That were tried?

No, no, not to my knowledge. No, they were main

20:00 offenders but there were a lot of people like Chinese executed by the Japanese and British, Indians. Terrible lot of races were, Australians, terrible. But we had no special training, interviewing like that mostly it's commonsense. You know you've got to anticipate little things

20:30 and eventually get around to, what you want.

Now during this time Slvy was with you in Rabaul, wasn't she?

Yes, she, she …

How did she cope with everything that was going on? How did you and Slvy cope together?

Oh, I never said anything you know. I didn't tell her what was really going on but she knew., I applied to brigadier or our headquarters.

21:00 See in Rabaul, after the war, civilians couldn't go there for about two years. Army, it was an army town. There were trucks, everything was army. Now they'd allowed our wives to go and join their husbands in Rabaul. But they wouldn't pay their fare or anything. I had to pay her fare. Not that I minded you know, how things have

21:30 changed. And she came up and before that I had to build a house for her. We were at the compound and we had a lot of labourers and artisans and tradesmen and, everything, all kind of, electricians, carpenters, the lot. So, I started, they said, "You've got to get quarters and you pay your wife's fare up." So, I got busy and got

22:00 all the materials for the new house. But I tell you what, we did it in the compound over a big sawmill and the Japs would go out of a day, not for me but for general use, and get these huge trees. Bring them in on a big truck and then we had our own sawmill, cut it up. Now I got that arranged. They cut up all the timber, sawn timber. We made this

22:30 house.

Who made the house?

The Japanese - and we couldn't get any roofing on, good stuff. We could only get old black roofing iron, it's not galvanised and there were still nail holes in these roofs and the Japanese, they know what they're doing, and they filled the hot weather putty. They filled the holes up by cutting a little bit of

23:00 canvas like a nail head and, with thick paint, a tin of paint going hard. Put the paint on the canvas and over the hole and it seals them and it did. Never went, it never dropped off for years. Anyhow that's how we got our roof. But when I got the house finished

23:30 or maybe before it was finished she come up, got her up. But with the army permission of course.

What did she think of the house?

Loved it. Best house in the town. Newest. She loved it. But she had four servants, got war criminals. A cook, a gardener a wash and iron boy, call him a boy, he was a man and a general factotum

24:00 and they did what you like, four of them. And so she got a bit - I was out most of the time, you know - and she got a bit bored I think. So she got a job with one of the big firms up there, like a departmental store. It was better for her really to be doing something.

Were you concerned about leaving her

24:30 **there with war criminals when you weren't there?**

No, not at all. See, we didn't have any police boys in our house but there was plenty about, on other duties and they never had any trouble at all like that. No. They just went about their business and that was it. And they were very good. The cook was very good. We used to get good meals and

25:00 so forth. Yes. Good old days.

Do you like Japanese food?

No, do you?

Some of it.

No, I don't. I'm Australian, English food person. Steak and eggs, something like that does me.

Can you tell us, I know it's rather ugly and sad to talk about, but was there

25:30 **any person that was tried that you haven't been able to forget or put behind you?**

I didn't quite understand that.

Well, was there a particular offence that had taken place that you remember, that you can't forget?

26:00 No, not to my knowledge. No. I can't recall any of the war criminals committing offence like that. They were very subservient. They'd do what they were told. We had doctors, lawyers, all kinds of tradesmen, amongst the war criminals. And they were employed in, where possible, in their job. Particularly the doctors they were

26:30 in the hospital and were from a little operating theatre and carried out minor operations. But in the hospital was an old government, civil government Australian doctor. He was pre-war. Up in the islands and he'd go once a week or once a fortnight and inspect things, what was going on from a medical point of view. But apart from that there's, they did it all themselves and

27:00 yes it was quite, quite easy. You had to be on the ball, that's all.

We've heard about a lot of atrocities that occurred at Milne Bay. Did you come across any of those?

No, I never struck any at Milne Bay. They were mostly Vanu Island and that type of thing, New Guinea. No I didn't strike any.

27:30 No doubt it happened. See there were courts all around the islands - even one in Moratai and Manus and, we went all around the main towns of the islands. I don't know what happened. All of the

28:00 war criminal prisoners were congregated in Rabaul, sent from these outer islands. And everybody in our compound. Anyone was executed say at Murik was sent to our compound, to wait the outcome of it. So that's how that worked but I don't know of any, no …

How long were you there in Rabaul?

28:30 Early '46 to the end of '49. I was first of all on the war crimes investigation only, and then I was made 2/IC at the War Criminal Compound.

That must have been a very demanding job?

Oh you take it in your stride. It's there to be done and it's got to be done ,so you do it. That's life.

29:00 **Let me ask you ask you about the fact that you brought up a few tapes before - that you met Slvy and you married 6 days later, is that right?**

Oh. A few days later, I don't know how many. And we went off on a 5 day honeymoon.

Can I ask you - how did she get - I've seen some of your wedding photos. How did she get her beautiful wedding dress?

That proves that my wife could do a lot of things. People couldn't get them but she got them. I don't know who made it and a beautiful wedding cake. It went through like a normal wedding really. In those days when there was shortages and rationing - you had to have tickets to buy sugar and butter and meat. Rationing you know. Coupons. Buy a pound of meat - put a coupon to the butcher. Oh tough days.

But she managed and a lot of people congratulated her at the time, for doing such a good job.

Do you happen to know how she put it together?

No. - The reception was in Lennon's Hotel - the whole Lennon's Hotel - do you know Lennon's in Brisbane?.

I've heard of it.

Well it used to be around the corner in George Street. And they pulled it down and built a new one

in - I think it's in the mall now. Anyhow - it was the number one hotel in Brisbane at that time. MacArthur stayed there for a while. And President Johnson when he visited Brisbane he stayed there. And I think the Beatles have stayed there. I think it was the Beatles. So you know that kind of person- and a lot of army officers, senior officers, everyone

had meat meals there and that kind of thing. Anyhow she got booked in there and we had 12 or 15 people at the wedding, army blokes and her friends of course, lady friends. It went well. The only thing the honeymoon wasn't long enough.

How did you know that you were right for each other after such a small

amount of courtship?

Well I don't know how ;we knew; it just happened. There was no way we could prove it, but we got on very well right from the start, no doubt. And, oh, we just decided to get married. I knew I was on my way - I was on draft to go to Borneo and I was a bit cheeky I suppose by upsetting

the travel arrangements. And I saw my commanding officer and he said he wanted to know what I wanted. And I said I'm getting married. "Oh God!" he said. It rocked him a bit. So he said "I can't refuse you". So he let us go - he excused me for about a week I think. And then we got married - that was the 5 days honeymoon.

Another day or so after that and then when I went back I was on movement, straight away almost, on movement to North Queensland prior to going to Borneo. So it was quick. And you know we used to write - oh you know it was a normal life really. She used to write letters and I'd write - no trouble.

And she waited for me all those months and I waited for her.

Where did Slvy go when you took off to Borneo?

Her mother lived in Brisbane. And she lived there and took a job - she paid her way you with her mother. So that was a bit handy. She had protection at home and that type of thing.

Did she, did you manage in that short amount of time to get an engagement ring?

Yes. Took a lot of money out of my pocket. I often joke about this - you know - over the years, I've often joked about Slvy having more money than me when we got married. I'm not sure about that ,but I didn't have very much and anyhow, I had to spend

all this money on an engagement ring, wedding ring, oh gawd! Never mind we managed.

How much did the ring cost, can you remember?

Oh not very much. I think it was under a hundred pounds which is…

That's a lot of money still?

For those days, yes. She had it for many years. But she lost it then I think. She dropped it in the shower in the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Rabaul and they couldn't get it out of the

sump at the bottom, the floor. And they got the fire brigade to come and get it out and the fire brigade turned on their big hose, all the pressure and the ring disappeared and probably shot into the harbour or somewhere like that. Too much power, pressure. And that's the end of her ring.

Bet you were upset?

Oh didn't like losing it ,no. Still, accident - they shouldn't have put the thing on full

pressure. We had a lot of little things like that you know.

And how did you get on as - I suppose you were newly weds - after the war really still because you hadn't been together that long?

No, no didn't know each other ,no. She was engaged to another bloke and she wiped him too. To marry me.

Maybe because you were going to get

35:30 **the ring?**

Oh - she had a ring. She was engaged to him, too. Ooh naughty wasn't I, pinching her? Pinching a bloke's girlfriend.

Was he in the army, do you know?

No, I don't think he was, no. No he was a farmer, out west.

There you go. And what was she like? Did she have a similar personality to you?

36:00 Well I think possibly she did She had her own mind and did things properly - she was more meticulous than me. I was careless in doing things but she wasn't. She was like her father - he was a perfectionist. In everything he did. Bit like Bruce over there. In his work Bruce is perfectionist. Her father was like that, and Slvy had a bit of that in her.

36:30 She did things her way and did it well. For instance we'd go into a house and want to buy some furniture and she'd do it - a lot of the work herself you know and did it well. For instance a plantation house - we built the house up there, she did as much of the painting though we did have natives to do the hard work - walls and things like that. She did a lot of work herself. Made, sewed up little doilies or whatever, curtains that type of thing.

37:00 Well, she was capable.

So you were husband and wife but you were also business partners - is that right?

Yes. Yes we had a cocoa plantation - it says only copra in there but it's cocoa too. We were on that for 30 years.

Did you eat a lot of chocolate?

No. Ate chocolate occasionally. But - I agree it's quite nice chocolate yeah.

37:30 But I haven't got a sweet tooth. So anyhow we were there and battled it out. At one stage I think she was 3 years before she had come down. It's a long time. And I think I was 5 years at one time. Didn't get paid, I didn't pay myself still for about a year. But eventually as things come good I took back pay, straighten things out. But that's how we started off.

38:00 **That was pretty lucky that she agreed to go and start a plantation with you in New Guinea?**

Yes, but it was partly in operation when I went there. It was badly neglected, hadn't been worked by anybody after the war. And it was badly neglected during the war. And the Japanese had cleared out half the trees because they were going to live here forever. And they were making big gardens.

38:30 to supplement their food. When the Japs invaded, came down here - they imported these great big snails - to eat. In Rabaul - in the islands up there - the snails they're - oh they're everywhere - they eat young plants and young cocoa trees and it really upset the habitat.

39:00 But we never ate - no-one - natives never ate them. But that was why they were imported. So that they could boil them up and have snail stew, I suppose. But that didn't do the place any good. But as I said, half the place was cut out - the trees cut out and only a grass house. Thatched roof house that leaked. It's a wonder she didn't leave me.

39:30 When I first went there she came up and that was night time and the truck broke down - we had to walk the rest - half way up. Through grass up to your waist. Wonder we didn't step on a carpet snake or something, python. Plenty of snakes in there. However we got up there and it was a very wet district and when the rain came of a night or any time I had to - no inner spring mattresses, they were just like

40:00 kapok filled. And I had to roll up the bed and the blankets and the mattress and cart it out into the kitchen. And the kitchen was the only part of the house that had a tin roof. And it didn't leak. So that's how we started off.

Were you able to work in New Guinea on an Australian passport?

We didn't need a passport. We needed an entry permit.

40:30 And you paid a bond. Fifty pounds. And that was to provide - in case you played up or had to be deported - that was your airfare out. There was a number of white men deported through having affairs or mixing with native women. That was taboo. And vice a versa. If woman you know couldn't or shouldn't have had a

41:00 male native, or anything like that.

Were there many Australians up there after the war?

Oh quite a number. I don't know how many but several hundred.

Did you have friends while you were owning the plantations?

Yes.

That were Australian?

Australians. And an Englishman. I can tell you a funny story about the Englishman. He was a lieutenant commander in the Royal Navy. On Anzac Days and places like that, when all our

41:30 mob gathered together, he would bung on the pukka attitude of Englishman. Like the upper class do. Anyhow we'd say: -" Go on you're not a lieutenant commander!" - we'd rubbish him. But he produced documents to prove that he was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. Well now this is a bit naughty but ...

Hang on a second ...

Tape 7

00:31 **Where did I finish?**

Well you were telling us about the English lieutenant commander who would get all pukked up when you had a little do on?

Oh lieutenant commander in the navy - navy fellow. Well on Anzac Day we used to rubbish him a bit about the Poms, as you usually do. But he - this is a bit naughty this one - his wife had a friend a woman, a friend in Rabaul - I knew her, Slvy knew her.

01:00 And they invited her out - this is a bit rough this one - has he got the thing going? Delete it later will you? Anyhow she was there and, you know living with them I think for a couple of weeks or something. Anyhow one night, Bill, this lieutenant commander bloke, heard a conversation in pidgin English. He thought his wife was in bed

01:30 with him. "Who else would be speaking in my house in pidgin English?" So he got up and this girl's in bed with his houseboy - cook boy. Gee, and did he play up. Bill - whoa - I know all this is true because I was the only one that had a radio and ooh - I've never seen anyone like Bill was. He offended

02:00 very badly. I wouldn't have liked it either. His darn cook boy in his own house. So anyhow - he come up to me and said, "I want the radio." you know. "Cause I want to contact Rabaul urgently". We had a normal schedule - Slvy used to operate it twice a day, call Rabaul – any messages things like that. Anyhow Bill wouldn't wait for that so I

02:30 had to contact Port Moresby. We had a hot line kind of arrangement where we could get Port Moresby and via Port Moresby to Rabaul. So I did that and then he took over. And he told the District Commissioner what had happened. Taboo - can't do those things. White men wouldn't support it. Anyhow they sent out a trawler. . Took them away. They took her to Rabaul and they deported her, whatever the case. He was tried - he had to do it officially - and she was deported. But they acted very swiftly. But I often think of that, poor old Bill, finding it happening in his own house. I tell you there was a - I won't mention names- but a husband and wife

03:30 he was headmaster of a school up there - a high school and she was a teacher. Now she fell in love with one of her pupils, this missus. And he was a very fine big Tolai native that I think represented New Guinea in the Pacific Games at one time as a high jumper - he was really athletic. Good looking bloke. So she fell in

04:00 love with her pupil. Not right. Anyhow it became a serious affair. And the government deported her. Yeah, her not him, but her. Back to Perth, she came from Perth. And anyhow she objected and she went to see her Member, political person in Perth, Western Australia and lodged a complaint

04:30 about being deported because she knew a native you see. So he got onto the Federal Government and that was changed. So she was allowed back into New Guinea and probably started all over - it did start all over again which is not good. So she finished up . I think she married him and they had two or three kids and then he dumped her.

05:00 That was a silly thing wasn't it? Sad. I thought it was. But this is how the mentality works. He was a Tolai which is a Rabaul native tribal name for the local natives - and the women in his village were going to kill him, because he got associated with a white woman. And that was badly taboo.

05:30 You shouldn't - in their custom - you shouldn't do things like that. So - anyhow they didn't kill him but that was what was on the cards. But I think they divorced. But it was a silly thing wasn't it, to go to all that trouble? And - I don't know how the children got on.

06:00 **Okay Joe, just a couple of general questions about fighting in New Guinea. How different was the fighting in New Guinea compared to the fighting you were doing in the desert?**

Well the desert was much more mobile, but there was very little mobility as far as transport went in New Guinea.

06:30 Unsuitable terrain. In New Guinea you were closer to the enemy all the time. Because of the dense undergrowth. Undergrowth had certain protection whereas you were very exposed in the open, and that was the main thing. Actually the Japanese

07:00 were very good in the jungle. They ambushed quite a number of our patrols. There were snipers and things like that. And I think being light and small and not heavy they were good in the mountains. They were generally more suited to that - you just didn't get that in the desert.

07:30 So I think that's the main thing.

How would you counteract their tactics, snipers?

Oh the Japanese - I don't think they had real tactics - it was just a matter of in and you know, deal with things. See you're very close. On occasions we were attacked in Borneo and you couldn't see the Japs but you could see the tops of the ridge or trees – no, no, no - the grass - going like this when they're going through it you see, crawling through it, things like that. So they're pretty close. And what can you do, if you can't see a man you can't shoot him can you?. But we lost one man like that, on that day. He got shot and killed. But

08:30 I think that's mainly the closeness - it's got to be close otherwise you'd never be able to hit him, to get an enemy if it was a distance in the jungle.

Can you tell about your first close contact with Japanese in fighting?

09:00 I suppose it was Finschhafen. Very close you know, very - hot you know - a lot of fire power and that type of thing.

Can you describe the scene for us and give us a bit of a picture of what it was like?

Well we came in by sea and the Japanese attacked immediately.

09:30 And they almost drove us into the - not me but the group - into the sea. And even the artillery that we had was firing point blank range - which is pretty close you know. I don't know whether it was very effective but that's what they were doing. It was so urgent. And then they got up a casualty clearing

10:00 station . So I suppose that the first encounter - you could actually see them you know. And there was three pronged attack. One frontal, one down the Song River on rafts, and from the sea behind us. And that's not too good. So there was an American, I may have told

10:30 you that put up a very good effort on a medium machine gun - that's a point five machine gunner. And he knocked out a couple of barges and he did a lot of damage to the Japs with this heavy machine gun. And we were told later that he'd won a Medal of Honour for his effort and he earned it. And of course our blokes were firing too but with a larger calibre

11:00 weapons. He had the advantage there. He got greater range and greater striking hitting power with a medium machine gun. Longer range. But that was probably my first encounter. Lucky to survive there. That went on for about 3 days. Touch and go. Nearly back, nearly back in the water we were.

11:30 **So that was a bit of a surprise to you?**

Well yes I suppose so 'cause you don't know what's going to happen when you go into attack. It was a bit of a surprise because the Japs were more than we expected and they were very ferocious. Anyhow as I said before I think some of our infantry battalions

12:00 killed an awful lot - the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] of the 2/ 28th reckoned they killed 500 in one night and that's a lot of bodies. So you can imagine how close it was and that was at a place called Katika in Finschhafen. And I think that kind of slaughter we'll call it - kind of steadied the Japs a bit.

12:30 And they retreated and then we went onto Sattleberg which is a mountain between there and Lae, 2,000 foot mountain which was a missionary station and the Japs got driven off there. And Lieutant Thomas "Diver" Derrick got his VC there - he was a South Australian 2nd /14th battalion - and he got a VC for

13:00 outstanding bravery and - went on for some time the fighting there. Then eventually the Japs - that was a bit futile - they could see that they were on the receiving end and so they retreated and got further and further away from us. They must've been going pretty fast.

13:30 Because as I said in the 60 miles from Finschhafen to Gona I think we only got one Jap prisoner. Never killed any. Not our mob. Probably others may have. But that's how scarce they were by that time they'd got going you know.

So you didn't get to shoot any?

No, no didn't see any.

14:00 Only got this bloke and he was having a wash in the creek or something, poor fellow. But he had a setback. but yes it was very dangerous there for quite a while at Finschhafen.

And how would you go Joe, being in the jungle where you didn't know where your enemy

14:30 **was which is very different from the desert? How would you go about securing an area as you were moving through?**

Well they had to form a scout and usually in his tracks even though you can't see it from the air, there was a lot of foot tracks underneath. And you've got to follow the track of course. And remember when you're coming back which track you're on,

15:00 that type of thing. No it was quite alright getting there. And the track usually led to somewhere so invariably it was a Jap track. Because they occupied New Guinea for some time before they were driven out. And yes when you attack a place and if you catch it - you've got

15:30 to consolidate and expect they'll counter attack. It's always dangerous. The Germans were good at that. You take an objective and next thing they're attacking you back and you're vulnerable. And it's the same with the Japs - they would have a go back .. If they could, if they had the numbers. And they could retake the place and kill you. But oh we had to set up - when you got there once

16:00 the fighting was over you had to kind of have a good look at your ground and allocate blokes for here, if it's suitable, or over there Spread them around the place so that if you were counter attacked you could deal with it. And in one case we had to make stretchers and things like that. Pretty hard work going.

Why was that?

Hm?

16:30 **Why was that?**

We had two casualties this particular day. So we had to get them back. But that's the gist of it. Same in warfare, you've got to be ready for the backlash. Once you've taken an objective, be careful because you'll get attacked at the other rear - they'll attack you. And then you're vulnerable, especially if you're a bit careless and not alert to what might happen

17:00 and you're not in suitable position. It could be dangerous, very dangerous.

Did you ever see that happen?

Well I did really, but I wasn't in it. I heard about it. It happened - they were a bit lax and were captured back in no time. Can happen. No love in warfare.

That's not what it was about.

17:30 **Now Joe were you involved in taking Sattleberg?**

Take what?

Were you involved in securing the mission at Sattleberg?

Well yes, but we weren't in the final attack. "Diver" Derrick,, he was there in that but we were on the way up. Pretty hard going.

Can you describe for us what that was like getting up to there?

Yes it was very wet and slippery and muddy and

18:00 quite steep in places. And you know you could easily come a target for the enemy and we were shot at quite a bit. But we were not in the final assault - that was the 2nd /43rd with 'Diver'Derrick. But they saved the day. I'll tell you what at Sattleberg we again met the Salvation Army with their tea.

18:30 And it was carried in big urns - the containers were carried on poles by the natives, on poles you know on the shoulder - they did a marvellous job . It doesn't sound much, but a nice cup of tea at the right time's quite acceptable isn't it?

It's amazing how they would just keep turning up everywhere.

Yes. Tobruk and now. And I've always appreciated the Salvation Army for that, what they did.

19:00 No vehicle this time. It was all just hard mountain tracks you know. Yeah. 'Course they had natives to carry it.

So what did you find when you actually got to Sattleberg, those initial advances?

There were some buildings, that's about all. It was just a higher position that the Japs had occupied. A commanding position. They had mountain guns.

19:30 Well equipped up there. Little guns, what they called a mountain gun you know - short barrelled things. And, a man can pull them and shift them and put them into suitable positions that type of thing. Yes.

Joe I wanted to ask what the worse thing about being up in the jungle was?

20:00 From what point of view?

From your point of view, from a soldier on the ground, having to fight the jungle?

Oh many things. It's just the hard conditions like mud and slush and rain. You know you sleep out and you've got a poncho over you in the night. Pretty tough that type of thing. Worse conditions I suppose

20:30 in open warfare in Tobruk and around there. Least you're dry in a desert - very cold in a desert night. Ooh. There was no rain and slush. That was hardest going, very hard. You take a step forward and your foot would slide back half a step. You know tough. Tough going, you've got be pretty fit to travel in that type, those conditions.

21:00 Australians are pretty good at it though. They can manage. Did a good job I thought.

After a bit of a fight and skirmish with the Japanese on the ground, as you were mentioning earlier, would you or your men search the bodies at all or

21:30 **check that they were dead?**

Check them. Check their bodies to see if they had anything on them. Invariably they had nothing. Only clothes and ammunition and that type of thing. I never saw any documents But that was pretty late in the war of course you know., We were in the Middle East when the main fighting was there.

22:00 And I suppose after years in the jungle, because of the American blockade of the islands - they could not have been replaced or reinforced or that type of thing. And they must've had a pretty hard time, several years in the jungle like that. And I was looking at places where they were short of food and they had to live off the land and all this. But

22:30 that's how it was.

Did you ever come across any straggling Japanese who were…?

No I didn't no. No. No. No they were in groups.

I've read a bit about how some soldiers felt that

23:00 **some of what they were doing in the islands in the later stages of the war they felt was a bit unnecessary because the Japanese had been largely defeated and pushed up north. Was that something that you knew of at the time?**

You say the Australians thought it was unnecessary?

Some of it, yeah?

No we never had that attitude. We were given a task and we went out and did it. Never thought

23:30 to let them starve. I suppose that's what you [could do] - leave them in the bush and let them die. Couldn't have that - see there's the natives to think of. A lot of the native villages were uninhabited because of the fighting, they got out. And went and lived in harsh conditions elsewhere. Which they can do, the natives can. Well you couldn't leave Japs there indefinitely

24:00 so we had to mop them up as best we could. But after the war when I was at AMD they were still bringing in the odd Jap that got away from his unit and they found him in the jungle - that type of thing. But he was a stray; he was not organised at all. He was just lucky to be found. And sometimes the natives would dob [inform on] them in you know. No

24:30 I don't quite agree that they should be left there. And I never struck that attitude in any of the units I was with.

Can you tell us whether you had much to do with the natives in the work that you were doing in the islands?

In the war?

Yeah in the war.

No - we did have guides, some guides in New Guinea. They did a good job. They were army PIR - Pacific Island

25:00 Native Regiment. White officers. And they were guides in places where it was difficult to navigate your way through the jungle which natives can do. They're experts - you can't lose them. I know in later life

when - on the plantation used to go out with them pig shooting sometimes. And I'd never go into the jungle myself because after a short time

25:30 you'd probably turn around a few times and you're disoriented and you mightn't get out. But they knew. I always had a guide, a bloke with me for that reason. I mean they're experts at it, they're born to it. And they can climb mountains - oh 'cause they've got bare feet I suppose. That helps. But they're wizards you know because they're born to it. When they're kids they're running around mountains and

26:00 get that kind of development that a lot of European children don't. So they're really good.

Did you rations change at all between the desert and the jungle?

Not at all. Still hard biscuits and bully beef and gold fish - that's what they used to call the tin fish. Gold fish. It was herrings in

26:30 tomato sauce. When I came home to my wife afterwards, things were rationed in Australia. Hard to get anything. And her mother had put a tin of fish away for me. Joe coming home, you know. Oh God I wasn't game to refuse her. You can imagine though, she was doing a great favour for me and we were sick of it.

27:00 I tell you another thing too. Baked beans. We used to get bloody baked beans at breakfast time day after day at times. Ooh. You'd get sick of them and yet in Australia they couldn't buy baked beans.

'Cause they were feeding them all to you.

That's right we had to be fed I suppose.

Can you tell us what bully beef tastes like, Joe?

27:30 Oh like, it was a good bully beef. There's two kinds of bully beef and they're both in the same kind of tin. But one has an additive - not flour but some sort of addition that increases the flavour. And I suppose it makes more quantity. It's cheaper. But you get real bully beef and it's all beef. Beautiful really. And

28:00 the fat, there's fat around the outside of it inside the tin but on the outside of the meat. And that's even nice, you know, the fat bits. And open the tin and eat it with a biscuit, it's quite nice really. I used to do it when I was on guard at night. Keep company and have a bit to chew something. No, bully beef was alright.

Which kind of bully beef would they give you most often?

28:30 **The first kind.**

Had no label tins - just bare tins.

So when you opened it which would you get, the better kind or the worse kind?

No, the better kind. Yeah, but I'm just stating that you can get this second quality - grade thing, you can buy in the shops. Tapered tins, you know. You can buy them.

29:00 **When you went up to Balikpapan, and you were in Borneo, you told us about the patrol you did on the last day of the war. Was there other action, operations that you were involved in, before that day?**

Yes we did patrol quite a lot. Never struck the enemy but we were

29:30 attacked one day. And we had one bloke – a lance corporal -killed when they attacked us. And we injured some of the Japs, but they got away. We know that they were injured because they were seen by parts of our platoon. We were attacked occasionally. But we were on

30:00 patrol a lot. Got to keep mobile - that confuses them.

And what did you think of the news that the A [atom] bomb had been dropped?

Well, it had become a way of life. It might sound silly but there was great jubilation, of course. The war was finished. But I think a lot of fellows thought" Well ,what the hell am I going to do next?" kind of thing.

30:30 They didn't say that, but you could sense that they were going to lose their mates and friendships they'd made over the years and the hard conditions. They didn't think too much of that. But I'm quite sure everyone was glad to be discharged, to get out. And when it came - the older soldiers had the option of getting out first, which they

31:00 did. The long serving fellows got out first, they sent them home first, for discharge. And the new recruits got home later. But I think they felt the fact that they were losing their friends and that type of thing. But it was not an overwhelming desire to stay in the army or anything like that. No.

You just mentioned mateship.

31:30 **Was that a really important thing for you, going through the war?**

Oh, yes.

Can you tell us about how that helped to get you through?

Well I think you work as a team. And that's the greatest thing. And you've got great friendship. You know you go out together, patrol - do everything together. And even when you get a

32:00 day's leave, when you're in say Palestine and you get a day's leave into Jerusalem you go with your mates and any trouble they're there to help you There's a strong bond, no doubt.

What kind of trouble would happen in Jerusalem?

Oh fights. I remember Jerusalem - I was on a picket once again.

32:30 And we were called to a restaurant and there was an argument between one of the Australian blokes and the owner as to the pricing. He'd charged for the meal they had on the big marquee. They were throwing chairs around. He said, "I'll get my son." I heard him say that to the bloke. "I'll get my son." He would come out with a beefy sort of a fellow. But made no difference, they just kept fighting.

33:00 And smashing Anyhow he rung up the British Military Police, the Red Caps - they had red bands around their hats. And they came and they took away these couple of blokes and put them in jail - the Jerusalem jail - till they sobered up, but they didn't charge them with any offence They were charged later by the battalion

33:30 commander and I think he only gave them a reprimand or something. But there was all that kind of scrapping. All amongst the Australians too sometimes because - I remember in Syria our battalion ran out of beer. And we heard that the battalion had the beer in a canteen you see. So a group of us walked over one night to have some of their's and they didn't like it. Got stuck into us.

34:00 But we coped pretty well - and the orderly officer - he's the bloke on duty and usually is in charge of the guard. You have guard on every night. At the entrance and also mobile - you walk certain distances and go back- that type of thing. Yes, it's amazing what happens.

34:30 I didn't finish that, what was I talking about?

You were talking about scraps between the Australians over the beer.

Oh yes. Anyhow so this is a big fight. We had a big bloke - he was a gold miner at Kalgoorlie before the war. And he said, I remember him saying, "You blokes don't know how to fight."

35:00 So he start street fighting. You know how street fighters fight, they throw punches and they kick and do everything. And he was a big and active man and he flattened them. A number of our opposition. And the orderly officer appeared and he didn't like what we were doing, but he didn't arrest us. We just shot through back to our unit. But we didn't get any beer. They were cross because we were there to buy their beer. Oh well, these things happen.

35:30 **You actually offered to buy it?**

It's in the canteen, you see. Yes.

But not your canteen?

No, illegal trading for sure. The good old days.

How do you reckon ,Joe, all your time in the army changed you as a person?

No, I don't think so. I think I grew up.

36:00 Perhaps, matured more. But I don't think I altered. You know, I think you take life more seriously after that. You get a few shocks. I don't know about fear. That's always a contentious subject with me. I don't know. Fear, you don't know whether it's fear or adrenaline. 'Cause you're certainly on a high.

36:30 But I don't think I've ever seen anyone shaking or really frightened, ever. You hear blokes say they were afraid, I don't know about that. They probably were afraid, but they were different. I don't think our blokes were actually afraid - but you were certainly on a high. You capture a position, especially in the desert and you think you're JC [Jesus Christ] himself. "Come on bring them on!" kind of thing. Really.

37:00 You get that feeling. But at the same time I suppose you're hoping to Christ they don't come along. But you do get a false sense that you're better than you are. It is true. It used to happen. I've discussed that with other blokes in our platoon. But I don't know about fear. I don't know what they mean. Fear to me is someone who goes panicky and goes to jelly, you know.

37:30 You think that? What's fear?

What's fear? Maybe it's the feeling that you're in a situation that's more than you can handle.

You get frightened because of that? Oh. You're probably right but I never looked at it like that. I don't know.

How did you look at it?

Well I think, as I said, you're on a high - definitely,

38:00 on a high. And you just do what you got to do. But we had no feelings - I didn't - that you're scared and you don't know the future. You don't think of the future. But that's how I'm sure others - I've talked about it to other blokes. But you see fellows on TV being interviewed and they say, they were scared and all this type of thing. Well I don't know what they did in the war, but they probably were scared too.

38:30 **But Joe you said that through the war years you had a couple of shocks. That there were a couple of things that shocked you a bit?**

What was that?

I don't know. I was about to ask you that question?

Oh I can't think of it now.

Was there anything through the war that

39:00 **you kind of thought," Oh this is a bit too much"?**

No no no. Never. Even when we were down we were still confident of what we were doing. Well trained. Training's a great thing. It keeps the morale up and everyone's fit and know their job and that helps a lot. Even though you may be outnumbered you can still keep going if you're well trained. But shocks?

39:30 I don't know. Do you remember where it happened?.

Oh no, it's just something you said 5 minutes ago. I asked you how the war might have changed you as a person, and you said you just grew up a bit.

Oh well, that's true.

Had a couple of shocks?

Oh I don't know about - if I said shocks, well I would mean that things happened that hadn't happened before, that kind of thing. And you get a bit of a shock, temporarily till you

40:00 steady down and cope. That explain it?

Yeah.