

Australians at War Film Archive

Ernest Granland (Ernie) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 22nd August 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/744>

Tape 1

- 00:35 I was born the second son of the marriage of Arthur Redlands Granland and Doris Christina Granland at the Ballarat on 2nd August 1921. As a youngster I went to Walker Street, State School
- 01:00 until I was 14, I got my Merit Certificate at 13 and I think my last year there was lookin' after the Headmaster ringin' bells and playin' drums and marching the kids into their classes, them days they were called Headmasters nowadays they are called Principals. When I turned
- 01:30 14 I got a job at Sunshine Biscuit Factory for ten shillings a week and that was workin' 48 hours. There I progressed to a better job in Sunshine Biscuit Factory; my original job was taking biscuits trays off, come straight out of the oven and onto
- 02:00 another conveyer belt, the girls' packed. For a little while there, I must have done a good job there because the boss come down and said, "I got another job for you Ernie." so I said, "Alright whereabouts is it?" It was up in the flour loft, I was a big strong young fella, lumping flour around and getting so many bags of flour for a
- 02:30 mixture putting it through a sieve, putting it down a chute for a mixture. Then my father got out of work, just during the Depression and he got a job in Melbourne in Fitzroy, and then of course he went down on his own and then of course Mother followed him and sister followed him and I was still workin' at Sunshine
- 03:00 and I didn't agree with it, I was living with a family, a nice family, a very good friend of mine, Norm Hilkie and then I got, oh well, chasing girls at that sort of business at that age and I was in the flour loft, and then I got a pushbike, I used to ride a pushbike and
- 03:30 then I got involved in and I was made you know, I used to ride the pushbike home and up the hill to the Sunshine Biscuit factory and back again and then I got a bit lonely without my family, so I decided to leave Sunshine Biscuit factory and go to Melbourne. Which I did and we lived in Fitzroy and this was just the aftermath of the big
- 04:00 Depression and then I couldn't get a job down there, but then an uncle of mine he lived at Maribyrnong and he had a friend next neighbour, and there he was a boss in a munitions factory, and he got me a job. So I rolled up on the pushbike from Fitzroy out to Maribyrnong up hills and up through (UNCLEAR) and I got
- 04:30 there and it was a job for shell filling, painting shells and filling with TNT [Trinitrotoluene]. I was there for quite sometime until the war broke out and then I was still there and from then on I left there I told them when I joined up with the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] I told them I was a labourer, which they
- 05:00 didn't go into too much detail about the shell filling.

What year was that? What year did you join up?

1941. The Melbourne Town Hall, and from there we went to Darley, the other side of Camp Pell first, and then Darley and they lined us up there one day and asked if anyone would like to

- 05:30 volunteer for the Pioneer Battalion and me and my friend Ronnie Powell, Silver was my nick name and he said, "Silver come on, we'll be in this." and I said, "What do they do?" And he said, "They dig toilets and clean toilets and all that sort of business." "That'll do me." so we stepped forth and they took our particulars and 2 days later we was on a train headin' for Darwin. Went
- 06:00 from Bacchus Marsh, from the train at Bacchus Marsh and went to a place called (UNCLEAR) where we stopped overnight and from there we went to and from then on we went to Alice Springs, by train, and that's where the train line finished, so we had trucks then to take us from there to a place called Birdham, that was a transit camp and from then on the train line started from there into Darwin.

- 06:30 It wasn't luxury I can assure you. It was kinda cattle trucks they loaded us in there and away we went and we got up to a place called Winnellie, just outside of Darwin. It was called E Company, a battalion has got A, B, C, D Company, there was no E Company in a battalion,
- 07:00 so we was called E Company while we went through the training. The system of training like, I turned 20 years old up there, because I was 19 when I joined. I put me age up when I joined the AIF, I was 19, 20 up there in Darwin and was building sheds, barracks for the
- 07:30 future people to come there like, and then all of a sudden we got word we was goin' overseas. So we packed up our gear and down to the station, the railway line where these trucks, the same trucks were there and we lost our conel there, Poppa Veal, the colonel stopped there he didn't come
- 08:00 with us. We got to Birdham again, a truck down to Alice Springs, Alice Springs on the train the Ghan and back to (UNCLEAR) up through Broken Hill, Orange into Sydney.

Ok Ernie, that is probably a bit too much detail, maybe skip ahead to the Queen Mary where

- 08:30 **you go overseas part?**

We had a week there in a camp there in Sydney, and put on a train again we went down there, and we seen this ship a big liner there out a big and it was the Queen Mary and we were ferried across and up the ladder, which was quite easy on to the Queen Mary, where we were

- 09:00 allocated cabins. Showed me to a cabin and allocated meal breaks.

Where did you go to first?

Our first stop was Trincomalee and then it was Ceylon, now is Sri Lanka.

Then where did you go?

From there we went to, we had an English

- 09:30 cruiser, the Queen Mary and the Elizabeth, were practically side by side, quite a different escort the Cornwall, an English cruiser, and I did learn later on that was sunk during the war. That took us over to Aden and we disembarked at Aden and we went from there to Palestine at a
- 10:00 camp called Kwastina, and we camped there for quite some time. We had a little canteen there we could go to, because we only got five shillings a day, not much to spend, have a couple of beers, bottles, what they called "Lady Blameys." they were bottles cut off and the edges were (UNCLEAR) a bit of beer in them and you could only have 1 or
- 10:30 2 because that's all you could afford. From there we went to Syria and put on the train again and went to Syria, the name of the place there is beyond me, and we done nothing there really, we just, as a battalion we did a bit of training, snow there, there was snow there. Had a few a photographs
- 11:00 there of that. And we went to another area there just outside of Damascus. And we was allowed to go into Damascus on day leave, which I did on many occasions, because I liked the place.

And so from Damascus?

Damascus yes, in Damascus we was diggin' trenches in the hills there, overlooking a kind of main road. I had

- 11:30 about 20 Basutos from South Africa workin' with me and they were quite a cheerful lot of fellows they were, they were quite good actually. They would be workin' away there and singin' away there, 'the pick goes up down' and it was like a bit of rock and I would have to lay a charge there sort of business, they would run a mile away and laugh, they were really a good mob.
- 12:00 From there well now, when that all finished, was to Alamein. We was going along to Alamein like and then we had to dig camp trenches and all sort of business aside the railway station, and then on the day of my 21st birthday, I was on a truck and we had to go the NAAFI [Navy, Army, Air Force Institute] to get some
- 12:30 stores and all of a sudden these bloody aeroplanes, the Stukas lobbed, and they gave us curry [attacked us] for a while. Fortunately nobody was really hurt, but to see the Stukas coming at you, I tell you what, and the noise they make is really frightening. That was my 21st birthday party. From then on
- 13:00 sort of business, we done a bit of training. And then our main objective was laying mines. Our West Australian young officer, he had an idea of a length of rope and 10 fellas on that rope, odd numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 10. And we would walk along so many paces and he would say, "Stop." this was during the night of course
- 13:30 and then he would say, "Stop, odds." and the odds would have to dig a little hole there. Following him would be the fella with a bag of mines, and following him would be a fella to put the fuse in, on the rope, and you'd take a couple of steps forward, and you had a little shovel there and 'odds' he'd sing out

14:00 and there you'd go and drop the rope and dig a hole, enough to put a mine in and of course that'd all be followed up by a fella puttin' a mine down and another fella fusin' it, covering it up and the officer would take a recording of where they were laid. That was most of the time there we done that, and this particular night we were there it was a moonlight night,

Ok, before you

14:30 **start that story, I want to go into a lot more detail later, but I will come back for that but just stick to the main points for the moment and just give us a brief outline?**

Well, then the night of the start of the big push we was in there layin' these mines and we done that for a week. Before we were sent into action,

15:00 that was a 303 rifle. Now we done a good job the boys did, a good job until they hit the railway line, and the railway line was between that and the beach. We had to get to the beach. We stopped at the railway line and my sergeant said to me, "Silver get over to that railway line and have a look around." Which I did there was nothing much there

15:30 I seen a German body laying there not so far away. I didn't know he was dead at the time because I made all precautions, and he was quite dead. I went back to tell the sergeant there was nothing much over there. He said, "Righto let's go with the whole platoon." Over we went and we never met any enemy at all, but we had to be there by daylight, and come daylight it was quite some distance

16:00 away from the beach. So we got the order to dig in, which we did. So long as your backside was covered that's the main thing. And we were was there for sometime and a sniper was havin' a few pot shots at us and our sergeant, Dick Matheson got up, the rest of the battalion moved back, we could see them movin' out and

16:30 the entire platoon was still diggin' dug down. And Dickie Matheson got up to run across to the officer, which he was a new man from Duntroon [Military College], he'd only been there for 5 minutes and as Dickie Matheson was going back we heard, "Bang." you could hear the thud and the sniper got him. And well you couldn't put your head above ground, it was foolish to do so. All you got is a 303 rifle.

17:00 And over the hill come 8 tanks, and come straight at us and behind each tank was 10 soldiers, and all I got's a 303 rifle, now what do you do the English reckoned they had anti tank guns there and they never saw a damned thing, the Aussies got nothing. Anyhow these 10 soldiers

17:30 behind each tank and burst around us and of course you had to give up then, 10 tanks and about 50 soldiers. All had automatic guns and all we got was a 303. So that was it, we all come out of our little huddles and the officer an English speaking officer among them asking where our water bottles were. We said down the hole. And he spoke in German and he said to 2 or 3

18:00 soldiers to each of us, back to where we were to get our water bottles, which we did. Then we was put onto a bus from there and handed over to the Italians. They had a compound there, an Italian compound. By the time we got there it was quite a few of our boys in there and then slept

18:30 there just on the ground, no beds or anything like that, just slept on the ground. The next day we was put on trucks and away we went. Tunis, I think it was Tunis the port where the boat was. And we was put on this cargo ship, down the hold, we had to go down the hold. Some of

19:00 the boys had dysentery and oh what a mess. If you wanted to go to the toilet you had to go up to the top and there was a couple of guards, there was no dignity whatsoever, put your backside over the side of the ship and away you'd go. Then we were travelling along a little while, in the Mediterranean we were, in the middle of the Mediterranean and the motor stopped on the ship. Everything was quiet. Even them fellas up top were

19:30 very quiet and our thoughts were, "Submarine, oh gawd blimey how do we go now?" Anyhow after about 20 minutes or so, the motor started again and away we went. A couple of days after we was in Retsina, which is between Italy and,

20:00 anyhow Retsina, and put on ferries there and transported across to the main land in Italy, and trained on, which was the same thing, cattle trucks and all that sort of business. Then we went right through Italy up to north Italy to a place called Udine. Campo 57 Rivignano [Gruppignano] I think it was. There we was

20:30 billeted into huts and I had a little fella up on top of me was a New Zealander, Rangi, Rangi his name was, a lovely little fella. He's a real Maori and him and I used to share parcels together and sit out in the sun and look for a few lice in our clothes and that which we had plenty and from there,

21:00 from there was after some time, we stopped in that camp, there was Indians, there was South Africans, there was English there was you name it there was everyone. Then they lined us up, it was Anzac Day in 194? we thought we was going to have a service you know, a bit of a service, the old Italians, they lined us all up and grabbed about 20 of us

21:30 and put us to one side and along come a truck, on the truck and away we went. We had a workin' party.

We didn't know at the time. Anyhow we come into the area where the rice fields were. You could see it was a rice growing area. We was billeted at a place called Collobiano and we was given a shovel each and diggin' the banks up

- 22:00 to hold the water like from last year's crop the banks were fallin' away a bit so we were diggin' the banks up and in the meantime the war had started down below in Italy, and these young sentries they weren't keen, they weren't too tough sort of business like what they were, they were arrogant buggers. They weren't so tough. So
- 22:30 there was 5 of us and we said, "There's a river down there where we got the water from for the rice." I said, "Let's get down there one day and have a little bo peep [a look]." So we worked our way a little closer and we seen this boat there on the river and we said, "Alright, tomorrow we go." We got on this boat and pushed it away from shore and away we went. Then =
- 23:00 the next time we hit shore it was a little village not so far away called Oldenico. Of course we were hungry then, something to eat. I went into the first place, I knocked on the door, explained we were Australian prisoners of war escaped and all this sort of business, would you have any food available. This fella came to the door, his name was Giuseppe
- 23:30 Bosco, he was a wonderful man. He took us around to a place where there was a kind of river flowing. In the middle was a kind of island, you could walk across the water onto the island. He made some accommodation for us like, branches of trees and you know all that sort of business, and a blanket if he could afford one. Anyway, we were there for a week and
- 24:00 all of a sudden there was a fella come past, we were outside there and a fella come past, he was chasing hares. And of course when we told Giuseppe when he come down with a bit of tucker that night, "Oh, oh," he said, "Him." Evidently he was an informant of the Germans. So rather than get Giuseppe into bother, we decided to leave, all bar one. One fella fell in love
- 24:30 with a local girl. He was a ginger headed boy he was, he was head of my battalion too. He stopped, he said, "I am going to stop here." I said, "Alright, mate, it's your pigeon, lay in it." So anyhow the 4 of us moved off. Giuseppe told us how to get up to these Partisans, the best way to go. Of course we had to travel by night which was very awkward,
- 25:00 but anyhow we got up the rise to this big tin shed and it was all quiet there, and all of a sudden out they come like you know, they all had guns and firing them in the bloody air, and it was crazy. I never seen them do any fighting at all like you know, but they never give us any guns to do any fighting, but the language was a bit of a problem. We got to them and said, "We are trying to get into Switzerland."
- 25:30 Like you know. And they said, "Alright I'll take you up, 4 o'clock in the afternoon." Took us up further up the mountain, the top there and pointed, "Switzerland is over there." So, 4 o'clock, it's not going to be long before it's going to be dark. So moved off the 4 of us, took it in turn,
- 26:00 going through the snow and all that sort of business, because behind rocks, there was no snow and only have a little bit and then you'd slip down one. Anyhow we come across this hut and we had a look around it, it was a kind of holiday hut, and went in the door, and we got a bit of food there, had a bit of tinned stuff. So we ate
- 26:30 that, cleaned up the best we could, moved off early next morning. I was leading at the time, and the boys were following and as I came around a bend I seen this grey uniform and a rifle on his shoulder. Got in behind a rock, a big, big, rock. So I went back to the boys and I said, "I don't know who this is, whether he's German or Swiss,
- 27:00 what do you want to do?" "Oh, well Silver, we got this far, let's keep goin'." "Alright." Away we went and before you could say Jack Robinson, we were surrounded by these soldiers all pointing guns at us, and again we had an English speaking officer, asking who we were. We told them we were Australian POWs. He said, "You are not Jewish are you." "We are not Jews, I am sorry, we are not Jews." And they took us into their barracks and
- 27:30 gave us a big pot of soup and a packet of cigarettes. If you have ever seen a soldier smoking a cigarette and eating soup at the same time, I tell you what, you would have seen us 4 fellas. We was there for a little while, only a day, they took us down to below to a place called Bellinzona. We were there and deloused, and washed and all that sort of business and given English uniforms.
- 28:00 Now there you go, English uniforms in Switzerland, during the war. So we didn't argue the toss, we put them on and we had them there, and from there we went to a place called Schaffhausen, in Switzerland. There was a camp there already made, huts and all that sort of business. We were there for a while and then they shipped some of us to a place called Sulgen.
- 28:30 and there we was billeted out in a private home. He was a baker, then again the language was always a problem. We used to go down the hill to work, we was diggin' peat. We was diggin' this peat out and puttin' it through a machine and it was coming out the machine onto boards and we picked the boards up and lay them out in the sun and etc, etc, etc. Of a night time some nights
- 29:00 there was an English speaking girl in one of the houses, invited us in and she played the piano for us

and you know, was allowed to go into the café and we had a few, what's the money over there, a bit of money, Swiss money we used to drink what's called (UNCLEAR) it was apple juice get a litre and a glass, that was quite good.

- 29:30 I met some quite good, language was a barrier always. And you know you get yourself known to the locals, I met some very good friends, Hans, Hans his name was he was a very good friend. I think I have got something there from Hans. Anyway we went from there to, we were still diggin' peat sort of business when the Yanks opened up France.
- 30:00 Then we was all, it was back to the main camp again. Say goodbye to these lovely people we stopped with. And back to the main camp and we was trained to, not trained, and away we went, at night time. And the only place I saw then was a place called Lyons and I looked out the window, and it was all under English command of course. English took over, English officers took over.
- 30:30 Lyons. And I said to meself, "Where in hell are we going? Lyons is in France." Lyons, Lyons, anyhow next morning we lobbied in Marseilles, oh this is great, and the Yanks give us a two blankets each sort of business, and we had bunks there, they were quite good the Yanks. We was there a week. We were allowed to go anywhere we liked; we were allowed to travel around
- 31:00 Marseilles. I get to the other place after around Damascus. We played around Marseilles and they took us down to the wharf and they put us on these ships, they called them ships, they were tanks across, and they laid down like the watch gone down, and the sides were all bunks and there was a big coffee pot there still goin'. They put, we had one each to a bunk and away we went across the
- 31:30 Suez Canal where we were put on trucks and back to Italy again, Naples. We were there in Naples for quite sometime and no money of course you couldn't get no money out of your bank and that sort of business, so we were just wandering around the streets then we go on another ship. Now what was that one, it took us to India, Bombay.
- 32:00 Off hand I just can't think right now. Bombay, took us to Bombay. We were there for a week or a fortnight. We could take money out of our pay book. So we bought a few things to take home, sheets, bed sheets and all that sort of business, that was available. So we were in Bombay for a fortnight and then taken down to the wharf again and put
- 32:30 on one of those Yankee ships what do you call them, just built by rivets and all that sort of things, I don't know the name of it I have got it in me whatchamacallit and from there we sailed and sailed and sailed and next minute we were in Port Melbourne. Port Melbourne was disembarkation, and there was a great line of cars
- 33:00 old vintage cars and that sort of business like three allotted one in the front and two in the back, and away we went and we finished up at Camp Pell. Going slowly it was, the car was slowly along, I was in the back seat and I spotted me mother, me lovely mother. And I opened the bloody door, nearly fell over on me backside, and got to Momma
- 33:30 and what a time, Dad was there and me sisters were there, and that was in Camp Pell. We couldn't go home that night, we had to stop there at Camp Pell until they had done everything to us and that sort of business, to find out who we were and whether we were the right person. And then we got leave from Camp Pell and then we went to Ballarat Con Camp,
- 34:00 not leave we were sent to Ballarat Con Camp. Convalescent Camp. All we done was route marches there, sentry duty and all that sort of business. Could go into Ballarat and have a couple of beers, because when I was home there was a bit of money available at home. A couple of beers and all that sort of business, because I was born in Ballarat and I knew the area pretty well. Things had
- 34:30 changed, the Yanks had been there, things had changed, I don't know it just didn't seem like the old Ballarat to me. Anyhow away we go back to Camp Pell from Ballarat. Then there was two or three of us put on a train at Spencer Street, and away we went to NSW, we found ourselves at Greta in NSW. "Now what's going on here?" To ourselves, you know, we thought the army was over as far as we were concerned
- 35:00 and here we were sloping along by numbers again, 1, 2, 3 left right, left right. They were going to send us to the islands. I don't know, got me beat. Anyhow I wasn't well, had a bit of trouble with me bladder and all that sort of thing. I was crook this particular day, and I went on sick parade and there was a queue to see the doctor, and I laid down on the boardwalk and a sister came along and saw me and she said,
- 35:30 "What's the matter?" And I told her, and she said, "You come with me." took me into the doctor. Next thing I am shunted across to the hospital in Sydney, what's the name, the Repat [Repatriation] Hospital. Anyhow, from there I was, dear oh dear, what's the name of that. Heidelberg Hospital of course was home for me.
- 36:00 And then I was sent out to a place called Stonnington, which was a big home and was given to the army for resting periods and I was out there when the war finished. Of course there was big jubilation right through the place. Back to Camp Pell and out.

36:30 **What happened then, did you get a job at that point?**

Yes, I had a friend in the boot trade. Name of Joe Hall, he just opened up a little factory in Collingwood there and he asked me to come and asked me if I wanted a job and I said, "Yeah, of course I want a job." so I went and worked for him for a while and then this other job come at the

37:00 where did it come from? Anyhow I worked with Joe for a while, it was a bit boring, after just coming out of the army after nearly 5 years and being out of Australia, so I told Joe I would get another job. Then I found it bloody hard to get another job. So I answered an advert in the paper, for a job at Hardie Rubber Co.

37:30 in Carlton. So I got dressed up and away I went, over I went and I got the job. I got the job as the manager of the place, I don't know the first thing about motor tyres or anything like that, but I quickly learnt. And despatching and all that sort of business, well they sort of went defunct. Where did I go from there, the wharf, I got a job on the wharf. My uncle was a

38:00 wharfie and he put me name down and I was called in, we had to ring where the boxing ring was, the hall and the ring was in the middle and the three of us stood up in the middle of the ring. They sung our names out over the amplifiers. "Anything against these men?" If there had been anything against me for any reason, I wasn't going to get in the union.

38:30 Nobody spoke up against me so they said, "Ok, gentlemen down you come." So there and then they signed us up for the Union.

Tape 2

00:32 My first job on the wharf was down at Williamstown, loading bags of wheat. I was on the wharf putting into a sling sort of and I said to this chap there, "I did me first load today." "Oh well." he said, "You had a mate down below carrying them." I said,

01:00 "You go down below and tell your mate to come up here." So here I am bags of wheat, 150 pound bags of wheat, very few clothes and stacking them into the hold. They had a block in the middle and land there just a nice size, put your shoulder on to them, and stagger across and stack them in the hold, and of course next day me shoulder was red raw,

01:30 and I was told to put a bit of silk on it. Next day I go back to the job again and I got this ladies' whatchacall em? But it was very sore, very sore. But anyhow two days down at Williamstown and that was it, and in them days you could pick the paper up and there was in the paper was a number 5068, then 5068 report to

02:00 Port Melbourne on such and such a ship. And you'd go down there and you know, you get down, I was in a gang, a gang of 39 and either down below or on the wharf, it made no difference. And I never had a lady friend at all during the war; the only lady that I ever loved was my mother and my sisters.

02:30 I was a freelance, I became a man in Damascus and I got home. I was walking down the street this particular day from home, down Kerr Street, Fitzroy, and a lady on a verandah there she was sweeping the verandah, and she looked a bloody good sort and

03:00 "That's not bad this sheila [woman]." so I chatted her up. After chat up and got to know her. She was a married woman with a 3 year old daughter; she was living apart from her husband. Anyhow we finished up living together for three years. But 'til she got her divorce, when she got her divorce we got married. We were

03:30 married, but I wanted a child, I only had her child, little girl, anyhow she agreed to give me a child. So we done all that was necessary and she gave birth to Wendy, lovely baby and I was on the wharf at the time and a telephone call that she was in hospital,

04:00 and I took the time off the Salvation Army Hospital where she was, and down I went and I met me darling daughter and me darling wife and we had a think about it like, on the wharf I was doing afternoon, night, day night afternoon, you didn't know where you were going to be, and I had to leave her at home with a little baby, on her own. Not my kettle of fish. So I had to give the wharf away,

04:30 resigned. Done the right thing, resigned, then we had a little place, got a little place, Audrey and I, for three years, in North Fitzroy it was, and we settled we had her child and we had our child. Then she wanted to move over to Fitzroy so we had another opportunity on top of a butcher's shop on the corner of Kerr and Brunswick Street,

05:00 so we moved over there closer to her family. She reckons, like being silly like in love and all that sort of caper I went. I put in for a housing commission house and waited, waited and waited. At that time we had a little disagreement the wife and I, I still call her the wife because

05:30 we are still livin' together. When she got her divorce through, we got married at the Registry Office in

Melbourne, and we went from there to the Moonee Valley Races. I will never forget it, a horse named (UNCLEAR) won the race. We came home and then of course her mother and my mother,

06:00 we had a little get together there with a few cakes and few friends. Then we was married sort of business.

When you were living in Fitzroy what were you doing for work?

Work? Huttons, "Name the best." I went up, you stand out at the gate there, they used to put casuals on

06:30 day work, depending on how many they had killed, this particular day I was picked up on asking to have a union ticket, no, no but you soon had to get one. This Gardener, he was the foreman, he put me on packing meat. Packing lamb.

07:00 I was packing away there and doing what I was told, any dirt or anything I was throwing it back to the boys to cut it off and all that sort of business. The inspector there he must have had his eye on me, because when the day finished sort of business, he went up to Gardener, "I want that man back again tomorrow." So I was back there tomorrow and finished up there for 15 years. I finished up on the staff,

07:30 I used to go and take meat around to the butchers, the smallgoods driver I used to go around the peninsula, down to Rye and those sort of places. Then I got a job on the weighbridge, kind of a medical officer I was, I used to weigh the trucks in and weigh the trucks out and all that sort of business. Then I was keen RSL [Returned and Services League], keen golfer.

08:00 At Bacchus Marsh, and this fella beat me by one stroke and I had a Tatts [Tatts Lotto] ticket with him. So I had to get the Tatts ticket. So, I don't know how long after that match I used to think about that Tatts ticket, and then I walked past a shop and I thought I better get it now, so I got two. And lo and behold if we didn't win money with bloody Tatts Lotto with one of the tickets. They just come over from

08:30 Tasmania then, it was \$25,000, 1972. I went and found Billy, Bill Kelleher, me friend, told him and we split it up and my wife then had a little car and we hopped in that and went right through Victoria. About everywhere, left the girls home and went right through Victoria and back home again. We had a real great time

09:00 for a while, I bought my wife a new car with the money and \$12,500 didn't last long in them days, bit of furniture and bit of carpet or something, bought a few rose plants you know what I mean and before long we was back on the bread line again. But I had a job. I left there; you say to yourself, I think I am

09:30 winning Tatts Lotto and I am still working you know. So I resigned from there. In a week's time the foreman come over to my place, I had to come back, so I went back. Completed 15 years there with Huttons, "Hams the Best." Then we got a house in Preston, East Preston over near Northland. Housing Commission house,

10:00 Two bedroom place. Then the two girls slept in one room and Mum and I in the other room, and it was quite a nice little place, had a lovely garden, I was quite a keen gardener, vegies [vegetables], we didn't have to buy many vegies, flowers, lovely flowers, roses everywhere, beautiful little home. What happened there?

10:30 Mum got a bit wary, a crowd of people up the street, rogues you know what I mean. She wasn't happy living there like. Anyhow we finished up buying the place, we finished paying it off. So I said, "What do you want to do now? Do you want to go bush?" She said, "Yes." I said well we'll go up to the Murray River. I used to go for weekends, up to

11:00 a place called Tooleybuc lookin' for houses there and we struck this little house, and I looked at it and went and asked if I could go inside and see, it and they said yes. Asked the price they said "\$58,000." I said, "Well I had better ring the wife up." and she said, "Yes we'll take it." So we had to sell our place then. But our house, they bought our house

11:30 for \$83,000, they bought it through the bank for \$83,000, the house we was livin' in and we bought the house they was livin' in, we just changed houses really you know. Of course I was retired then and done a bit of fishin' and when the grape season come on I done a bit of work packing grapes and all that sort of business you know.

12:00 Then had a holiday in Queensland, and her daughter was living in Queensland at the moment, and blood was thicker than water and she wanted to go up near her. I said we can't go near bar, the Gold Coast, that's my spot. So we got to the Gold Coast and got a flat for \$140 a week and we lived there for quite sometime.

12:30 Anyhow word come down from her daughter that she was in a bit of bother with the house that they had bought, in a bit of bother for \$23,000. What else can you do, you bail them out, so we wrote a cheque for that amount of money. They paid the house off, it was in a place called, outside of

13:00 dear oh dear oh deary me, it will come to me in a minute. Anyhow her mother wanted to live up there in the house. Here we go; we go up and live in the house. Change everything around, your licence around, DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] and all that sort of business, doctors, they all changed. Anyhow

she was going alright and all of a sudden,

- 13:30 she didn't tell me anything, she didn't say a word to me, she had a tear, but she knew she had cancer, so we went to Rockhampton Hospital and I stopped there and I had a Red Cross little flat across the road and Mum stopped in the hospital and a specialist come up from Queensland and I was there with Mum and he
- 14:00 spoke to her and like, and she said,, "I am dying am I?" and he said, "Yes." Flat out, yes. So I took her home and she sung out one morning, "Ernie, I can't walk." So I rang an ambulance up and took her in to Emerald Hospital, a doctor in Emerald, who put her straightaway in hospital. They
- 14:30 found her in the toilet, she was all bruised and she wanted to come home, and she was kind of a problem. Anyhow I agreed to take her home. Got a wheelchair, put her in a wheelchair and drove home. So I had to get a sister, a nursing sister come down and tend her, another one to come down and wash her, I sat up for five nights
- 15:00 when we knew the end was close. And there was a male nurse in little Sapphire, little town further down and he used to come, he would come at four in the morning to give her tablets. She couldn't take them through the mouth at one stage so they had to be inserted in the rectum. This particular morning the sister came, 24 July,
- 15:30 10 o'clock, the sister came and then the washer woman came, and away she went and we took it in turns in sitting with the wife, and my nephew was there, nephew from her daughter's son, he was sitting in there with her, it was his turn, I had just come out really. And he came out and said, "Grandmother's gone."
- 16:00 So in I go and she was gone. I had made all preparations prior to that with the funeral director in Emerald, so I rang him up and he was out there spot on, it was only about half hour he was out and a policeman arrived, and this male nurse arrived and of course she was still in bed at the time, and
- 16:30 they took her out to this car, and took her away. Then they rang me up and said visiting, I could come and see her at such and such a time, which I did and she wanted to be buried, and I wanted her to be buried, but you couldn't be buried in Queensland and I wanted to bring her down to Melbourne and bury her, no, no she wanted to be cremated. So we had her cremated in
- 17:00 Rockhampton. And two days after, I packed up all the damned cases, all me clothes what I had, threw them in the car and hopped into the crematorium and picked her ashes up, put them on the front seat, where she always sat, and took off. I travelled through NSW, stopping at motels. I finished up
- 17:30 back in Mildura, Broken Hill, Mildura and then back to Tooleybuc again. I got a flat there, no, no, I was in the hotel first, I had a room at the hotel and it was a TAB [Totalizator Agency Board] also, and I used to like me beer in them days and I used to be there spending and drinking, and betting and gambling, and
- 18:00 I woke up one day and found me money was gradually going down and so I haven't had a beer and haven't had a bet since, and that was many years ago. This fella built three that I knew, built three units in a block and I asked him if I could have one of them and he said, "Yes." So when I finished building them I moved in there and I think it was \$95 a week.
- 18:30 After a while I was there I, on me own I used to go to Swan Hill and do the shopping and all that. Then I got an offer of a nice flat, this was a nice flat because it was brand new, but he put the rent up and I am agin those sort of fellas, they don't turn me on. I heard there was a bit of a story there was a flat over in Nyah West,
- 19:00 belonging to the Council in Swan Hill. I went and saw them, and gave them all me particulars, my bank books and all that sort of business, you can have it no worries. So I was there for a couple of years, made a nice garden, roses again. Had a lovely next door neighbour, her husband died, they were all old people, in their eighties and that sort of business
- 19:30 and my sister come up one day to see me and she said, "Why don't you get to see the RSL?" Because I am a life member of the RSL, Life Governor and I have been a member of the Preston RSL for 30 years or more. I said, "Why not? I might get back to Melbourne." So anyhow she bought a form up and I filled them in and signed them, and I got a call, come in for an interview.
- 20:00 So I go into Anzac House and met this lady and talked and talked, she asked me where I would like to go and I said, "Heidelberg or Reservoir." "Not out Frankston way?" I said "No, no." She said, "We have a place at Broadmeadows." Well now, Broadie had a long name for crooks and robbers out here, so it didn't worry me so I came out and had a look at it and
- 20:30 I said, "No, no I won't take it." there was a bath in there and a dirty, it was bloody paint was, they said, "No, no we'll do it up for you Mr Granland." "The bath has got to come out." "We'll do that, put in a shower recess." Which they did, put the carpet down, painted the place, put the shower recess in, so I come and took it over. And I have been here now 20 years and two days.

- 21:00 That's about the end of the story, comes to an end about there, nothing much I can tell you, my legs have gone on me and I have been a sick man, I had prostate cancer. I had to go to Heidelberg Hospital, a doctor, specialist there to see me, had me testes removed. So I am not quite a man at the moment,
- 21:30 but everything is going along alright, no pain no nothing, sort of business, so I am living here quite nicely, it's a nice little place I get a bit bored of a night time, I can't sleep and it might be 12 o'clock, two o'clock in the morning. I might sit in that chair and go to sleep there. But this lady next door is a very great woman, she had got seven children, that's all them there,
- 22:00 in the photograph, she had seven children, they used to come and see their mother and they used to come and see me.

Ok, I will stop you there because we're here to talk about your life and there's more than enough in your life?

Alright, whatever you want.

Perhaps I can take you back, right back to the beginning, tell me, you were born in Ballarat, what was it like growing up in the

22:30 **1920's?**

As I said before, the 2nd August 1921, I can't remember baby days, but I can remember starting school. Miss Halliday was my teacher. Kind of a kindergarten and got to know the class, a lot of them lived down our way, we walked

23:00 up a hill to school, which was Urquhart State School and the Headmaster then was Mr Dimsey [?], and then I progressed through the classes to, well as a lad like we used to go, due to the Depression, the big Depression came when I was round about

23:30 nine I suppose, 1930 I suppose, nine or ten, and things were very bad, work was scarce even for Dad and all that sort of business. Food was pretty scarce, but there were plenty of rabbits about, and we had our push bikes, and we had our ferrets and we had our nets and we had our foxie, Fella his name was, he was a beauty rabbit, and we used to out and get rabbits.

24:00 Then my mother had a happy way, she had more than one way of cooking a rabbit. Down below near the mill where Dad worked was Chinese gardeners. And for threepence Mum would send me down with a threepenny piece and a sugar bag. Down we'd go and he would fill it up with carrots, parsnips and a few things like that you know back home again, so with the rabbits and the food down there, we used to grow a little

24:30 garden ourself. We survived, I had a wonderful mother, a beautiful mother, you couldn't wish for anything better. We used to get a rabbit around Lake Burrumbeet and Lake Learmonth and if you had a Malvern Star [bicycle] you was made, and I had a Malvern Star. Sundays we used to go up to Lake Winderee and there would be a band playing in the rotunda and you'd be eyeing the girls

25:00 off and talking to the girls and all that sort of business. As the years went by I got the job at the Sunshine factory, there was a lot of girls there and I kind of pinpointed one out, Betty Berryman, she used to live over at Ballarat East and I lived over at Redan which was a mile away, two mile, five mile, when you escort them home, there was no buses no nothing.

25:30 Get into the city there was a tram service, take us down to Redan where I lived, but that was, Betty was, Betty, I will never forget, she was at Her Majesty's Theatre upstairs in the gods, and this picture was going and all of a sudden she started to snore, silence, silence, and here she is snoring, talk about,

26:00 anyhow, I kept on with her and when I moved down to Melbourne, we lost touch and she eventually married a chap who worked in a clothing store in Bridge Street. I never saw Betty no more from that day onwards. I have never been to Ballarat again for quite sometime, I went up there in a car, drove up,

26:30 the wife and I, showed her all the places, the school I went to, where we lived and all that sort of business.

When you were young, during the Depression, what sort of things did you do for fun?

Oh, well Anzac Day, not Anzac Day, Bonfire Day, we used to, kids used to build a bonfire bigger than this house, we used to go down to the creek, Yarrowee Creek and cut gorse bushes.

27:00 Drag them up the hill and throw them on the fire, there was no motor cars in them days so you got no tyres. We had hot cross buns around Easter; go knocking on doors and Mr Brogden, he cooked the hot cross buns, "Do you want to order any hot cross buns madam?" "Yes, half a dozen." Go and deliver them on Easter. Another lurk I had was I knew

27:30 down along Yarrowee Creek there was a property there, in the paddock it had a lot of daffodils. I used to know when the daffodils were bloomin' and I would go down and I would pick as many as I could and carry them along the creek and go and get a few gum tips and put a little bundle in and knock on doors and sell them for threepence. Them days for threepence you could buy a heap of lollies.

- 28:00 Other than that sort of business. Dancing, dances in the Town Hall. And I had a friend called Alec McKenzie, Alec's father used to light up the Town Hall and Alec used to do it a few times and he said to me, "Come on, Ern, come on we go, you come with me." and we went through this Town Hall, it was an eerie sort of place,
- 28:30 like you know, silent and eerie, and he would go up and do the lights and come down, and Alec got killed, he was in a mine, he had a little mine all by himself, and he used to go down and fill a bucket up and he'd winch them up, and his hand slipped and the handle went round and hit him on the head and killed him straightaway.
- 29:00 And that was the end of my friendship with Alec McKenzie. Jack Foster was another friend, Long brothers, I had quite a few friends, quite a few mates. We used to go down Friday nights, late night shopping, up and down Sturt Street, Bridge Road, eyeing sheilas off, you know what I mean, what young fellas did in those days. Other
- 29:30 than that there was nothing much. Christmas time was Patterson Pearl and Sampler, they used to have a Father Christmas up on top, throwing little toys at people you know, they had a procession there a kind of toffee apple day and buy this toffee apple during the procession. She was a lovely little place, she's always something. Football,
- 30:00 yeah I was never no good at football, but I tried. I tried that at Redan and I was something like under 14s and I tried, I got a game but I couldn't even last at that. My brother was quite good, he played with the seniors and all. But me, I was a bumblefoot. Dancing, yes we used to go dancing in the Town Hall, the old Lambeth Walk and all that sort of things
- 30:30 you know different world now, when we was kids it was different altogether, you know the country was so wide open you could go anywhere, get your push bike and away you'd go, we used to go to the miner's racecourse there when there was a race meeting on, uncle of mine had horses, put the bike against the fence and look over. Enjoyed myself that way, we even put the ferrets in the
- 31:00 tunnels there, the water channel's there and get a few rabbits out of them, at the miner's racecourse. It is now the Broadway Trotting Track. There was plenty of rabbits about, and it kept the dogs in food, kept us in food, my favourite was the roast rabbit, $\frac{3}{4}$ grown roast rabbit, the way mother used to cook it, beautiful.
- 31:30 **Apart from rabbits what else did you do for food?**
- Well the Chinese man supplied the vegies and that, kind of offal, saveloys and livers from the butcher shop down the road there, anything cheap cuts, there was no steaks or anything like that,
- 32:00 my favourite was on a Saturday afternoon when I came home from the footy, mother had a tin of salmon in white sauce mixed up on toast, I used to love it. That sort of business you know.
- What did your father do for a living?**
- He was a warfer in the Sunnyside Woollen Mills, if you know what a warfer is, the thread goes one way and the
- 32:30 weaver goes the other way. Dad was a warfer, he would have all the threads going on to a reel and from a spool, when that run out he would tie a little knot in the thread. He'd been there for sometime Dad, and he was a very good umpire, football umpire, a very good boxer, his nickname was Sparrow, there wasn't very much of him.
- 33:00 A photograph over there of him. He let me do a bit of boxing, that was quite good learning me boxing, come in handy at times I can assure you.
- Was he strict with you? Discipline?**
- Very much so, very much so, we had to be home at forget now,
- 33:30 say 10, it was only Friday nights we went out. We used to have "Dad and Dave" on the silly radio, and listen to the cricket when it was played of a night, like in those days someone would go out, and the cow would be mooing and the bells clang clanging, and all that sort of silly business. Dad was very disciplined. I will never forget the time he first saw me in a billiard saloon, I was there with a couple of me mates,
- 34:00 and we was playing billiards, and I looked around there's my father standing there. I said, "I am in for it now." but no he never said a word, he walked away and down the stairs he went, and he never said a word to me about that, he never said 1 word about me playing snooker, because he knew I was growing up. He knew I was on my way into manhood.
- 34:30 **Why wouldn't he want you to play snooker, was there alcohol there?**
- No, no.
- Was that seen as a bad place for kids?**

That never came into my category until, late in life, a few beers.

So why didn't he want you to play billiards, why was that a bad thing?

Oh, it wasn't that he didn't want me to play billiards, I was still under

35:00 home at 10 o'clock, are you with me.

Oh, so this was after ten?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And you'd tear down Skipton Street at a hundred mile an hour to get home. He wouldn't be home, but I knew Mum would be home. Mum was beautiful, she wouldn't tell Dad, no worries. In life, in life, your mother is the greatest friend you'll ever have. You can have

35:30 who you like, you can have wives, you can have girlfriends, but your mother is the greatest friend you'll ever have. Anyhow from then, them Ballarat days, you get on your push bike and go for a run, go down to Albie Long's place and say, "Come on." Going to school, now I used to pick up a chap by the name of Robbie Frampton, cos I was the best, I used to fight a lot,

36:00 and I was the best fighter in the grade, put it that way. And I used to pick up this Robbie Frampton, he was a Downs Syndrome, and take him to school, and there was a church there, I forget the boy's name, and pick him up and take him to school because they used to get bullied by the other boys you know, because being with me there was no bullying.

Why was that?

Well, I would give them a biff in the ear.

36:30 Yes I had several fights there at school. I was very short fused, very, very short fused. Anyhow the old Headmaster there he said one day at the gathering there, something about you boys play up I will tell that boy in Grade 8 to look after you, that was me of course. I was 13 when I got me Merit Certificate

37:00 and then I had to do another year at school, which was very dull like, they didn't worry, they were just going over the same subjects again. The Headmaster wanted something done they'd come and get me and away we'd go. Ring the bell of the bloody morning, ring the bell of a dinner time, play the kettle drum to drum them into school, they used to, not like now, they would form into grades, you know this big

37:30 area, and they'd march off, march off to the kettle drum, the base drum and the kettle drum, into their grades, like you know, into their school grades, here they just go holus bolus, I think. On Anzac Day we would have a soldier from WW1 come out and say a few words, and we used to take a little bunch of flowers, I don't think there was a flower left in Drummond Street, that particular day, in anyone's garden.

38:00 But it was all under this flagpole, but it was great to take a little bunch of flowers on that particular day and he'd tell his story of what went up in WW1.

Tape 3

00:31 **You mentioned Anzac Day, was Anzac Day a big deal for you?**

Present or younger days?

In your youth, '20s or '30s?

No, not really. No, no, no. It was only that we learned all about it at school. We were asked to bring a little bunch of flowers which we did and

01:00 the man spoke of the war, and that was it, never any marches, never attended any marches or anything, I never gave it a thought really.

Did you learn much about WW1 at school?

Oh, yes, I had an uncle killed, Uncle Bert, Albert, he was killed in France and another uncle,

01:30 Ernie Vermont, he was the husband of my Dad's sister, he died with gas, after he got home, and down at the old homestead where grandmother lived, there's all photographs of the boys all, in see there were 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 boys, Uncle Alfie was in the army, Uncle Bob,

02:00 no, Uncle Charlie was, anyhow there was quite a few of them in the army, WW1. No, no really, I never give it a thought, Anzac Day, until I came to Melbourne, then I realised what Anzac Day was. It was a day,

- 02:30 and I had marched a lot, I had marched a hell of a lot Anzac Day, no worries, but I can't now, they have offered me cars to go in and march, but I find it troublesome to get from here to the city on the train, and the reunion was in South Melbourne. I don't drink sort of business and there was only about 8 of us left.
- 03:00 **From your battalion, only eight left from your battalion?**
- Only the Victorians. It was a NSW battalion, but we joined as E Company and we were dispersed into different companies, I was taken into 15th Platoon. Lieutenant Russ Burton, he was
- 03:30 put into, just a couple of days before we were put into action, still layin' mines and that, but he went into Intelligence, so we got this new fella out, straight from Melbourne, he didn't know, well fair enough, we didn't know him and he didn't know us sort of business you know, he didn't know, Russ Burton knew every individual in his platoon.
- 04:00 But anyhow, that was the end of that lot, no; I can go on if you have got something else that you like.
- I am interested in your job at the Shell Factory, Munitions Factory?**
- I used to ride the push bike up the hill there at Maribyrnong, later they put a tram line up to the Munitions Factory,
- 04:30 you would clock on, leave your bike there, make sure you had nothing metal on you, cigarettes, I never smoked, but all cigarettes put in packets and put in little lockers, for those that did smoke and you would walk down to your little places, mounds of earth, in the middle of the mound were
- 05:00 these little sheds, which were shelling filling sheds, if anything went wrong the blast would go up in the air, it wouldn't spread. Anyhow these shells would come in and would be painted, and we would put them on a disc around about disc, and set it going, and put the shell on it and then we would paint it. Then we would
- 05:30 go off somewhere until it dries, and then later we would get them back and we might put a green band on them or a red band on them. You know, to denote they were 18 pounders or something like that. Then you would have a jug which you would fill up with hot TNT which was liquefied and watery, you know liquid and then you would fill up,
- 06:00 then you would put a whatchamecallit, a plug in the top of it sort of business, and then you would fill it up around it, that plug was for the detonator sort of business, once you fill it up all around as close to the top as close as you can, then you'd put it aside until the TNT would melt it. Set it. That was that.
- 06:30 They were taken away and where they went from there I would not have a clue. That was my job there at the munitions factory.
- That was in 1938, is that right?**
- Yeah, '39, the war started, '39 I was there then.
- Ok, that was just as the war started. Do you remember where you were when you first heard that war had been declared?**
- 07:00 Home, I was at home in Fitzroy, still working at the watchamecallit, I still went to the plant the next day.
- So you were already working at the munitions factory before the war. So what did you think when war was declared?**
- Well I just couldn't understand you know like, us Australia in it. All of a sudden word came that Australia was in it.
- 07:30 I had a friend Ronnie Powell, 1941, he was only 19 then of course, him and I saw the march, Anzac Day March. It sort of churned us up, so we went to the Town Hall and joined up.
- Ok that was a couple of years later though, but**
- 08:00 **in 1939 when war had only just been declared, you were protected from joining up, did that frustrate you or were you relieved?**
- Really relieved sort of business you know, it was a kind of, daily job, it was the same thing over and over and over again,
- 08:30 and you had to be careful, you had to do everything right. Everyday from Fitzroy to Maribyrnong on push bike daily and back home, I was pretty fit, but I was getting sick of that, and anyhow Ronnie and I went into town. I said I was a labourer, 21 years of age, a labourer and
- 09:00 he was a labourer too, Ronnie so over to Camp Pell, and we got out that night, we were allowed to go home that night. I had to come back the next morning, they reckoned I had sugar in me water, they had somebody else's water for me, no worries about that so the next morning, Ronnie got 54399, that was his number VX 54399

09:30 and I had to go the following morning I had to go in early, and I got 54413 so our numbers were very close, and never been any trace of diabetic in me, never, never and they've done everything to me like you know, tested me this and tested me that, so I reckon they got someone else's water for me and he got

10:00 through with my water.

Fair enough. So what do you think was the main reason you wanted to join up?

A couple of young bucks, and oh I don't know it was just that you seen the fellas going, seen them Jimmy was goin', Alec was goin', very soon there was nobody left only Pallie and I.

10:30 So, "Ah come on let's go." and so that's it went and joined. Pallie come out alright and I come out alright, I think Pallie's still alive down in Port Melbourne, living somewhere. He married and he had children. I don't know, my daughter,

11:00 she married and had a boy, that's them up there, and he had two lovely girls which are great grandchildren to me and that's what consisted of my family.

At the point that you joined up in 1941, was that after Pearl Harbor?

No, no, no I was over in the Middle East when Pearl Harbor just come into the war, I was over in the Middle East when the Japs come into the war.

Right.

11:30 **So before the Japanese came in, did you think it was a very serious thing for Australia?**

Oh, my word, we got the news that Singapore had fallen and all that, had all the guns pointing out to sea and nothing backwards sort of thing and whole vision of Australians, it was all very disheartening.

So what did you think when you were then taken to the

12:00 **Middle East, rather than to staying to defend Australia?**

Well your eyes new and lookin' at everything new, you hadn't been there before sort of , but your eyes were new with the Arabs and the way they lived and donkeys and ridin' donkeys along and (UNCLEAR) and all that sort of business, the only thing I had against them was you had to take the bolt out of your

12:30 rifle and sleep on it. They were a very thievie mob, you know, if you had seen them in the camp, yeah. Other than that, Jerusalem, we went to Jerusalem, Gaza, Tel Aviv.

First off you went to Ceylon, what was your impression of Ceylon?

We never got out of the boat. Never got off the boat at Ceylon,

13:00 the boat just stayed in the harbour and that's where we left the what was the other ship, the Queen Mary and the other ship,

HMAS Australia? The Australia or the Duntroon?

No, it was a passenger ship. It disappeared, we never seen that, or we never seen the Cornwall no more. So

13:30 we went off an got off at Aden, which was only a couple of days away I think, a big ship. It was a big ship the Queen Mary, she had a lot of troops on board, thousands. Yeah, well our battalion was 1,000 and there were other battalions besides us. We were what you called corps troops; we weren't attached to any division at all,

14:00 until Alamein when we were attached to the 9th Divvie [Division]. That's the first time we got attached to the 9th Divvie, that's where layin' mines and all that sort of business was, it wasn't combat unit, we did learn in the combat, Lewis guns and all that's all we had, all old fashioned things, 303 rifles. Lewis guns.

Where did you do your training?

14:30 **Darwin. Qastina.**

How long were you there for in Darwin?

Oh, quite sometime, when did we come down, 6 months or more I guess.

So tell me a bit more about your training?

It was just by numbers and you would pull the route marching and all that sort of business you'd pull a watchmecallit,

15:00 gun to pieces, Lewis gun and put it together again then you had your trained, your man there to feed it alongside you, then you had your rifle drill, rifle range there, go with your rifle and they would give you

five rounds of ammunition to shoot at targets. Route marches a lot. You go into Darwin,

15:30 leave and you go into Darwin. There was only 2 hotels there, an old Prap and the Darwin Hotel, they used to serve bottled beer, whatever ship come in, if the ship come from WA [Western Australia] they'd have WA beer, SA [South Australia], they'd have SA beer. Very few come from Victoria, with Victorian beer, so you would have to buy the bottle

16:00 and a jug and a glass and then you would go outside and enjoy it, sit down outside in the beer garden or something, and that's the way you got drinks up there. Even the canteen in the camp, once or twice a week, two bottles of beer. I remember me 20th birthday party, three of us went down with two bottles each and was had a whale of a time

16:30 in the bush.

That was in Darwin?

Darwin, yeah. Yeah. Darwin and.

So you snuck off into the bush for a party?

Yeah, we snuck off into the bush for a party, we lit a fire and sat and had a yap and a talk, there was "Powelly" and me and who was the other fella, I don't know.

So did you smoke cigarettes by then?

I didn't smoke no.

Did you

17:00 **take up smoking during the war?**

Alamein. Shells were coming over pretty fast one day and a fella in the trench with me, he got out a cigarette and started puffing, and I had a packet in me pack, I got from the Comforts Fund or the Red Cross or something, I kept the packet there and I said, "Oh damn it, why not." Coughed and spluttered through it. And I have

17:30 smoked for 50 years since. But I haven't had a cigarette now since the 2nd August.

2nd August this year?

Yeah, 2nd August this year, it got too expensive 20 days or something.

Well done.

Bloody government, they put beer, well they thought about petrol, beer and cigarettes, well they thought about putting up, I used to buy a packet of tobacco and

18:00 **GST [Goods and Services Tax] \$1.64 GST. That's it. The electric light bill the other day, \$96, \$8.16 GST.**

So getting back, you said in Darwin you had your 20th birthday there, how long had you been drinking for at that point, when did you take up drinking?

18:30 Oh, well not too many I don't suppose, larrikin lads, we would go and buy a bottle, a couple of bottles for like a shilling, one and one after hours we'd buy a bottle a group of us and yapping and talking, and have a little, no harm done by anyone,

19:00 I was never a great drinker, and I could never afford, by the time I gave Mum some board and all that sort of business, even the Sunshine Biscuit Factory was only \$1 a week, ten shillings in our currency, you could buy a lot of things for \$1. Pretty cheap, but not like things now,

19:30 different altogether.

So after your training at Darwin you went from there to Ceylon and you didn't stay at Ceylon, you just stayed in the harbour?

We got 7 days leave when we got to Sydney which I was allowed to go home, I went home to Melbourne, I done the 7 days I said goodbye to the family, go back to Spencer Street on the train

20:00 **and up to Ingleburn, anyhow we lolled around the place for 3 or 4 days and all of a sudden the move was on.**

So you went from Darwin down to Sydney then to Melbourne to say goodbye?

Yeah and back to Sydney again.

What was it like saying goodbye?

Girls were alright, Dad was alright, Mum was

20:30 in tears. It was alright really.

It must have been hard to say goodbye to your mother?

To Mum yeah, yeah. Of course I kept in touch as much as I could and she kept in touch as much as she could, I never got a lot of letters over there at all in the POW [prisoner of war] camp. Got a few but not many, just the

21:00 elder sister, the younger sister to me but the eldest girl. She used to write a bit, Mum would write a bit, because everything, your letters are opened up, same as when you write a letter home, the officer would open up your letter and read everything, you couldn't say much, not that you wanted to tell them where you were but you know you might say

21:30 a few things or something like that. The officer would know everything you know, one of those things.

Tell me, about the Queen Mary, what was it like on the ship?

Well now, it was alright, we set sail, we sailed off and there were so many decks on the Queen Mary, then we used to have allocated a deck for exercising,

22:00 you know, we would run around the deck and come back and do all sorts of exercises and all that sort of caper, we never had rifles then, we never took our rifles with us, but all kinds of exercising, then go and have a bit of brekky [breakfast], bit of lunch and bit of tea. I don't think there was a canteen

22:30 on the ship. We called them canteens; the English called them 'Naafis.' I don't think so, no. no.

Was it hard to exercise on the ship going from side to side?

Oh no. We watched all the flying fish, very interesting you know, watched the flying fish following the boat along. Sometimes you might get a

23:00 porpoise in front of it. Other than that, walk around of a night time, there'd be a two-up game going on somewhere at the other end of the ship. There was all these fellas there, they had pennies and everything.

You didn't play yourself; did you play two-up?

I didn't play there, I played at -

23:30 where did I play, at Gaza, I won a few bob, and took a trip into Tel Aviv and had a look around there and back to camp again. Just forget now, anyhow it was a few bob, nothing much, you didn't bet in hundreds, just what you could

24:00 afford, what was the money in them days. I forget all about all these moneys, type of money they were in different countries.

On the ship did they gamble on anything else?

The Camp up in Udine there, Camp 57, there was always a big game going there,

24:30 we used to get parcels, no money. All cigarettes, we used to get parcels from, we used to have share parcels with Rangi, from Canada or England, very few Australian ones, in there would be 50 cigarettes or something. The parcel there, 25 for me and 25 for Rangi. So I don't smoke, and Rangi don't smoke, so we'd go down and have a bet. Say 5 cigarettes, the tail or something and some fella sets it

25:00 it was just something to do you know.

So your first stop was Ceylon and after that you went to Palestine?

Aden yeah.

Tell me about that how long were you there for?

Oh, we were kept on the move, off the ship and straight away transported to a place called Qastina in Palestine, and that's where we camped there and that's

25:30 where we were when the Japs come into the war. It was Christmas Day, I remember Christmas Day there, it rained and rained and was sloppy and they had a lovely dinner for us you know and you couldn't enjoy it very much, you had to go out and get, in the rain by the time you got back sort of business, there was turkey, very nice, very nice dinner yeah.

26:00 That was at Qastina, very muddy.

Were you at Qastina when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour, how did you hear about it?

Yeah. It's marvellous how you hear things through the grapevine. Soon goes through the camp, bang, no worries at all, anything at all like that. I don't know the officers they must have some way of contacting someone,

26:30 I don't know wireless or something.

What did you think when you heard?

I thought about home, that had me worried about home. It was going so fast, going so fast and for Singapore and all that sort of business you know, it was very traumatic, especially with your family home.

27:00 But then I thought, "Well with the Aussies there they'll fix them up." The English capitulated and so did the Aussies have to. We was always under the English, don't know why. Even the night I was taken prisoner, there wasn't one anti-tank gun around. There was nothing, nothing, just us with a 303 rifle.

27:30 And yet they spruiked they had all anti tank, you read there they had all this equipment there, where I am damned if I know, but it wasn't with the bloody Aussies. Damned if I know, that's I don't know. So you can't have a 303 against a Centurion tank.

So,

28:00 **I forgot the name of the place where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked, after that where did you travel to?**

Syria, the 2/ 2nd Pioneers were up there and they came out and we took over. They fought the Vichy French, the 2/ 2nd Pioneers.

28:30 **Did you catch up with some of them?**

Only later on in years at the RSL [Returned and Services league], I met some there. The camp I was in, they'd gone by then.

So you went to Damascus?

Syria yeah, outside of Damascus, that's where I had the Basuto, the African Basuto with me, diggin' trenches.

29:00 **So you spent quite a bit of time there?**

Yeah, quite some times, when did we get there? Dates, all I know is the 21st birthday was the 2nd August and it was the day of the Stukas in fact, but Damascus was a funny sort of a place, it was

29:30 run by the British of course, it had the British provosts [Military police], 'Red Caps,' they called them, there was a big meeting place where the Aussies met the British and the Scots and the Yanks, the British in a boozer [pub], drink up and drink up and 9 times out of 10 there'd be a fight, an Aussie with a Scot or a Scot with an Englishman and the Red Caps would come in then,

30:00 away you'd have to go home, back to camp. It was one of those things, you didn't travel far. We had a fella killed in a laneway up there, a paymaster, they found his body in the laneway up there, stabbed to death, he was on his own see, he was on his own and done something, don't know where he was. They found him the next day stabbed to death

30:30 he was the only one we lost there. I got some photographs there of fellas, me and me sergeant.

So apart from the occasional fight, did generally the troops get on with each from different countries?

Oh yeah, no worries, no worries well I don't

31:00 know what it was, they had a regimental brothel, the Poms. And naturally enough you'd go and have a look and there's these Poms, they got no money, we had no money. There's all these girls sitting around there all numbered, numbers on em, if you decided to take a girl, you'd go away and do your business and you'd go upstairs to a have

31:30 a clean out, a wash out and you would put your number down the girl you had intercourse with and that would prevent, if anything happened sort of business they could pinpoint the girl that give it to you sort of business.

VD [venereal disease]?

That was the only thing there. We used to get like Gary in the camp, Gary, George

32:00 **like you know, horse and cart and away we'd go up to the brothel. That didn't happen very often I can tell you, money was scarce. You had to pay, nothing free. You had to pay.**

What did you think of the girls?

There was some pretty girls there. There was the Turk, they called her the Turk, all different nicknames, Simone Simone,

32:30 you know, the different nicknames the boys had for them, but it was really, yeah, I can't say.

Did you talk to the girls much, was there much conversation?

No, I only had it once. That done me. I got the dribbles here.

33:00 Yeah, only once.

You said that's where you became a man; it must have been a pretty important experience for you?

Well I had nothing, I never had anything like that in Australia, I never had a girl or woman in Australia before I went over there, there was the first time I had intercourse with a female.

33:30 And that's where I say it made me a man because I had had intercourse. That was the only thing in that respect. Yeah, well Damascus, the city itself, well it's a big city, there was a street, they called it a "Street of 1000 Backsides."

34:00 it was there and it was all brothels. And we used to have to,

Can I ask you though for posterity; you don't have to be embarrassed, what was that word because I don't know?

Arseholes.

Ok I just wanted to be sure.

Yeah, the Street of 1000 Arseholes. And then we used to have to

34:30 sentry them you know, like Australian soldiers up and down the street, keep any of our fellas out. That was the only thing I volunteered for I think, you know, it was interesting. To see these bloody...

What sort of things would you see?

Well, these sheilas sitting out, big fat sheilas sayin', "Vome on, come on, come on." The Arabs were there, they used em.

35:00 We could go into any place at all, we had liberty to go into these places and have a look and see if there were any Aussies hiding you know. Interrupt an Arab or two occasionally doin' the business, but other than that it was quite a good job you know, it was one of those things that was a pleasure to do you know. Because it was interesting, very interesting.

35:30 **And all the soldiers were there from the different nations?**

Oh yeah, yeah.

There wasn't any group that couldn't afford it or weren't allowed to by their commanding officers.

We were all forewarned about the area beforehand you know, very few went down there or anything like that. They could get it up at the -

36:00 where Simone and the Turk was. Yeah.

Why didn't the soldiers go down there?

Why?

Why weren't there any soldiers there?

Very few.

Why?

Well it was heavily guarded, there were sentries there, at the end of the street there'd be two of you.

36:30 To come in there they had to come past you.

Why were they being kept out?

Through diseases.

Ok so they couldn't be policed.

They had to be policed to keep them out. So syphilis and all that sort of thing, the place was full of it.

So the idea was the

37:00 **regiment brothel up the road, where Simone and the Turk were?**

That was the spot if you wanted to do something like that, because everything was organised and you

had to wash yourself and put your name down and the number of the girl, why go down to a street with 1000 arseholes when you could come up the road with a medical officer there

37:30 and yeah.

Did any of the blokes you knew get the clap [VD]?

No, no, we had one in Italy on the way home, no mention of names. He got one in Italy on his way home. Don't know where he got his money from, we had no money, but the little fellas come. "You want my

38:00 sister, come, come, come you want my sister." No worries no. So close to home, on his way home.

Tape 4

00:33 **When did you actually start your employment with the ammunition factory?**

Munitions works, I would say in 1939.

01:00 When the war started, in September of course, started at the munitions factory at Maribyrnong.

Maribyrnong, was it a big factory?

Oh yes, it was quite a big concern. As you went through the main gate it took you sometime to walk down to where you were working.

Were there a lot of people working?

Oh yes.

01:30 **Do you know roughly?**

Not really no. Roughly I know there was only four of us in the shed where I was working. Arthur Manning, who else was there? Forget now, McDermott, his father was the Policeman there in Maribyrnong. I just forget the other fella, Russ, Billy Russ, there was only the 4 of us there. There was only the 4 of us in that compound,

02:00 which is one fella would be fillin' on fella would be painting, putting wotchamecallits on the shells you know and all that sort of business, mostly the one type of shell all the type, you didn't do grenades or anything like that, you only did the one shell all the time. I think it was an 18 pounder.

02:30 Yes. These things they get away from you at times, but no, no it was quite good.

Just 18 pounder shells?

I think, I think I am not sure of that. I don't know if the 18 pounders were out there, it might have been a later gun. 18 pounders. Anyhow, shells

03:00 I'll put it that way, they were shells for artillery.

Can you tell us about how you made these shells, what was the process?

The total of the shell was a kind of orange colour, and you might put a green band on it, and a red band on it, you just put your brush on it and just leave it there, and it's just rotating around see, putting the colour on the

03:30 then the inspector would come in and check it all to make sure it was alright, and then he would put his brand on it.

Just one more question about the ammunition factory?

Yeah.

Did you see many accidents take place?

No. No. None whatsoever.

04:00 They had a crew there, they must have been a good crew, they did what they had to do, done everything as directed, because you had big directions on them, these things, you can't go and be stupid and go your own way about doin' something, you did it the way they told you to do it. It saved you, you had TNT you know, a big explosive

04:30 TNT. So do it properly in the first place. Then again it was done properly sort of business, it activated itself properly. When it was sent to the war, wherever it went.

On another question here, when you were in Darwin when you enlisted you went to do some

training in Darwin. Can you recall what Darwin

05:00 **was like at the time?**

It was only a main street, in it, it had a few shops, a hotel, it was a quiet sort of place, it was only small, a few Chinese gambling dens there, if you wanted to have a bet on a horse you could go and have a bet on a horse, all the prices were up on the wall and all that sort of business

05:30 like you know. The Chinamen were mostly the gamblers in Darwin. They had their little shops and they had the prices on the board and if you fancied that price well you wouldn't have enough money to do it but that's what it was all about. And, other than that a few shops. What was the big

06:00 meat place up there, Vestey's yeah, that's all, other than there was nothing in Darwin at all. The air force they were down on the beach. Down where we were, just down from us was the naval radio place. The air force were on the beach, Mindil Beach,

06:30 and we was in a place called Winnellie and we had the 2/ 21st Battalion alongside us, which was right down in Ambon. Had some good friends in that battalion, and they were wiped out on Ambon, by the Japanese. They went over there and we were very fortunate, well say fortunate some of the boys weren't fortunate,

07:00 they were killed, and we went to the Middle East. It was different altogether, we did come home, a lot of us, but the 21st didn't come home.

Can I ask you, before the Middle East, was Darwin a very rough town?

No, only what you made it yourself. A few fights outside the

07:30 pub of course. That's simple, few beers sort of business and there's always someone that wants to fight you. Fight someone you know what I mean. Nothing the hotel used to close, the fight outside until they closed the doors, it was all over. And open it up again. Simple.

What about Americans?

I never saw an American the whole time I was in the AIF. I was out

08:00 of the country when the Yanks come here and I never come home until after the Yanks had gone. I was away for 4½ years out of this country, out of Australia. It's a long time to be away from home. The battalion came home after Alamein, they came back to Australia and then they went up to the islands, to Tarakan and those sort of places.

08:30 I didn't, no.

Did you meet any aborigines in Darwin?

Seen a few, there wasn't a great amount, they was mainly out at Adelaide River and all those places. They had their own little camps, and that you know what I mean, in Darwin itself no, no. They never

09:00 worried us, we never worried them. You got a night's leave or an afternoon's leave, and you had enough money to buy a bottle of beer or something you would, have a walk around and catch a bus home, not a bus they'd have an army truck home, back to Winnellie. Been over a few kinda bridges over

09:30 the Darwin River, just ordinary, not what to you call it bridges sort of business, stones in the river so the vehicle go across, a fair amount of work over there, and the huts we built up there they were coming on when we left, so the next mob that went in there it would be a bit of luxury for them. We

10:00 started building them but that was all left and we left. So other than that there's nothing much more I can tell you about Darwin, Sergei [interviewer].

That's ok, now I want to move towards Syria.

Now you came after the campaign in Syria was over with the Vichy

10:30 **French?**

We came after the 2/ 2nd Pioneers fought the Vichy French there. We came after that. We never saw any of our 2/ 2nd Pioneers there at all, they were all gone by the time we got there. We kind of took over their camp and that you know.

What did you hear about the campaign there, the Aussies fighting the French in Syria what did you hear about that?

11:00 Grapevine, the grapevine in the army was the same as anywhere else, we were told heading for Syria and where the 2/ 2nd Pioneers were, but we never saw any of them, they had gone. So we did actually nothing, we just did more training, route marching and all that sort of business. It was all snow, cold,

11:30 cold and miserable. It was a very, very cold place. I know the toilet system was just a roof over your

head sort of business and a seat and all of it was open you know and the wind blow, you didn't want to go and have too many poops I can tell you. Very, very cold, very primitive, that sort of caper in Syria.

You were in northern

12:00 **Syria?**

Pardon.

You were in northern Syria?

That I couldn't tell you, whether it was northern Syria.

In the mountains was it?

Ay, yeah, in the mountains, there was mountains there, I have got photographs of mountains there, oh yeah, yeah. That's where, well Damascus is in Syria, there was mountains there, the Basutos was digging

12:30 with them. Sandbagging trenches sort of thing, no sign of combat at that stage you know, even though Tobruk was goin' and a few other places were goin' and he'd made his way down, and Australians and the New Zealanders stopped him at Alamein before he could get to Alexandria,

13:00 that's where they held him there for a while and that's where the 8th Division formed. Scuttle him out and back again which they did. I was 2 days behind, I was taken to the 31st and about the third or fourth day they moved him, he was gone, on the move.

Now there's a few more questions I have got to ask you about Syria, you would have met other

13:30 **soldiers there of course from other allied armies, other soldiers there, Scots and Poms and Indians?**

We had them in the POW Camp.

In Syria though?

No, no, no. There was all Australians where we were.

Never saw an Indian there?

No, no never saw an Indian there, only Indian I saw was in the camp in Italy.

What about the British Army, were they there?

Yes, they was about

14:00 there. But I didn't see them either. They told me that [Prime Minister Winston] Churchill come there, but I didn't see Churchill.

What did you think of Churchill?

He won the war didn't he? He was the head man.

Did you like him though?

There isn't a like or dislike situation when you are in the army, you got to

14:30 look forward to your men that are leading you, your big men that are leading you, and hope they do the best and he done really good, yeah. Of course a lot of deaths and that sort of business. War is a very, very, awful damned thing, when you see your mates there. We used to come out and lay mines at Alamein

15:00 and come out and pass an RAP [regimental aid post] tent and there would be body bags layin' outside, and you would know as you walked passed them that they were Australian soldiers. I only seen one of our men, big Murphy from 14th Platoon, a mortar came right alongside him and fixed him up. That's the only one I had seen

15:30 of our mob, that were dead like you know. Because didn't do no action until right on the end of the big push, the 30th was the first time we went into Infantry action.

Are you talking about North Africa here?

Yeah.

I don't want to talk about the fighting just yet, a few more questions on Syria I have got for you?

Syria, well I don't know.

16:00 **The local people, outside the brothels and so forth, did you get a chance to intermingle with the people?**

No, no only soldiers, only soldiers from different countries, mostly English and Scottish. A few to yap to because they only ones you could talk to, you know, they knew our language and we knew their language. But other than that, no, no.

16:30 That's the reason why the Red Caps were there, plenty of them about.

Red Caps were?

Provosts, English Provosts.

Military Police?

Very savage men.

Why were they savage?

Well do anything wrong, on discipline yeah. Never fall in their clutches.

When you used to visit

17:00 **brothels, most soldiers did didn't they? Most Australian soldiers visited the brothels do you think?**

I would say yes. I had no ties at all at home, I wasn't married and didn't have a family and so I was free and easy and could do like I please, you know. But it was hard on those married men, you knew they was married and had a family like, you know, but

17:30 if you seen them goin' in there, they were goin' in for one reason you know. They didn't interest me, it didn't stop me from you know, but gosh you know, their family might be doin' the same thing home 'ere. The Yanks they didn't mess around. They're lookin' after their wives while we were over their fightin',

18:00 with plenty of money. Silk stockings yeah. I was only pleased that I didn't run into the Yanks really.

Why was that?

I have a very short fuse with them.

You have, with the Yanks?

Oh yeah, yeah. Very short, very short fuse.

What do you mean tell me about it?

Well, they tried to take over the country like, there was thousands young Australians out of the country, away, and in they come and they took over the

18:30 country. See, they built that Melbourne Hospital, that was built by them. That was a good thing, no doubt about that, that was a good thing. I don't know, they took over our women, well there was one fella there he murdered three didn't he?

Leonski?

Leonski, he murdered 3 of them like. All types.

So how do you think you would have

19:00 **reacted if you were in Australia when the Yanks were here?**

I put it this way sort of you know, if all the Australians were in this country when the Japs come into the war it would have been a totally different thing altogether. Without them, we wouldn't have needed the Yanks, wouldn't have needed them, if we could have afforded an Australian instead of the Poms, English officers, well it's the same as Gallipoli look at that,

19:30 it was all through English officers, that sort of business, bad mistakes, the 'ol Australian, he'll go in and fight.

Do you think we could have stood by ourselves?

The German did respect the Australian, my word he did, he knew what the Aussie was like, because look at the way he held Tobruk, they held Tobruk for months, couldn't get near them for months, took the Aussies out and took them out by ship,

20:00 put South Africans in, "Bang bang bang." they was gone within a week. Yet the Aussies held it for months. Different type of soldiers.

Now with the Americans, how do you think you would have reacted if you were in Melbourne at the time with the Yanks?

It's a funny thing sort of, it's not that I hate or despise the Yanks, no, no, no

20:30 they just kind of opened this country up where we weren't here, they were all womanisers, there's no doubt about it, all womanisers, there was no war here in Australia, so they were womanisers with plenty of money, pockets of money, and the girls, who knows, who knows

21:00 silk stockings and so forth. I couldn't cope with that, I couldn't cope with that no, no.

What do you think you would have done?

Well nothing much I could do I suppose. I be wary if I was havin' a beer in a pub somewhere and there was a loud mouthed Yank there or something, well me and my short fuse might accommodate him in some sort of way, you know. And some of them get loud mouthed, real loud mouthed.

21:30 **I heard at Flinders Street Station there was a big fight there between Yanks and chaps from the 9th Division?**

There was, evidently there was a story of two trains, one train going up and one train coming back. The Aussies were going up and the Yanks were coming back. And somebody said, "We'll go down and look after your girls for you." the Yanks did. That caused a bit of concern evidently. That was only

22:00 talk, I never seen it, I wasn't there only heard it. Heard a bit of commotion that the Yanks put their heads in and said, "We'll look after your girls for you." and that sort of thing, and the Aussie didn't like it. No, no, no they were a necessary evil here at the time. We were away at the time, we was all away. The 7th Division was up in

22:30 the islands, they were all captured sort of business, the whole Division. We was over, the 9th Division was over there and the 8th Division was in Crete and Greece and those places. But Europe we done our fightin' see. Nothing here to stop us in this country, no help from us in this country. We was over in Europe in all those places, Africa and Greece.

23:00 No, no, no.

No I want to ask you what sort of salary were you paid in Syria were in the Middle East?

Five bob a day and give me mother 2 and 6 out of that. She got 2 and 6 and I got 2 and 6. Clothing and fed and that was it. Now they are getting

23:30 thousands of dollars, things have changed.

What would you spend your money on in Syria? Just day to day sort of things, how would you spend it?

We had the NAAFI [Navy, Army, Air Force Institute]; the Poms had the canteen called the NAAFI. There was more NAAFIs around than canteens. I used to like a little tin of fruit and tin of cream and I

24:00 about one shilling or something, then. Extra foods, little things, buy a lolly or something. Liked a lolly or something, or buy a pot of beer.

You'd get it all from the army wouldn't you, when you go to town?

Only what you spent yourself, no, not town, the NAAFIs, what you called canteens. The NAAFI in Alamein,

24:30 it was the Alamein Station.

I am talking about Syria.

Oh Syria, no we had nothing in Syria, nothing like that in Syria, not a thing. Anything we got we got in Damascus.

Can you describe to me what Damascus was like then?

It was a big channel running through the centre of town

25:00 if I remember rightly, and the buildings were, I don't know what you call them, you see Iraq now sort of business and the buildings are what they look like after they have been bombed, well that's the same as in the Middle East, they lived so close together like, narrow lanes and you know what I mean to say, that's the same as the

25:30 Arabs now, in all those places they were all so close together. I don't know what was inside them because never went inside them I only saw the outer wall, very rarely see them, whether they come out at night I wouldn't know, but very rarely seen them. We was camped alongside a

26:00 what would they call them, like a big castle, 4 walls, 4 square walls like you know, what was inside those walls I don't know, but there was movement, whether it was Arabs or what they like to call them living in them, but they never interfered with us. There they didn't, Palestine we had a bit of worry with them, thieving.

Now did you have any close encounters with any Syrian people?

No not really. Close encounters. Dangerous encounters.

26:30 No, not really. The only people over there were the Bosutos from Africa, the English and Scottish, in town and of course our own men, other than that no. No. Not in Damascus no. But I was a bit wary, we were all a bit wary after they found that

27:00 pay sergeant dead you know, stabbed in the laneway. I was always a bit wary of them.

He got stabbed in the laneway?

Yeah, they found him dead next morning, he had been stabbed, bit wary of them then. Even in the street of the old bums I was always careful to have the old bayonet on the gun, just in case they you know, struck anyone, I was prepared,

27:30 never had any ammunition of course.

So you didn't trust them?

No.

Were you warned by the officers about the people?

Well we had to take the bolts out of our guns, take them to bed with us, they pinch the gun without the bolt it's useless sort of business, no bolt in them it's useless. Used to watch them in the camp. You used to do your washin' someone want their

28:00 washin' done, "I wash you George." "No thanks I'll do me own." Yeah. It's all called George, King George in England, Saida George, yeah. Very shifty, very shifty people, around that area in Qastina.

28:30 They had no trouble in Syria.

Did you like the Syrian people?

I didn't disagree with them, no; the only thing over in Syria was the bloody cold. No, no I didn't disagree with them, any of the locals, never come

29:00 in the camp, they had a few workers in the camp that's about the only time you come in contact with them, you didn't go to a dance, or the theatre or a picture show or anything like that no, no. Only contact would be in the camp working and he would be well, gone over to see whether, what his credentials were.

29:30 **So now, about the brothels?**

What about 'em? Well it was a kind of a house, upstairs and all that, little rooms everywhere, and all these girls everywhere and they all got numbers on them. Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 as the case may be,

30:00 and you go upstairs with a girl, and after you done your business you would go out into another room and it was Condyl's crystals [potassium permanganate] I think they would, penicillin wasn't available in them days and it was Condyl's crystals that you washed yourself in Condyl's crystals, put your name, unit and the girl you had intercourse with on a list on a

30:30 sheet and that was the finish of it.

Yeah, but now were they providing condoms for you?

No.

None. Did they give you any ointment or anything like that?

They were so crude, you see them come down the stairs and they would squat down in a little place where there was a hose and insert the

31:00 hose and clean themselves that way.

This was the girls?

Yeah, clean themselves that way, in full view of everyone. Crude, crude, crude. That was the only time you seen them clean them you know. Next please. Didn't have to take them, you didn't have to go with them. Of course the

31:30 Poms were there, they had no money. They was there pervin'. They would stop there all bloody night, just pervin'. Give one of them a kiss or something like that. I feel sorry for the Poms, really.

How often did you go?

Only went once, Number three

And you chose number three.

Simone. Simone, she looked like

32:00 to me. Remember Simone Simone was a film star and she was rather pretty. Simone Simone, number 3. She was alright. I guess I was all fumbles and mumbles, because it was my bloody first. But, she soon learnt me. There was Vera the Turk there and

32:30 she had photographs around the wall of some of fellas, I didn't go in of course, and they tell me that one of our lads, no names of course, photo on the wall, we used to give him hell. Vera the Turk's boy. Had photographs of all the soldiers like. Probably she asked have you got a photograph of yourself and, "Oh yeah." Cop this.

Could you communicate with her well?

33:00 Not really, not with language.

So you didn't know what each other was saying?

No, no I did what I had to do and she knew what I was there for. You pay sort of business. It wasn't very much, over there. Wasn't much, couldn't afford it. But I wanted to

33:30 try and I try, I bought and I tried, so that was it.

Was it what you expected it to be? Did you find sexual intercourse what you expected it to be?

Yeah, it was a funny sort of a caper this, you can either masturbate yourself or you can go in and have a

34:00 bit of sex if you have got enough money. It was all, practically I don't know, masturbation was a big thing in the army, you know what I mean, behind doors, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Masturbation was a big thing in the army?

Relieve, relieve themselves like you know.

34:30 No harm in it really. But that was all and I went in there and had number 3, Simone Simone.

Do you think most men had to do that to get by,

35:00 **masturbate?**

Oh, you wouldn't see them, it was done in private.

But surely they'd talk about it?

You know, when they get away, they are married men and they are used to a bit of that and they do it, masturbate no worries about that. Very few fellas could honestly say they haven't masturbated, sometime or other.

35:30 Know what I mean. It happened a lot over there, married men they are used to it and got away sort of business, and probably left all their money, kept a a shilling a day with their wives, and they couldn't afford to have sex, the next best thing was masturbation, you couldn't see what was going on because it was done in private.

36:00 **What about in Palestine? How was Palestine?**

Nothing like that in Palestine, nothing like that.

No brothels or anything like that?

No, no nothing in Qastina. We had whatchamecallit, a vaudeville

36:30 show come there once. I forget his name. That's Qastina.

Who are you referring to, Jim?

No. Just forget now, who they were, they had a couple of sheilas there. Couple of comedians, sing a song,

37:00 and some bloody thing "Hoy hoy hoy." you know. The sheila would do a bit of a flip around the joint; I reckon masturbation that night was very strong.

After those sort of events.

See you own girls after you have been away for a while. You haven't seen Australian girls; even see them on the stage there in little

37:30 flimsies.

Did your sex drive start to take a dive after a while?

Did I get what?

Did your sex drive start to dip after sometime?

No, not really. Not really.

Why was that?

Well you never had much time to start to think about things because there was always shells comin' over, there was always aeroplanes up their,

38:00 Stukas dropping their watchamecallit, as I said on my 21st birthday I come under attack by Stukas. And, over home they was having a big cake and a 9 gallon of beer, I thought of that at the time.

Tape 5

00:31 **There was 1 more question I wanted to ask you.**

Ok Serge, fire away son.

With brothels, were there hierarchies?

No. There was a doctor in charge of it.

A doctor.

Yeah, a doctor upstairs when you

01:00 cleansed yourself. Put your name down, what battalion you belonged to.

What happened in Palestine?

Nothing happened in Palestine.

Boring?

Very boring.

Training?

Yes. Training, route marching, pulling guns to pieces and puttin' them together again.

01:30 None of them modern, see we had 303s and there was a Thompson machine gun come out and was given to the sergeants, then the Bren gun came out which we got, and pull it to pieces and put it together again in such quick time. They timed you, see how quick you could put it back, and you had to have someone feed your gun too like you know.

02:00 There's 2 on a gun. I was feedin', old fashioned though, nowadays, keep on firing away, I notice them over in Iraq, the Yanks, I don't know how they can perform with all the stuff they got on, nowadays, over there,

02:30 they are loaded up with stuff how they move. That's all nowadays, different altogether, I don't where the safer place would be if another war started, land, sea or up in the air. I don't know where the safer place could be, because they got things now that can shoot aeroplane down when you are sitting in sort of business,

03:00 everything in the naval and on the ground, no hope in the world, with the amount of firearms there is now. I had a Spando lined up along the railway line, and the night he told me to go across there and have a look, see what's across there, I had to wait until the Spando stopped, and it shot across the railway line,

03:30 because it was directed at the railway line, anyone walking across that was going to cop it. I had to wait until on the way back until it stopped spittin' and then we all moved over gradually, the whole platoon moved over gradually, the whole Company. Yes, moved over gradually, but still that's the war.

04:00 That's night we were taken prisoner.

Did you ever go to Cyprus?

No.

Never?

No. Palestine, Syria, Palestine, North Africa of course, Alamein.

So you went from Cairo all the way up to Alamein? You travelled through

04:30 **Cairo?**

No, no, no from Qastina and eventually finished at Alamein. I went through Syria, mostly Syria, Palestine, Syria, Gaza, yeah, yeah. Right up to Alamein.

By land?

Yes.

Did you stop at Cairo?

No, no, no, there was some leave there at Cairo, but

05:00 you had to have money to go on leave in these places, because you always wanted to buy something to send home you know, a few trinkets and all that sort of business. When you have got no money there's no point going in. I never applied for leave to go in there, some of the boys did, come back and tell us all about what they did. Only sittin' down and have a

05:30 beer or something, in a café, that's all they did. Yes, and that was Cairo, I don't know much about it.

What about Alexandria?

No, not Alexandria either, no, no leave there. As I said some of the boys had the option of going to those places. They stopped the Germans from coming down at Alamein, they nearly had

06:00 Alexandria really, only 70 mile off it. He was 70 mile away from it, [Field Marshall] Rommel until the Aussies and the New Zealanders stopped him at Alamein. There was only one way you could go, one area he could come, which he did, and of course we lost a lot of fellas, we lost a lot of men at Alamein,

06:30 but we stopped him anyhow.

What did you hear about Rommel?

Rommel there? Oh, we knew he was in charge of the Middle East forces.

Were you scared of Rommel?

Not scared of him. I was bloody scarred of everyone, Germans and all,

07:00 these chaps that win the VCs, Victoria Crosses, they go a little bit like, and they get a bit wild with themselves and they go, "Bugger this, up and at 'em." and some of them get away with it and some of them get killed. No, it's something you have to take level headed. You have got to be level headed about it, know where you are going and what you are doin'.

07:30 Well let's be factual about it, we laid more mines than you could shake a stick at, and that's why they are still worried about them now, they are still going off over there.

Yeah, they have killed quite a few tribesmen.

Yeah, we laid lots of mines.

What sort of mines were these, anti personnel mines?

No, anti tank. She had a great

08:00 tank force the Germans, I say there was 8 tanks came over and knocked us off, 6 or 8 I just forget now off hand, each one had 10 soldiers. Had plenty of tanks. We never had anti tank guns. The Poms, they had them all, never give us Aussies any.

Were you trained well?

08:30 Yeah, yeah.

Do you think by that battle you were trained well? Were you confident to take on the Germans?

Yeah, yeah. Well to a certain extent yes, bayonet charges we was trained to do that, snipers they were the worst. You couldn't see them, you didn't know where they were, and all of a sudden, bang you were dead. But we never struck that much

09:00 against them, like you know, during that night. Because when I went over the railway line I couldn't see anything. Not a bloody thing could I see bar a dead German. When we go back over to where we were supposed to go, supposed to go to the beach. Onto the ocean, and we couldn't get there on account it was day break, so we had to dig in, that old

09:30 shovel was better than the rifle at times. Oh yeah, it was a handy tool in the desert. Underground mate. But then the Germans had a shell that exploded above the ground, we lost quite a few fellas and one particular fella I know

10:00 was outside of his hole, up there washing himself, and over come a shell and, "Bang." he didn't have to

wash himself no more. It was just one of those things.

Just like that?

Yeah, just like that.

Now you said snipers were a problem?

Snipers yeah, they got our sergeant,

10:30 Dickie Matheson, they got him. That's the morning we were taken prisoner, he had just got to his hole there, he had just got to where he dug, you could hear the bullet thud into him.

What to you mean thud into him? Where was he shot?

Don't know, he fell into a hole, we wouldn't get out of our hole with a

11:00 sniper about. No, no we never saw him no more. We had to leave Dickie there. He would have been picked up the following day. No worries.

Was this the only combat action you had been involved in?

That's the only one.

What about before that, any patrolling?

No, the only one, always laying land mines and general work about camp.

11:30 We had a couple of out of a night time platoons, half a dozen fellas went out of a night time. But the Verrey gun [a flare gun] if you sighted any Germans sort of business, you fired this Verrey gun, all that sort of business, that's about the only, we never struck anyone in my little trips out. No, no,

12:00 I don't know, was war I suppose, but to see those bodies outside those tents, it got a bit sickening like, you'd be there next mornin'. Who knows, you did not know my boy where the next one was comin' from. We was under fire all the time,

12:30 we wasn't actually in combat, but we were under shell fire and mortar fire and aeroplanes and bombardin', so you had to get up and get your meals from the truck, one bottle of water a day, if you washed your teeth in it, you finished up with no teeth at all, they all rotted, I used to drink mine and have a shave,

13:00 I lost a lot of teeth over there. I got a set of teeth in Switzerland, top plate. Now I have got no teeth of me own. All through the army my friends.

What did you think about the environment you had to fight in, in the desert?

Pardon.

What did you think about the desert?

The desert was bloody awful,

13:30 you would get your meals in a little dixie and the bloody flies. You had to beat the flies, you had to put a spoonful in your mouth and beat the flies to get to it. Scorpions, down the hole, scorpions. There was some sandy bits but a lot of rocky bits, in the desert, a lot of rocky bits. And sand, yes, not much sandy business, but flies.

14:00 Cold nights, bitterly cold nights. You used to be up every morning at daybreak you was up, on guard, not on guard but still in your trench, prepared with your rifle out in front of you, prepared for attack of some description. But it never came, it never came that. That was the

14:30 last one. Mostly laying mines we did. A bit of transporting. Sort of back to camp, take across the Mediterranean for a swim now and then. We were well guarded over there. Didn't have to wear no bathin' suit over there, it was all stark bollocky naked and frolic around for a

15:00 little while, it was quite good, and back to your little hole again, back to your little hole, like rabbits. Yes, so that's about it Sergei, over there mate. I can't think of anything else old mate.

So tell us about when you became captive,

15:30 **when they actually captured you first, was it Germans and Italians or was it just Germans?**

Germans, just the Germans, don't worry about the Italians, they was weak as water the Italians. Every 5 days of a week I would fight them. No, the German tanks behind each tank was half a dozen or 10 soldiers,

16:00 the game was up as far as I was concerned.

You said that when they first captured you, you had a conversation with them?

An English speakin' officer, yeah, yeah. He asked us to get our water bottles, he wanted our water bottles. I had a chocolate, we all had a chocolate and I grabbed that and smothered that up and got me water bottle. So I had this spare

16:30 chocolate for a couple of days like you know. But it melted and all that sort of business and you couldn't, no, no, no. Hot days, cold nights. Very, very cold nights in the desert, amazing. So other than that there was water bottles and then we were handed over to Italians in a compound. It was already built, the compound was up, no sheds or

17:00 anything, just wire right around, wire. Barbed wire and all that sort of business and just laid on the ground, went to sleep on the ground, just as you was, no blankets no nothin'. Very cold night. Next morning, on the move again, on a truck, they trucked us and put us on trucks and moved. We was two days ahead of the

17:30 Germans, so we were two days ahead of them movin'. They were two days behind us was all the Germans. All the tanks all the soldiers, Rommel himself, all on the move sort of business, I don't know whether it was good or bad, or whether the Lord saved me that way I don't know, but I got home again. I gotta go home,

18:00 I don't know about the islands, fighting up there was very desperate.

What sort of conversation did you have with the Germans?

Nothing really, just a straight back and they got a few watches. Germans, like he wasn't backwards in coming and takin' something from you. I didn't have a watch I don't think, no. Just took us straight beyond,

18:30 past where the tanks were, you should see these, what I want to say was how could a 303 stop them? Anyhow they just handed us over to the Italians which was close behind them.

The Italians? What did you think of the Italians as soldiers?

I don't know, I never fought them, only what I read about

19:00 them. Thousands and thousands and thousands of them give up at the one time, they didn't want war, it was only Mussolini brought 'em in and joined Hitler and brought 'em in like. So they was in Australia living on the land, livin' on the land of luxury.

19:30 A lot of them come back to this country too, a couple of them up there, they were nice fellas like they was, they worked, they were great workers, they worked in concrete and fruit and all that sort of business they were great workers, they would go all day and all night, up there at Tooleybuc, they was lots of them on the grapes, grape vines and all that sort of thing. The local club up there,

20:00 you go and have a few beers and say, "G'day. How are you, alright?" They would talk to you, they were quite good.

Tell us about your life as a POW?

20:30 Pardon.

Tell us about your life as a prisoner of war?

Well actually, we went right from right through the middle of night time, you couldn't see much sort of business, the train goes from one end to the other in one day sort of business. So night time and we got up to Vercelli, and this Camp in Rivignano [Gruppignano], 57 Camp,

21:00 and there was allocated to a hut, there was people in the hut, there was this fella this New Zealander, Rangī, he was already in there. I kind of bunked with him, bunked alongside him. We joined; he was a wonderful little guy.

What was his name?

Rangī, that was all I knew him by. R-A-N-G-I. Other than that I wouldn't have a

21:30 clue.

Why a New Zealander?

Eh?

Why a New Zealander? Why not an Aussie, there must have been lots of Aussies there?

I don't know, he was already there, and there was room for another 20 prisoners sort of business. Catch as catch can, they didn't say you go there and you go here, you went where you seen a cot. Somewhere to sleep, put your head down. There was an Indian next door, you seen him walking across to the toilets with a little tin of water. They don't use

22:00 paper to clean themselves. Water, fingers, uggh. Amazing.

Yeah, were they very hygienic?

Uh, uh.

A lot more hygienic than the other soldiers.

Lice was the thing. You get a sunny day, you would strip your shirt off and go through and look for the bloody lice and squish them and amazing how you get them

22:30 you know. We were lousy, there was no doubt that.

What were the other allied soldiers that existed?

What was what mate?

The other allied soldiers that existed in the POW camps?

The other Allies, they were in different compounds. There was Indians in one compound and South Africans in another compound and Aussies and New Zealanders in another compound.

23:00 There were so many compounds within the camp itself. We didn't mingle really. You didn't go over to their compound and they didn't come over to our compound. The Indians had to come through us to go to the toilet, that was about all. You know, we just sat out in the sun and I used to go to the kitchen and bring the meal into the

23:30 hut and serve it out and take it back through the snow, and snow and cold and everything. And the cookhouse would give me a little piece of cheese, that was an extra you know, and that was well worth going and getting the food and takin' the empty cans back and washin' them. And get a little piece of cheese. And

24:00 someone got on to that and wanted to know why it wasn't shared. Dear oh dear oh dear me, imagine me. Comin' out into the snow and the cold and getting' these things with me, you know. It's amazing the things he used to do, the Aussie, he was a very clever fella. He used to make little things out of tins, and fires, and cook things and

24:30 I don't know, very clever some of them. Yeah, yeah. Some of the tins we got in our parcels like, you know, what was it Lactogen no, no you would have a big tin like that you know and turn it into something to burn like you know, something to cook on.

25:00 But oh, we never done badly. They never had much themselves, food. They had very little food. When you go and knock on the door like, you wouldn't worry about going into a village and find one isolated, and knock there and ask for food, "Any mangari?" Sometimes you would get a

25:30 piece of bread, sometimes you might get some rice. You would get something from them you know. They never had very much themselves.

What were their women like?

Pardon.

What were their women like?

Well then again, there were some nice lookin' young girls there, but the language barrier was there again like, you know, say good morning to them you know, "Ciao." and all that sort of business, goodbye

26:00 or "Bonjiorno." or "Come sta bene." and all that sort of business. A few little words you pick up. But we couldn't move out, they were working in the rice fields, but they were kind of, well they weren't pretty there and their clothes and all that, their workin' clothes and the water and mud and poop and all that sort of thing. But suddenly they used to get dressed up in all their finery, go to

26:30 church, there was a church there in this little village we was in. Go to church and all that sort of thing and probably walk around, go walk about, and oh yeah. Anyhow this fella fell in love with one of them in the second village, old Nicko, he fell in love with her and she fell in love with him and he said, "See you later Silver." and I said, "Yeah, see you later."

27:00 and away we went. So he stopped there and I never heard, I knew what town he lived in and I knew what town he come from, in NSW, he come from Yass, and I been through Yass a couple of times and I had been to the RSL there to see if his name was there and anything like that, and I made a lot of enquiries and no, never heard from him no more, so I wondered if he stopped over in Italy and

27:30 had a family, I don't know mate. I do not know.

This is another thing about the punishments right? In the POW camps, so tell me about people misbehaving?

The man in charge of the camp, the Italian, he done a lot of

28:00 walkin' around in the compounds, and if you didn't salute him, you was in all sorts of trouble, you were put in these little (UNCLEAR) and you might be in there for a couple of days or something, before you let yourself, I saluted him, no worries, I would kiss his arse, no worries about that. But you had to do things right, if you were silly,

28:30 you were on the wrong end of the bloody punishment like you know. If you had to salute, salute him, what difference does it make, to salute a man? Some of the fellas there, "No, no bloody Itie [Italian]." We had big two-up games there.

What about the punishments though? If you didn't salute him what would he do?

Only one feed a day or something, probably only night time, a feed or something. I was never in there

29:00 **You wouldn't get fed?**

Eh? No, no I was never in there. I don't know much, I was a very cagey man.

What was the Italian soldier's name?

There was rules for everything. There was rules in the army, there was rules in the POW camp, there was rules in Switzerland. Abide by them, you can't get yourself

29:30 **into bother.**

Did anyone get any severe punishments?

Not that I know of.

Anyone get shot?

We lost a fella by the name of Mudge, I can say that now because he's dead and gone. He jumped off the truck when it was goin' slow, but he didn't get far, they mowed him down, Mudgie. He was a good boxer too he was.

What was his name?

Mudge.

Mudgie?

Yeah,

30:00 Mudge. Yeah, M-U-D-G-E, that was his surname, Mudge. I don't know his first name, it was just Mudgie, everyone had a bloody nickname in the army. Mine was Silver.

Silver?

I was goin' grey like you.

What do you mean like me? That's his nickname as well, Silva, because his name is De Silva.

30:30 Jones was Jonesy. But my mother used to pull hairs out of my head when I was 14, you know grey hairs. She loved to get hold of them and she wasn't quick enough. They grew and they grew and they grew. So when I joined the army I was kinda half grey and half dark, and got called Silver.

That's

31:00 **strange.**

Strange, yeah.

People used to call me that as well?

A lot of their names were Powellie, Honk, his Honk, Honkie Powell. Jonesy was Jonesy.

Honkie?

Honkie, how he got that I don't know. Dixie, Lorticus, Pacey, incidently they are all dead now. Lorticus has gone, Pacey has gone.

31:30 Dixie's gone, Ashie has gone. I could name them, keep on naming them.

Were they all good blokes?

Yeah. All come from Victoria, E Company they were. There's only one, one in Noosa. Bobby Ursula, Stan Payne in Robina and me and Powelley in Port Melbourne, they are the 4 of us left out of E Company that I know of.

32:00 **How close were you to them?**

You got close to one another like. You relied on your mates at all times. He mightn't be your mate like

but he was there, I was there to help them and they was there to help me. You relied on them.

32:30 Especially when you got a fella sort of business, you got the mine behind you sort of business, a fella fusing them up, if he done the wrong thing sort of business, well boom he's gone and so are you. So that's what I say, you rely on them, that they done their job and done it properly. Yeah, so times gone on

33:00 time has gone on the wing. I don't think I told you much about my daughter. If you are interested in that?

Actually not just now, maybe later.

Alright.

Tell me about your work routine at the POW camp?

POW?

Your work routine at a POW camp?

33:30 POW camp. Now what about it?

Work routine at a POW camp?

Oh, only when we went out in the rice field with a shovel. Shovelling the mud up on to the banks, fixing the banks to hold the water, as you are well aware, the rice is growing completely in water and

34:00 it was season it washed away sort of business, and we had to shovel mud, and padded it back to build the wall up again. They would come along later on and fill it up with water and plant the rice.

Who would, the women or the men?

Women. The only men about were,

Were soldiers were they?

Yeah, soldiers.

So did anybody have any hanky panky with the women?

No, no, no.

34:30 **No one?**

No, no one, wasn't interested.

Why was that?

Not interested no. No, no, no.

How come you weren't interested if there were attractive women there, I find that very difficult?

They didn't look nice.

Didn't look nice, I thought Italian girls were good looking.

Didn't look nice, in their working gear like, oh yeah.

35:00 No, no. We didn't have much time, talk to them anyhow like you had the little guard there with the big rifle, he was a little Italian man, he couldn't get a job in any army at all and he had that particular rifle, 10 feet above him, you know, and he was a guard and some of them were very officious, and some of them not, some were very pleasant,

35:30 and get away you bloody mug, they couldn't understand us and we couldn't understand them so tell them to get away and leave us alone, until such times as we took off, fighting, some of them wanted to go down south, some of the boys in the camp wanted to go down south. I said, "No ways am I goin' down through that German line." because that's were they was, the Germans were down that end,

36:00 and they were caught they got caught.

What happened to them? Did they get shot?

No, no, no. They were prisoners of war in Germany; we sent them over to Germany. We kept on moving north as best we could until we come across Giuseppe (UNCLEAR),

Hang on, until you get to the Partisans and all that,

36:30 **what was your food like there? What sort of food?**

Rather watery. Meat, still cabbage and vegies and carrots, watery very like you know, pour it out in the dixie, and you were lucky if you got a piece of carrot or some damn thing, and very little meat. You don't

know what the meat

37:00 was, could have been anything.

You didn't eat it?

Could have been bloody horse, could have been anything, you didn't worry, you ate it.

Horse you said?

Could have been horse, could have been camel, could have been any damn thing, same as Palestine, the sausages were made in Palestine, we ate them but you didn't know if you were eating horse, camel or donkey or what. No hygiene amongst them.

No hygiene?

37:30 No, no, very little hygiene, if they wanted to have a widdle [urinate], sort of business, the girls when they was workin' they would just squat down on the track. No pride, no dignity, no nothing. So you can imagine how the eyes didn't attract them.

When you saw this you just felt revolted?

They did the same thing when they wanted to do a

38:00 poo.

The women?

Yeah. Do it on the path, between the beds. Be careful where you walk.

Another form of land mines?

Yeah, land mines alright, you slipped on in.

Tape 6

00:32 **I wanted to ask you, I will take you back a bit; I wanted to ask you about the Basutos.**

Basutos.

What are Basutos exactly? I have never heard that?

In Africa you got different types, you got Zulus, you got Basutos,

01:00 different groups.

So they were a full African tribe?

Oh yeah, a full African tribe, yes.

An army division.

They were the South Africans, you see they were what's called "Bi-South Africa." how they come over to us I do not know, but I don't know whether anybody else had any, but I had a group of them and

01:30 we told what to do, dig trenches and we was up on a hill, overlooking a road like you know and I could see the idea what it was for. These fellas would dig away there and be cheery, singing songs and then they would strike rock or something and I would have to put a plug in it and blow it like, you know and I told them, "Bomb bomb." I would sing out to them and they'd run a bloody mile away, like

02:00 you know, and call them back, come on back you come.

Did you learn any of their language?

At that time your mind wasn't working with different languages and people you would meet you know.

Did you enjoy working with them?

Oh they were great, they were great yeah.

02:30 Their truck had come with their tucker on it, out with their little dixies same as us like, you know as in the army, feed them up and fill them up. After about an hour we'd say come on back to work, no troubles whatsoever. They were a great mob.

So were they part of the South African Army?

Evidently yes.

Were they a special division of their own or part of part of the general army?

I never seen many of

03:00 them together, I only seen our little mob, my little mob, they used to bring a truck in of a night time and take them away. Bring them back next morning on the truck and I would get in the truck and take them up to the job and away we'd go start workin' again.

Were they happy working with you?

Yeah, yeah, happy go lucky buggers, yeah. Never seen so many so happy,

03:30 laughing and singin' all the time.

Did you every play games with them, at lunch time or anything?

No, no, I'd see them in the morning and I would go up there at lunch time, sort of business, they sat down babbling away to themselves you know, I would be a little bit further away, no, no, unfortunately the language barrier in all these things is not good

04:00 you know. I would love to be able to have a yarn with them, find out their history, if they had a wife and family at home and all that sort of business, but no, no you couldn't do that. See 'em in the mornin', take 'em up to the job, bring them back to, and away they take them, where they was camped I would not know.

Did they speak any English at all?

No, no, no.

None?

04:30 No.

But they understood a few words, like bomb?

They knew all about them when I showed 'em it.

So generally you worked with using just a couple of English words?

Yeah, only a couple of English words like, "Bomb." and, "Come on work." other than that nothing. They were a great

05:00 mob, great nice guys.

This is in Syria where you were working with the Basutos. You were laying land mines?

Not in Syria, no.

Ok, tell me exactly

05:30 **what you were doing and how you did it?**

Practically nothing in Syria, other than training like you know.

Ok my mistake. Where were you working with the Basutos?

That wasn't Syria of course, that was

06:00 It was just out of Damascas. Basutos was just out of Damascus.

So when you were working with the Basutos, were you laying land mines there?

No.

Ok, what was the work you were

06:30 **doing and describe to me exactly how you did it?**

I was given the whereabouts where to put these trenches, and I used to plan it like, mark it out for them, with a little pick sort of thing and mark it out.

So were they defensive sort of trenches for fighting in?

Oh yeah. It was overlooking a main road. I could see the idea of it sort of business

07:00 like they'd be up top here and they'd be down there and they'd be just slaughtered down below, I could see the idea of it sort of business. So we'd dig the trenches and someone else would come along and sandbag them, and a put a bit of whatchacallit there.

So what was your role?

Just there in charge of diggin' the trenches, making the holes in the ground, put it that way.

And did you plan where the trench would go?

07:30 No, I was told.

Ok.

That was all organised, yes. The old sergeant would come out, that was the first morning you know. "Silver goes there, and I want that one there, and I want that one there." and that was all organised sort of business and away he went back to camp and left me there.

And had you been trained to use the gelignite

08:00 **or the TNT whatever you used?**

Yes.

Where were you trained to do that?

Well, I don't know, it's a simple thing really, as long as you are careful. It's in a stick sort of business and all you put a whatchamecallit in it and press it down into it and put it near a rock or under a rock. I didn't make holes. It might be like a

08:30 bloody nuisance rock and I would just put it underneath or something and light it off meself, and when she goes "Bang." only 1, see it all depends on how many, you put down 2, 2 bangs go off. I was careful I only put 1 down at a time. When that went off, we waited a little, and come on, up they'd come and they'd shift the rock and throw it up on top of the whatchamecallit

09:00 and oh yeah, no troubles. Quite easy.

So was it in Syria you had your 21st birthday?

No, Alamein.

That was in Alamein?

Alamein.

Tell me about your 21st?

We had to go to pick up some supplies down at the station; there was a headquarters of supplies

09:30 like you know. We had to get some for the Pioneers, so we trucked it down, loaded up what we had to get and we was on our way back and all of a sudden we looked up and there they were, comin' at us, so we jumped out of the truck because that was the first thing they would want to hit was the truck.

This was the Stuka dive bombers?

Yes. Stukas, oh yea. Rowdy damned things, ooh. Anyhow they was

10:00 there for 3 or 4 minutes strafing a few bombs and lettin' a few bullets go. Luckily they never came anywhere near us. Why they didn't have a go at the truck I wouldn't have a clue. But I was well away from the truck of course. You like prowl on the ground like and they kind of move away, you see them getting further away. Still dive bombing and when they are done dropping their bombs they

10:30 strafe, machine gun. Whether they got anyone I wouldn't have a clue, because we got back in the truck and as quick we were away zoom back home as quick as we could.

I have heard a lot about the Stukas and that they had a very particular sound that was quite terrifying?

It was shocking, a shocking sound.

Can you describe it

11:00 **for me?**

It is very hard to describe like, it was a whine, really loud like something travelling through the air at a great pace. I don't know, it was really noisy I can assure you. There must have been something on this plane to make this noise whenb they built the plane. There must have been something that made this particular noise.

11:30 And they would come out of the sun you see. You don't see them, then they come out of the sun you see. You would hear them, they're comin', and we would duck for cover. I seen several fights in the air with our planes and German planes, over Alamein. Yeah, Stukas in particular. Very, very

12:00 very, I don't know. I was pleased I got me 21st birthday pay in.

You got special pay?

No, I was pleased I got me 21st day in, I lasted it out.

Did you have anything special planned for your birthday?

No, no you can't because you was up early in the mornin'

12:30 and you was, every morning you was up at daybreak like and in your trench and you had your gun ready, that was when they mostly attack, the Germans, was early in the mornin'. So we was prepared if they did attack at that area, but no there was no attacking at all.

Did any of your coppers [friends] give you a present?

They wouldn't know.

Oh, you didn't tell them.

No, no, no,

13:00 no. That was my little secret. The fellas I had me 20th birthday with, in Darwin, they weren't with me in 15th Platoon, they were with the 14th Platoon. See they split E Company up in different platoons. When we done our initial

13:30 training they split us all up and put us in different platoons. Different Company, A Company, B Company, C Company, I was drafted to C Company, 15th Platoon. That was that area see, that's why the ones I had me 20th birthday with, they weren't available like. They could have been anywhere. Anywhere at all they could have been.

14:00 **We spoke before at quite some length about the brothels and you mentioned a bit about masturbation and various ways that the blokes relieved their sexual tension, did any of the blokes get friendly with each other?**

No,

14:30 not really. We had a lad there which was he admitted himself that he was gay, them days you didn't call them gay, you called them poofters. Fella by the name of Moodie, he didn't worry us. We knew he was a poof, but he didn't worry us. He was last heard of in the Sydney Markets, in the

15:00 you know the fruit and veggie market. He was workin' there the last we heard of him.

But he was a good digger?

Oh yeah, he done his job, he didn't worry us.

He was accepted by all the blokes?

Yep, yeah, he done his job, he was a good fella really. No hanky panky with him. If he wanted it, he'd go away on his own and do it to whatever he wanted, you know. Yeah, Moodie,

15:30 Mr Moodie.

Were there, say in Damascus or some of the other places you visited, were there ever brothels with boys or men available?

No, only the women.

Only the Street of 1000 Arseholes?

No not that. That was all. They would have to pay you to go in, to see them sitting out on the seats,

16:00 oh God. Guts hanging over the money box, I remember one night, I put me foot out and lifted one of the flap at one time, no, no. You wouldn't want to. No interest there, no, no ways.

16:30 **Ok, you mentioned at one point that, I think in telling a story, I think you said that you prayed to God that it wouldn't happen to you. Did you pray to God?**

I went to each church service. If you didn't go to church service, you got some sort of a

17:00 job in the camp. That didn't worry me, I wanted to go to church. I am not a Catholic, but I even went to Catholic groups, you know. There was a church for Anglicans, there was only a gathering like, with the priest or the parson, and he would say few words and sing a few hymns. You know what I mean, you seem to think

17:30 well ok, he was on your side. Well he was too, I am here.

Did you go to church much as a youth, before the war?

No.

At all?

We went to the Salvation Army as a lad and that's about all. The Salvation Army was close to home and I wanted to join the band then and all that sort of business. As a kid you want all those things.

So did

18:00 **your time in the war make you think more about God?**

No, not really. The only time I seen more of God was when this family next door, son was drugs and booze, daughter was drugs and booze.

18:30 Now, they don't touch any of that, even with church, they are high up in the church. There's a church up near the racin' track up there it's not a church, they use that part for, it's differently, I went up there, it's all this loud music and this singin' different songs, not like

19:00 church was. You know, it was different, totally different altogether. They liked it. The Lord and hold your hand up sort of business if, Jesus has you and all that sort of caper. But they have come from the dregs to a beautiful family. Just recently the lady next door went up to the

19:30 wedding of one of the daughters. They had 7 children, I don't know how she done it, but 1 committed suicide and 1 had a motor car accident and was in such pain and couldn't get rid of it and how he done it I don't know, but he committed suicide. 6 of them are still alive, 2 boys and 4 girls. All their photographs up there on the wall. They have all been good to me. My family,

20:00 my grandson there with his 2 children, he may come out occasionally, but no, no. Ever since I lost me wife I have been on me own. Me daughter we lost to breast cancer. She had her breast taken off at St Vincent's Hospital, I tell you about it at the time, she came up there, she brought a friend with her she wouldn't let her mother

20:30 where the breast was taken from. She brought a friend with her to dress it and all that. Anyhow, when she went back, she wasn't back very long when the phone rang and her husband said she was in hospital, so they sent her home that day, a Thursday, she couldn't stand on the Friday, so he took her back again. Saturday morning she was dead, clot or something. So I lost both me daughter and me wife with cancer. And I got

21:00 prostate cancer. It's going alright at the moment, I don't feel I don't even know it's there. It's been, what, 5 months. I go back to hospital on the 1st October, back to Heidelberg, yeah.

I wish you luck.

They have taken

21:30 my testes off me and all, I have got nothing down there at all in testes. They done all that sort of business, scrape the prostate and done all those sorts of things. But, we're still alive, still goin', still breathing air. Still as happy as ever.

That's good, I admire your spirit.

I already went and paid for my funeral, I went up about 3 months ago,

22:00 over to Preston. \$5,570, to be buried.

Crikey.

\$5,570. I am a landowner, I have already got a plot at Faulkner. I am a landowner, I call meself a landowner. I done that on account, I don't want my sister to be worrying about

22:30 things like you know. That's all fixed up, it's all finalised. They just have to come and pick the body up and away we go.

This is a strange question, but I mean it seriously and it's an important one, what do you think will happen to you after you die?

Me, I will be 6 feet underground, that's as far as it goes.

That's as far as it goes?

23:00 Yeah, 6 feet underground. It's crap, this going to heaven and all that sort of business and you come back as a dog and you come back as a mosquito or some bloody thing. That's all crap, to me, my opinion. Once your body stops functioning sort of business, well you are

23:30 gone, there's no two ways about it. Some, what about those that are burnt, you cremate 'em. I got me wife's ashes in there with me now, goin' down with me.

Do you think God intervenes here on earth, do you think he looks out for people?

24:00 Well when you have been through a war and you have seen your mates killed and everything and you say, "Where the bloody hell is God?" That's what I say to these Seventh Day Adventists who come

knocking on my door. Bit of drivel you know. I say, "I seen a war, I lost several mates all dead. Where was God then? Thank you, goodbye." Sends them off quick.

24:30 I am not a disbeliever, but I am not a true believer, put it that way.

You say you lost several mates, were you with any of them when they died?

No, a few wounded, Bob Dobel wounded, no. Only Murphy was the closest one, Murph, the mortar got him. And injured another

25:00 little guy. Yeah, he was, I forget his name now. I seen Murph dead of course. That's about it yeah.

How did it affect you when you heard about your mate?

I was only about 20 yards away from Murph when the mortar lobbed, well one lob was a very welcome lob. We was layin mines

25:30 at the time, so you never know, but no more come over, thank you God, thanks to the Lord, up there.

I would say you are hedging your bets, you are still a gambling man.

I thank him sometimes. No more come over so we finished our job, we moved on when we come back Murph was gone, so we picked him up and took him up to the RAP. He was

26:00 one of them in the body bag when we passed the RAP on the way out. So we was in there, layin' mines on the 23rd October when the heavens opened up and 10 o'clock. You got no idea, every gun they had opened up at the one time, 10 o'clock. All the shells come over the top of us. Jerry put a few shells back, not many. And this went on for quite

26:30 sometime. The shell you hear is not the one that gets you like, it's the one you don't hear that gets ya. But the one that's fair loudest is the one that is goin' away from you. And, there were shells going, and you should have seen that night, and all the guns were they were, there was all empty cartridge cases. There were

27:00 stacks and stacks of them around each gun where they fired each gun that night. And that was the start of the whole push, on the 23rd October.

Ok just getting back to Murph, how did that affect you when he copped one?

He wasn't actually, I had a couple of beers with Murph, he was a big lad,

27:30 he was a good lad, but you know how you pick up a mate up and well he's not a mate no more, we found one another doing the same things and wanting the same things and like the same things and they're the ones you make your mates, and that's how we go like you know. I got one now that met in

28:00 Switzerland. Boyd, Slim Boyd, he lives in Byron Bay. Slim's a bit younger than me, he was young when he went in, he's a good guy. I have had him all these years, for a mate. We phone one another occasionally, he lost his wife. He had 1, 2, 3 children. He married an English girl. He stopped in the army and

28:30 he didn't come out of the army when the war was over. He stopped in the army and finished up a sergeant major, or some darn thing but yeah, old Slim, him and I are still mates. He comes down here and I make this sofa into a bed for him. And give him a feed and say, "Ta ta." Good man, been friends all that time. He lost his wife,

29:00 she had asthma and died with it, his family is 1 Robyn and the 2 boys are up in Queensland. I don't know, you make your own mates, you find them. They do the same things you like. You go into Switzerland like you know, drink Boost [?] there, you got little bob for the work you done. Not much.

29:30 They pay you in their money, in francs, you go down the hill along the little part of the town, you get a litre of Boost, and drink that up, it was very strong stuff. That's where I met him, good fella, had a drink together and walked home to the camp together and been mates every since.

30:00 Just a conversation that's all you know. That's how it started, I found he liked the same things I did and he done the same things I did. He come from Holbrook in NSW.

Ok well that brings us to the Battle of Al Alamein. Can you tell us what that was exactly like to experience, what actually happened for you?

Well in the Battle of Al Alamein, you are well aware that

30:30 every night from the 23rd onwards, and prior to that too, from the 23rd you got a moonlight night. Well they're frightened somewhere else, well we're laying mines. It was the night of the 30th, we didn't go out layin'

31:00 mines. I thought to myself, "There's something amiss here." We didn't go out, we might have laid all the mines we wanted to lay. They said, "No, come on, everyone on board, on board this truck." 15 Platoon

had a truck, and 14 Platoon had a truck and 13 Platoon had a truck, and away we went. We was given bullets. We could see then we was going into action.

31:30 So, we was the last, 13 Platoon and 14 Platoon went in, gained a bit of ground, 14 followed through and gained a bit of ground. We was the last to go over like, and we got as far as the railway line. This is where the sergeant asked me to go across and have a look and see if there was anything I could see there, and I was very stealthy bout that, and when I came across the railway line when I arrived there, I came across this beautiful

32:00 bunker, it was made with sandbags. You don't go down there in those sort of things, they could be booby trapped. I looked around there and there was a body layin' not so far away, and down I went down to the ground, kept me eye on it, get me gun ready, he never moved and I never moved. So I gradually moved over to him and I could see he was

32:30 dead, quite dead. One of the boys had got him early. This dugout smelt of human, we all got a smell about us. You get in those little places and you fart and it stinks. Smelt like you know, I didn't go down, no way in the world would I go down because it could have been booby trapped. So I couldn't find no more Germans, I couldn't find no more

33:00 movement, so I got back over the railway line and I told Vinnie Grace, and he said, "Alright, we'll move over" and the platoon moved over and kept movin' over, and met no one, we didn't meet anyone. It was daylight, and we had to get to the beach before daylight. Cut them right off like. But we didn't, we couldn't get there, so the order come to dig in.

I think we

33:30 **have been through this before, but I wanted to ask you, there was some terrific bombardment at the Battle of El Alamein, did you see any of that?**

It was going over our head. We was layin' mines in kinda now man's land. All the shells were goin' over our head. A few German ones come back, a bit of mortar and bit of German, that's about all, that was that particular night, like you know.

34:00 That was only that night, that barrage opened up on 23rd October. 7 days later we had our first action, the battalion had our first action like you know. They evidently done well according to that, we hadn't struck anything, those in front of us struck it all like you know, we just followed suit, like where they had been.

34:30 I got to the railway line and it was our turn to go across the railway line to the beach, which we didn't do in time and the order come through to dig in.

That's when you were taken prisoner by the Germans, taken prisoner at that point?

Yes.

You said before that you went out there to fight

35:00 **tanks armed with only a 303. Did you feel this was a bit unfair?**

Well it's always unfair sort of business when you got to fight, either fight soldiers with tanks and you got a 303. The British were supposed to have all the machinery, I read that again, they got all the guns, they got all the anti-tank guns. Where were the bloody things? The Aussies are in there fighting, but where the bloody things?

35:30 Where were they? They were with the Poms. Wasn't even an anti-tank gun, anywhere. Not an anti-tank gun or a shell come over, not one thing. There were stuck in a hole, just like that.

Did you feel ill equipped at the time?

Oh, when I seen those tanks I knew we was ill equipped.

36:00 Soon as I seen those tanks comin' over, they had us all covered like, a long line of them.

Around about how many tanks do you think you saw?

I reckon there was 7 or 8. Behind each one of them was 10 soldiers, about 10 German soldiers. The tanks stopped and out they come and of course we were completely surrounded then, they all had sub machine guns and we had little 303 rifles.

36:30 **How did you actually surrender?**

The lieutenant got out and as soon as we seen him get out that was it, there were not further orders from him, so we all followed suit.

Did he put down his gun, raise his hands?

No, no, no. We had no equipment anything and we just

37:00 walked out like you know.

So you left your guns behind you?

Yeah, yeah, guns and equipment and everything. The water bottle was on the equipment you see and he said to get back and get your bloody water bottles you silly fools. He allocated 2 or 3 soldiers to each one of us and back to our hole and got our water bottle and back to them and off we went, bang bang bang.

So you were loaded on to

37:30 **a truck and the tanks continued ahead?**

We didn't see. They stopped there they didn't go any further. It was on a kind of a rise our mob, I knew they were up there our mob, they might have had anti tank guns, I don't know. They may have had it. They knew they was up there too. They knew we was on our own.

38:00 So no, not even a shell come over like, you would think they would signal sort of business like the Germans are so and so and so and sniper so and so and so, 50 yards. Send a few shells over, not a bloody thing.

Tape 7

00:32 **So once you were taken prisoner, what was morale like amongst you and the blokes?**

Well, it wasn't too good, I don't suppose, there was no food available, I had a piece of chocolate there which I ate. And

01:00 there was no food available sort of business and layin' on the ground on a cold, cold night. Morale was very low, very low indeed. You didn't know what was goin' to happen from the following day. We didn't know.

Did you think there was a possibility you might be shot?

No, not really, no, there wasn't nothing like that all, only if you done the wrong thing. Now,

01:30 Mudgie, he done the wrong thing and he never come back home.

Yes, now you mentioned Mudgie, he tried to escape; he jumped off the back of the truck, and then what happened? Did he get run over?

The truck just kept on goin'. Some Italian would pick him up.

So he tried to escape by jumping off the back of the truck and then got hit by the next truck?

Yeah.

02:00 No, it wasn't good the morale, like. We kept on goin' I think it was Tunis where the port was, where the cargo boat was like. And all these Arabs there was laughin' and gigglin' at us and spittin' at us like you know as we marched through them. I haven't got any time for Arabs I can assure you. Spittin' at us and you know and laughing that we was

02:30 prisoners of war and then straight on to this cargo ship. And put us on the cargo ship and it wasn't long before she set sail down the hold, if you wanted to go to the toilet you had to go up the iron steps and that was practically covered in, the fella had dysentery and that was covered in crap, the steps, put your backside over the

03:00 side of the boat with 2 bloody grinnin' Italian soldiers lookin' at you, you know. No dignity at all. And then we was gone for half a day when the motor stopped on the boat and everything went quiet. The thought that come to my mind and a lot of the fellas minds was that there was a sub [submarine] about. It was quiet there for a while, up top,

03:30 they didn't even make a noise, the soldiers. So we believed then there was a sub about, whether it was ours or Jerry's, it was hard to say. Anyhow after about half an hour the motors started again and away we went. That's where we got the Trincomalee to Messina. Anyhow we got off the boat at Messina, transported by ferry across to Italy.

04:00 Messina Strait. And all the way from then up to Campo 57 up in Udine. And it was night time so we saw Etna, Mt Etna like, the flames comin' out of her like.

Oh, it was active at the time?

Not active, it was like you know.

04:30 **Just glowing?**

Yeah, yeah. And, well that was it and I think I have told you about the rest, we was allocated to a bunk and hut and that's where I met me little mate Rangi, Maori boy.

Tell me a bit more about Rangi?

He was a nice little chubby fella he was. Little fat fella, happy go lucky bugger.

05:00 I think he was taken at Alamein, previous, the one previous to that, that fight like. When they stopped the Germans from comin' to Alexandria. They got caught there, he was alright, I don't know much about his family but he was honest, he was everything was shared, shared properly, no bigger bit for me and

05:30 a smaller bit for you. He shared properly. I had no complaints about that boy, he was quite nice. He was good. Yeah.

So you became strong friends?

Yes, at the camp. The only time we left Rangi was when we went on the working bee, took us out and lined us up on this Anzac Day. We thought they were going to have a bit of an Anzac session,

06:00 you know, but it wasn't, it was "Bang, bang, bang you, you and you on that truck." and away we went. It was a workin' party in the rice fields at a place called Collobiano.

Did you ever see Rangi again?

Never saw Rangi again. No, no, no. Rangi might have went to a different place workin' party,

06:30 I don't know. It was only the Aussies formed out there for the workin' party. There wasn't no New Zealanders, Indians or nothing like that. There was just Aussies.

Ok, so you were in the camp, there was all different races and then you got split off into different groups and the group you were with was only Australians?

Only

07:00 Australians.

So after you got split up, you were split away from Rangi?

Didn't see them no more, didn't see them no more, I believe they was all sent to Germany, prisoners of war.

So how long were you all together before they split up the groups, before Anzac Day?

Ooh, it wasn't that long, I don't know, we got taken in November sort of business. Anzac Day, what was that?

07:30 November, December, January, February, March, April, what's that? 5, 6 months.

So in those 5 months, what were you actually doing?

Nothing really.

Nothing?

Nothing, that's when I used to go out and get the meals, that's all.

They didn't have any work prepared for you?

No.

Did you have to go to a roll call or anything?

Oh yes.

08:00 Only a count really, they never said your name, because they couldn't repeat your name. Some of them I don't think. Only a count like you know, if the count wasn't there, then pop, find out where they might be still in bed or some silly thing. But everything went alright there.

So how did you keep yourselves

08:30 **entertained?**

Aah, no other way at all, but to talk to one another, talk about families, about where you lived, and they came from all parts of Victoria like you know. Rangi, I don't know where he come from, but us Aussies, we stick together like you know. And

09:00 yeah, we talked about families, and that's about all and sit out in the sun and delouse ourselves, and all that sort of caper, and you might go down and watch the two-up game. Go for a walk. Can't walk outside the compound, but you can walk around inside the compound. Walk outside it no.

What about with some of the other

09:30 **races and countries? How did you get on with them?**

Well you couldn't get near them because the Indians were the only ones to come through us to go to the toilet. You didn't talk to them, you wasn't near them, they was isolated away, they had their own little camps, their own kitchens, their own cooks, and all that sort of business. The Indians were about the only ones, New Zealanders,

10:00 was already in the camp, Rangi was already in the camp. There wasn't many of them.

So the area you were in there was only Australians and a few New Zealanders?

A few New Zealanders, yeah, yeah.

Did you ever speak to any Indians who came through?

No, not really, we let them go, we let them past you know, to the toilets sort of, we used the same toilet, but you know they were in there and you could hear their tins hittin' the floor, and they were there cleansing

10:30 themselves. They walked passed us with this tin of water, walked past you, you know what's going on. They kind of cleansed themselves with their fingers and this water. I used a bit of paper meself.

Did you have paper?

Oh yeah, there was paper there. Yeah, yeah. The parcels were good

11:00 Canada, from England and Canada, very few from Australia. Sometimes you got one each, sometimes you had to share one Rangi and I would share, sometimes we got one each. They gave us like. That's where the Japanese prisoners they got nothing like. That's where ours was a little bit easier.

11:30 Greatly easier than the Japs, because we got nothing like that, parcels and all that sort of business, bit of food. I suppose, something different from them. They earned their \$25,000 the government give em. Too late though. Half them were dead, like the government give them \$25,000, just a couple of years back.

So in general

12:00 **how did the guards treat you?**

Alright, they was alright.

Were they fair?

Don't stand on their toes like. You got treated like the way you treated them. Anyone, even your army mates, they treat you the way you treated them. Oh yeah. You got to be thinking up here all the time, especially when there is danger. Change the lane everywhere. Plenty of guns about and plenty of bullets

12:30 about, just be nice.

You mentioned that sometimes people weren't nice or if they did the wrong thing, they would get punished, what sort of punishments exactly?

Well they had little cells like they would put them in and keep them for 2 or 3 days. Let them out. That's about, they didn't go back again of course.

13:00 Lesson number one for them.

Would they be fed in the cells?

Oh yeah, they got one meal a day.

Just purely solitary confinement?

Yeah, put it that way, solitary confinement yeah. Talk to themselves.

So you when you went into special work detail, were you taken away from the camp?

Taken away

13:30 from the camp?

Yes, you mentioned on Anzac Day you were split up on work details?

Yeah, taken away on a truck, loaded on to a truck, Italian truck, Italian guard, one on the back with you. Away we went, we could see as we were getting close to the rice fields, that it was going to work. We come to this little village, place called Collobiano.

14:00 That was already wire netting and bloody barbed wire around a kind of a little, big as this I suppose, bunks and the like you know. Yeah, we got a bunk each, Freddie Clark, a fella by the name of Freddie

Clark, was him and I was on a bunk. We got

14:30 crook [ill], Freddie and I, I forget this one, so we was hot and cold, cold and shivering and in the war there was a lot of mosquitoes, in the water like, you know. So Freddie come good and I didn't come good. So they got a doctor for me. They took me to

15:00 Vercelli, to the hospital, one guard. I was there for about a week I suppose. They got me right and back to the camp again. Word got out that it was Dengue Fever. I don't know that I would class it as that. It wasn't malaria. It was through mosquitoes just the same. Could have been Dengue Fever I don't know.

15:30 **The medical treatment you got, was it good?**

Pardon.

Was the medical treatment you got good?

Good, yeah, there in Vercelli.

Did they have a well equipped hospital?

Yeah, oh yeah, nice little bed there, rest up. So and back to camp again, and that was alright, but it wasn't long after that that we moved out. The 5 of us got together

16:00 and away we went.

What was it like, this is when you decided to escape and you got into the little boat?

There was fighting down below in the bottom of Italy, there was big, big fight, war goin' on there and like and these little Itie fellas, they got jittery, they wanted to get home, they didn't want to mess around with us. They lost a lot of attention to us.

16:30 So one day we walked up to the river and had a look and no one following us sort of business. We came back and the next day we decided we'll do that the same, and there was a boat up there, no oars or anything in it. So we said the five of us could get in that boat yeah.

What sort of boat was it?

Just a bloody old wooden thing.

Row boat, dinghy?

Yeah, row boat, few seats in it and we said this is

17:00 alright, tomorrow we are in it and the five of us we moved out. No one followed us. We got into this boat; we pushed it off shore, no oars or anything in it. And away we sailed down this river. And then we seen this village comin' up so with our hands, we tried to get into the bank, which we did and we got out off the boat, and away she went, we let the boat go. We got out and

17:30 it was a little village called Oldenico and I went up to a house there and I asked them for some food, and a chap there by the name of Giuseppe Bosco, gave us something. I explained we was Australian prisoners of war, escaped, trying to get to

18:00 Switzerland. So he took us down outside the village a little bit, there was this slow movin' stream, and in the middle there was a kind of a little island. So he took us in there and had an axe and that sort of business, and cut some branches off trees and made a kind of Aborigine sleep out sort of business, and he brought us down food for about three or four days, and I don't' know

18:30 Andy, Knoxie, how he met this sheila I do not know, I do not know to this day how he met this sheila. Anyhow there was a fella come past with a gun, a double barrel shotgun, chasing hares. And I told Giuseppe Bosco about this and the best way we could and Giuseppe said, "You got to get away from here." If he had have been caught with us, he was gone.

19:00 Shot him straight away.

Can I ask you about Giuseppe? Did you talk to Giuseppe much?

Only sign language and all that sort of business you know, food, and he could say where are the what do you call them? Partisans. Switzerland was the biggest subject, he knew all that. Then the

19:30 Partisans come up, now he told us where, in his language, you go that way sort of business, and you strike them up there, which we did. We said goodbye to him. A great guy he was, I got a photograph of him there. A great guy and we were away, we travelled of a night time. We didn't travel of a day time.

Now, did you have shoes?

20:00 Pardon.

Did you have shoes at this point?

Well, you didn't know who was like, again for you, like you know. We would sleep in a shed out in a barn like on a bit of straw, go in late and go early before anybody was up, and keep on goin' like this. Anyhow we got up this

20:30 big rise and there was this big shed. On top of the rise really, there was only the four of us, we lost Andy, to this Sheila. Then out come these bloody Partisans, with rifles you know, "Bang, bang, bang." up in the bloody air. I said, "These crazy bastards!" Anyhow we stopped there for a while with the language barrier, they never gave us no guns to fight, they never done no

21:00 fightin' themselves. We kept on pressing our claim that we wanted to go to Switzerland.

They didn't fight at all?

Not while we was there. Weak, weak.

What were they doing?

Just runnin' outside with a gun firin' it up in the air. The Partisans, yeah, yeah. While we were there they never done anything. Anyway we won them over about goin' to Switzerland. Then

21:30 language was very hard again, they ushered the four of us out, so we followed them up. Further up the hill then they said, "Swiss." over there like, fair enough. So away we went, bloody snow was thick on the ground. And, yeah we travelled a little while and we was hungry and

22:00 cold.

Did you all have good shoes?

Not really, no. We was in civvies [civilian clothes]. We had no uniform by that time; we had travelled everywhere, which was not good because you can be charged as a spy, if you are not in uniform. Anyhow, we got hungry and we came across this hut, this hut was like up in the

22:30 mountains, "Now there might be something in there." well we stopped the night, so we gave the door the heave ho and there was a bit of tinned food there, openers and that and we had a bit of a feed, left it nice and clean, none of the empty tins for 'em. And early next morning we were away again.

How were you keeping warm, you must have been freezing?

Oh, you have got no idea. Got no idea, walkin' through snow, trousers

23:00 from there was just hard and icy. And you would take it in turns to lead, sometimes you would find a track, if there was a track goin' down we wouldn't take, we knew it was goin' down. Sometimes if the track was goin' up we would take it. So, this particular, I think it was only the second day, after I got out of there. Yeah. About 11 o'clock, 12

23:30 o'clock, I was leading and I went around this bend, I could see this figure, and a large rock and he was in a uniform much similar to the Germans, and a big gun he had, he shot in just behind this large rock, and I went back to the boys, I said to them, "Look, it could be Germans. What do you want to do? Go back?" And they said, "No, no. We've had it Silver."

24:00 So I said, "Let's go." So around we go and we get to this rock. And all of a sudden we were surrounded by these soldiers like, and an English officer came out, asked who we were. He said, "You know you are in Switzerland now? You are not Jews are you?" "Are we Jewish? No, we are Australian soldiers." So they took us in and we had soup.

What do you think he meant when asked if you were Jews?

Wouldn't let 'em

24:30 in.

They wouldn't take Jews?

Out, go back to where you come from. Why, I do not know.

You as prisoners of war, were in a different class from refugees?

Yeah. But Jewish, they wouldn't let Jews in, they didn't want Jews in. Why, I do not know. But, he asked us if we were Jewish, "We Australian soldiers, soldatas, Australiana."

25:00 He could speak pidgin English and all that sort of business you know, so we didn't have to go through that crap. Big pot of soup and a packet of cigarettes each, smokin' up large and drinking soup. Got no idea to see 4 fellas inside a warm hut, with a nice big pot of soup and a

25:30 packet of cigarettes and a lighter. Anyhow they put us up that night and the next mornin' they took us down to a place called Bellinzona, where they stripped us off and put us through a washin' machine sort of business you know. Strong water and all that sort, and cleaned us up.

- 26:00 Yeah yeah, strong force water like. Cleanse you, anything on you, then they took our clothes away from us and then gave us an English uniform. Great big, great coat and trousers,
- 26:30 up there see that little photograph up the top one, see me in the corner, that's me in English uniform.
- Ok.**
- That was taken in Switzerland.
- Right, we'll get a photo of that later.**
- Did you meet the villagers at all, the Swiss people?**
- Where in Switzerland?
- Yeah.**
- Oh, yes, they were great people. Great people.
- Tell me about them?**
- Yeah, great people, they were so
- 27:00 homely like. Every man in Switzerland was in the army and every man had his equipment at home. You wouldn't know it, but in every house there was a gun and a soldier's uniform. You would meet them in café and come in and have a drink they were like anybody else, they would work say for 7 or 8 hours, 10 hours, and come in and have a drink, Boost, what they called Boost. Was apple cider, there was no beer or anything like that there down in
- 27:30 that little place. And we would drink there with them, and talk with them, as best we could. We would fill up and finish up half piddled and stagger back to camp again, and we had to be back by a certain time, they were very strict the Swiss in that respect. I know one time we came back a little bit late and we tried to sneak in and he caught
- 28:00 us and all of a sudden bang. And we off, and I go into my bunk and I had boots and all on. Boots all me clothes on, 2 or 3 minutes after in they come, panting and everything. They never done anything, they never done a thing, they let us go, but I never done it again.
- What was the**
- 28:30 **bang that you heard?**
- A shot, fired at us.
- Really?**
- Whether it was a warning shot or not I do not know but I didn't stop to find out. I took off, we all did, the 3 of us. I got into my shed and bunk and put blankets over me, and boots and all like. Puffing,
- 29:00 in they come. Walked around made sure everyone was in bed and out again. That was the end of that lot. But it didn't happen again I can assure.
- Did you meet any of the Swiss children?**
- Well now, we met them, the boy scouts and girl guides in a place called Heiden,
- 29:30 Christmas Eve, they came in and all sang "Silent Night" in German. And you have never seen, this little place was Pommies, Aussies, South Africans, Yanks and there wasn't a dry eye in the place,
- 30:00 it was absolutely beautiful, to be free from war and to hear these children singing this song, you know. I have always loved that song, always loved it, "Silent Night." It was great; they were the only children we ever came across, really. We went to a place called Adelboden, which was on a bit of a holiday. We stopped in a big hotel there, there was nobody there at all. And he looked after us, the manager, there was skiing
- 30:30 slopes there, I tried skiing, I done no good. I used a toboggan and dragged it up the hill and get on it and 'achtung!' and belt down the bloody hill, that was at a place called Adelboden. There was a few ice hockey matches, with the Yanks and the locals and we used to go up there and, I got photographs there, and sit there
- 31:00 and watch these fellas play ice hockey. Other than that it was back home again, meal and bed. Cold and we was there for over a week. Why we went up there I do not know. There was a train that had a ratchet, you know up the rise have a ratchet go very slow up the mountain. It was very high up the
- 31:30 mountain Adelboden, a place called Adelboden. We enjoyed ourselves up there, some fellas could take those, our boys could take those skis just, you would think they were born with them. But not me, I was too big and awkward, bumble foot, toboggan done me. Achtung, "Get out the bloody way." Dear oh dear. Yes, that was good, that was a nice place,

32:00 relaxation sort of a place. I have got photographs there.

Just to take you back. When you first surrendered to the Swiss, and they

32:30 **put you in a camp, what was the name of that area, the camp?**

I didn't know the name of the camp; they sent us down a township on the Italian/Swiss border called Bellinzona.

Right.

It was a town. It was in Switzerland across the other side of the border was Italy, Lake Maggiore and Lake Como and we were just stuck in the middle there,

33:00 road into Switzerland.

How long were you there for?

We weren't there for long; we were there for a week I suppose. They organised a few things and then we went to a place called Schaffhausen. They had a camp there, they had camps everywhere, they was using ourselves, they were using them for their own, if anything struck them they would go to

33:30 this camp and they were already prepared.

You mean army camp?

Army, yeah. They were already prepared, so all you had to do was get the gun and the uniform and bang and they allocated this camp and they put us in those camps. And Schaffhausen, we did a bit of work there, they were lopping some fir trees

34:00 down. We wasn't, the locals were doing that, we was just cuttin' the branches off with an axe. You know, just cuttin' the branches off with an axe. Yeah, Schaffhausen, I just can't remember, I think we got a couple of francs a day doin' that. You would go and get a bit of tobacco for yourself and you know. Some lolly in this shop,

34:30 most stations, bahnhofs they called them, they had a shop there a shop in the station, they had a restaurant there too and you could buy those sort of things. That didn't last long and they shipped us off to a place called Schulgen. Now, there I didn't mate meself, they mated me up with two

35:00 Pommie fellas and we went and lived in a private house and he was a baker he was, up on a rise and anyhow we got organised there, had our meals there and we had to go down this hill to the flat there, diggin' peat, they had this machine goin' sort of business to mix up all the peat up and

35:30 forced it out and cut it into slabs and we'd take the slab off and put it out in the sun to dry. And this was their fuel, this was all they had for their fires. And we kept on diggin' this. We had a wonderful time in Schulgen. That's where I met some good friends, in homes and a few there like, we were happy go lucky buggers, I was anyhow, the Poms I don't know, I

36:00 didn't have much to do with them. All they wanted to do was chase sheilas. Anyhow I met a lot of people down there at Schulgen, we was allowed there till 10 o'clock at night, we would go there after work. We wouldn't go there, we would go and have something to eat and then go down and have a couple of beers. Couple of Boosts rather. There I met a lot of people there. Again, the language

36:30 barrier, Hans, he could speak a bit of English, he was a Frenchman, he was a French/Swiss, he was nice, he was a good fella. He used to come over and watch us working all that sort of business, he had his little hat on, I have got a photo of him somewhere there. He gave me a little a nice

37:00 kind of scarf when I left, nice. Over there each canton they call them, like it's a suburb here, but over there they call them cantons, and they have all got their own banner, shield, and on this neck tie, this handkerchief, not handkerchief a necktie, a sort of thing, had all these cantons and all

37:30 their shields on it. I give it away, I give it to me sister. I give it to her so she would get it if anything happened to me, the other sister, the rest of the family, might get in and knock it off, so I give it to the good sister. And, he

38:00 was. We said goodbye to him like and this is where we had to go to France. That was, we left Schulgen to go down to the train, the train to somewhere else, big train, where we met up with all the other soldiers, all the other Aussies in it, English officers there,

38:30 abrupt sort of old buggers they were. Put us on the train and away we went. I remember I tried to sleep, but you couldn't sleep very much. I looked out the window there goin' through a place called Lyons, that's in France, and I thought to myself, "Where in hell are we goin'?" Anyhow we lobbed at Marseilles. The Yanks had taken over France

39:00 completely, by then. They was in charge there in Marseilles, and there was no worries about signing for

two blankets each, they would just hand them to you, not like the old Poms, they would always want you sign your name and your death warrant and all, just two blankets there and give it to us and put us a big kind of place that must have been a dance I think, a couple of palliasses there and

39:30 a fill a palliasse with straw and sleep there, but we were free to go out in Marseilles. We could walk around, we were free, we didn't have to stop there, the Yanks provided all the meals, which was always a good meal as far as we were concerned.

How long were you in Marseilles for?

I would say about a week in Marseilles.

40:00 **Did you get out and see any of the town?**

Yeah, we got and seen it, what intrigued me was we would go and have a leak [urinate], it was that much off the ground sort of business. You see your legs; you see peoples legs and see the stream of widdle, that amused me. And there's no toilet seats, you had to squat on the ground, a little thing in the ground like you know,

40:30 squat down. I don't know, how the other half live of course, and to me that was strange. France, I thought, everybody wants to go to France on holidays. Anyhow for about a week of jockeying around, we got sick and tired of the same thing so we might have a game of cards, or something,

41:00 and then got orders to pack up what we had, we was movin' out. So we moved down the road a bit and had tanks on them, and on the side of these boats were bunks where the tanker drivers used to sleep. There was no tanks in them, so they put

41:30 us in them to sleep sort of business. Big coffee urn there, goin' all day. How the Yanks were, with their coffee, and us the same way. Where did we go through from there? We went through on to the Nile I think.

Tape 8

00:32 Where was we? We was on those things that carried those tanks.

Before that I wanted to ask you about Marseilles, did you go to any of the brothels there?

I had a look, but there was all Americans, big black Americans. And I remember coming down the

01:00 stairs, I had a look, and this big black fella comin down and, "Oh God fancy goin' there." and that's, no, no, no. We had no money anyhow so what difference did it make.

What did you mean, you didn't want to sleep with the same women that black men had slept with?

01:30 No. I can't, no.

Had you met many black men before?

That was the first I had seen. The camp where they were handing out the blankets, they were all white. No blackies, but in the brothel we find 'em. We had a look you know.

02:00 We found out where it was and we said, "Oh we'll go and have a look." But it's all upstairs, the girls are all upstairs and this big black fella come down the stairs, and had a big smile on his face, and up with another black fella with a big smile n his face and I said, "Let's get out of here." So we got out of there, and had a little walk around, we got sick and tired of going over the same place all the time.

02:30 It was a big place Marseilles you couldn't cover it walkin'. Go you go by the waterfront, the Yanks had all their equipment there from these types of things left their, tank carriers. They got a name for 'em and that sort of business, but I don't know.

Had you had word from the Australian Army at this point? Did you have

03:00 **orders?**

No, still under the Poms, still under England, they was in charge. And we got on to this after a while. We got tracking on these bloody boats, there was about a dozen of us I suppose and we were in a convoy,

03:30 one after the other. There was us and there might have been South Africans and there might have been even Yankee prisoners of war interned, a lot of air force interned in Switzerland. They used to get hit a little bit and the Swiss Air Force would go up and bring 'em in. Bring 'em in the

04:00 Switzerland, and what they want the planes in I do not know, but there was a lot of Yankee pilots. And anyhow we got into these things and away we went, I suppose there would be about 8 or 9 of them, all

got fellas in them, I suppose they might have 10, 20, 30 fellas in them. There was a bunk each, that was the main thing. And we got to the Suez, on trucks,

04:30 now these things never come through, we come through on trucks, we disembarked from them things and on to trucks. English of course, still English and travelled overland to the end of the start of the Suez or the end of the Suez whichever you would like to call it. In the middle there was a transit camp which we done, comin' up one time, we never stopped there we kept on goin'.

05:00 Anyhow I just forget we got on there, another Italian ship, some sort of Italian ship and over we went and got to Naples. Napoli, Naples the English call it and to them it's Napoli. We for a while there we just knocked around, still no money, you couldn't do, the little fellas

05:30 "Come on you, you want my sister, you like my sister, she lovely you know her, she good jigga jig." You just take it with a grain of salt like you know. And no, nothing we done there. One fella he got caught there, I know him, I won't mention his name. He got caught there with the little dose of syphilis. I met him in Melbourne there, after it was all

06:00 over, he was workin' there in Melbourne, I met him in Melbourne, and asked him if it was all over everything, oh yes, come and have a beer, so I went and have a beer, that was the last time I saw him. That's it, now where were we, oh yes in Napoli.

Yes, now tell me about Napoli, what was it like as a city?

Oh, it's their way of livin', I tell you what,

06:30 it's the cleanest in the bloody world. I'll say that. You see, they live high rise places and lanes that wide, hangin out washing outside and throwin' stuff over. It's disgusting really. I didn't like Napoli at all, I wouldn't go across there if you paid money to go across and see it.

07:00 It was war time of course, and might be different in peace time, it's hard to say. We was there for about a week I suppose, it was always a week still under the command of the British. I forget where I went on then, we went on to Napoli. Anyhow it was on to Bombay. Our next port of call was Bombay, and that was

07:30 where we were allowed to get a few bob out of our pay book. Which we did, and I spent wisely, nicely. Anyhow we was there for a week. Anyhow this Australian lady, she was a jockey, a pony jockey, a pony jockey used to go and ride the ponies in races. This fella was a good one, and

08:00 she was his wife. Anyhow she so she invited is upstairs and gave us cups of tea and all that sort of business and explained to us what we wanted in home, what you could buy, sheets were very unavailable, bed sheets very hard to get. So I went and bought some of them and took them back to camp. Thanked her very much. Took them back to camp and then went down to the

08:30 Grant's Hotel, down past the girls in the glass houses. All sitting in bloody glass houses they were, beckoning to come in. "No no, we'll go down to Grants."

When you say glass houses, what do you mean?

Well they was all glassed in.

Shop fronts?

They were sitting in this place, all glassed in, sitting on a chair.

Were you talking about a shop front or an actual

09:00 **house?**

Oh, well, it might have been shop fronts at one time, might have been shop fronts.

Right.

Might have been shop fronts at one time, beckoning us in like. "Sorry, we'll go and have a whiskey." Had a couple of whiskeys at Grants. Slim and I, and that's when Slim and my mate went past the girls again, oh, what a sight. Anyhow

09:30 back to camp and we was there for a week, I think, in Bombay. They slept in the streets; you had to walk over the top of them. They would be asleep on the street, it would be a hard surface, you know what I mean. There were hundreds of them, not just one or two whole street full of them, dogs, mangy dogs. Cattle

10:00 roaming around the place. They are all hungry. They wouldn't kill a cow to have a feed, no that was sacred. Anyhow a couple of nights we went out and had a look around. That disgusted I was and so was Slim, the people livin' like they are the poor devils. After about a week there too, everything was a week. They put us on a

10:30 ship controlled by the Yanks, there we lost the Poms. Poms stopped in Bombay. They put us on a one of those. All put together with rivets, what did they call them?

Destroyer or corvette?

No, no, no, it was just an ordinary cargo boat.

Liberty ship?

Yeah, that's it,

11:00 I know the name, I got it written down somewhere, and put us on those the Yankees, and we had cigarettes, you could go to their shop and buy as many cigarettes as you like, we had money. Couple of cartons of, what did I get? A couple of cartons of Camels, yeah, Camels. Put them in me bag until I get home. Sat on the back deck of the ship, it was

11:30 3 or 4 days I suppose and "Land ho." someone sung out like you know. And it was Australia, and we kept on goin' a little while longer, and it was Port Melbourne, we had come in to Port Melbourne.

How was that to finally see Australia?

Well it was early in the morning when somebody sung out, "Land ho." Everybody's eyes was lookin' for it, it was Aussie we was told.

12:00 The Yanks said it was Australia.

How did it feel to finally see Australia?

Oh, gee willikers mate, home, home to me family, it was great. Anyhow we lobbed at Port Melbourne and there was a lot of cars there, beautiful old cars, a big line of them, and we was all allocated, two in the back and one in the front, to these cars. They waited until they all

12:30 filled up, it was a convoy through Melbourne. Up through Royal Park to Camp Pell sort of business and I spotted me mother. And the car was still movin' and very slow and I opened the door and I out and nearly fell arse over head. But anyhow I was there with my mother, the most beautifulest time in my life. And

13:00 me father was there and me sister was there, wo sisters were there, brother was there, it was a real family reunion. Dad couldn't get me into the pub quick enough. I live in Kerr Street, opposite there was the Evelyn Hotel, Dad used to do a bit of drinking there himself. We went home first, sandwiches and a cup of tea, and then, "Come on son."

13:30 Anyhow I went with him. We finished up nice and piddled [drunk], the pair of us. Mum never said a word, never said a word that day. Next day she did. The pair of us together, she told us really off. That was it from then on, we got vouchers, back to

14:00 discharge in Camp Pell. What did we do between home? Oh we went to Ballarat Con Camp. Back to Camp Pell and over to Ballarat Con Camp, to convalesce there. Then what happened from there? Oh, back to Melbourne again, back to Camp Pell, then down to Spencer Street Station on a

14:30 train, and find myself going in to NSW and we lobbed at Greta, we lobbed at a big army camp at Greta, me and several other fellas, and "What's goin' on here?" We thought we had finished the army, we had finished our fighting, I had done my share. I said, "Well that's it." being a straight fight, I could have stopped home, left them, but no I followed it

15:00 through.

What year was this now?

1944.

So the war was still well under way?

It ended 1945.

Had you heard much about the war going on in New Guinea?

Yeah, oh yes. We get the local news, newspaper news, or news of a night time on the radio.

15:30 **But you hadn't heard this while you were overseas. Had you heard anything about New Guinea while you were overseas?**

No. I didn't know even know where my battalion was. I had no fears I was going to be sent back to my battalion, they was slippin' home by numbers again, and route marches, and all that sort of thing and "Yes sir, no sir." saluting and then I took crook. Bit of bladder

16:00 trouble, you know water trouble. And I went on sick parade, Concord Hospital, that's the name of that hospital and I went on sick parade and I was layin' on a kind of walk, it was high up, and I lay halfway across there, and this sister come past and asked me what was wrong with me, and I told her I wasn't feelin' well. They knew we was prisoner of wars kind of business and

- 16:30 she took me in and the doctor examined me and also took a lot of tests and he said Concord Hospital, and I got in the ambulance.
- I want to just take you back. When you were picked up on the wharf in all those cars, was that just for prisoners of war, were you all prisoners of war?**
- That's all that was on that ship.
- 17:00 **And were there people lining the streets to wave at you?**
- No, nothing like that. The only time we saw people was at Camp Pell. There was no news that POWs were coming home. I don't know, my mother must have been notified, my family must have been notified that I was to come, because I was there at Camp Pell.
- So what was the idea do you think putting you in all those cars?**
- 17:30 What was the idea of?
- Well, it sounds like a parade to put you in all those cars.**
- Oh yeah, it was all arranged, there was all kinds of vintage cars, well kept.
- So it was something special?**
- Yeah, they were special cars. Word must have come out, but they volunteered their cars.
- 18:00 See petrol is hard to get, you had to have coupons and all that sort of business, clothing and food was all hard to get. But where they got the petrol from I wouldn't, they might have been allocated petrol to do the job. They might have been allocated coupons to do the job, which they did, and they done it well.
- After you jumped out of the car, did the other cars go on a special parade?**
- They
- 18:30 kept on going around and around and all them fellas that had all their people were waiting for them, but I seen Mama first. I don't whether they seen.
- They arranged the families?**
- Yeah, yeah, all my family was there like, I don't know whether there was wives, or a lot of fellas, wives mightn't have been there, because a lot of homes broke up over the war and the Yanks.
- 19:00 A lot of homes broke up over that. I don't know, I didn't like to see any. I don't like to see sad things; as a matter of fact I can shed a tear here now watching TV [television]. Simple, amazing. I don't like watchin' sad things. When I seen my parents that was enough for me. They said, "Righto word's come on now." how did we get home from Camp Pell?
- Your**
- 19:30 **mother must have been very pleased to see you. It must have been very hard on her?**
- Well, yes, brother Ralph was in the army too, but he didn't leave Australia he went over to WA to do something over there. He was older, he was the first boy, I was the second boy. And two years later after me there was a girl, and six years after that there was another girl. That was the family, over there, photograph in the middle with my Mummy,
- 20:00 my mother and my siblings.
- Fantastic.**
- That was at my daughter's wedding, that was taken, that particular day I know the day, Collingwood were 42 points at half time, playin' Carlton for the Grand Final, 42 points in front and got beat. Carlton beat 'em.
- 20:30 My daughter's husband, she was married that day, he was a real keen Carlton man. Was he happy, married day and Carlton won the premiership, he remembered that day.
- How long did you get to spend with your family before you had to leave for the camp?**
- 14 days I think, and back to Camp Pell.
- What did you do**
- 21:00 **during that time?**
- We had, Sunday, the Princess there in town and community singin' and all that, and I took Mum there and different places like that, I hadn't met my wife by then, but I had met an Italian lass from Elwood,
- 21:30 probably take her to a theatre or pictures or something like that. But it all took time. There was always

something to do when you are back, walk into the city from Fitzroy, walk up Brunswick Street. Into the city have a look around the shops, had to buy a suit and all that, from the coupons they gave us, suit, and socks and shoes and all that sort of business. Rig yourself out.

22:00 I done that when I first met my wife. I was going up to my aunty, my mother's sister she lives up the same street, lovely girl, lovely woman. I went up to see her and show her my civvies, that was when I met my wife, on the verandah sweepin', and finished up I had her for 53 years. 53 lovely years

22:30 I had her.

What was it about her?

She was lovely, she was a lovely looking girl, she was nice and slim and trim, never had an ounce of fat on her, she was beautiful. There are photographs of her there somewhere. Show you after. Then saw Aunty with all the new suit,

23:00 new clobber [clothes], oh blimey teddy, that was the day.

She was still married at the time?

She was, she was married to a soldier now. His name was Doyle; her name was on our certificate as Audrey Doyle. Her name

23:30 was Skipper, but then she married this chap Doyle, had a baby to Doyle, Raima. Took her quite sometime. We lived together for 3 years before she got a divorce, she got a divorce and we married straight away.

Wasn't it unusual at that time for a single man to be seeing

24:00 a... ?

I didn't know the circumstances of her married life, I never asked, I never got. I never even asked how she got her divorce, whether it was through adultery or desertion or what, I don't know from that day to this. Didn't know one thing about it either.

What did your family think of Audrey?

My family knew her

24:30 and evidently at that time during the war, she would go to the hotel, she liked a beer. She used to work in Hickory's Ladies Briefs and Bras in Nicholson Street there, and of course she was only young, with a lot of older people, cigarettes, she started smokin' cigarettes. That killed her in the finish.

25:00 Then she met this Doyle fella, I don't know how, where, she turned Catholic to marry him. And, all this come out later on. I don't know how she got the divorce, where she got the divorce. All I know is she came to me and said, "I am divorced, we'll marry." I said, "Right." So we went into the Registry there in Melbourne and signed up and

25:30 had to get witnesses and so a fella by the name of Elmer, husband and wife came in as witnesses, done all that and married, walked out the place and got in a taxi and went to the Moonee Valley races. High Production won that day.

Did you put money on High Production that day?

Yes,

26:00 I backed High Production. At the school, he used to start movin' at the school. Every time, he won a lot of races, at the school, he started movin' at the school. That was it. Night time a few friends and a few beers and that sort of thing.

Did you have a honeymoon?

No, living with her for 3 years

26:30 before we were mate. I give her credit, she was a wonderful girl, I couldn't touch her in any way at all until we started to live together. Give her great credit for that. She never even cried during her illness. I couldn't understand. We was in different rooms in the

27:00 finish. She was in bed one afternoon I went in and took the wheelchair in and said, "I'll take you outside in the sun and do your hair and make you look pretty." She said, "Bullshit." They were the last words she said to me, and then she couldn't talk no more. "Bullshit." Anyhow I took her back in to bed again, her sister was comin'

27:30 and all that she was sick. It was sad to see her go that way I tell you. Still, that's life.

So can I ask you, do you know where you were when the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima?

No, I do not. I remember reading about them or hearing about them, Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

- 28:00 A yarn come out, funny sort of yarn, when the bomb hit the place. That was sad, it did end the war of course, but it was sad to see all those innocent people down like that, even though the Japanese,
- 28:30 they were cruel bastards, they done what they was told to do. They started the war. And we finished it. When I say we, as Allies. I don't know where I was when Hiroshima, I don't have a clue.
- 29:00 **Do you remember when the war ended?**
- I was at Stonnington, big home, rest home. Resting, we used to go down to the pub of a night time, it wasn't very far away, have a couple of pots. I was in there when the war finished. So there was no one to
- 29:30 tell us what to do sort of business, so we got a train into home, home to me family, and we had an enjoyable time, me father, Sparrow, he had the nickname Sparrow, he was kind of thin like you know. Good boxer, champion boxer, good umpire, good sportsman really, but he was fine.
- 30:00 **What was going through your mind when you heard the war was over?**
- Well, "How am I going to get out of this army? I don't want no more of it." I wanted out. What happened there? I went back to Camp Pell, who we were, who I was and that sort of business. Next minute I was in there and being discharged
- 30:30 and all that sort of business and, "Goodbye Mr Granland." "Thank you kindly, I am off." Couldn't get out of the place quick enough, wasn't far from home. Camp Pell wasn't very far away from Fitzroy, so I walked, walked around and enjoyed the scenery. Walked past the cemetery there and looked in there and think at all those dead people
- 31:00 who can't see what I can see. It was a nice little walk home. Didn't go past one pub, got a pot in one pub in Nicholson Street. The Evelyn Hotel across from home, had a pot there.
- What was the mood like in these pubs?**
- Alright, it wasn't on every day,
- 31:30 it was only certain hours. It was on certain hours and if you weren't a customer there they wouldn't serve you. Now I give you an idea, when Dad took me over to the Evelyn Hotel for a few beers, it was bottle night and this publican was givin' bottles out see and I just got home, and Dad said, "Go on and get bottles here." and he looked around and said, "You are not a customer, sorry can't give you any
- 32:00 bottles." Well my short fuse started to work, which it did. Well I give that publican everything I possibly could. I said, "You wasn't with me you bastard when I was over fightin' the Germans." Oh, oh, oh, we were great friends, Kennedy his name was, we finished up great friends. Didn't I give him a pay. The same thing with the taxation.
- 32:30 I got a letter from the taxation, saying, "Why hadn't I put my taxation in?" I wrote a nice little letter to them. I didn't put me tax in. I said, "I didn't know how to pay tax with Palestine money." All this sort of, but I heard no more. Then I started to work and had to pay tax. I give one to them and one to me.
- 33:00 And that sort of business, and they knew I had one so I had to pay tax.
- I just want to go right back there's one thing we haven't talked about, when you were first taken prisoner, and you were in the Italian POW camp, I heard that they had a kind of system with the priests with**
- 33:30 **the Vatican for communication?**
- Communication at Vatican City for me because this chappy rode a push bike and put his push bike up against my mother's fence and come and knocked on the door and Mum answered and he said, "Is your son Ernest Frederick Grandland?" She said, "Yes." He said
- 34:00 "He is now a POW in Italy and is safe." "Who are you?" "I am a priest." and all that sort of business. But they did, the Vatican did get one fella out from our battalion, a fella by the name of Bobbie Oestler, they got him out of the POW camp and got him back home, how and where I do not know. He's still alive and living in Noosa.
- 34:30 **Why did they get him out?**
- He was a very strict Catholic, in his private life he was very strict in the Catholic Church, that happened anyhow, this priest come and tell Mum I was alive and safe, which brought a little bit of joy to Mum. She didn't know where we were, what we was doin'. All she could read in the paper, she knew I was at Alamein and the battle of
- 35:00 Alamein was on and read that in the paper in the news, and so many killed and that wasn't good for her, but this news that I was safe, it must have been lovely for her.

So how did this system work?

We got a cable later on, telegram saying

35:30 that I was a POW, "Believed POW on the 30th." I still got it there somewhere, it is nearly in tatters, I have looked at it so many times. "Believed POW." such and such a date, this come off the priest.

Right, the telegram was sent to the priest?

No, no, to my mother.

To your mother?

My mother.

Delivered by the priest?

36:00 Message was delivered by the priest. Not the telegram, the message. The Vatican City must have got all the names of all the Australians sort of business that was in the whatchamecallit and they relayed it by radio to Melbourne or NSW, or where the case may be. Catholic Church got my name and where I lived

36:30 and then out he came, and this must have been after a week after I was taken prisoner. When we first got into Italy put it that way, they must have got all the names and sent it to the Vatican City. That was the outcome of it.

Tape 9

00:32 **I want to ask you if you remember any songs from the army?**

Oh, "Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag."

01:00 "Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major."

Can you sing one of them for us?

Ooooh, no ways in the world, no ways in the world old mate. And I don't read poetry.

Come on and I'll buy you a beer!

I don't want to be a ...

Or a Scotch.

"Show me the way to go home,

01:30 I am tired and I want to go to bed/ I had a little drink about an hour ago and it's gone right to my head." What else do we know? "Pack Up Your Troubles." I suppose that's an

02:00 easy one.

Do you know any other ones?

No.

For the record.

That's it Sergei.

When and where would you sing these songs, these poems?

In the olden days it was about community singing,

02:30 everyone used to sit there and sing songs, you would have somebody up on the stage leading you. Community singing which was done then, but it's not done now. There are a lot of things never done now we used to do goin' back years ago.

03:00 **Did you feel like part of the Anzac tradition?**

Feel?

Yeah, with the military service did you a part of the Anzac tradition?

Yes. I feel I done my part for this country. Well I spent 4½ years of my life, 4 good years, 20, 21, 22, 23 out of this country

03:30 4½ years, so I think I done my part as an Anzac. Even though I didn't do much fight, we was there, we was needed. Put a lot of mines down. A lot of fellas done a lot of fighting and didn't put a mine down. I

put a mine down and never done much fighting. The

04:00 one occasion where it didn't come off. It didn't come off.

So you felt like you had to do your part for the Empire or the country?

For Australia, not the Empire. Australia and solely Australia and no Empires. I love my

04:30 country, I love it very much.

What do you think of the Empire?

Well no comment. No comment. It's part and parcel of this sort of business, we old English we come off the ships years ago,

05:00 when they first come into this country and brought a few sheep over, Merinos, McArthur and all that, we kept the English traditions right up until oh, I'd say the war. Then they just seem to drop right off. And all those changed. They still got to change things.

05:30 Spencer Street Station has been Spencer Street Station for years now; they want to change it to Southern Cross Station. Things like that, that riles me. It does, it riles me, why? Why? Why? They probably have thousands upon thousands of letterhead with Spencer Street Station, just thrown in a dump, and they wonder where the money is going. No, this country is,

06:00 I am not a red ragger, I am not a Communist at all, I can feel this lovely lady that sat on the bench and passed GST, I got names for her that I won't repeat. \$8.80 GST on my electric light bill. Pensioner, pensioner.

Did you think the war

06:30 **was a just war?**

No, no war is a just war; you had a maniac in Hitler. He was a maniac, a dead set maniac, no doubt about that, he wanted the world, he wanted the whole world. He wanted Europe and he got nearly all of Europe, until he lost the war from when he never kept goin' from Dunkirk, attacking England and then he stopped in Russia

07:00 when they went to come in Russia, that's when he lost the war. From then onwards that was it. But he had all Europe tied up.

You saw no justice in the war?

No, no justice in war.

But did you feel you were fighting on the side of good?

Good, sure my word. We are educated people Australians, we are really educated people. And to think that like you know

07:30 what's goin' on in some of those other countries, look at this Iraq sort of business, people are dyin' every day, including our coalition members, the Yanks, but a lot of Iraqi people are dyin', unnecessary. Don't tell me it's all over oil. See America run out of

08:00 oil, they got no oil over there at all, they run out. Iraq had plenty, they couldn't get it. Yes, yes it's political. I look at this Pauline Hanson [politician], three years in goal, political, no doubt about that. Political. They do as they please. This country is not what it used to be.

Ok, I have got another question for you,

08:30 **Ernie. How did you deal with the potentiality of being wounded, or killed? How did you deal with that mentally?**

What with who was killed?

When you were in the war, how did you deal with it, being wounded or killed?

Well for a start off, I started smokin' cigarettes, and

09:00 when you didn't know, you kinda worked yourself into a pattern, that you could possibly die any moment and you could live for the rest of your life. If you started to worry about the darn things, you had a cigarette. Have a smoke.

That's how you dealt with it? But did you think about it often still?

09:30 Not really, only when the shells start comin' over like you know that you didn't know was landing, they was landin' amongst some of the boys. The Germans made a shell that exploded in the air, they came across and explode and go downwards and that's was an arsey one, you would be layin' in a hole and still get killed, still shrapnel get you down there.

10:00 But no that was shelling, shrapnel and that, I couldn't worry that it could possibly go off, up there, no, no, no, never. No mate.

What sort of wound did you fear most?

What sort of work mate?

No. What sort of wound did you fear most?

10:30 Head wound, anything in the head. Any wound in the head. It could send you paraplegic for the rest of your life or anything. You have only got to see now from motor car accidents sort of business, what they are like, head wounds, head injuries, anywhere in the head. No, no ways.

11:00 **Have you seen soldiers wounded with head wounds?**

Murphy had a head wound Of course they took half his scalp away really, the force of the bomb. Yeah.

What did you think about your enemy?

What did I think about who?

The Germans and the Italians?

11:30 The only time we met Germans was when they captured us. That was the only time we ever saw a German, was when they captured me. They were quite good, they respected me water bottle and they treated us like human beings. 'Til we got to the Italian department, and

12:00 not so hot there, they were a bit wayward, a bit roguish and all that sort of business. If you minded your own business you done alright, they was alright if you minded your own business. Do what they wanted you to, do if they wanted you to do it. Don't cause trouble, and that's the trouble with a lot of fellas who were in POW camps, that never come out of them,

12:30 they thought they knew the world. Do what you gotta do, do what you are told and never volunteer for anything. In the army, never volunteer for anything. Even though we volunteered for the 3rd Pioneers from Darley, but that was nothing, but if they directed you to do something, do it. As I was directed to go over that railway line,

13:00 had to do it. And I knew those bullets were comin' along. That railway line form the Spandau, and I had to wait until that Spandau stopped and reloaded it and "Chooo." across over the railway line and on the way back the same thing. It was not nice I can assure you. Oh yes, there was no beg your pardons about that lot,

13:30 you you didn't know who you was goin' to walk into you didn't know what you was goin to run into. You didn't know what was over that railway line, you could have run into 100 Germans.

Was it a terrifying experience?

Eh?

Would you describe it a terrifying experience?

Well yeah, that was my most terrifying to me yeah. Didn't know what was comin' next.

Do you still dream about the war?

14:00 No, I like watching war pictures.

Did you then. Never?

I like watching war pictures on TV and DVD [digital versatile disc]. I am still rapt in it; I love pictures, a bit of action, war action. I enjoy it.

What sort of pictures?

I liked that one "Private Ryan." That was a good one

14:30 **"Saving Private Ryan."**

That was real clips of what actually happened, in those little towns and that sort of business, you know. I liked that one. Yeah, that Tom Hanks, that was another one, my name, what was his name? I forget now. So I buy

15:00 a few war videos and that. Mostly the ones you buy now are mostly about Vietnam. I had a friend of mine's son, was one of the first killed over in Vietnam, with a mine. Tommy Farrington's son, first killed in Vietnam with a mine, anti-personal mine yeah.

15:30 No. Wars are ugly mate, wars are very ugly.

Are your memories of the war the strongest memories you have?

The what?

Your memories of the war, are they the strongest memories you have?

Yes. I can go right through really, from go to whoa. There are things I don't want to say on this.

What sort of

16:00 **things?**

Well, nothing really. No, no, no. I was a single boy, and all I had was a mother at home. I never had a girlfriend, I never had a wife, never had kids. Big strong boy. Little things I get up to like. I didn't tell you too much about Marseille, did I. That was another

16:30 place I got up to.

Are you sure you want to say things for the record?

Oh, no, the only thing there really, when I got in the queue with the Yanks for the two blankets, I got me two blankets and I got back in the queue again and got another two blankets. Then when you went outside sort of business, there was a fella out there and he was buying blankets with French Francs. So bang, over went these two

17:00 blankets and he got a pocket full of francs, and this bought us wine and beer and for the week, we stopped there, and some of the boys wanted to have a naughty and take the money off that pile, no worries. Lot of funny things go on. You can't tell much about war, I know I would like to

17:30 talk a little bit more about things, but no, some things you can't talk about.

Were you ever put in a position where you were forced to shoot someone?

18:00 Was I forced to do?

Forced to shoot someone?

No.

Where there be in operations or escaping?

No, only time I would have been in a position to shoot someone if I had crossed that railway line and was confronted with someone with a gun, pointed at me I would have to have a go first. There was one on the bridge when I went across the railway line, just a matter of pullin' the trigger you know. Yeah, yeah that was about the only time I could have shot someone.

18:30 No fears I would have done it, no worries. It would be him or me and it wasn't goin' to be me. A simple solution, that one Sergei.

Well when you are in that position you got no choice do you?

Only you or me, and it wasn't goin' to be me. Go on keep them

19:00 comin', what else have you got for me.

Have you ever been in a position where you have seen chaps who suffered from LMF [lack of moral fibre]?

Have I ever?

Lack of moral fibre.

Lack of morals fibre.

Lack of moral fibre, LMF?

Not really,

19:30 no, no, no. He was a good fella the Aussie soldier, you ask the Germans. He was the best soldier he ever fought, the Aussie, you ask any German who fought an Aussie. They respected us, the German respected us. No worries about that. Even after the last push that I was taken prisoner. The whatchmecallit got up and gave a speech there,

20:00 what was the name of the man in charge there. Anyhow, I read it, you have got no idea how he praised the Australians. Without the Australians war wouldn't have been won here. He really give it to us, really great. We was good fighters for some reason or other. I don't know whether it's in the make up of the person, I wouldn't have a clue.

20:30 It was either him or me.

Have you ever seen someone who has broken down?

Done seen anyone has?

Have you ever met an Australian that couldn't handle the war?

No, no, bomb happy, what you call, "Bomb happy" I suppose put it that way, bomb happy. No, no not in my mob. I worked at the

21:00 Bundoora Hospital in my last job there, which consisted of a lot of patients in there that had gone bomb happy, alcoholics, yeah, so.

Did you ever get chaps who were getting letters from home with white feathers?

Never heard of anything. No. No, that was

21:30 old fashioned that business. If you have got something to say to a fella, go and say it to him. Why send him a white feather? Say you are a bloody coward or something. That's as simple as that. The only way to deal with that. An old fashioned English custom.

22:00 Forgot about those old English customs when Australia started to grow up.

You never heard of it happening to other chaps?

Happy what?

Did you hear of other soldiers, Australian soldiers getting white feathers?

No. No.

Never heard of it?

No, not in my time.

22:30 I heard of getting letters from their wives sort of business saying it was all over. They'd met someone else, someone who wasn't in the army.

Did you ever encounter cowardice?

No, never. We all done our part.

23:00 **What about desertion?**

To my knowledge no. Not over there, you had nowhere to go. If he did desert where did he go? The bloody desert? No. That didn't stop us from doing our job, doin' our duty, we signed on to do a duty and we done it to the best of our ability.

So did you

23:30 **ever see acts of heroism?**

No. As I said before, all we seen in action was those tanks, with those bloody tanks. No. No. We had one of our battalion in the islands, Bluey Mackie, he got a VC, that's his father up there in a

24:00 one of those photographs, top photograph up there, with his medal on, Bluey Mackie. He got killed. I wasn't in the islands of course, I didn't know the first thing about that lot.

I have just got my last bunch of questions for your Ernie?

Yeah.

Right. This goes back to

24:30 **when you were a POW in Italy, you mentioned before that the Italian guards got a lot more relaxed towards the end of the war and they started talking more?**

Yes. That's correct, they got pretty lax when the fighting down below, and they were moving forward a bit and they struck one bad spot

25:00 I think, the Allies did, anyhow they were movin' up sort of business and these fellows they might have been their home towns I don't know, they might have been the home towns they might have wanted to get home to see their families or so I would have done the same thing, if we was fighting down here in Broadmeadows. I would want to get home and see me family. It's

25:30 one of those things, they lack a little bit of discipline sort of business. They lacked a little of their stand overish.

So what do you mean they began to get a little more chatty?

Oh well they knew that we was winnin' the war and they must have known that over in Australia there was thousands and thousands of

- 26:00 Italian POWs living off the fat of the land. I don't know it's just that they wanted to be, but you couldn't understand them, they chatted away like you know. Let them chat away, you couldn't understand them. Actions, they were all hand actions, done more than talk.
- 26:30 **What about Giuseppe Bosco?**
- Giuseppe Bosco yeah, he was a lovely man, he was a real true Italian, I have got a photograph of him there somewhere. Only thing I didn't like, thing I was very sad and sorry about, what that I never got in touch with that man after the war. Why I do not know. I asked
- 27:00 people, I look in telephone books, to see if the name Bosco pops up, I was going to ring them up and see if it was him. But he would be dead and gone now because he wasn't a young man. If he was alive he would be 100. Which he would not be alive, Giuseppe. But some of his family might have migrated to Australia and that's why I looked in the phone book.
- 27:30 But no, no Bosco. What you got now mate?
- What about that experience? He was helping you to hide from the Germans?**
- No Germans about. There was very few Germans about. There was more informers. Italians.
- 28:00 **You said there was an instance where you said a hunter come past, very close by?**
- He was an Italian, he was after hares. He liked hare soup. I never saw a hare the whole time we was there so I don't know how he was find a hare. We never saw one movin' around. We used to walk around a little bit, and we walked from one side of the stream which was very
- 28:30 shallow, and go for a bit of a walk of a night time but we never saw, along the creek or whatever it was, never saw a hare or anything. Anyhow Giuseppe knew him and knew what he was, and told us he was not a good man. So I don't know how Andy got on. Andy Knox with that Sheila, he might be dead and gone too.
- 29:00 Anyhow I couldn't find no trace of him.
- Was he a Partisan?**
- No, no, Australian in my battalion.
- Sorry, I think we are getting a big mixed up here. You know Giuseppe Bosco, was he a Partisan?**
- No, no, no. He knew where the Partisans was. He might be probably sending food up or something like that
- 29:30 you see these Partisans had to live off the people in the valley, they would send food up and all that sort of business to them, otherwise, rats pooey.
- The Partisans?**
- They're all talk.
- You don't like them?**
- All talk, no action. What's with shooting up in the air? "Bang, bang, bang."
- 30:00 Up in the air, wasting bullets. Might get a bird or a pigeon or some bloody thing. No, no. They weren't my kettle of fish.
- Were they arrogant?**
- No, happy go lucky sort of lot. They was stuck up there, getting a feed and doin' no jobs.
- 30:30 At that time the Germans were down the bottom of Italy, down in the boot, fightin' for their lives.
- Something else you had said before, you said that when you went to Switzerland, the Swiss soldiers asked you whether you were Jews from Germany?**
- That's right.
- Why did they ask that?**
- I wouldn't have a clue, I don't think they allowed Jews into the country.
- 31:00 I wouldn't have a clue, I don't think they allowed Jews into the country. You know how Hitler skittled a few Jews. They all got into Switzerland sort of business, they would overflow the joint. Not a very big area, it's a small area really Switzerland to some of the other
- 31:30 places. They were my thoughts then they weren't lettin' Jews in. Fortunately we weren't Jewish.

You said when you were actually in Switzerland, they put on a performance for you with little boys and girls?

Singing, still goin'.

Did you meet a lot of other Australians there?

Lot of other Australians.

32:00 **Yeah.**

No.

From the AIF?

No. The only other ones you would meet would be from your own battalion. You would meet them from A Company, B Company, C Company or D Company. You would meet them. Some of our fellas from E Company, were spread around all these companies sort of business, you would probably go and pay them a visit. If you knew them, you trained with them, if you knew them from

32:30 Victoria you would go over and have a bit of a yap. You might even take a bottle of beer over. And where they were and have a beer with them. Pay days, bottle of beer day, pay days. It was alright, that Darwin, mate.

Have you got anything else to say about your war experiences?

Not really mate, you have gone through the works really

33:00 mate. I will be repeating myself if I keep goin at the way some of the questions you are asking. No all I can say is that I had a good life in the army, I met a very, very lot of good friends and mates, I came out unscathed, I was away from the country for 4½ years, I can't say I enjoyed every moment of it, but I was pleased to get

33:30 back to my Australia. And when the war ended it was the best thing that ever happened, it was great. It was great, no more killing, no more death. Foreign lands.

34:00 No that's a fact Sergei, I can't say no more regarding that fact, it was just that my married life was wonderful. 53 years. I had my darling wife. It was a long time, I lost me daughter at 40, only 40 years of age with breast cancer.

34:30 Mother was 79 when I lost her with cancer. No, no life goes on. You got to go forward, can't go backwards. I am in a nice little spot here, I got a lovely neighbour next door, she got four lovely daughters that look after me. When I say look after me, they always come and have a cup of coffee,

35:00 cigarette or something with me. One comes from Queensland and one comes from Sydney. One's at Glen Waverley and one's from Sunbury. When they come over and visit their mother. I would say she's a companion, the lady next door. A lovely person, we have a little kiss and a cuddle occasionally. Nothing like that there's nothing other than

35:30 that, because I am useless sort of business. Anyway at all in that regard. So we get along alright together. Lovely person. Originally she was English. New Zealander, she married this Bill Quinn, gave her 7 children.

36:00 She reared them all and they are all healthy lookin' buggers. She's a lovely person.

Is there anything else you want to say about WW2?

No. You have got the works.

INTERVIEW ENDS