Australians at War Film Archive

Clyde Beard - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:38 **I would like to ask you to briefly outline your life starting from where you were born and where you grew up.**

All right, I was

01:00 born in Murrumbeena, in Phillips Avenue, Murrumbeena, I am one of 5 boys, second eldest, I had an elder brother who was 18 months older than I was, so three younger ones. The 3 younger ones average about 4 years apart we are, so there was the 5 boys, we were brought up during the Depression, I was born in

01:30 1923. My older brother was born in 1921 and we both attended the Murrumbeena State School. And, that was during the Depression as you can imagine, 1923, started school in 1927 and off we went I was at the Murrumbeena State School until

02:00 1936. During the Depression I used to spend most of our spare hours scrounging things. At week-ends our favourite past time was to get on our bikes and head off into the paddocks, and get some rabbits and things like that to help my mother supplement the budget. Everything counted, every briquette or piece of timber round the

02:30 place was used to keep the one fire stove burning. My father was never out of work; he was an electrical engineer with the Richmond Electricity Supply. He was recessed in about 1930 1931 and he did odd jobs from there on working for

03:00 hard ware places and all sorts of things and he finished up with Marfleet & Waite in Abbotsford, as an engineer helping to build cranes for the Cockatoo Dockyards in Sydney. However, Jack and I went through our school days, Jack continued on at Murrumbeena State School and I went to Caulfield Technical School. And I was at Caulfield Technical School

03:30 for about 12 months when they closed all the schools down because of that polio epidemic. And nobody was allowed to go to school or make contact with other people, so we were stuck at home for about 9 months.

Which year was this sorry?

That would be about 1935.

There was a polio epidemic in Melbourne? And you didn't go to school

04:00 **for 9 months?**

About 8 or 9 months yes, closed down for a long while. Then I restarted school and finished my schooling, 3 years and then I applied for jobs and my brother and I got a job at the local service station, pumping petrol and that was a 6 or 7 day a week job. And pumps in those

04:30 days were along the side walk, so you had your CLR [?], Esso, Ampol, Golden Fleece, Shell, Mobil all lined up in a line and you would go along and as the cars pulled up, not many cars in those days as you can imagine, they'd pull up and pump up the petrol or whatever they wanted, couple of gallons as the case may be, and fill the car up. I applied for a couple of

05:00 jobs and didn't get them, but in Fitzroy they applied for apprentices for lithographic printing. So I went out by cable tram through Melbourne, up Bourke Street in the cable tram came out to Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, down George Street to McLaren's in Fitzroy and I found out that the job wasn't for McLaren's, it was for another crowd on the first floor called

05:30 WB Litho and this WB Litho was a lithographic printing place, which was owned by McLaren's or the fellas by the name of Beveridge. So I applied for the job, there was about 40 in the queue waiting for

the job, anyhow they interviewed about 40 of them, and I went home, and my father said, “Where you been.” and I said, “I have been to

06:00 McLaren’s in Fitzroy to apply for a jo.”, he said, “Oh, you should have told me because your Uncle Vic is in the printing trade.” he worked for Rennick Pride in Melbourne. He said, “I’ll give Uncle Vic a call”.” so on the Saturday, we didn’t have the phone in those days, on the Saturday, went across to Murrumbeena, at the back of Murrumbeena where Uncle Vic lived and told him and Uncle Vic said, “I’ll fix that on Monday..” So he rang

06:30 a chap by the name of Jack Wilson, who owned the WB Litho, the lithographic printers and told them I applied and Wilson said, “Well come on Tuesday morning and get the job.” So I got the job amongst 40 people. I started my apprenticeship – at that stage I might tell you I was only14 and they couldn’t apprentice me until I was 15. But I started work

07:00 that year in 1937 with the WB Litho and was apprenticed in February, which is my birth date in February for 6 years. A six year apprenticeship, which consisted of going to school, night school in those days from 6 o’clock to 9 o’clock twice a week. Which was at the Working Man’s College

07:30 or as they call it now, RMIT [Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology] and I think it’s a university now. I certainly did that until I was called up into the army. But during the Depression years my brother and I spent every weekend without fail either gathering wood, or getting something to supplement the budget, in other words we used to go down to the railway siding

08:00 and collect briquettes that fell of the back of the trucks. And we had our own little go karts and we dragged those home, and this was our weekend after weekend after weekend job, and the next time be out getting wood or anything we could salvage, and we managed all right and things worked out very well. 1937, as I said I was apprenticed, that was in February 1937,

08:30 after a couple of years the war started, 1939 and I still apprenticed and I was doing my apprenticeship. 1941 I got a note from the army to say that I was going to be called up on February 1942.

So you were in the militia?

I was in the militia, yes I forgot to mention that. During my period at the Caulfield Technical

09:00 School, next door was the Caulfield Militia Drill Hall and the Caulfield Technical School had cadets and they were just called the cadets, and I joined the cadets and used to go on camps with those down to Portsea and Sorrento.

And that was considered militia?

Yeah. Militia, I had a militia number and when I joined the army, went back into the army I had a

09:30 V number. I can’t remember what it is number, it was 28 something, something, and the V number was a militia number. So when I went into the army I had a V number for quite a number of months and then I transferred to the AIF [Australian Imperial Force], because in those days the government law was that you couldn’t send militia outside of Australia. But of course in 1942 things were changing quite a bit, the Japanese were in

10:00 Port Moresby, or trying to get into Port Moresby and they were trying to get into the other end of Milne Bay, so they decided they would change the regulations and send militia troops as well as the AIF, and most of the good soldiers they, called them were overseas in Tobruk and the Desert. But what was left was called ‘choccos’ people got the name through AIF

10:30 as Chocolate Soldiers.

That’s the militia?

That was the militia. And a lot of the boys who went over the New Guinea were still ‘choccos’ but they soon proved to be just as good as anybody else of course, it was just a name and it just so happened they were in the army before the AIF.

Can you explain to us why they called them ‘choccos’?

Only

11:00 not seasoned soldiers, they reckoned they would melt away under fire and all that type of thing, it didn’t prove that way of course because the 39th Battalion that went into Port Moresby, which was our sister battalion, we were the 37th, and there was the 38th and 39th all belonged to the one brigade. The 39th were – when we got called up we went to

11:30 site no. 17, Nagambie Road, Seymour. And when we got there the 39th Battalion were there and they were just getting ready to go across to New Guinea, so actually they were calling for volunteers and most of those 39th fellas in the days were ‘choccos’. But of course they transferred to AIF by getting a VX number. So and after a while we

12:00 transferred to AIF. But not everybody – half our battalion was just still ‘choccos’, the other half were AIF

and they changed the rules and regulations as I said earlier and we were able to ship off to New Guinea. But in the meantime our training was done along the Queensland coast. We went to Maroochydore, Nambour, up the coast as far as Rockhampton

12:30 laying barbed wire on the beaches at the entrance to the river such as the Brisbane River. All our main jungle training, if you would like to call it that, was done on the Tambourine Mountains outside of Surfers Paradise. Because there was nothing there in those days. We did all our training there, our night marches, our route marches, all the training there

13:00 the only problem we had we had nothing to train with. Because there was a shortage of rifles, shortage of machine guns and all that sort of thing, it was only what was left over from the First World War that we could use. But later on, as time went on at the end of 1942, we gradually got equipped with WW [II] rifles, 303s, machine guns. When I went

13:30 in originally, in the army, I had a 303 and then I transferred to a Vickers machine gun, which was the English one and I finished up with a 45 [Thompson] American, 45 was like the gangsters used with the round

The Tommy gun.

Yeah, the Tommy gun. I finished up with that, but the point is being a 45 calibre, the ammunition just wasn't available for it so they dumped

14:00 those. Used the Vickers, not the Vickers the, I can't think of the other machine gun, but it came from England, but they were still in sterling [probably means Imperial measurement] but the Americans were using millimetre, so we finished up swinging over to - most of our machine guns, that's the light machine guns, such as the Owen gun, and finished up with 9 mm ammunition.

14:30 So we went off to - after our serving our time along the Queensland Coast and our training, we got shipped off down the Brisbane River on a ship called the SS Bothe . Was a little Dutch thing, we had 800 men on that thing, you couldn't swing a cat there, you weren't allowed to smoke, and of course everybody in the army in those days smoked because it was

15:00 free ration type of thing. It was too hot down below to sleep, because it was more like a cargo vessel and if you went down the holds you just about saturated yourself in perspiration it was that hot. So most people slept on deck. So we sailed from out of the Brisbane River straight for Port Moresby. It took a couple of days to get across

15:30 because the SS Bothe was only capable to about 5 or 6 knots, and every now and then they'd cut the engines because they were frightened of submarines. In those days apparently we found out now was that the Japanese submarines were marauding up and down the coast from Sydney right through to Queensland, and we had to be very careful, we didn't want to be torpedoed. So they stopped and we'd float around in nighttime and day time just

16:00 loose on the water you know. We had a little American patrol boat, like a PT boat [motor torpedo] that was supposed to guard us and that was running around us all day and night, looking for submarines. Anyway, we finally got to Port Moresby, I went ashore at Port Moresby and for no reason at all, just a portion of us went ashore and we got bunged back on the SS Both again, "You are not staying

16:30 here you are wanted in Milne Bay." So we went around to Milne Bay. And, the Japanese were being pushed out of Milne Bay across the air strip when we arrived there, back into the Owen Stanleys and we didn't really have much contact with the Japanese but our main job was to reinforce Milne Bay, which we did for quite a number of months before we moved out of there. So that was in

17:00 February 1943, and March /April we were still pottering around Milne Bay. We had a couple – we were being raided all the time. One raid came across Milne Bay with about 100 Japanese bombers and fighters, and blew the place to pieces, except us, we were well entrenched down with in trenches with the natives on top of us. Because they realised what was happening and we would get into the trenches

17:30 first and they pile in on top of us. So we – matter of fact, we had to be very quick to beat the natives to the trenches. Anyhow when those raid finishes you got no idea what the place looked like. I don't think there was a top on any of the coconut palms; they shot all the tops off them. Machine guns with these dive-bombers. The only squadron of

18:00 RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] planes were Kittyhawks, 74, 75 Squadron, and they couldn't reach the Japanese bombers, because the Japanese bombers were flying at something like 20 to 25,000 ft and the ceiling for the Kittyhawk was about 18 or 19,000. They couldn't get up to them to do anything, so they just flew around underneath and then they flew around long enough underneath and then they couldn't land again because the Japanese had

18:30 bombed the air strip to such a stage it was just one complete mess of holes. So the RAAF just had to land wherever they could, and a lot of them landed on the beaches and were able to salvage the pilots out, after wards where they landed, some landed in the water but they landed all over the place. It was a horrible of a mess for a long while until we cleaned it up. And as soon as you clean it up another wave of bombers would come. And as far as we were

19:00 concerned those bombers were heading for Darwin. We knew they were heading for the Australian coast. They seem to swing round Port Moresby, and just head from Milne Bay straight across to Australia. So that's the last we saw of them. That was it.

Now Clyde, can I get you to be a little briefer in your explanations, what I mean is that we'll come back to that detail of Milne Bay and your experiences. I

19:30 **intend to ask you very specific questions and that. Can you just very briefly, outline the other places you went to?**

After leaving Milne Bay we moved up the coast to a couple of trails through there, there was a trail called the Bonga/Wareo trail and we struck the Japanese there, they were heading from one side of the island to the other or to the

20:00 centre of the island. We didn't have much conflict with them; I think we shot one officer or something. Then we moved on, and gradually moved on until we got to - we were shipped in, we picked up some Jap – start again, start again. We picked up some American barges which took us around in a half circle into Red Beach, the other side of Lae. A lot of the troops always landed at Yellow Beach. And

20:30 we went around in a half circle by barge, to bypass that section and we went into Red Beach. And it was that muddy we could hardly move. And we started to move in towards Lae and got stopped, because according to the experts, too much disease in Lae and they wouldn't allow the troops to go in until they bombed it. The Americans came along – that's not quite right, the Australians came across in Liberator bombers

21:00 They borrowed these from the Americans, and they bombed Lae out with petrol. Dropped 44 [gallon] drums and incendiary bombs on top of them and burnt Lae out. The only thing left standing, when we looked in at Lae, was the ice works. They missed the ice works, everything else was cleaned out.

How long were you stationed at Lae for?

Oh, not very long, it was only a matter of weeks.

And then you moved up the coast?

21:30 And then we moved up the coast further. We moved up, still pushing behind the Japanese. The 9th Divvie [Division] were on the coast because they couldn't get off the coast because they had tanks and things and they couldn't get off into the mountains and so what we got landed with the – we got attached to the 24th Brigade 9th Divvie, and it was only a couple of companies of us, and we got split up into two – one was called Bruno Force, and I was with

22:00 Mack Force, and Mack Force was what was called a Green Beret Force that protected the 9th Divvie of gaps or any Japanese that were on the inside of the island. So we had to keep up with them right up as far as Madang, Madang the 9th Divvie turned around and that was finished as far as they were concerned and they joined at Madang with the

22:30 30th and 35th Battalion that came from Australia. We went across as two or 3 companies, that was A, B and C company of the 37th went across, to the islands there was Karkar Island and a couple of islands just of the coast of Queensland and we didn't find any Japs on one of them, but one of them they had dug in underneath the trees and trenches and we found out from some

23:00 Chinese that they were still up in the mountains. And we chased them around the island, the island was about 75 mile around the island, and we chased them right around the island we still didn't get them, we don't know where they disappeared to. But then we came back to Madang and I got transferred from Madang to the 35th Battalion, the 35th Battalion wanted according to them, 'seasoned soldiers', not that we had been there very long.

23:30 At that stage we had been on the island for something like 14, 15 or 16 months I think it was. They wanted seasoned soldiers so they picked out about 10 or 12 of us and put us with the different companies, of the 35th Battalion and they continued where we left off, still pushing the Japanese up the coast. The idea was not to give them a chance to stop and settle

24:00 down. Which we did and it worked very well as a matter of fact, so I stayed with the 35th Battalion from January 1944 to March 1944 and they thought that was enough, they got all the experience they wanted, we struck a lot of Japanese, stragglers and goodness knows what, we cleaned them up as we went. Now I came back to join the battalion at Madang

24:30 and we came home. After a couple of weeks leave, and when I say leave, couple of weeks in Heidelberg Hospital with malaria and scrub typhus, eventually got out of that and the battalion was on their way back to the islands again, I got grabbed and taken across to Wide Bay, yeah it was Wide Bay, an open bay, and Jacquinot Bay

25:00 so we got landed across there

In New Britain?

Yeah, New Britain. As an advanced guard. We waited there for a while and the rest of the troops

arrived, the rest of the battalion. We, that's myself and Tom Poundy, he was a lieutenant and about half a dozen others, had got the job of going over the mountain to connect up with the battalion on the other side of the mountain. I can't remember the battalion now, but it was –

25:30 but they were going to come back over the mountain and we were to go north. Anyhow we went over the mountain, it took us 6 days to get across. Very, very, slow, you could only go for about a quarter of an hour or so and have a rest. 10 minute rest and gradually work your way up the mountain. And down the other side and we landed on the other side and contacted this other battalion and they did they same, came back.

26:00 While we were doing that the rest of the battalion was following suit, going over the mountain. There is quite an interesting story on that by a reporter or a war correspondent , which I have got a copy of out there, it's a very interesting story. He wrote the story of about going over the mountain. We got over the side and we gradually moved up the coast to a

26:30 river, I can't remember the name of the river. We patrolled along the river because the Japanese were on the other side, but they weren't game to come across because we were – they estimated later on there was 40,000 over there, at least 40,000. We didn't want to stir up a hornets' nest so we stayed on our side of the river, they couldn't come across because of the crocodiles and we wouldn't go across

27:00 because of the crocodiles. But every now and again we would drop a couple of grenades in the river to scare the crocs away and we sent a patrol over the river, so see what was doing. And then after quite a number of weeks, or months I think it was, we spent there until the August, and on the 15th August the war ended, we didn't know until about the 17th or 18th. They had

27:30 a message through that it was all over, so we stayed where we were and next message was that the New Zealand Air Force was going to fly in, in Catalinas and pick us up. Well they flew in, in Catalinas and loaded about 25 troops on each Catalina and flew them back over the mountain to the other side. Well we picked up the [HMAS] Manoora

28:00 and the Manoora took us straight into Rabaul and we went in there in the middle of the night. It was pitch dark. The Japanese didn't know what was going on but we did and we went in and our job was to disarm them. When we got our total number in the place, it was about 52,000 Japanese. Well we split them up into groups, I don't exactly know how many in a group, but about 4 or 5

28:30 groups and move them well apart from each other. Some down 30 miles down the coast to get them away from each other and each company had a job of looking after this group, until the Americans later on in Rabaul Harbour they brought in a aircraft carrier and they loaded about 20,000 Japanese on the deck of the aircraft carrier, headed them off and a couple of the Japanese

29:00 ships come in and we gradually got rid of them. We started to clean up the odds and ends round there and I left Rabaul in February 1946 to come home. Hoping I was going to be discharged. When I got home here in Melbourne, Royal Park, they said, "You're not going out of the army yet." and I said, "Why not?" and they said, "Because we want you out at Broadmeadows, we got a

29:30 camp out there of battalions and we want somebody to look after them until we can interrogate them and gradually get them out of there." So I finished up going out to Broadmeadows for a month or so and then got discharged from the army. And after – will we talk about after the army will we? I got discharged from the army and I went back to my printing and finished my apprenticeship, didn't

30:00 like being tied down very much with this firm printing business, and when I looked ahead at all the chaps ahead of me were printers, full time printers of course they were there during the war, and all about 30 or 40 years of age and I thought if I ever get to that stage I will be 20 years or more stuck in this printing. So I applied for a job through International Harvester

30:30 Company who was starting a new company down in South Melbourne called ISAS, [Industrial Sales and Service] and they – Industrial Sales and Service serviced and sold international tractors for industry only. Nothing to do with harvesters or farms, they were all bulldozers that type of thing, diggers, for the actual industry. I

31:00 stayed with them for 2 or 3 years and got promoted to the Operations Department when I was in charge of Vehicle Operations, and I stayed there all told for 10 years. At the end of 10 years they got bought out by, that section got bought out by Clyde Industries and Clyde Industries wanted to move the whole caboose out to Broadmeadows. I was living in Frankston at the

31:30 time and I thought, "Oh hell, a trip from Frankston to Broadmeadows every day didn't appeal to me, bad enough going from Frankston to South Melbourne, but going on to Broadmeadows." So another chap by the name of Geoff Morgan, said to me, "I am going to get out of this, I am going to put my superannuation together and I am going to buy a shop, would you be interested

32:00 in going into partnership?" and I said, "Oh, I'll think about that." So after about a month or so before the company moved, moved to Broadmeadows, I said, "Yes, let's try it." So we bought a shop in Highett, Highett Road, Highett, a grocery shop. We run that all right for a while, and then we bought another one in Chapel Street, still in Highett. So we had two grocery shops going, and they were doing all right, going well.

32:30 And then we bought another one in Solway, have you ever heard of Solway, it's a little suburb at the back of Ashburton and we bought a little Four Square Store and it was doing all right there. The chap had been in the army and wanted to retire so he wanted to sell it, so he sold it and we bought it and had the three of them going. And this Geoff Morgan and I we used to work our way around the three of them and then we bought

33:00 another one at Syndal. All these were different shops. The first one was Four Square, the second one was Four Square and the third was a Foodland franchise and the one at Syndal was a Foodland franchise and they were going all right. We decided we would keep going, and Geoff and I had a discussion about this and we said that what we needed was a licensed shop.

33:30 Anyhow a chap by the name of Symonds in Glen Waverley, was in the middle of selling out, he was going to retire, so we applied for his licence. And everything was going all right, that was November, and everything was going all right, and the paperwork was on its way through, Geoff was down on his father in law's farm down at Balnarring and on New Year's morning on that particular morning,

34:00 they found him dead, in bed. Then the fun started. Because here's my partner dead and all the shops in joint names. And they said, "Well that's O.K: no worries, his wife will probably get the lot and she can be in partnership and work things out." Anyhow to make a long story short he left everything to his 3 children, the eldest

34:30 girl was 16, the next was 14 and the next was 10. And they said, "OK..They're in partnership now but you can't be in partnership with juniors, you gotta sell the lot." Here we are in the middle of getting this licence and these shops, so sell the lot. Anyhow, I had a talk to the solicitors and accountants and we decided to sell it all

35:00 and I bought two of them. Cath and I said, "We will buy two of them." She'll run one and I'll buy the other. So we bought the one at Solway and we bought the one at Syndal and we got rid of the Highett Road one, the two of them. Chapel Road and Highett Road in Highett, got rid of both those and got rid of the - had to cancel out the buying of the licence from Symonds in Glen Waverley. Because

35:30 again it was in partnership, so I had to reapply. My time at all flattened out and we reapplied, and we found out that somebody else had whacked in for the licence and got it. And it was one of the Safeway – so we missed out on – so Cath and I we thought, "What we will do: we will run Solway and Syndal as a Four Square and one Four Square, the other Foodland.

36:00 So we run those for quite a number of years and then we applied for a licence, and we couldn't get a licence because they – in those days Judge Fraser, who was in charge of licensing in those days said, "You can't have them closer than 3 mile between 3 mile between each other." And the nearest one there was 3 mile was back at Ashburton, which was only a couple of mile away and then

36:30 Syndal of course you had the one in Glen Waverley, so we lost those, we didn't get those. We stayed with those until 1969, and in 1969 by that time Safeway had opened up in Ashburton here and also in Chadstone, Chadstone was a thriving centre, starting to move in 1969, so we made a decision that we would sell both the

37:00 shops, which we did we sold Foodland and the Four Square and get jobs. So we cleaned those up and it was all finished and cleaned up by 1969/1970 and then, I went and applied for a job at Taylor Instruments. I didn't know a thing about instruments, but there was an apprenticing job there

37:30 so I applied for the apprenticing job. That was 1970. I got it and the chap who was in charge of purchasing, a chap by the name of Will Wright, he was due to retire in about 12 months. So when he retired I took over the purchasing for Turner Instrument Company. That worked out all right. I went – by 1975 everything was going very

38:00 well and they asked me would I like to take over the production and they had 45 on the staff on the production part of it,

I'll get you to pause there for a moment Clyde.

Tape 2

00:33 **Clyde, can you explain to me – can you tell us about your parents firstly and then we'll move to schooling and all that?**

Well, my mother and father met in Prahran – my father was working for his father, who had a grocery shop in Toorak. My mother was she - was

01:00 an instrument maker, watch repairer, she worked for T G Gaunts in the City and she sat in a little alcove in Royal Arcade in the City repairing watches. And everybody that walked past the place said look at my mother repairing watches. In 1920 she met up with my father and they got married, in 1921

01:30 Jack the oldest was born, he was born in August 1921, 28 August and I came along on the 14 February, and my mother thought I was the greatest St Valentine's Day present, not really, because they didn't have St Valentine's Day, but I was born on St Valentine's Day, 14th February 1923 and then along came Neil, who was the next one and he was born in

02:00 on 8th May 1927 and the next one that came along was Graham, Graham was born in 1930, on 19th December 1930 and the last one, the youngest was Neville and he born on 20th August 1934. OK., so we are come along – so we all lived at 15 Phillips Avenue, Murrumbeena

02:30 until 1937, but during those Depression years, everything counted, we had a big duck farm behind us in Murrumbeena, we had a lane behind us which was called McLauren's Lane, wasn't really a lane it was just an unmade strip of land we used to grow vegies on that. My father every opportunity every nighttime

03:00 after work, if he had time we'd tend to those, dig them up put in potatoes, grew everything we could. Across the back we had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, so every occasion, every month or so we'd knock a head off a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK and have a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK which was quite a novelty. So we survived mainly by growing vegies and swapping with the lady that owned the duck farm for duck eggs and things like that, so it was real reciprocal trade.

03:30 And it worked very well. And as I said earlier, Jack and I, being the eldest two Jack was 18 months older than I, we used to go down and salvage what we could. We even had with us on our trucks, a 6 ft length of spouting. And people used to say, "Why for goodness sake why do you cart that spouting with you?" Well we had a reason for carting that spouting.

04:00 When we got down to the Murrumbeena wood yard, that was the railway siding, the briquettes used to be piled outside up against the fence and we found out that if we pushed this piece of spouting into the heap of bricks, the briquettes, they'd slide down the spouting. So it was no trouble at all and they'd start sliding down the spouting into our trucks. So we'd go home and Dad would say, "Gee you did well today, all these briquettes, where did they come from?."

04:30 And we'd say, "Well they fell off the back of a truck down at Murrumbeena." Well we survived, any piece of wood at all anything at all, and away we'd go. But there was farms all over the place in those days so our average was two jobs, we used to collect the eggs at one farm for one chap. My brother and I would leave school and go straight over to one farm and collect the eggs, and he'd give us half a dozen eggs to come home, you know, and of course Mum thought that was marvellous

05:00 having eggs to make cakes and things because she was a great cook. Anyhow, we survived right through the depression, the boys were growing up, that's Neville, Graham and Neil. They were all gradually growing up and Jack and I left school. Jack stayed at Murrumbeena State until the 7th Grade, I went to Caulfield

05:30 Technical School and Neil and the other boys went to Lloyd Street, because in those days what actually happened was the house we lived in, in Murrumbeena belonged to my grandfather and my grandfather died and left the house to his housekeeper. And the housekeeper decided she'd sell the lot, so we had to get out. Because we didn't own

06:00 the house, so we moved to a State Savings Bank house in Fisher Street, East Malvern.

Now before you go on there, your father's background - I am interested to know whether he was involved in the First World War in any way?

No. His brother Jack, Jack Beard was involved in the First World War and was killed in France, and then

06:30 in that particular family, Alice, my Aunty Alice was the oldest and then there was Jack which was the next in the family and then there was Aunty Olive and then my father. My father was the youngest, OK. OK. So he didn't go to the war at all. He worked in the grocery shop for his father during the latter stages of 1918, 19, 20. Because he

07:00 got married at 19 years of age in 1920, so he was too young for that particular war.

At 19,

Yes.

Really. There was a lot of blokes that were younger.

They protected a lot of the trades too. You see grocery trades and things, he was – when I say too young, they protected a lot of things, he was an electrical engineer

07:30 Originally working for the Richmond Electricity Supply. And anybody working for those MEC [Maribyrnong Electric Company]or Richmond Electricity Supply, were exempt from service, from war service.

Like protected industries.

Protected industry, yes. OK. OK. My older brother Jack, who was born in 1921, had a privilege in a protected industry, he worked for the Gordon St Ammunition Factory.

I see.

08:00 **Right.**

So he didn't go into the army for a couple of years after he turned 18, whereas I was already in there because the printing trade wasn't protected. Anyhow, Mum as I said used to be a watch repairer/maker, I think she used to be classed as a watchmaker as much as anything else. And she worked for Gaunts until they got married in 1920 and then she – 1921 she had Jack and so on.

Did she have

08:30 **relatives like her father – maybe not her father, but any brothers…?**

My mother's father was killed in New Zealand. My grandma, that's my mother's mother was in New Zealand and decided to come here to Australia and my mother was a very little girl in those days. So they left the family and they came to Australia. When they arrived in Australia they had been up with a chap called,

09:00 he was another New Zealander, called Fred Mason. He had a son and two daughters, anyhow they got together and grandma married this Fred Mason, and she became Mrs Mason. My mother in those days was still coming along and later she got – she married my father and they moved into Murrumbeena. So her father – her father was never in Australia

09:30 was only herself and her mother and she had no other sisters. She had stepsisters when her mother married this Fred Mason.

You said that her father was killed in New Zealand?

Yes, we don't [know] the story on that. We don't know whether he was killed or died or whatever happened; we never got the story on that one at all. Because that was back in – during the war years somewhere, because my mother was

10:00 married in 1920, so it would be around about – and she was a bit older than Dad, she would be about 20, 21 years of age so her father died when she was about 10, 9 or 10. But we don't know why, we never found out the reason why; never – the subject never brought up. But grandma, she came here and married and went right through and that was so much for the family, Mum and Dad

10:30 brought up the 5 boys until 1963 and Dad was due to retire in two years time, that was 1965, he was working for Marfleet & Waite, which were building, as I told you before cranes and a lot of guns and things during the war. He decided to take part of his long service leave and Mum and Dad went to Kangaroo

11:00 Island. He bought himself a new Holden car and it was a red and white one, I can picture it now, red bottom with a white top, in those days, it was all the go. He bought himself a new car, and drove across to Adelaide, went across to Kangaroo Island, had a great holiday and decided to come home through Mildura, Charlton, Bendigo and Melbourne. Cath and I at this stage, this was

11:30 1963, we were in the shop at Solway,

Yep.

I was in the shop at Syndal.

I don't want to jump too far ahead there, I want to stick to the pre war period – now when you were in the Depression years, which was quite a long time basically until the war started, can you tell us about your experience with Susso's – Sustenance workers?

Yes I can.

12:00 My brother and I went to Murrumbeena State School, the older brother, and we used to sneak out from school at lunch time and head off to the nearest sustenance – what do they call them – mobile kitchens we call them now, because right around that area and right through Dandenong Road, from Caulfield through to Oakleigh they were pouring that new highway and it was all done in concrete

12:30 and they poured concrete by hand, mixed concrete, poured it by hand and they had these mobile kitchens. And we found out that if you arrived there right after they finished their lunch, we got what was left, and if we missed out then we went at nighttime before they packed up and headed off home ready for the next day. So we were able to get quite a bit. Most of the dairies around the area would separate their milk, take the cream and

13:00 the skim they used to get rid of and they put a note up outside the dairy, 'free skim milk' so we would go with whatever billies we had and get free skim milk and we would use the free skim milk during the Depression years. This went on for years, for quite a number of years and Jack and I would – no problems at all to head off to these kitchens and

13:30 get what was left, mainly stews and things like that but it was still supplemented and big chunks of bread and we would get home at night and Mum would say, “How’d did you go today”, “We went to such and such a kitchen, we had a nice feed and we had skim milk on the way home,” and she would say, “Good, you won’t want so much for tea tonight.”

Did you eat a lot of bread and dripping at home?

Oh, rice.

Rice.

Oh yeah, rice in those days. Was one of the

14:00 cheap commodities. We used to get rice.

I didn’t know people ate rice in those days.

Yes, we had rice in those days. My mother used to make rice puddings, and rice this and rice that, mainly with 5 boys to fill them up you know. Oh yes, we used rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, all those things we grew ourselves of course. And what we

14:30 could salvage – going to school of a morning, we didn’t have any lunch, but we used to pass through an orchard belonging to a lady called Miss Quinn. And Miss Quinn had this big orchard along Murrumbeena Road. And Jack and I used to go down there and supplement our lunch if we had any, with an apple or a

15:00 quince or something that was ripe and would head through Murrumbeena, we had quite a walk actually. Phillips Avenue to the School was something like 2.5-3 miles which was quite a walk in those days because up in Phillips Avenue they didn’t have power on there we had lanterns all during that period, I’m talking about early 30s and I started school in 1927

15:30 and it was quite a walk there, and we walked there and get some fruit on the way but we passed two grocer shops, one was called Moran & Cato and the other one was Crofts Stores. Well we would call at Moran & Cato and see if he had any broken biscuits, if he did they used to give us a bag of them, and then we would go on to Crofts and get some, and in some cases we would get some at both places, and share them with the boys at school. So we salvaged that way with our

16:00 food and what with the mobile kitchens we were able to survive pretty well. Quite often the Chinese carts used to come down from Clarinda and those places, South Oakleigh, down Murrumbeena Road heading to the Victoria Markets and every Friday night, they would come down there and head for the market and we found that we could salvage quite a bit of stuff from those big two horse drays coming down you know.

16:30 But it was all fair and square and above board you know, and that was all right went very well, and as I said Cath and I were at the shops at 1963, one Saturday afternoon a policeman or two policemen actually, hammered the front door and said, “We got some sad news.” and we said, “Oh goodness, what’s happened?”

17:00 and they said, “Your father and mother have been involved in an accident at Charlton, on their way home from Adelaide, and your mother was killed instantly, and your father is in the Bendigo Hospital..” So I immediately rang my brothers and we said, “We’ll go to Bendigo..” So we packed up on the Monday morning and went straight to Bendigo. But Dad didn’t last long, he had a nasty accident.

That was very

17:30 **unfortunate.**

Yeah, both of them killed together and the brand new Holden too. We often think of that.

What year was that?

That was 1963. January 63. Going back a few years now. But he was due to retire that year, of course.

O.K. Right. Now, with the schooling, now what was the name of the school you went to?

18:00 Murrumbeena State School. State School.

Now Murrumbeena would’ve been and still is, a bit of a country sort of area isn’t yet?

Yes. In those days it was of course, it was a very country area, we had no electricity, we had to …where we were out at Murrumbeena.

No electricity.

No, we used lanterns. Electricity came on round about 1920 something. Anyhow, it was late in that period.

18:30 The only means of transport we had was the train going to Dandenong, or actually went to Oakleigh and

then on to Dandenong. We had no other means of transport bar bikes [bicycles], so Jack and I, the two oldest, we used to go everywhere on bikes actually. There's not much more there really, as I said earlier salvaging everything we could and surviving

19:00 that was the main thing. We were very lucky that our father had a job, even though it was only a labouring job and he was able to bring a bit of money in and that was to pay the rents and all the different bits and pieces that you are up for. I went to Caulfield Technical School, 3 years, sat for my Junior Certificate and then this polio

19:30 epidemic came into being, and I didn't go any further I applied for a job, and as I said earlier went to McLaren's in Fitzroy and …

How did the polio epidemic affect Murrumbeena?

Well, it affected Murrumbeena in this respect that nobody moved around very much at all because they were too frightened to, because they didn't want to pass this polio germs or whatever they might be

20:00 on. We have neighbours either side of us in Murrumbeena. When I say either side, a block or two away and we Normie Huggins and Geoff Maggs. We weren't allowed to contact them. They were off from school and so were we. We used to talk each to other from a distance, but we weren't allowed direct contact

20:30 because they didn't want this polio to spread anymore than it had to. How long it lasted exactly I don't know but I know it was round about 1936 or 1937 because there was the year that I was going to Caulfield Technical School.

Now what about

21:00 **for social activities, during the Depression period how would you entertain yourselves?**

We entertained ourselves in lots of ways, early in the piece we had plenty of land around us, and this big duck farm at the back and we made kites and all that sort of thing and to entertain ourselves, Jack and I would go out on our bikes, and we would go away camping for the week-end. We would pedal our way up to Healesville, which was

21:30 38 miles from home, but we would pedal our bikes 2 days up to Healesville and camp up there beside a river fishing, looking after ourselves, sometimes we would have mates with us, all depends, but that was plenty of time to fill in sort of thing so it didn't matter. When we got home and later in my life, when I say later, when we were 16 and 17 years of age.

22:00 prior to the war we went to dances at Caulfield Town Hall. Malvern Town Hall and they'd have these community dances, and we would go there of a Saturday night, meet up with our friends and girl friends.

You had girlfriends at that time.

Oh, yes, I had a girl friend and Jack had a girlfriend. Unfortunately Jack's girl friend lived at Yarraville, it was a bit

22:30 far to go. Mine lived locally around at Murrumbeena. East Malvern. It was a lot easier to walk home. You must remember there was no transport after midnight. So we had to walk wherever we were going to go and it was always very awkward walking home. And my father used to lay the law down, and say, he's very strict my father, even though he was a very good father, he was very strict and lay the law down, "You boys

23:00 don't forget, you have got to be in by midnight, otherwise your mother will worry about you." Well we used to get in about half past one or two in the morning because we had to walk from Caulfield or Malvern, whatever the case may be and we would stop on the way at a hamburger shop and get a hamburger or something, and by the time we got in, it was always reasonably late. And we would sneak in the back and Jack and I had to sleep at the back of the house and we

23:30 sneak in and Jack would say, "Ssshhh." because Dad was comin' down the hall. You could hear this old house and the big wide hall and you could hear him come thumping down the – because my father was a big fella, he was about 17 or 18 stone he used to play football for Essendon, he would come thumpin' down the hall and Jack would say, "Quick get into bed." and we'd jump into bed and he would turn the light on, have a quick look, and shut the light of probably tell Mum the boys are in bed. Safe they're right.

24:00 No worries. Later on in life I said to him, "Did you know that Jack and I used to get in at 1 or half past one?" "Of course I did." he said. He never used to say anything he would just come in and shut the light on. He said, "I used to hear you come in, I knew you had come in because there was no boots under the bed, you used to get into bed with your boots on when you would hear me coming." Which we did. We used to jump into bed with our clothes on when we'd hear Dad coming down the hall.

24:30 **If he – you said he was strict – if he did catch you coming in late and he caught you red handed?**

Oh we got reprimanded and the next time we had to be in at 11 o'clock or 10 o'clock very strict, or wouldn't let us go out at all. Very firm. Because that was how he was brought up as a boy and he sort of passed it on, and having 5 sons he had to be pretty strict I suppose.

25:00 Yeah. He was a disciplined man in lots of ways, he played football for Essendon.

Yeah, tell us about that?

He played football for Essendon in his younger days, he wasn't a good footballer, but he knew quite a few footballers from Essendon, a chap by the name of Half a Knee [?] another chap by the name of Dan Drum. Dan Drum finished up having the Coburg Hotel out at Coburg.

Coburg Hotel.

Yeah, Coburg.

Whereabouts in Coburg?

25:30 Dan Drum on the main road at Coburg, that runs out what you call it, Hume Highway, no.

Sydney Road?

Yeah, Sydney Road. The Coburg Hotel, he was there for many years. But of course by that time they had all given up playing football for sure and

26:00 we used to see Dan Drum now and then, and Half a Knee he lives in Essendon area there somewhere, being Essendon footballers that's the way they lived and the way they worked.

You were a big fan of footy yourself?

Yes. My brother and I, Jack and I played for East Malvern Rovers, we weren't good footballers by any means, but we used to enjoy it. And we belong to East Malvern and they used to meet down at the

26:30 east end of Waverley Road at the East Malvern Cricket ground there. And it was called the East Malvern Rovers and they were in the Caulfield/Oakleigh League. There was Caulfield and East Oakleigh and East Malvern and quite a few around the area that used to have football. We used to enjoy that every Saturday, every opportunity we got. But of course you had different priorities

27:00 in those days sometimes we'd miss football because Dad would say, "Saturday I am not playing football because I am going out to get wood." and he would borrow a trailer from somebody – we had an old Dodge motor car 1921 model Dodge and the only thing it was used for was to pull this trailer to go out and get wood.

So you would go out with all your brothers?

Yeah, all my – actually myself, Jack

27:30 and Neil would go out and we away we'd go with big cross cut saws and we'd cut up the wood and put it into the trailer and bring it home and stack it along the back fence which was McLauren's Lane. And I can tell you a story about that, a chap by the name of Grouse, he used to deliver vegetables, he used to come around twice a week delivering vegetables

28:00 into that area, Murrumbeena, because you must remember there wasn't much in the way of shopping to be done. And we used to stack – we would get the wood every so often, go out and get the wood and stack it along the back fence, and my father would come home and say to Jack and I and Neil, Neil was 4 years younger than we were, than I was anyhow. "Did you cut up the wood for tomorrow for the fire?" Because we had the one fire stove and 2 ovens

28:30 on either a big Luxe it was, made in England. And, to keep your mother happy and we'd say, "Yes Dad and all stacked in and there's enough for the front room for the fire." "O.K." he'd say. "Good." He used to come in, when he come in from work and inspect the – he said, "You boys cut wood up today?" and we'd say, "No." he said, "That's funny, the top layer of wood is missing." and I said, "How did you know?" and he said, "Because I used to mark it."

29:00 He said, "Somebody's knocking offour wood, we'll have to keep our eyes open." So we kept our eyes open and didn't notice anybody knocking off the wood. He came home about 2 weeks and the top layer is gone again. And he said, "That's no good we're not going to work for nothing, I'll fix this." So I can remember Jack and I going down to the shed, we had a garage off the back lane and a big work shed and he was

29:30 good with his hands and he got this from – he got these logs of wood and drilled holes in them and he put shotgun cartridges in the holes, mixed up some glue with saw dust and plastered up the hole so you wouldn't know what was inside it, and he marked the wood so he knew which was which and he'd say, "You boys see these marks, don't you ever touch these logs of wood." And he put them across the top of the

30:00 stack and nothing happened the first couple of days, nothing happened. Anyhow this particular Friday night he came and he said, "Somebody has taken the complete top layer of the wood, I don't believe it."

he said, “Yes, somebody’s been here.” I said, “Do you know what’s happening, during the day, during the night or when it’s happening?” – He said, “Ooh well, we’ll soon find out.” Nothing happened for about 2 or 3 days then there was a big write up in the

30:30 local Murrumbeena Gazette about a chap who’s chimney had blown out. In those days they had weatherboard houses and they had a fireplace built in, and they had a metal canopy outside the house for the smoke, the metal canopy. And this chap put wood on his fire, wood, and it had cartridges in it of course, and it went bang and thank

31:00 goodness it just blew the back of the metal out, the metal blew out into the yard at the side, he had his horse tethered at the back and the horse busted off and bolted. It was quite a write up in the paper. Matter of fact I often think I should have kept it. But never mind I think my father might have kept it. Anyhow Dad walked in and he said, this was during the next week. And Dad said, “Well we know who has been taking the wood don’t we?”

31:30 That’s all he said, never worked from that day on wards. And Jack and I used to say to him it was a bit dangerous it could have blown out into the lounge room. He was sayin’ “Oh yeah I suppose so.” but, the idea was to stop him from taking the wood and he wasn’t thinking of that at the time. But it blew the other way and blew the canopy off the back.

That’s all your Dad said?

All he said, “We know who was

32:00 takin’ the wood.”

Did any more get stolen after that?

No, no more got stolen from thereon. This fella had a cart, a vegetable cart and he would go through the area of course he had a long way to go up Murrumbeena Road and across – and deliver vegetables, not that we wanted much because we used to grow our own. During the Depression years it was very vital

32:30 that we grew everything we could, carrots and parsnips and turnips and all those things all the time when we were growing up. This chap would sell his vegetables and then he would load up – come up the back lane and load up the cart on his way home. He didn’t live far from us, a couple of miles.

Were you surprised it was him?

Yeah. Very surprised. I thought it was the wood merchant knocking it off. We had a chap by the name of

33:00 Christie who used to deliver wood and I used to say to Dad, “It’s probably Christie knocking it off.” and he’d say, “Oh no he’s a nice bloke I don’t think he’d do that.” He used to deliver the ice and the wood and it wasn’t Christie, it was this chap by the name of Grouse G-R-O-U-S-E.

Grouse.

Blew the back out of the chimney. A lot of little things used to happened we used to get – my brothers and I

33:30 used to make our own fun really. We used to go down to the station – Dad used to work until 9 o’clock on a Friday and we’d wander down to the station at about 8 o’clock to meet him, and it was pitch dark of course, we’d wander down there and as we wandered down we’d see the Chinese coming down the main road and the local kids used to do – we’d walk up and get

34:00 the horse by the bridle and when we got to the corner of Murrumbeena Road and Neerim Road, we’d lead the horse around and turn him around and head him for home again. And not everyone but every second one you would grab and – the old Chinaman was sound asleep in his cart. When he woke up he was supposed to be at the Victoria Market and he’s back home again. Oh yeah, we had some great fun. Later on,

34:30 around about 1930’s ’35, ’36 before we moved to Fisher Street in 1937 we had a big long hedge, one of those big long privet hedges along the front of our place. And they just made the road and footpath and people used to have to – to get home they had come up Henley Street and along Phillip Avenue to get to their place which was quite a walk. And we used to get behind the

35:00 hedge and as they walked past we would drop a – we would have a brick and we would drop a penny on the brick. And they stop and – oh, I must have dropped some money and here they’d light matches lookin’ to see where the money was and of course they never found it because we were inside the hedge. We used to have some fun like that. We also had an old purse of Mum’s and round the

35:30 corner of Murrumbeena – off Phillips Avenue and Henley Street there as the old cars came round the corner and the lights – they would spot this purse laying in the middle of the road. By the time they stopped and walked back to pick up this purse, it was gone. We had it on a string, and used to pull it back around the corner. And they’d be lookin. You couldn’t help but see the cars; they were old and slow in those days.

36:00 Which didn't do any harm to anybody, but we used to have some fun to us.

Some practical jokes?

Yeah.

When you think of the Depression now, they were very hard times, but were they very character building?

Oh yes, you learnt to – you learnt a lot in this respect that you weren't very wasteful,

36:30 you were character building in this respect that you didn't expect a Christmas present. My brother and I, the older one and I never expected a Christmas present. Because we just couldn't – there was just no such thing as a - my father would come home from CS Green's or whoever he was working for at that particular time, and he'd salvage some old ball bearings or something like that and unbeknowns to us

37:00 when we were in bed asleep at night, he'd go down to the shed and made us a go cart OK. Just a truck you know, a thing with a box on the back, he would make that out of ball bearings and that was our Christmas present. Between Jack and I we used to use that, and we used to think that was great. Have that to cart down to Murrumbeena and fill up with briquettes or whatever wood we could, you know we used to take that everywhere with us.

37:30 One would sit it and the other pushed and then we would change over and vice versa and have a rest. So we made our fun and we used to go out and fly our own kites. We used to go across to different parks that had lakes and do yabbying. The best yabbying spot was the Caulfield Racecourse. They had a big lake in the middle of the Caulfield Race.

38:00 And the racecourse was a free park in those days, you didn't have to pay to go in, you just walked in OK. . And Jack and I used to go across there, we'd take our bucket and piece of string and lumps of meat and get yabbies over there and put them in the bucket with a bit of water and cart them off home, on our bikes.

Did you catch lots of yabbies?

Yes, we caught a lot of yabbies; we caught enough for a feed for the family, yeah.

38:30 Quite big ones.

How big?

About 3 or 4 inches long yeah. Quite good yabbies, my Mum knew how to prepare yabbies. Like a big shrimp. Have you ever tasted yabbies?

Actually I am not sure; I used to go yabbying in Merri Creek.

Did you?

We got bitten by a few. That wasn't real good.

I didn't mind. They are real good yabbies. Wherever there was water or a dam we'd go yabbying.

39:00 And, Caulfield Racecourse was one of the best places, in between time we'd go out – of course we both had rifles and both Jack and I had 22 – Jack and I had an automatic rifle in those days, a 22 automatic rifle in those days, a 22 automatic. When I say automatic it shot about 3 shots in a row where mine was only a – I had to put a single shot in mine. They were ideal for rabbiting. We used to go rabbiting.

39:30 We'd tie the rifle on the bike. There was no such thing as having a licence or anything of that nature and we used to go out to Rockbank.

So anybody could get a gun you didn't need licenses?

Hmmm.

In those days anyone could get a gun?

Well my father worked for CS Green who were hardware merchants and he was able to get a couple of rifles and he had a shot gun himself actually, and

40:00 he was able to buy rifles and the only reason he got them, he got them pretty reasonable in price through CS Green's. You couldn't pay out the rifle he used to pay it out of his salary, but he reckons it was well worth it because Jack and I earned quite a bit of money. What we'd do was head off early Saturday morning as soon as it broke light and would pedal out to Rockbank or anywhere in that area where the rocky areas and

40:30 just go out rifle shooting and knocking off rabbits. We – at one stage we decided that was a bit hard and we get some ferrets and a chap we know a chap by the name of John Mitter, lived in Murrumbeena, had some ferrets so we said, "We'll borrow your ferrets and we'll go out ferreting." Well that was the worst thing. I got bitten by ferrets, the damn things stayed down the hole and never came up again.

41:00 We had to dig them out, and all those sort of things. So the rifle was a better deal as far as we were concerned and shooting. And we would come home and arrive at Murrumbeena and the local policeman, the sergeant down there, he would always order a couple of pair and we always kept him nice and happy, a couple of pair of rabbits. And we'd have them all hanging on our bikes. Normie Huggins who lived a couple of doors from us, he had his bike. As a matter of fact Normie Huggins father was

41:30 in the air force, and he built himself a little trailer to go on the back of his bike so we could put rabbits in the back of that, so we used to tow this damn trailer, with pram wheels on it.

Tape 3

00:36 **Before the war began, the Second World War began, what did you know about previous wars like the First World War, the Boer War etc?**

Not very much as a matter of fact, I knew that I had an uncle, that's my father's older brother who was killed in France, but actually wars weren't spoken of very much in

01:00 those days. I didn't know very much – matter of fact I heard a bit about Gallipoli, but at school of course, nothing much was said about war, so quite frankly I didn't know very much about we were too busy in the Depression doing everything else without worrying about war. Even my grandfather never spoke too much about war, either grandfather. But

01:30 what they did during the war, the grandfathers, because one came from New Zealand and the other one was born and bred in Melbourne here, but he was in the grocery business. And had a grocery shop in Toorak Road, South Yarra and as far as I know was here right through the war, because it was his eldest son was the one that was killed.

02:00 **What about their school in history, did they talk much about the First World War in history?**

No, no not really, nothing much spoken about history of WW 1, generally it was all it was, not much spoken about it at all. Matter of quite frankly, I didn't even know very much about it until, I knew my father's brother,

02:30 the older brother was killed, but where and when I only found out myself in later years. When my younger brother and I started to go back on history, to try and do a family tree, and found out that he was killed in France and buried in France, he was a truck driver. And

03:00 that's about whatever we found out ourselves was all we knew about it.

What about Anzacs, did you come across the First World War Diggers often in your youth?

No. No. Not very much at all.

You didn't see any of them?

No, we – I can remember Anzac Day, we used to go out and watch the Anzac Day March. When Sir John Monash [WW1 Australian Commander] died

03:30 I remember going with my mother to the St Kilda Cemetery, where he was buried with full military honours, it was a full military funeral, magnificent display, but as regards any other contact with the First World War, not very much at all. I can't help you there.

What about Murrumbeena for Anzac Day,

04:00 **how did you celebrate Anzac Day?**

We all went into the March. We got the train and went into Swanston Street, where they marched from Swanston Street down to the Shrine. Nothing locally. Because you have got to remember in those days there wasn't many RSL's [Returned and Services League] around, there might have been one at East Malvern and another one at Caulfield but in Murumbeena there was no RSL. I think there might have been one at Oakleigh too, but the majority of them

04:30 went in to March, Anzac Day March. And as kids we used to enjoy that, day out to see the March.

Why was it enjoyable?

Oh, to see the big bands go past, people marching to the music, as a matter of fact in those days, a lot of horses in the Anzac Day March, and the police used to have their horses, controlling the crowd, it was always fun with the kids.

Lots of people?

05:00 Oh, thousands yeah. More than they get today, in those days, and that was just after, 1927, 1930 a lot of people went to marches, yeah.

Would they dress in uniform?

Some of them were, some were still in the army, and I used to watch the Light Horse with all their feathers

05:30 in their hats all done up in uniform with these beautiful horses.

They looked very smart?

Oh yeah, they looked very smart. Yeah, they were beautiful, there seemed to be more participation in the marches in those days than there is today. For uniforms and the actual spectacular glamour that went with it.

It was a very glamorous march?

Oh yeah,

What would they think about

06:00 **in those marches, did anybody think about the horrors of the First World War?**

Oh, I think you do, it doesn't matter whether you were in the First World War or the Second World War, one of the biggest problems you get is that these nasty areas crop up, I had a lot of trouble after the Second World War with settling down, they doctors

06:30 put it down to war neurosis and even though I got married, it took a long, long time to settle down. All I wanted to do was meet up with my mates and have a beer with them you know. Really didn't have anything else in mind bar that, because they were the only people that you could discuss the war with

07:00 and what happened and you could discuss things that happened that you wouldn't discuss with anybody else.

Because they understood what you went through?

Yeah, they were there. They knew and you would discuss about the times we went through. I know I am diverging a bit here but the cannibalism and all that, it was absolutely disgusting but there you are.

What about – oh sorry go on.

07:30 That comes on to more of your war service type past.

We'll go through that that's an interesting aspect as well. With regard to Empire, did it matter and how did it matter, the British Empire?

Well as far as I am concerned, you were brought up at school by singing God Save the King, and then Rule Britannia, was always

08:00 sung of a Monday morning, so the Empire was always part and parcel of your life actually, I think the world was better of with the Empire as it is than today because every country, India, Pakistan that have broken away from the Empire, have always had trouble ever since. We are very lucky in Australia; we haven't had much in the way of

08:30 problems like that. But you think of the countries that broke away from the Commonwealth as we knew it; most of them have always having problems. Right throughout Africa, India, and Pakistan all problems, problems and more problems.

Did the monarchy matter?

It does to me, yes.

09:00 I think we should always have a monarchy, I don't believe in the republic side of it because every time I look at a republic you find they are always in trouble somewhere. And when you think about that you think about all your republics of India, Pakistan, and I keep referring to those two because they are big countries, but all your republics are all having problems. Because they are fighting over

09:30 who is going to be the leader, and who is not going to be the leader. And they are just fighting amongst each other, whereas with the monarchy at least you have got control over it. And everybody is in the same situation, you have got your presidents and your prime ministers and goodness knows what. Just imagine if you had a republic here in Australia and the president – and fighting over who's going to be president,

10:00 and have all sorts of problems whereas now we have a control with the system.

The Governor General?

Mmmm.

You are speaking of the Governor General representative of the Queen?

Yeah, I think it's needed. I think we are the envy of a lot of countries particularly America, America is very envious of Australia; you can see it between the lines. They would love to have

10:30 a monarchy or queen or king or somebody to help them along, but no they are stuck with their president and they are always having problems there.

Was the monarchy important to you when you were a young boy?

Yes it was, yes it was. We – the monarchy was always important because it was drummed into us at school and everywhere you know. Rule Britannia and

11:00 God Save the King. You never went to school of a Monday morning without standing up and singing God Save the King. Rule Britannia, Britannia Rules the Waves, you probably heard of that one, and that sort of thing. It was drummed into you as a boy, as a youngster.

Your background, are you a Protestant?

Yes. Church of England. My mother was Church of England, my father more or less

11:30 all his family were Church of England so we are actually all had a English Church of England background.

Were they religious, your parents?

Only my mother, my father, didn't worry too much about it, my grandmother and my mother were very religious. Religious in this respect that they wouldn't miss church and as boys, the 5 of us we never missed going to church

12:00 of a Sunday morning as they used to have their junior kindergartens or whatever you like to call them. And we used to always have to go, not every Sunday, but one of us Mum would say, "It's your turn to go, of you go." So as boys we all had out turns and going to church of a Sunday morning. And she was very – for years and years, all her

12:30 life actually she wouldn't miss church Sunday morning. And her mother was the same.

And so did you remain religious as a result of this upbringing, after the war?

I wasn't religious in the first place.

After the war were you more religious?

No. Definitely not, no.

Definitely not.

No.

So you are not a follower of religion at all?

No, not a follower of religion at all. The only thing is that during the war you have a priest, or a padre or somebody come

13:00 along and you are in the middle of nowhere or in the jungle and they call a church service if you like to call it a church service, and everybody would go and it wouldn't matter if you were Catholic, Protestant or Jewish, it wouldn't matter, everybody would go just for some relief I think, something different.

Now what about your country, did it matter to you – you know, Australia?

13:30 Oh of course, yes.

Why?

Why, you are born and bred here for a start, you lived through a Depression here, and as far as we were concerned Australia was what we were fighting for. So it certainly made a difference, when think of it and you go back, if we hadn't fought for the country and the Japanese had taken over, where would we be now? Be very interesting after six years.

14:00 **Did you feel the Japanese were going to invade?**

Oh yes.

Australia, you thought…?

Oh, they wanted to. They were already loaded up in the islands. All along there, every Japanese you go on to was loaded up with Australian money which they printed themselves, ready with maps where they were going to go and how they were going to get there. I don't think they realised how vast Australia was

14:30 and what would happen if they landed between Broome and Darwin or something, because they couldn't go far, they wouldn't ever have lasted because of the deserts and things. But they were

definitely on their way they wanted Australia there's no doubts.

What about with the war beginning, were you expecting a war with Germany and Japan before it actually took place –

15:00 **the build up in the late 30's, 38, 39?**

We knew we were at war with Germany, because our troops the AIF had gone over there. But we didn't expect Japan, that was the last thing I expected anyhow.

What about before the war, before Germany got – before the declaration of war against Germany and Menzies famous speech about our sad duty and how we have to be involved as well as a result of being in the Empire?

15:30 Quite frankly as a boy 16, 17 years of age, I didn't think there would be a war.

With Germany?

Yeah. I thought Chamberlain [Neville Chamberlain – British Prime Minister] would sort it out and fix it.

So you believed him?

I believed he would fix it, it didn't work because he listened to what Hitler had to say and when all said and done Hitler just told a lot of lies, and said we are going to do this and that and signed pacts and goodness knows what, which he didn't keep. And then

16:00 it of course started the war. I think, if you look back on things now, if America hadn't come into the war, if the Japanese had have left America alone, Japanese would have overrun Australia and if America hadn't come into the war we would have trouble everywhere, not only Germany but right throughout Europe, because without the American help,

16:30 I mean even England would agree that the Americans helped, because when they came into the war they brought supplies and ships and aircraft and goodness knows what which we didn't' have. We had nothing here in Australia; we wouldn't have been able to hold New Guinea without the American help. There's nothing surer in my mind and we now know through history that

17:00 Japanese were in as far as Sydney Harbour, they had landed in lots of places around Australia which people didn't know about, but found out later on so they weren't far off and they had control of the waters from right up at the top of Cape York down as far as Sydney and Melbourne, with submarines, so we had no hope of getting in or out. But when the Americans came in of course

17:30 and you had the Battle of the Coral Sea and Midway, that's where we actually won the war.

Did you actually think the war was a just war, the Second World War?

Oh I don't think any war is a just war quite frankly. I tell my grandson's and everybody like that, that nobody wins a war, I am sure of that, nobody wins a war. We say we came out victors,

18:00 but didn't really the war, because we lost so much to win it. You know, when you think of your mates getting killed.

Did it make Australia in your view, did the Second World War make Australia into a better nation?

Yes, it made it much stronger.

Why is that?

Oh, I think because we fought together they sacrificed things together, and when you think of the rationing they had and all that brings people much closer.

18:30 And I think war does bring people very close, because they have got to look after each other. And that's what happens in the army, I don't care who he is, next door to you, whether he's Catholic or whatever he is Jewish, he's looking after and you are looking after him, and that's something that you learn as you spend time in the army that

19:00 the person beside you or with you, you are looking after him and he is looking after you. And it brings a lot of – you wouldn't dare do the wrong thing in case it affected them and they wouldn't do the – and it didn't matter who they are, we had school teachers and all sorts of people mixed in the army together and we all got on well because we all looked after each other. Had to.

I will just

19:30 **have a look at my notes for a moment Clyde.**

Off you go.

What did you think of the rest of the war, you didn't go til 1942 so what information

20:00 **did you have and what did you think about what was happening around the world?**

Well, not very much, as you know the, I know that the news coming from Germany and those places where they were fighting to stop the Germans from landing and England and then of course and made a mistake and went the wrong way, and tried to take Russia and as you know

20:30 during the war everything is so secretive, we didn't know the HMAS Sydney was sunk, very close to Australia and the war was here, until much later, because they didn't want the enemy to know they were winning, but as far as I am concerned as I said earlier I don't believe in wars no. 1 even though you get involved in it

21:00 and no. 2 that you are better off without a war. It's just that the Japanese came in and did the wrong thing as far as they were concerned, and attacked Pearl Harbor and in turn brought America into the war and the Americans decided to stop the Japanese from coming into Australia. What would have happened if they hadn't done that I don't know, I hate to think. I think we would be overrun by Japanese by now.

21:30 **What did you think of the Germans?**

I didn't have very much to do with the Germans of course, I wasn't in the army, but the Germans are a different type of race to the Japanese, as far as I am concerned the Japanese were a very cruel race, whereas from what I can gather from people I know to this present day, that were in Tobruk and those places, the Germans were quite a good enemy.

22:00 You know, they would stop in the middle of the war and have a cup of tea with them.

How did you react to the news of the holocaust, the Germans killing Jews?

Well I didn't think that was right of course, but that was one of those things that happened, and again that was because of one man or one area that wanted to try and get rid of the Jews. What they had against the Jews I am blowed if I know.

22:30 But they forever…. the whole thing was based around that wasn't it, get rid of the Jews. Hitler thought the Jews were going to take over Germany, whereas other countries such as England they weren't worried about it. But Germany was, very worried!

What did you - on the topic of race issues,

23:00 **when you were growing up in Murrumbeena area, what was your view of the Catholic / Protestant tensions that existed?**

Only that they were different Churches, I had a lot of friends that were Catholic, went to school with a lot of Catholics, we had Murrumbeena State School just across the road in Dandenong Road, we had a Catholic School there, but quite a few fellas that I played football

23:30 with went to that school, but that didn't have any affect, as far as I am concerned religion didn't have any affect in my younger life, because as far as I was concerned they were all virtually the same, it was just that other fellas with different ideas. It might have worried the older generation in my day, but it never – my mother used to go off crook about the Catholics, that they wanted too much from their

24:00 their, people in the way of money, because she had a brother, a step brother, who married a Catholic girl and the priest used to be around every week to collect some money. My mother thought that was awful, she thought that if the church wanted any money it should be put in the plate on a Sunday morning, not the priest come round to collect it. But that was her idea,

24:30 as far as I am concerned religion didn't worry me before the war, didn't worry me in the least and didn't worry me during the war because I didn't care who was next to me, as long as he looked after me and I looked after him it was all right. We had occasions where we had Seven Day Adventists, I went into the army with a young chap by the name of Ingram, who was a Seven Day Adventist and they wouldn't take any notice of him,

25:00 they said, "You are in the army." Well when we got up to Nagambie Road Seymour, he wouldn't carry a rifle, not that we had many, but he wouldn't carry a rifle or take part in war activities. So they gave him a job of peeling potatoes in the cook house or working in the regimental aid post, in other words doing up any injuries or people with blisters on their feet or anything. Well he, Ingram went across to New Guinea

25:30 with us still carrying his Red Cross sign around his chest and a case in his hand, and we went right through to Wareo, I was with him as a matter of fact at Wareo, and the Japanese were going from Bonga Wareo across this trail, and they used to jog along single file. And we thought, "What was the best way to stop these from

26:00 going with us?" Our instructions were to stop them from going through. So we spread out and in those days, our tactics were to stay on one side of the track, so we stayed on one side of the track and (UNCLEAR) would say, "How many more are we going to let through?" you didn't know where to start

or stop. Anyhow this chap who was a left handed rifleman, Tom Poundy said, “We better stop these and knock one of these off.”

26:30 He shot and knocked off one of the officers. And everything stopped, and then they started firing back and Ingram was next to me and the shot came through and went straight through his First Aid case, and he said, “Bugger that.” The next thing I know he is carting round with a rifle. Firing back. So there you are. Changed his mind

27:00 completely when they starting shooting at him. But the Japanese were very cruel in lots of ways; they didn’t worry or care very much who you were or what you were. They shot the padre. He had a big wooden cross and they shot him. No reason to shoot him, but he was the padre, a religious man, so they got rid of him.

Was he a prisoner?

No. No.

27:30 **Where was the padre when he got shot?**

Just outside of a place called Fortification Point.

Was there a battle there?

Yeah. Oh, right.

Do you think he would have been killed in the cross fire?

He could have been killed, but he was shot dead, and they reckoned that was awful and made everyone mad as hell. It wasn’t necessary. They had no excuse, they could see what was happening, they could see who they were shooting. They used to sit up on the mountain

28:00 there with this Woodpecker, it was a machine gun, they called it a Woodpecker because it went peck, peck, peck – very slow rate of fire.

The Japanese machine gun they called the Woodpecker?

Yeah. We called it the Woodpecker, because it sounded like a peck, peck, peck, no rat-a-tat-a-tat noise, it was very slow. We used to say, “They have got a Woodpecker up there somewhere.” you could pick the different

28:30 noises.

Well, OK. . Now your first combat engagement was in Milne Bay, or Lae was it?

It was in Milne Bay the combat engagement; it was only that the stragglers left over when we arrived there. They had all been pushed back over the Owen Stanleys so our main contact was Lae. I got up to Lae.

29:00 We didn’t strike much between Milne Bay and Lae. Going up the coast until we got in to Red Beach.

Red Beach was your first real contact?

Yes. Red Beach.

With Milne Bay, you say you were there doing patrols, you said there were some stragglers there?

That was exactly the thing what was happening, we were only the stragglers. And at one stage when we were out on the point at

29:30 Milne Bay, at the end of the air strip, and we could hear this ruckus going on over there and they had these Bofors guns [machine guns] for the aircraft, and they were firing the Bofors guns straight across the air strip. And the reason they were doing that, was that some of the Japanese stragglers were trying to get back across the air strip, so they put the guns pointed back at the, and of course they disappeared. But they didn’t give up

30:00 the Japanese, they’d try and get across and half an hour later they’d try again. And they kept doing it, but they didn’t get across the strip and we just went about our business sending patrols out into the mountains and reporting back what was going on but there was nothing really to worry about as far as we were concerned until we got to Lae, Red Beach. And of course the 9th Divvy were going up the coast then and they

30:30 had been into places called Sattelberg and all those.

The 9th Division. Sattelberg, yes OK. Right, so Milne Bay is known as being the first defeat of Japanese forces on land?

Yes, it was.

Right, what sense of understanding did you have of this when you were deployed there, were

you enthusiastic to see them?

Well, within reason.

31:00 Being youngsters, 90% being 19 year olds and very young, we weren't eager to get into a fight, but we knew the job had to be done. But I tell you it was a great relief when they went back over the mountains and we were settled into Milne Bay for quite a few months without even worrying before we went to Red Beach. Because we knew the

31:30 Japanese were on their way out and they were doing all right in Port Moresby, the 39th Battalion, we got a report back from there that they were doing all right. So it was a great relief that the Japanese were on their way on up. The idea from there on was to try and keep pushing them and that's how we actually won the war along the East coast, was to keep pushing them all the time.

32:00 Didn't give them a chance to sit down over night and think what they were going to do next. Kept at them, at them, at them, right up as far as Madang. Kept – we pulled out at Madang and the 35th took over and their job was to keep pushing, pushing, pushing.

You didn't go to Sattelberg did you?

No. We bypassed Sattelberg.

32:30 Yeah.

Tell us about your combat engagement at Red Beach?

It was only again the stragglers, because as I said earlier most of them were in Lae themselves, holding Lae and we didn't go into Lae, we were only on the outskirts so it was only patrols that picked up the odd strays on the outskirts of Lae themselves, because the

33:00 bombers came along and bombed Lae out altogether. And then from there on we moved on, of course, we moved on to Fortification Point. Which was at a place called Scar Face [?]. It was a flat top mountain with very, very steep sides, and that was what we called Fortification Point and it was

33:30 Scar Face we struck the Japanese, we went round side and they went round the other. And we had three Companies, A B and C, chasing them out of there, we lost a couple of men there, we lost one, two, three or four. C Company lost two I think it was, because they were sitting at a high position, overlooking this, like a

34:00 plateau and they could see what was going on and were able to rake it with their Woodpeckers and machine guns. So we had to keep around the edge of it all the time, yeah. Yeah.

So walk us through the first day of the battle at Fortification Point?

Oh. The first day of the battle at Fortification …

What were you doing in that?

We were on the top of the mountain; we were on top of the mountain and got pinned down with machine gun fire.

34:30 **The Woodpeckers?**

Mmmm.

The Woodpeckers?

Yeah, we had to crawl our way out. So we crawled out through the grass and it was only 8 inches 2 ft high at the most, so we crawled our way out and down the side of the mountain and then we ran into more Japanese and they started throwing grenades and we started growing grenades. So we were very close to them on the edge of the mountain there. They landed a few grenades amongst us

35:00 and there was quite a few of us that got shrapnel from the grenades, but the Japanese grenade when it blew up, blew up into little like pepper and salt, very fine metal, whereas ours used to go off in big chunks. So we dropped a few grenades down the side of the mountain, to where they had these guns and went down into a valley and up the other side and the Woodpeckers were

35:30 on the high side overlooking. Well they pinned us down there for quite sometime. We couldn't move until we moved the Japanese in front of us by using grenades. Rifle fire and machine gun fire was useless as far as we were concerned. We got back on top of Fortification Point and found that our machine guns had been raked with fire, and

36:00 Colonel McDonald he was one of the machine gunners, he was on a Bren Gun, he was killed, his 2IC [second in command] Snowy Bartlett got a bullet, he was lying flat on his stomach, a bullet went down there, through there and went through his leg and out the other side and he was carted off. But, we stayed there for quite a few days in that spot,

36:30 and sent out patrols to see where the Japanese were and it gave us a chance – Bill Brewer, who was the

corporal, he got one of the Japanese grenades got a bit close and he was peppered with all this shrapnel so he had to go out and get it picked out. Rolf Walker and Ben Gatty and myself, who were on either side of Brewer, copped a lot of it but

37:00 we were able to get it out ourselves, take these little bits out you know, and we used what they called, this Evan Ingram had, the three dye so as we picked the bits out we put a bit of this dye on it to disinfect the spot. But we got away with it. There was about three or four of us at least didn't pull out at all, we stayed there because we weren't really

37:30 injured, it was just these damned grenades that went off with all the bits and pieces. Others who copped the bullets, were the ones who – Norm Anderson, couple of others were killed, killed on the spot. We had to go back later, when I say later the next morning, to see if we could find them, we knew they were there.

Their bodies?

Yeah, recover them, and by that time we knew the Japanese had moved on.

38:00 **Was that your first combat experience?**

Well, first real experience. On the Bonga/Wareo trail, we were under fire and they were under fire, but nothing to worry about because they moved out the way very quickly.

Sorry, what's it called?

The Bonga

Bonga?

Yeah. Bonga was a little native village inland, and Wareo was on the coast

38:30 and the Japanese were using that to reinforce their troops at Bonga. It was called the Bonga/Wareo Trail.

Was that after Fortification Point?

No, before Fortification Point. That was when we were moving up from Red Beach.

To Fortification Point?

Yes, Fortification Point was the next battle ground we had. At that place called Scar Face. How it got the name Scar Face I don't know but

39:00 later they called it Scar Face. The biggest problem up there on Fortification Point and Scar Face was the lack of water. We had no water; we only had what we had in our water bottles. We were a force called Mac Force and in charge was Major McFarlane, and he insisted that every opportunity we had in the morning we have a

39:30 shave, because he thought it was good for morale, and makes you feel better and cleaner. That was all right for him, but we would rather have the water to drink than to shave with it. We had a lot of protest there but anyhow in the end we got the natives to bring up water from the I think it was the Mesawang River, to bring up water from there, that was December 1944,

40:00 because on that Scar Face and Fortification Point we had our Christmas Dinner.

I see.

Yeah, and they brought up some Red Cross parcels, which we shared, it was the first time we had been off bully beef and biscuits for 8 weeks. And nothing else but bully beef and biscuits for 8 weeks. Because we were on the outside of this damned 9th Divvy and

40:30 we – where they go aligned to 2 or 3 kilometres and have a spell, it took us days to go up and down these mountains because we were actually looking after their flanks. And we dived down into a valley and it took us days to come up the other side.

Constant up and down?

We could see them, miles away along the coast, could see by

41:00 the movement they were moving and we had to keep up with them.

The Japanese you could see them?

No, this was the 9th Divvy.

Oh sorry.

And as they pushed up so the Japanese spread out and a lot of them went inland and that was our job, the job we had cleaning them up and we get to a village and there would not be a soul in sight, not a native or anything at all, because they realised we were coming and they disappeared to the next one.

We

41:30 kept chasing them.

Tape 4

00:33 **You can pick up where you left off before. You were talking about the Battle at Fortification Point.**

Fortification Point yeah.

You were saying you actually had Christmas dinner up on the Point?

Yes, Red Cross parcels arrived and we thought that was marvellous after 8 weeks of being

01:00 on bully beef and biscuits. And so we sat up – The Japanese had pushed further – see you gotta remember that we were pushing them along and they would just stop, and be a damned nuisance to us, and off they would go again, so they were heading up towards Madang and we stopped - the New Guinea natives brought up some water, and they brought up these parcels. They couldn't get jeeps or anything up to us, it was too steep, so they carried everything up.

01:30 And we had these Red Cross parcels. And the parcel I got to share with a couple of others, had a little Christmas pudding in it, it had a tin of bully beef, it had a little pot of cream, one of those little tins of Nestle,, some shortbread biscuits,

02:00 they were little hampers so we shared them OK. . That was all right within reason, we had some tins of Tom Piper Irish Stew, done in these cans and each can was for 3 men, and we shared it, quite a reasonable size, a 16 ounce tin. The only thing they

02:30 forgot to do was send a tin opener, so we had to open with our bayonets. But we opened it up and got into it all right. I was fortunate in a way, it didn't affect me, but some of them were horribly ill, for a couple of days on end, because the food was too rich. You can imagine eating plum pudding after having dry biscuits for so long.

So it made them ill?

Oh, very ill.

03:00 Yeah. And they – a lot of them very, very ill, but the cream – it was a great idea, but it didn't work too well, so we were back on the bully beef and biscuits and away we went.

Did you sing carols, Christmas carols?

No, no, that sort of thing you didn't do that because you made too much noise, you had to be very careful, and at nighttime one of the major things you had to be very careful of

03:30 was lighting cigarettes, because all the way up the coast, the Japanese had these patrols planes, they were like a sea plane and they patrolled the coast, because we had nothing to combat them at nighttime and they would get up there with lights ablaze and away they'd go. Up the coast and if they spotted a light or anything that looked like a cigarette, they'd bomb it. And we used to call him

04:00 and he used to really come along as soon as it got dark and we called him "Washing Machine Charlie." Because it sounded like a washing machine this thing, boom, boom, boom, and coming along in the plane and he unloaded his bombs, if he spotted anything that looked like a light. We had to be very careful. At one stage we formed a perimeter, this is the other side of Fortification Point, and I

04:30 was with 11 Platoon and Tom Poundy was in charge, he was the lieutenant, I was his sergeant in No. 2, and there was Frank Scrambler and a few other boys and we formed a circle, and the circle would be about 30 ft across diameter and we formed a circle and dug ourselves in as much as we could because the ground was very, very hard,

05:00 more volcanic and we were only, some of us were only 18 or 16 inches below ground level. Well Washing Machine Charlie picked up something and dropped a bomb, and believe it or not it landed right in the middle of our circle, there was one hell of a crash and bang and there was rocks and dirt and mud, I was lucky, Tom Poundy he got

05:30 injured with shrapnel and concussion, he got carted out and Frank Scrambler who was next to me, got carted out, I was lucky I got buried, when the bomb hit, it threw the earth up and it buried a lot of us and the others came and dug us out, when I say dug us out, they helped get us out. And I didn't get – all I got was a sore chest with a concussion, other than there was only about 3 or 4 that got carted out

06:00 but nobody was killed thank goodness. And the only thing we could work out was that somebody must have, had something that was shiny, because it was a plumb shot right in the middle.

From that height, you really think they could…?

They weren't very high; it was only just above the tree tops. They didn't muck around. Well later on the Americans brought in a plane they called the Black Widow. And they used to be able

06:30 to fly that at night, and that stopped things a bit, because the Japanese couldn't fly down the coast with all their lights blaring and they used to have speakers and all on the planes, "Come on Aussie what are you doing?" All sorts of things. That was another thing we had to be really careful. A couple of places we struck the Japanese and they'd talk to us in English and they say, "Hey Aussie, why you Australians don't answer

07:00 back?" Because if we answered back they'd open fire on us, because they knew where we were. But we were very careful, we knew between ourselves what we going to talk – if we were talking to anybody we would call them by name. We would say, "Are you there Tom, or Jack, or Harry?" or whatever the case may be, but the Japanese didn't know who they were, but they knew if you yelled, "Come on Aussie." somebody said, "Yeah, I am over here!" but they

07:30 couldn't work out right in the end.

What other sorts of things would they say?

Hmmmm.

Other than come on Aussie, what sort of things would they say?

Not very much, you got to get close enough to them at that stage. Our biggest problem we had was the other side of Lae, we were moving up the coast, and we ran into these Japanese and we opened fire on them, [an] American officer came in off the

08:00 coast line and said, "Hold your fire, no more…", it was only a company of us or what we called Mac Force, and we were all issued with these green berets, so we knew one from the other and "No more firing, stop the firing!" I said, "O.K.." I couldn't work out what was going on and when we got up there, we hadn't killed anybody but there were some injured soldiers and they were Hawaiian

08:30 Japanese. And they had formed a battalion in Hawaii and they were brought into New Guinea, not realising of course that we couldn't tell the difference between the Japanese, whether they were Hawaiian Japanese or Japanese or whoever they were. The only thing we went by was the uniforms; we thought these buggers have got on to some Americans and got their uniforms. Anyhow we found out (UNCLEAR).

09:00 **What sort of uniforms did they have?**

They were American uniforms camouflage uniforms just like the American soldier, with American soldiers' steel helmets and all, they happened to be Hawaiian Japanese, because there were a lot of Japanese apparently on Hawaii and they made – formed battalions with them. So we had to be very careful on that one. But we got over that one pretty quick; thank goodness nothing very drastic happened.

09:30 **What was you first reaction when you saw them?**

Was to shoot them, naturally, fire on them, until – cease fire, what the hell was going on around the place. He was one of the commanders of the battalion and he had come along the beach way and got in beside us and told us about the American Japanese.

So you went on their faces rather than their uniforms?

10:00 Of course, you never go by the uniform. Because they could be wearing anything.

Was that – had you seen that before, in fake uniforms or disguises of some sort?

Japanese had done that, they did that on some of the islands, captured Americans, took their uniforms and posed as Americans, and some of – not us particularly, but some of our companies go into trouble on Goodenough

10:30 Island and some of those islands along the coast, where the Japanese who weren't Americans, but looked like Americans but just had Japanese uniforms.

Did you meet some of these Hawaiian Japanese?

No, no they got them out very quickly. Because we didn't know one from the other of course. But we went from there up to Madang, where we stopped

11:00 off and we got re-equipped with – they brought in barges and brought in new clothes, shirts, trousers, the whole lot there because, we had the same uniforms and same shirts and trousers from way back in Milne Bay. They were starting to get a bit high and that's just because there was a river down there and that's good. But the only thing they didn't change

11:30 was our boots of course, they had been worn in and it was the same boots all the time. But then at

Madang, they called for these, not volunteers, but they called for these people to go from our battalion to go with the 30th and 35th Battalion. Well as it happened we went with the 35th Battalion, and they all they did

12:00 was they took 2 men from each of the companies. I went with A company of the 35th, some of them went with B Company and C Company, and there was a (UNCLEAR) of about 15 of us including the officers, Gordon Claverton was the captain, and a couple of lieutenants went with us off the 35th and they got allocated to the different companies, and

12:30 they went of into different directions. Up these different native tracks to try and re-route the Japanese and keep them on the move. While I was with them from January 1944, to the end of March 1944. January 44 to March 44 with the 35th, by that time they reckoned the 35th and the 30th had enough experience. Well when

13:00 we went up some of these trails we struck a lot of Japanese, tail enders, and it was – we went up these trails, I was with A Company of the 35th Battalion we struck a few Japanese here and there and got rid of them. When we got to one of the villages, about 150 odd in it and we cleaned them up. So all told in that 4

13:30 months, January, February, March – 3 months, we cleaned up about 275 Japanese. Terrific amount, you wouldn't believe it, the cannibalism – they were living off each other. Their dead, they cut off big chunks from their rumps and it was a shocking mess.

They had no food?

No food no.

14:00 And they were just raiding the native gardens, there was nothing left. It was just a shocking mess. So quite frankly I was glad to get out of there and get back to our own battalion. Then we came home from there, I came home from Madang to Melbourne, and finished up in Heidelberg Hospital with malaria and scrub typhus

14:30 and then I got – 3 weeks, and then I got discharged from there and I went back to the battalion and they said you are just the man we want, we want you to go back to New Britain. And I said, "Well where's the rest of the battalion?" and they said, "On leave." So they – there was a John Kingman, who was a lieutenant, Poundy, Lieutenant Tom Poundy, a couple of others,

15:00 couple of others as regards myself other ranks and we shipped across to New Britain, made a camp there, picked up some other engineers and that that were already there, and they were building a camp ready for the troops to arrive, and we went over the mountain and down the other side.

So this was with the 37th Battalion?

Back with the 37th yeah. After I had been in hospital I went back with the

15:30 37th. And it was the 37/52nd still. And the interesting part about it was we were the mountain, we got to the top of the mountain between Jacquinot Bay and White Bay and we struck cannibals, native cannibals.

O.K.

Yeah and we thought oh, this is a bit awkward and John Kingman, who was in charge of the group of us, only about 15 of us altogether, said, "There's only one thing we can do and that is,

16:00 keep moving."

So were these New Guinea natives that hadn't been working with soldiers before?

No. Didn't see white people a lot of them. Just wore little lap lap cloth and were armed with bows and arrows. And they stood along the side of the track from here to where Suzie [interviewer] is sitting and watched us plough through, didn't do anything, didn't touch us and we just kept

16:30 going.

Did you think they might attack?

We thought they would yeah. We thought they might attack us, we went down the other side and kept going, we didn't stop I remember it was 7 or 8 o'clock at night, but New Guinea nights were all right because they were moonlit you know, not bad so we were glad to keep – I suppose we were about halfway down the other side, it was worse going down than up shocking, you couldn't get your foot,

17:00 there was mud and slush, they were only native tracks. Anyhow we were down without any further incidents, contacted the battalion that we were going to relieve, and they started off back up the mountain. We told them about the cannibals, they didn't see any or – they disappeared. Or we thought they were cannibals, we were told later they were, whether they would have worried us or not I don't know. But they went – can't remember the number of the battalion that was down the bottom,

17:30 but they came back over the top and contacted the 37/52nd coming back the other way. So they were crossing each other.

Do you know the name of that mountain?

Wouldn't have a clue.

Whereabouts was it?

In New Britain, halfway between Jacquinot Bay and White Bay. Right – they called it the Gazelle Peninsula.

18:00 The Gazelle Peninsula and it was the narrowest part of New Britain, it was the shortest way across. Because we knew the Japs were on the other side, so we had to get across there pretty quickly and it took us 6 days. 6 days to get across.

You say it was just native tracks, it

Just a narrow native track.

18:30 **must have been pretty treacherous at times?**

Oh, it was. Matter of fact, the war correspondent who was with us compared it as worse than the Owen Stanleys. The only difference we had was that there was nobody shooting at us.

So you didn't have any contact with Japanese?

No contact whatsoever. Because when we got to the other side and moved up the coast, it was the north-west coast and moved up there,

19:00 we came across this river, and this river was full of crocs [crocodiles], huge things they were, and they'd swim out in the salt water, and swim around and come back up the river mouth. And, nobody was game to cross. We got across in the end, we sent patrols across. We dropped grenades in the river. One fella swam across, took a rope across and

19:30 then the others pulled themselves across with the rope, and we just kept an eye out that no crocs came back, and we were just ready with the grenades to drop a grenade in.

Did you ever kill any of the crocs with the grenades?

Yes, killed quite a few. What we used to do – we got on to some stores, or salvage from some stores and they were off an American barge, and this American barge had been disbanded, somewhere down the bottom of

20:00 New Britain, and one of our Colonels can't think of his name now, and he salvaged this barge and brought this barge up and it had tins of condensed milk on board, American condensed milk, which was sweetened condensed milk, it suited us down to the ground because we had a shortage of sugar, but living on bully beef and biscuits

20:30 you crave for something sweet and oh geez, we opened these tins and – and we just sucked it down, it was like treacle. You know what condensed milk is like? We just opened it up with a bayonet and somebody got a bayonet and somebody got a brainwave that those condensed milk tins fitted a grenade beautifully, just fitted in beautifully, just pull the pin out put it tin in and you had a condensed milk

21:00 can with a grenade in it. So when we got on the beach, we knew the crocs were out there and they had come back up the river and they could probably smell us but we couldn't smell them. So we planted these tins, these condensed milk tins with grenades in them. In the morning they were all gone. But, every now and then you would be going along the

21:30 coast of the beach and the waves slapping in, it was very hard to hear anything and all of a sudden you would hear, "BOOM, Rumble, rumble, rumble," another croc gone. What they would do, was grab these condensed milk with the sweetener and the grenade and all and swallow it, and later on it would digest it and the grenade would pop out and pop the pin out and bang away it would go. So we had quite a few dead crocs

22:00 laying around the place. Quite surprising.

Pretty keen eating the whole tin?

They got some brainy ideas – we got on to some fishing tackle, see this barge was just found – what the story was – when I was American - we had these reels of fishing tackle,

22:30 and we thought, "That will come in handy we'll look after that." so, this particular barge pulled into the beach and this particular barge had nothing else but these cans of condensed milk and this fishing tackle. And we decided at nighttime, what we will do now, is tie this fishing tackle across the edge of the beach, because with the rule of the water as the sea coming in you couldn't hear a croc or anything coming in. So we what we did between the

23:00 coconut palms we rigged these booby traps and put a piece of this fishing tackle from one tree to

another, we'd put the condensed milk can against the tree with a grenade in it, and tie the end of the fishing tackle to the grenade. And we'd lay that trap and lay another one and another one, right along the edge where we were so we would get a good night's sleep. We knew that if they crocs come in they'd let them off, if the Japs they'd trip

23:30 over the wire and we knew we were pretty safe from the Japs on the other side of the water in any case. Anyhow sure enough it worked, a croc had come in and boom, and everybody up waiting - frightened them off.

Did anybody ever get attacked by a croc?

No. We were very lucky. We had a swimmer with us called Topsy Neilson, he was a robust type of fella with a beautiful –

24:00 he used to swim with Frank Beaurepaire. You know Beaurepaire's, Frank Beaurepaire, but he used to as a lad, he was only 18 or 19 years of age, but a terrific strong swimmer, big solid fella, and we used to send Topsy over with the rope and we would drop a grenade in here and a grenade in there and he'd say, "Right." and swim across the – and the river I suppose would be about 50-60' wide, and he would swim across with the

24:30 rope, a light rope and pull the big rope across and tie it to a tree and we'd tie the other end and our patrol would go across, and when the patrol went across, Topsy would come back on the rope and we gotta wait and see them off from the other side, and when they wanted to come back we would drop – the last man would undo the rope – and we would drop grenades in and swim back again. So it worked out pretty well.

25:00 It was all swamp land, unfortunately, we didn't want to sleep on the beach, but we used to sleep on the swamp land, and I used to sleep and wake up with water that high and as the tide come in the water would come and you would be sound asleep and there's water. It was most unusual, when you stood up all your skin was wrinkled white. Sleep in the

25:30 cold water. Not actually cold but warm salty water. But once we dried out we were right.

Did you ever try eating any of the crocs?

No. No thanks no. We were keen enough with the bully beef and biscuits. We had the Australian Boomerangs, remember down there – here in the aircraft factory, they built what they called the Boomerangs, they had

26:00 little aircraft with one engine in it and little radio engine, and they used them for patrols, well the Boomerangs would come along, they knew where we were, and they dropped bully beef and cigarettes to us. The only trouble was the bully beef they dropped was in 9 lb cans.

26:30 Like a big bully beef can, but it was 9 lb in it. So when they dropped that, if you wanted to open a can of bully beef you had to get 9 other blokes to eat it with you because you didn't want to waste it. So you had to get a gathering and open up a can of bully beef and slice it up and eat it.

Did you smoke much?

Yes, all the time. Yes, I didn't smoke a cigarette until I went in the army,

27:00 I went in the army and smoked right through until 1960.

How many a day?

It used to vary but anything from 20 to 40 a day. You had to have something to calm your nerves. I don't know of anybody who was in the army that didn't smoke. Not one. Everybody –

27:30 the ones that didn't smoke, if any their cigarettes wouldn't last long because everybody else would get them – because we got little pouches of tobacco and cigarette papers given to us and we used to – as a matter of fact we only used haversacks, we didn't use – Colin [interviewer] we didn't use haversacks because we didn't use big packs

28:00 on our back because they were too big. All the way through New Guinea from Milne Bay, all the way through, all I ever had on my back was a haversack with enough supplies of food in that we could carry and our pouches were full of ammunition, grenades on our belts as the case may be, no steel helmets we tossed the steel helmets away, the main reason being that when we went over the Owen

28:30 Stanleys and Milne Bay, heading up the coast, we found out that going through - we wouldn't take a native track because we knew the Japanese would be sitting along the side of native track waiting for us, so we crashed through the jungle. And we would always have it – somebody would go out for 10 minutes and a machete and chop a track through and they would come back and the next one would chop through away, we chopped our way through.

29:00 We might go for 10 minutes a quarter of an hour like that and then 10 minutes more and another quarter hour chopping our way through. If you had a steel helmet on, as you went away the vines would hit the steel helmet and the helmets would go ding dong, ding dong. You could hear them. So we

decided that's the end of that, we'll get rid of those. So we went back to the idea of the old felt hats. And as I said, later on when we got turned in to what we were called Mac

29:30 Force, as a separate company, Mac Force, got attached to the 27th, we got issued with green berets and that's quite surprising how you could pick the green berets from the others. I'll show you some photos after which I've got.

So you didn't hang on to the steel helmets?

No, they were useless, useless. Not only that,

30:00 it was what you call 'close jungle warfare'. You would trip over a Japanese before you found him. Trip over him, because you – I don't think unless you have actually been through a jungle, how close it is. You know, it's very – and you could lay beside a track and be 10 foot of the track and just cover yourself in the

30:30 jungle and nobody would ever know you were there. And even though we went taught jungle training by the actual training itself, it was only what we learnt out of books and things because we had nowhere, I think it was Corowa in NSW that had a bit of jungle, but we didn't get anywhere near that, all our training was done in Queensland. And we had no jungle training. We

31:00 taught ourselves jungle training at Milne Bay, by going out on patrols.

Does – did you do many ambushes like that where you would lay and wait?

Well on the Bonga/Wareo trail it was a complete ambush, we lined a complete platoon, and that platoon consisted of, would be about 10 or 12 fellas, and just within

31:30 arms distance of each other, along the track and waited for the Japanese to come and had already been lined up. And as soon as the first – we wouldn't fire on the first lot, because the back lot would disappear, we waited until the first lot got through – but the problem was there on that particular trail was that they were within one metre of each other and there was no end to it there was not one for 100s of them.

32:00 So we had to start somewhere, and we started by getting the next group, which was an officer, and they spread out – they used to make a whole lot of mistakes, the Japanese ambush, they made mistakes by forming an ambush on both sides of the track, and we had a set policy if we were going to ambush it would be only one side of the track. Because when you fired

32:30 across the track, you were firing at your own people. The Japanese didn't wake up to that for a long while. But we never ran into many ambushes, we went around them more or less. Because we had New Guinea natives with us and they could smell the Japanese 100 yards away. They'd say, "Japan man, Japan man!" and they would tell us what was actually happening, because they could actually smell them.

33:00 **What was your relationship like with the natives?**

Our relationship with the natives was very good but you had to be very careful that the natives you had were on your side, because the Japanese were sending natives down the tracks to mix with your natives, and they would be on the Japanese side and telling the Japanese what would be happening. But the natives in the end woke up who was winning, so they'd come and tell us where the

33:30 Japs were and what was happening. But you had to be very careful, you couldn't trust them all, you could trust the ones you knew, but the others that came and joined them, you had to be very careful.

Were you on first name basis with them?

No, no not really, they talked pidgin English. You could talk to them in pidgin English.

Did you speak a bit of pidgin English?

Yeah, they'd come along and

34:00 teach you a little bit. "We had a long time to work out what belly belong me kai kai." in other words hungry. They – at one stage, where was it at Madang or somewhere like that a native explained to me what a saw was. "You push him you come and push him, you go that and kai kai dee why."

34:30 In other words dee why was wood and kai kai is eat and in other words you push him you come and pull him you go and he ate into the wood.

Push him he come and pull him he go, kai kai dee why,

He cut into the wood – he ate into the wood. Little things like that you got to – one of the problems we had in New Guinea was monkeys. You'd stop

35:00 overnight and park wherever you could and all you do is put a waterproof ground sheet over you because you didn't have tents or anything, and you park there overnight and you get up to clean your

teeth in the morning, and use – use plenty of water we used a mug to clean our teeth, and before you know it a monkey would come down and put your tooth brush down, and he would come down and grab it,

35:30 colourful tooth brush.

So they would steal things?

Yeah. They'd see the colourful toothbrush and knock them off. We had another session there along the beach before we got to Fortification Point, we were coming along the beach and somebody found a case of food floating around, and when we opened it up it was a case of tinned herrings

36:00 and we thought, "That's good, it looks all right." it was only a platoon of us, and a whole platoon would have only consisted of 10 or 12 men at the most, and we decided to sit on the beach and open these cans of fish, smelled all right and looked all right, herrings they were, we ate them,

36:30 we were there for 3 days, but ptomaine poisoning and dysentery and name it. We had to send back for a doctor, and a doctor came up from battalion headquarters which was – he wasn't very happy about it he had to come about 5 mile up through the jungle to get to us, and we told him what it was and he said, "Oh, it's ptomaine poisoning there's nothing I have got for ptomaine poisoning, but you gotta get rid of it now." He'd go out

37:00 to the edge of the water and get a cup of salt water and say, "Here, drink that." And of course it made you violently ill, salt water. And besides the dysentery and violently ill, 3 days it took us to get over that. And that was because we were greedy.

What was it ptomaine?

Ptomaine poisoning, yeah.

Was it from the can, the rusty can?

No, it's from the actual food, it goes rotten, it's called ptomaine

37:30 poisoning. So that didn't help very much. The tins – salt water eats into the tins and blows the tins up and you had poisoning, the fish goes off.

So it's a bit like salmonella?

Yeah.

Tape 5

00:33 **I just wondered a lot of what you have spoken about so far has been about the Depression years, is there much that you remember about before you were 7, the 1920s?**

I was born in 1923, and I remember going down to start school in 1927,

01:00 because I had to take my older brother with me. The reason being is didn't start until the same age I did. I started school in February 1927, I had just turned 4. In those days they took them at 4 or 5, but I was a bit young but they took me because my brother was with me, my older brother who was 18 months older than I, and he wasn't a well – he hadn't been to

01:30 school, he wasn't well as a baby. Anyhow they made a position for him and we both started in the same grade. I can still remember the school teacher's name, a Miss Ingram who's a big lady and she welcomed us there. Anyhow we went right through both my brother and I in the same grade to what we called the 6th grade, we had a good time at school really, as we grew up,

02:00 the different things we did as youngsters together, we were very close my brother and I. Because there was only 18 months difference between us. We had some very good mates. We had a friend called Clarrie Head, his father owned Head's garage in Murrumbeena, and we used to go home with Clarrie and Clarrie's mother and father used to welcome Jack and I like sons. Because they already had four

02:30 sons. Which were older than Jack and I, but they welcomed us there and we used to spend a lot of time with the Head family. At weekends. Having the garage he had boats and cars, which they used to race, and they used to take them up the back of Warrandyte to a place called Cannon's Creek and they'd race these Evinrude boats

03:00 up the Cannon Creek, or you'd go down to Phillip Island, Cowes to the race track there belonged to Len Lukey who used to make Lukey mufflers and they used to take these 9 horse powered Rileys, racing cars, English racing cars and to race them down there. So we spent a lot of time on weekends whenever the opportunity occurred to go down with them.

03:30 Of course they didn't go that often, once a month or so if that.

Were you ever involved in a push?

What do you mean?

A push, like a small gang of youths?

No. Because all our time was spent with either football, playing football for East Malvern Rovers or as I said collecting bits and pieces for the household. But we never had

04:00 gangs, we had friends, we formed friends and that sort of things, but never any worries about gangs because most of us were all about the same age, even before the war, most of our friends of course went into the army, the air force or the navy. And because we were all about the same age. But no we didn't have gangs or anything like that to worry about in those days.

We spoke a bit before

04:30 **about what you knew about Gallipoli and WW1 which you said wasn't a lot, but you did go to the Anzac marches. What did you think of old soldiers or people in the Anzac marches, did you look up to them?**

Oh thought they were very good, the way they looked after the country and looked after Australia and actually we were in the

05:00 stage of just enjoying the marches, a carnival or day out type of thing. The Anzac Day march and my mother used to love the marches, any time there was a march on or a funeral for that matter. When Sir John Monash was buried in St Kilda or anybody of note, she was the first one down there to see it and take one of the boys with her or all of the boys. Because you got to remember we were all pretty close together, there was only 18 months between Jack and

05:30 I, 4 years between Neil and I and then 3 years between the others. So we were all pretty close together as boys.

You mentioned your father was quite strict, did he ever use a strap or a cane on you?

No, he had a cane which was about 3 ft long, we sat at a big oval table, Dad was at the head of the table and

06:00 Mum sat at the other end and the boys would sit in between, the youngest was always nearest to Dad and the oldest was the furthest away. So he had to discipline or we did anything wrong, we'd get a whack with the cane, but the cane was always set beside him and it was always had it. I can remember an incident one Sunday night when Neville who was the youngest, was sitting beside him and we were having

06:30 a – and in those days if you had a big meal, Sunday particularly, it was a roast in the middle of the day. If it was a roast WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK or fowl, it was one of these real outer thing – we only had it about once a month, a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK , even though we had them in the back yard. But they were there for eggs mainly; we would have roast lamb or roast beef. My father was a very good cook he used to cook sponge cakes and everything – Mum would go to Church Sunday morning,

07:00 for the 8 o'clock service by the time she got home at lunch time, lunch would be cooked ready, had roast potatoes and the whole lot. But he was a disciplinarian in this respect that if you did the wrong thing at the table you got a whack on the wrist or the arm from the cane. I can remember with time we were there this particular night and we had a couple of visitors, some friends of ours who were sitting at the table with us, and

07:30 young Neville spread himself a slice of bread and sprinkled hundreds and thousands [small multi-coloured sweets] on it, and he's got a great layer of – you know what nonpareils [?], hundreds and thousands across the bread, spread across the bread and he picked them up in his two hands and he was just about to take a bite when my father gave him a whack on the hand with the cane and said, "Cut that." Well when he hit him on the wrist the hundreds and thousands went everywhere. I think everybody at the table had hundreds and thousands,

08:00 in their cups of tea and everywhere. But they were – but Sunday night was always a night, when my mother would make, Saturday or during the week, make cakes, lamingtons, scones, she was a great scone maker my mother, she'd make cheese scones, or sultana scones or plain scones, and that was always Sunday night's meal, we didn't want for anything else because we had a roast during the day. Sunday was always

08:30 roast day and so he was firm, but a good father no doubt about it. Even though he would go out of a Saturday afternoon and off he'd go to the football, we still – when we moved into Fisher Street, East Malvern, we still had the old Dodge. My father used to pull it apart and put it together again with the help of one of the

09:00 boys. So the Dodge was always there. Jack couldn't drive, even though he was older than I was didn't drive, I learnt to drive very young because I used to go with Dad to a farm up at Terang, one of Dad's friends had a farm at Terang and whilst we were at the farm I used to drive round in the farm

implements, the 3 ton truck or

09:30 the – Jack, what was his name, oh it doesn't matter, had the farm up there and he would drive around in new Jaguar's and new Humber's and he did very well on his farm. Dairy farm of course. And, we used to learn to – as youngsters learn to drive the cars and things and when we came down to Melbourne here, we could all drive even

10:00 before I went into the army I could drive all right, I didn't have a licence going into the army, but when I got into the army I got a licence straight away. When I came out of the army I walked into the Police Station and he said, this is a chap by the name of a Sergeant Kelly, that knew me as a boy and said, "How did you go in the army all right, did you get a licence?" I said, "I got a truck licence." so he said, "I will give you a licence." so he wrote me a licence,

10:30 so I never had to go through the licence to drive a car back in Melbourne here, because he knew if you had an army licence you were pretty right.

Tell us more about the polio epidemic?

The polio epidemic affected a lot of children mainly, under the age of 20 odd and they had this paralysis, this polio paralysis and they

11:00 spread right throughout Melbourne and so they had to separate. So all the schools were closed, where there was any congregation at all and they kept the people apart as much as possible until they got – and they brought this vaccine out which later on they gave everybody and cleaned things up. But that's about all I can remember of it. I know we were confined to the backyard, myself and my brothers, and we weren't allowed – we weren't even allowed

11:30 next door to one of our mate's place, because of the spreading of this polio.

And you didn't go to school for 9 months?

It was quite a few months exactly how long I wouldn't know, but it was a long time, long time.

Can you remember where you when war was declared?

Yes, I do

12:00 I was – I had been to a dance on the Saturday night with this chap I was talking about, Clarrie Head at Head's garage, my older brother, the three of us and on the Sunday morning we had made arrangements to go across to the Caulfield Racecourse and I learnt on Sunday afternoon that war had been declared. And that's when it started, 1939 and from what memory I have got

12:30 I think it was Sunday night that we first learnt about it.

What were your initial feelings?

Didn't affect – '39 see I was only 16 years of age. And didn't worry me very much, I was apprenticed to printing, my older brother was working for a builder as a plasterer, but he got a job at the Gordon Street Munitions Factory, and

13:00 between 1937 and 1939, and they kept him there they wouldn't let him join the army. He used to look after all the machines there, and it wasn't until about 1943 when they released him to – because they were short of personnel, they released him go into the army. So he went into the 2/6th Machine Gun Company and went into New Guinea. By that time we were in

13:30 Madang, I met him in Madang.

Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor, when the attack on Pearl Harbor happened?

Not exactly, no I don't know exactly where – but I remember Pearl Harbor and the mess the Japanese made there. What date was that?

7th December 1941.

'41. December '41. I was still around Melbourne, apprentice, because I didn't go into the army until

14:00 February '42. So it was before that.

Tell us about the 35th – actually before we get into that, I wanted to ask you about your training around Maroochydore and the Tambourine Mountains?

We trained mainly on route marches, we went into Maroochydore a place called Jimboomba a couple of places along coast Nambour just moving

14:30 from camp to camp. We did some of our training down at the Tambourine Mountains, behind Surfers Paradise there, over the mountains there, but no jungle training because we didn't have any jungle. We did night marches; we spent a couple of weeks sleeping during

15:00 the day and marching at night. That was part of our training, during the days when we weren't marching we were laying barbed wire along the coast of Queensland, across the mouth of the Maroochydore River right up to the north of Brisbane at Red Beach.

Were you laying barbed wire as training or as a precaution?

No, a job wasn't for training, it was just because the Japanese – they were frightened they would land somewhere down the coast, so we put

15:30 barbed wire up. That's about all we did there, when we went across to New Guinea; we virtually hadn't had any jungle training with the exception of what we read in books and things.

So it was pretty much basic training, fitness and…?

Fitness. The main thing was getting us fit because we were joined by the 52nd Battalion and their

16:00 colonel or commodore whoever was in charge there didn't believe in all these route marches, he taught them all how to pull rifles and Bren guns apart and things like that. Because we didn't have many of them and we'd get one Bren gun and everybody was – sat around in a circle and learnt how to pull it apart and put it back together. Anyhow we didn't do that we mainly did route marches and when it came to a time we had a big march to do and the 52nd

16:30 had joined us prior to that we found all the 52nd fellas didn't last the distance. They all fell by the wayside.

Tell me a little more about the Bonga/Wareo Trail?

The Bonga/Wareo Trail was apparently a link the Japanese had across the island, across New Guinea and they used to send their platoons and troops across there to reinforce one end to the other,

17:00 and when we came across our job was to stop them from going across one end to the other. So all we did was move up and down the Bonga/Wareo Trail and set traps for them as they came through. They didn't move at night but they moved during the day, just one continual stream of say 100 or more of them, following the leader with just a few feet apart, our job was to slow them down, stop them and scatter them, which we did

17:30 quite – no problem at all.

You weren't travelling over it you were just going up and down?

Running along side of it, up and down the trail, yep.

From – after the Bonga/Wareo trail you went down to Lae, or Red Beach near Lae and you mentioned that they had…?

Red Beach was on this side of Lae and Yellow Beach was on the other side of Lae.

18:00 Yellow Beach was the nearest so we went around Lae by barge and landed at Red Beach.

You mentioned that they had to bomb with petrol because of disease?

Yes, we watched the big Liberators ~ Flying Fortresses or whatever you like to call them, go across Lae, and tip off these 44 gallon drums of aviation fuel into Lae and drop incendiary bombs and after it Lae was on fire.

18:30 They burnt the whole place out, because they had all sorts of diseases there apparently.

Were the Japanese there?

Japanese did, we didn't go in. We backed out and went further up the coast. After it all bombed out and finished. We went to the outskirts of Lae, and the only thing left standing was the ice works.

Do you think there would have been Japanese caught in that bombing?

Oh yes, matter of fact it blew the hospital apart a lot of nurses, Japanese

19:00 nurses and Geisha girls were captured there, but they were captured by the Americans who had come up the other way. We went on. We went on to…

Were they burnt by the bombing?

I don't know that, I don't know I should imagine they'd be burnt all right, the whole thing was an inferno.

Do you remember the first time you saw somebody

19:30 **killed?**

Yes I do, I remember that. One Japanese, it was on a trail, I don't know where he came from, he was on

his own and it was somewhere over the other side of Milne Bay when we went over the mountains and we were heading north and we were following this native track and come across a Japanese who had just been killed by somebody we don't know whether it was

20:00 the natives or who, but somebody had killed him and he virtually hadn't been dead very long. There was the first sign of it.

Do you remember the first time you killed somebody yourself?

No, not particularly. I mean I can remember as we went through some of these villages and the Japanese had left rear guards,

20:30 well all we did was surround and open fire. Somebody had to kill them somewhere along the line. We didn't individually embrace them at all. One spot I can remember where we caught them on of a hillock and we were on the other side of the hillock, and we came across them, and we were trying to get over the hill and they were trying to get over the other way and we had a clash

21:00 but it was just a case of standing there with a machine gun and firing, whoever – finished up cleaning them up and got out of there.

In a sense these were fairly one sided battles?

Yeah. Well, one sided in this respect we always had the upper hand in most cases even at Fortification Point, we had the upper hand even though

21:30 they were there for a long time with those machine posts set up, we had the upper hand in the end, because there was only a few of them left and the bolted in the end there.

I was going to ask you – Fortification Point and you mentioned the padre was shot, was that a sniper?

I don't know, we didn't know, he was with C Company.

O.K. I see, right.

He was the

22:00 battalion padre, he used to move from company to company. Could be A Company or B Company or C Company, as the case may be.

Did you worry about getting killed?

Did I worry about it?

Yeah.

Certainly did, self preservation you worried all the time. Yes plenty worried. It's like being on nervous edge,

22:30 on edge all the time. See the problem we found, or I found particularly with jungle warfare is that you couldn't see the enemy 9 times out of 10 and you didn't know where they were and it must have applied in reverse, they didn't know where we were but by the same token, you didn't think of that – it was self preservation. And when you went along any of these tracks or cut your way through the jungle you relied on the fellow behind you

23:00 to look after you what's happening behind and you made sure the fella in front was all right. So when you trailed each other along, and it was usually single file, it was the only way to move, and it took hours sometimes to get 100 yards or something, cutting your way through, you were on edge all the time because you didn't know what was there and the slightest movement such as

23:30 disturb a pig or something in the jungle, put everybody on edge. You wondered who was there and what was happening.

Did you worry about any kind of wound in particular, did you hope for a quick death or…?

No, I was hoping no wounds whatsoever, didn't worry about death mainly, we worried about staying alive.

24:00 **So there wasn't you didn't fear any particular wound, stomach wound?**

The main thing as I said was self preservation everybody looking after each and getting the best you can.

You mentioned before that you weren't religious apart from being brought up religious,

24:30 **you weren't religious before the war, you weren't religious after the war, did you ever think about God during the war?**

Yes, sometimes you would say a little prayer and I would say, "Thank God I didn't run into that." Yes you are religious to a certain way but not to any extreme, you know what I mean. We used to attend church

– we'd be in the middle of nowhere and the priest or padre would come along and call a church service, just in the middle of a little clearing in the middle of the jungle

25:00 and virtually everybody was available bar the sentries or the guard outside, would go to that service. We didn't care if it was Jewish, or Roman Catholic or what, and pray that we weren't the next ones to get hit. And we were very, very fortunate battalion or company in my case, B Company because we always seemed to be on the outskirts of the fighting

25:30 and what we did strike, they were on the run, when the 9th Divvie came up through the valley along the coast line, the Japs were on the run and they didn't stop to say hello to us, they just kept on going and we kept as hard as we could on their trail. Didn't keep them – it took a long time; sometimes we travelled day and night to keep moving. I recall at one stage –

26:00 there was a company of us, called Mac Force, and we were trying to keep abreast of the 9th Divvie, and we were going the mountains heading to wards um, where would we be heading towards Madang, or somewhere in that area, but we were well inland we were about 8 mile inland on the mountains and we were travelling along there and we decided that we had to keep up with them we'd have to travel at nighttime.

26:30 So we started moving at night, and to keep contact with each other you would touch the fella in front. Well we got to one stage there; it was pitch dark, as dark as it gets in New Guinea, next thing I knew the fella in front disappeared. So I took a couple of steps forward and I disappeared too. We were on the edge of a waterfall, well I guaranteed we slid 100 yards or more down that waterfall.

27:00 Slid down on our backsides and all we had was a pack, I had some signal cable on the back of my pack but not only one but about a dozen of us all slid down, because you were following the fella in front and down they go – we slid down there.

I guess one was too scared to call out as well?

You couldn't, you couldn't make too much noise at nighttime. No. Very quiet.

27:30 But ought to have heard the racket when they went down the waterfall. And especially with the rolls of signal cable on their backs, because we were trying to lay a signal line to keep in contact with the 9th Divvie, well slid down there and the following morning I couldn't move. We waited until day light at the bottom of this waterfall, but I couldn't move. Some of the fellas were sore and sorry and bruised, and I thought something has gone wrong with my hip.

28:00 The RAP [Regimental Aid Post] bloke, this Evan Ingram, had never, until he went to New Guinea, seen a wound or a cut or anything in his life. But he being a Seventh Day Adventist prior to that, he got the job, he said I think you've bruised your hip pretty well. Well we found out later after I got back to Melbourne here, that I had dislocated it. And it slipped back into position again, yeah.

28:30 But it took a while to – I got to go to my army records about it and I had to get it replaced in 1975, but that's what happened and other fellas bruised their arms and one fella had a heart attack. Believe it or not he got such a fright going down the waterfall, but he's still alive, a chap by the name of Hank Coombe and we had to leave him there, he had a heart attack and they called the rear guard caught him up later on

29:00 and took him down the coast, but he was all right. He just got such a hell of a fright in the middle of the night. Little things like that happened. (UNCLEAR) moving at night and when you move at night you disturb all the pigs, and you got wild boar and pigs being disturbed, you didn't know whether they were the Japanese hear this crashing through the jungle, who's coming now. And many a time, nervous one with

29:30 a machine gun would say something up there, pig or something.

Did you hunt the pigs at all?

We ate the pigs. We had to cook them, that was the hardest part to stop and cook them. But I reckon every battalion headquarters had a feed because we'd leave the pigs there and they would pick them up on the way through. I reckon they had good feeds. We were stuck with the bully beef and biscuits.

30:00 **Um, you mentioned about finding the cannibals near Madang is it?**

This was on the east side, sorry west side of Madang we all went inland with the 35th Battalion and A Company, there was A B and C Company of the 35th Battalion they were heading towards Wewak up past the Sepik

30:30 River and myself and a chap by the name of Hank Coombe and who was the other one, anyhow there was 3 or 4 of us, joined A Company three or four of out battalion went with C Company and 3 or 4 went with C Company, whatever the case may be. But we split up and Captain Claverton[?] and I can't think, but they went with battalion headquarters

31:00 and we headed of in different directions. One company went straight up the coast to Madang, up towards Wewak one went down the middle and we went on to the mountains and we travelled along the

mountains and the first sign of any life was when we found some dead Japanese, we don't know where they came from or what happened but we came across this first village, it was completely empty.

31:30 Not a soul in sight, so we travelled again, using the Papua New Guinea fellas to guide us and we went in and struck the second (UNCLEAR) village [?] just before we caught up the Japanese, it was a great old battle, it didn't worry us very much because we were well armed with machine guns and Owen guns and goodness knows what and we split into a half circle and

32:00 approached this, we finished up there was 100 odd Japanese dead there and the rest had moved on. And when we moved into the village we found Japanese in these native huts with their buttocks cut off, shocking mess, they had been cannibalised, eating them. That's how tough things were. Nothing to eat, we were lucky we carried most of our food with us.

So you knew this because there were parts that had obviously been cut

32:30 **off by a knife?**

Yes, they cut big chunks of the buttocks off. Oh yeah. And we went on to the second village and there was more, I suppose 100 or so Japanese and the same thing applied. Same thing applied with the Japanese. It was awful.

You didn't find anyone alive?

No, no, no. They kept moving, as soon as we got them off.

33:00 They didn't stop to fight or anything, just went. But that was my first experience with cannibalism and I think all told we killed about 274 Japanese in that little episode and that was from January through to March. And then in March I returned together with the others, returned back to own battalion at

33:30 Madang, and then went home on leave.

Now you sort of you made reference to this before, but did you ever see any evidence of Japanese cruelty to bodies or prisoners…?

The only evidence we saw of Japanese cruelty to Australians, was in New Britain and about 30 miles south of

34:00 Rabaul we came down the coast and we came to a plantation called the Toll Plantation, and there Australian soldiers had been tied up to the palm trees and they had been shot and some of them still had their meat tags [name tags] on, and that was my first experience of Japanese – whether they were cruel to them, or just hung them up there or tied them to the trees and shot them, we don't know but that was down south of

34:30 South west of Rabaul itself and a plantation called Toll, Plantation. And the only reason we had gone down there was because we had come up from Jacquinot Bay and across Wide Bay and down by the Manoora into Rabaul Harbour, and with all these Japanese up there, we don't know exactly, but supposedly there was about

35:00 52,000 of them and we knew that down the coast there was supposed to be 40,000 of them. And the only [thing] we could do [about] it, and remember there was only 1, 2 about 3 or 4 companies of us and each of our companies were down in numbers. We'd have – lucky to have 80 to a company and all these bloomin' Japs so what we did, is round them up and make them put the ars in a big heap on the

35:30 on the beach front and then we marched them off down the peninsula to a certain place and then we armed them with machetes, their own machetes and cleared the jungle. And put them in their with about 2 or 300 into a group, went round the other side and did the same and gradually worked our way around and we had all these groups 5 or 6 or more and some had up to 1,000 in it.

36:00 Troops, Japanese troops. The only way we could do it – we were frightened of bloody Rabaul and secondly the only way we could stop them was to separate them, if you had them altogether you were in trouble. What they did – we did – not us but the natives, we got them to load the rifles on to a barge and as we collect them, load them up and make big heaps of rifles, they'd load the rifles on to a

36:30 barge and took them out to Rabaul harbour and pushed them overboard. And Rabaul Harbour is one of the deepest harbours in the world, so it was no trouble to fill that up. And all the shells from the mountain guns, we took the mountain guns out and pushed them overboard and the shells from the mountain guns we took the cordite out of them, the engineers just undid the bottom and took the cordite out, and took the shells out to sea and dumped them. And the cordite,

37:00 they took a match to the cordite and burnt it. And why they didn't dump them with the cordite in I don't know. And as we went down the coast we had 30 about 30 mile down to this Toll Plantation, all along the coast of New Britain they dug in and made big caves, into the foreshore. We went into one cave and there were sea planes in there,

37:30 Japanese sea planes. I remember one fella saying, chap by the name of Wills, he was a mechanic said, "I'm going to start these things up." we said, "Can you fly them?" he said, "No but I can start them." So we used to drive around the bay in a sea plane but couldn't take off. Damn things. Sunk them in the

end.

Sunk them.

Yeah. Got rid of them. Well they were no good to us.

38:00 Anything at all we didn't want we dumped in the harbour, because I can remember going down the coast and I had a platoon, Tom Poundy, my lieutenant: he copped a grenade down further, he had gone back and I was in charge of this platoon, as a sergeant then, and I went and they said, "What about cleaning up these blooming tunnels?" I didn't

38:30 like I didn't like the tunnel at all, and I didn't like the idea of the fellas going in either, they said, "We'll go in." and we went into these tunnels and it was pitch dark and you'd be going along and all of a sudden you'd get thumped by something and it was these dirty big frogs or toads, the Japanese were breeding them there as food. And it hit you right in the middle of the chest. Anyhow this chap Wills I was telling you about, he was an engineer, diesel mechanic

39:00 and we came across this big lighting plant and we said to him, "Do you think you could get that thing going?" and he said, "I can try." So we lit torches because we had nothing else, and helped him, and he started the thing up and it started it was a lighting plant and it lit up the whole tunnel. So the tunnel was lit up with electricity, so then we could see what was happening.

39:30 And they had a storage of food the Japanese there. But food that was no earthly good to them in this respect it was all rice and they were using the frogs' legs for food.

Why do you say that was no good?

Well it was all right for them. I wouldn't eat a frog. They must have enjoyed it over their rice. But the interesting part

40:00 about that is, as we came out, we got a lot of this cordite and with the engineers we blew the tunnels up, so inside the mountains there is all sorts of things, and when they went in there later and salvaged and I am sure somebody would have and dug them out to find – but some of those tunnels went right through the mountain and out the other side.

Tape 6

00:32 **Just go back and tell us a bit more about 35th Battalion and the blokes who you knew in it?**

The only ones we knew were the young fellas that joined the 35th Battalion in Queensland somewhere and they were actually called up at 18 years of age. And they spent their jungle training at Cowra in

01:00 NSW and then they were shipped into New Guinea. Now how they got up as far as Madang I don't know, but they must have come by one of the big boats Manoora, or [HMAS] Kanimbla or one of those, up as far as Madang, full strength battalions and companies. And relieved us we were down very, as you can imagine with malaria, scrub typhus,

01:30 and anybody who was wounded at all, they had gone out, our strength was gradually going down and down and down. I was in a platoon that the normal strength of that platoon would normally be about 30 or 40 fellas, it was down to about 10 or 12 because it was not only wounded but illness. Hell of a lot of malaria there, there was no stopping it, just by taking

02:00 your Atrebrin and hoping for the best. Speaking of Atebrin, I think it should be noted here that when we went into Milne Bay original there was no such thing as Atebrin and malaria as far as the powers that be were, was just something we had to combat. Well we moved into Milne Bay and then we had a – at nighttime

02:30 as soon as it turned dusk and the sun started to go down, we were issued with a hat with a mosquito net on it which you tucked into your shirt OK. OK. You were issued with mosquito gloves that came right up to the elbow and tied on to your lapel at the top here, and you were lined up, not only our company but all the other companies, were lined up and the officer in charge went along with a little

03:00 medicine glass, poured quinine into the medicine glass and handed it to you and you had to go, because if you tasted quinine, oh shocking stuff.

It's bitter.

He'd take the glass from you, take a bucket of water and give it a rinse and go to the next fella and put some more quinine and behind him was one of the orderlies with boiled lollies and they would give you boiled lollies.

03:30 **Where was this?**

Milne Bay.

That was still early days for you?

Oh yes early days. And later on they came to light with Atebrin. Which made you turn like, yellow it was. My mother didn't recognise me when I came, after 19 months in New Guinea, came come and she said, "Is that a sun tan?" I said, "No, its Atebrin, it's yellow." Anyhow getting back

04:00 to the 35th Battalion, the 35th Battalion was split up – we were - why of course, the question was, somebody said, "Why did you pick – how did you pick people out of the 37th Battalion?" somebody said 35th Battalion needed somebody with them that had experience with no. 1 how the Japanese worked and no. 2, that could talk to the natives, and knew which were good natives and which were

04:30 bad natives. Because they were worried about the Japanese would send natives down knowing it was a new battalion or finding out that it was a new battalion. They lost then. They would mix with them and the natives would go back and report to the Japanese where they were. So we went with the – as I said we had all sorts of problems early in the piece with running into these villages loaded with the Japanese so we kicked them out and they went further on and further on, and I left them in

05:00 March and came back to our own battalion.

Being sort of an older more seasoned soldier – well more experienced in jungle warfare what sort of things were you teaching them specifically?

Ambushing. Because if they wanted to ambush the Japanese, only do it from one side of the track. Never put people – the tendency was to spread out and put people

05:30 on both sides of the track. Now if anybody came in between, they would fire on each other. Ambushing was no. 1, to rely on the natives to tell you where the Japanese and whether they had been there because the Japanese could smell whether the Japanese had been there, and if they were still around because they knew, they knew, they were very good like that, they could tell you where they were and how long. They were like our black trackers here in

06:00 Australia. They were born and bred in the jungle, so we taught the 35th boys to make sure that they listened to the natives as to where they were, and the other thing was at nighttime, not to make any noise whatsoever. Because the first night out with them I nearly died, because they had these tin pannikins and we stopped over our night meal and camped down for the

06:30 night and you just make an area and you just make an area in the jungle and plonk down and put a ground sheet down. You were lucky you had half a blanket; we used to carry half a blanket if we were going up into the mountains. But this 35th Battalion, I nearly died you could hear clang, clang, bang, bang, clang, clang, they had these metal bully beef tins and they opened them plonk them down near there canteen containers, and make a hell of a noise in the middle of the night.

07:00 So we had to teach them to be very quiet at night, and not to light matches at nighttime. If they wanted to smoke they had to make sure they completely covered up and light their cigarette and they were right. Because you can see in the jungle, you could see a light no trouble at all. Particularly in the dark.

You didn't worry about the smoking with the smoke?

I used to smoke. I used to smoke so I was very careful. I knew that if I wanted a cigarette,

07:30 my hand or my hat was always over the – and that was to teach them – because we learned down the coast that these "washing machine charlies" bomber, could pick you up at nighttime no trouble at all, and we reckoned the only way you could do it, was somebody smoking like that …

I just wondered about during the day, wouldn't the smoke be visible?

Aaah, yes. It would so you gotta be very careful during the day, but the point is the Japanese had to be close enough at night, but at nighttime

08:00 just a little light that they could see you know, a cigarette lighting up. But during the day we used to stop for smokos during the day, but when you did stop for a smoko you always made sure that you had 2 advanced fellas well ahead of you, always 2, and they'd go well ahead of you while you stopped for smoko, and when you started up again and caught up with them, they would drop down to the rear end and have a rest when someone else would take over. We used to use

08:30 the natives quite a bit for that because they could go ahead of you, by about 50 or 100 yards and they'd stop and go and you would say, "Hello, something's wrong?" and they would come back and say, "Japan man here." or "Him been here." because they'd know they could smell them. So we would use them. Without them you know, it would have been a hell of a war. Without the fuzzy wuzzies down south and the natives in the north New Guinea, they saved a lot of lives.

09:00 **Did you do any covering tracks, or were you careful about the tracks that you made?**

No didn't worry about them. The only time we worried about covering tracks was when we were in New Britain over the mountain into New Britain, we landed at Wide Bay and we were very, very careful there because we didn't know

09:30 what was behind us. You can imagine you have a complete island and we went over the middle of the Gazelle Peninsula down into – we didn't know what was down that end – we found out later there was 52,000 Japs at the other end. But we didn't know what was behind because we had to be very careful that we didn't land in the middle of them. So we covered our tracks that way.

In the

10:00 **37th Battalion, did many of the blokes that you know get killed?**

A chap I went to school with got killed. Chap by the name of Jack Collett, he got killed, yes there was quite a few actually. Quite a few, Norm Anderson, Jack Collett, there was quite a few of them that ran into trouble and got killed. And as a matter of fact

10:30 one of them I was talking to just recently, Normie Cove was saying, "You remember Jack O'Riordan?" and I said, "Yeah." I said, "Where is he now?" he said, "Oh, he died of wounds, so he came home and died." But there was quite a few, it is hard to say, it was something you didn't let worry, but I suppose it was something that deep down it did. You didn't have time to worry. As I say

11:00 you only worry about the fella either end of you, looking after you. And nighttime it was most essential who was on either side of you and whether they were looking after you because you were looking after them. And that went right along the line.

But when someone copped it did it make you stop and think?

Yes, by surely did. Yes. Sort of thing, particularly at Fortification Point when those damned

11:30 Woodpecker starts ploughing and they were firing a 50 mm shot – you know, pellet at you or a bullet at you, 50 mm, you can imagine a little 9 mm these 50 big heavy things and they used to stir up the ground and particularly when we come back after

12:00 going up the valley, and being covered by Snowy Bartlett and (UNCLEAR) they had a machine gun there and we had another one down further, and they were covering us as we went down the – they were 20 or 30 ft higher than we were and when we got back up to the top to find out they had been hit, we weren't very, very happy about it. It was worse than ever really. Matter of fact the

12:30 officer in charge Major McFarlane, he said, "I'll go down and get the," – he took a couple of fellas with him "I'll go down and get the little buggers." and when he got there they'd gone. They had peckered the machine gun and gone. But he was mad too. Because we thought they would be pretty safe up there. But we lost a couple, we lost 1, 2, 3 up there, and of course the

13:00 biggest problem there, in the middle of the jungle. And you got 3 bodies what do you with them. Well what we had to do was cut the bottom tag off, you seen the meat tags they used to carry, one top and one bottom? We cut the bottom one off and you put it into the officer in charge of your company, and the other one left on the body and then you would get that sent back by courier, or somebody, to battalion headquarters and they would

13:30 pass it to the pioneer battalion, and the pioneers were the ones that made the roads or dug the graves or marked the position of where the bodies were or should have been and they kept a record of them.

So the pioneers would come out…?

They'd come after we moved on. We'd move on and they would come up behind and sort it all out.

Did – when these deaths

14:00 **occurred, did you – was there any ritual or ceremony, did anyone say anything or?**

No, sorry, didn't have time to do anything or say anything. We didn't even have a padre in those days, he'd been shot. So didn't have time to do anything unfortunately. I know it's sad and when you think of it now something should have been done but you couldn't, you couldn't stop there, you didn't know whether the Japs were still there. The only way you could do it was to push on, push on.

14:30 You felt it later though, I think later in the war that's why we used to get together and talk about it. I never talked to Cath. Cath wouldn't know what happened, or any of my brothers. Jack might have been different when he was alive because he was the 2/6th Machine Gun Battalion and he was up in Madang / Wewak area. But would have been the only one I could talk to. You couldn't talk to anybody else about it. You know.

15:00 Because they didn't know them, they didn't know what was going on and didn't understand what jungle warfare was all about. You know, people just couldn't believe that you could just about walk over the top of the Japanese and they would be underneath, you know the foliage was just that thick. In places, not everywhere of course. If you got into kunai grass. Have you heard of kunai grass? It's about 7 ft high, like heavy

15:30 bamboo, not a bamboo, it's a grass, kunai grass it's about 7 or 8 ft high, it would cut you to billio but it was the best way through because no-one could see you. It would cut you the kunai grass. It was ideal. The only problem was you could just about shake hands with the Japanese as you passed. You wouldn't

know he was there. We had ways and means of cleaning it out first, dropping grenades

16:00 and things in. Yes I think the worst part of the war is afterwards there is no doubt. I reckon the first 2 or 3 years or 4 years, after war, you never forget it and you never will. And here I am 60 years later talking about it and you are the only people I have talked to about it, bar the fellas might talk about it at a reunion. I wouldn't talk to anybody else about it, because they

16:30 wouldn't understand what it's all about.

You mentioned that when you came back you had a hard time settling down, what exactly do you mean by that you couldn't settle at work or?

Couldn't sleep. Went on the grog. Yeah. I had trouble at work. I left my apprenticeship job after 12 months, went down to South Melbourne to work for International Harvester Company. Wouldn't go home at night unless

17:00 I had 4 or 5 beers first. Wouldn't go out at….. - went out at lunch time and have another 4 or 5 beers.

Did you get into fights?

Not really, but I tell you what you more or less drowning your sorrows and the hardest part of it all is that you relive it all in your own mind you know. You think about Saturday Jack Collett and (his daughter), his sister and so and so, we used to go to

17:30 Saturday night dances, he is no longer with us. He got blown up along New Britain or something, and away you go you think about all these things. In the middle of the night for no reason or at all. So the only way I could do it was to have a few beers and go to bed over a whisky or something and I did that for quite a number of years, right through until 1958. And I went to see a fellow over here in

18:00 Ashburton, what was his name, he's dead now, he was a doctor of psychology. Can't think of his name, he's dead now, no longer with us. I used to have a good talk to him. He said "Well you can't drown your sorrows, what you have to do is live with them, talk to people about them," and I said, "Well the only people you talk to about them is the people there with you."

18:30 Which we used to at reunions. But then I got to the stage I used to ring up people and talk about it. And I gradually got overcome it in time. I had two sons and they went through, more or less the same sort of thing I was going through because instead of coming home from work I would go to the pub.

Did many of the other blokes that you knew feel the same way as you they were struggling as well?

Yes. Not me

19:00 it wasn't only me. I can name to this present day the people I used to meet in the pub after the war, fellas with wives and families. As a matter of fact Albie Simpkin over here in East Bentleigh, he is still under a psychologist and he can't virtually go anywhere on his own. All because of that. Coog McDonald a school teacher that we used to meet down at South Melbourne

19:30 I am talking again about after work, Coog McDonald a school teacher, he used to teach at the South Melbourne State School and he had the same problem, and he virtually drank himself to death in the end. It just for some reason seems to get at you. And they put it down to war neurosis. That's all this doctor put it down to,

20:00 it's a nervous reaction from the war. And there must have been hundreds and hundreds like that. One of the problems you had Colin, was that you had as we did, or I did, February 1992 to March 1996, - start again, 1942 to 1946, was nothing else but army and war OK.

20:30 and this war neurosis catches up with you. It's all you can remember and it's hard to dismiss it from your mind. Little things would remind you of it. You would go out to a dance and you would say, "Oh, so and so is not with us now, because he got killed in New Guinea." Your friends you went to school with some went to the army, some navy,

21:00 some air force. But we used to meet after the war, not to discuss the war mainly, but to get together again.

Did you have nightmares?

Yeah. Early in the piece. Early in the piece. All sorts of things. But never mind we got over those, but thank goodness this doctor down in Ashburton who was an army doctor originally, oh,

21:30 if he was alive today he would be over 100 or more, but he was – I was only a young boy in those days, compared with him, he was in his 70s or more, but he get you through it all right. Yes.

So when you first heard that the war was over in 1945, what was your reaction? Do you remember where you were?

Relief. I certainly

22:00 remember where I was, I was sitting beside a river full of crocodiles and we were tossing up whether we would go across the river or not. And this was August 17th, war ended on the 15th, we didn't know about that, and we were tossing up whether we would go

I was wondering about that, because you said before, wasn't that VE [Victory in Europe] Day August 15th?

22:30 When was VP [Victory in the Pacific] day then?

December?

That's right we weren't home for VE day. VP Day was August 15th 1945.

I thought it was December. I didn't think the bomb was dropped until December. Yeah, no-one is really sure. We've had this a couple of times. We've had this from a

23:00 **few different people, we can't quite work out our dates. We haven't done our research properly.**

I would always have sworn it was August 15th. Because on the 17th August, Jack Collett was killed, and it was just bad luck, we didn't know the war was over. And we thought, and I always thought it was August 15th.

Well I believe you because you were there.

We were only the other side of the island stuck on the edge of this river

23:30 Poundy's track, Tom Poundy was the Lieutenant that got blown up with a bomb on the coast just south of Madang, and he rejoined us in New Britain. We cut tracks around trying to find out what the Japanese were doing, at this river and Jack Collett

24:00 turned round and we said, "Something has gone wrong, we've lost the line between here and headquarters." Because we were right on the edge of this river. And Jack said, "Well I'll go back with so and so and see what has happened to the line." He went back down the line, because we were laying signal lines, signal cable to keep in touch with headquarters and I remember the word came through that the war was

24:30 over and I said to Jack Collett and his mate, I don't know who went back with him, I said, "Don't bother, the war's over." That was on the 17th and the war was over on the 15th, two days beforehand. He said, "I'll still go back and link up the lines and contact." He went back and the Japanese had booby trapped it. His mate who was with him was all right because he was ahead of him, but Jack ran

25:00 into a booby trap with a grenade and got killed. He should never have been killed because it was after the war had finished. I have always been crooked on that one. But I'll have a look after, I am sure the books I have got over there will show you the date of the end of the South Pacific war.

When did you meet your wife?

Where did I meet her?

Mmmm.

Well when I had the shop in Ashburton,

25:30 she was a hairdresser by trade, she had a hairdressing shop in – well I'll start again, her father had a men's hairdressing shop.

So this is after the war?

Yeah, after the war. Father had a – and they had come down from Barham in New South Wales, down to Melbourne. This father, chap by the name of Keeful[?] had 4 daughters. There was nothing doing in Barham

26:00 for them so after the war they came down to Melbourne. Cath went on to hairdressing, her father had the hairdressing shop in Ashburton and the other girls, one got married and went to Bendigo, they went on their normal way and I met Cath in Ashburton actually.

So after the war when you finally got to come back to Australia, because you got delayed a bit

26:30 **for a while, but when you got to come back were you were greeted by your family?**

Yes, I was greeted by my mother.

Your Mum?

Yes.

You came back by ship?

Yeah, a Swedish ship called the Veeto. Yes, I remember that and they, Mum

27:00 met me at the Spencer Street Railway Station. When you think back, excuse me getting emotional, but being a mother of 5 boys and having 2 of them in the army,

27:30 and not knowing whether they would come back, because there was there was other fellas I went to school with that got shot, Normie Huggins who lived next door was in a plane crash, all around us, Geoff Maggs who was I went school with during the war, and you can imagine how it would take it out on your mother, not knowing from one day till the next what was going to happen.

28:00 So you can imagine how very pleased when I arrived home and some month later Jack arrived home. Very pleased, yeah. Because she must have – for years lived on edge and being a religious person in that respect wouldn't miss church or that thing, she went to church every week, every Sunday without fail.

28:30 And besides going to church she wasn't on her own. She had Mrs Cuthbert with her, couple of other ladies who had sons in the war and Neville and I went into the army together and came out of the army together, and Mrs Cuthbert and my mother went to church together, made up hampers and goodness knows what.

29:00 And besides the other two ladies again, who had sons in the army and the 4 of them got together and just prayed that we would come home safe. And we all did bar one.

So it must have been quite a meeting when you finally arrived home?

Sent a telegram home

29:30 from Brisbane to say we were on our way down, and I am trying to think, I think everybody was there, my younger brothers, Dad, they were all there, because there was a train load of us come down. And the thing was, the thing I got annoyed about was that

30:00 you were greeted by your family and they bunged you onto buses and took you to Royal Park and you had to take your uniform and hat and everything of and pass it in and a lot of people didn't realise that and they gave you a civvies [civilian] suit. Shoes and all. And I said, "Well you are not taking my boots", and they said, "We don't want them you can have your boots." So they discharged you from Royal Park

30:30 and took everything that you had, except what you stood up in. Didn't worry about your underclothes, gave you a suit, a shirt and a tie and a pair of shoes, which you didn't wear because you had your boots on in any case. And but the – these days they would have all sorts of counselling and goodness knows what – there was no such thing. Yeah, no such thing. It's a shame really because some of those fellas to

31:00 the present day that were very emotional after coming back from New Guinea after being in New Britain, and seeing some of the sights and things that we were just talking about before, were still very, very upset about it, very upset. And they should have been counselled somewhere somehow. But there was no such thing. If you went to a doctor you were worrying, they would lock you up at Heidelberg. They

31:30 had padded cells up there believe it or not. I went to see a chap by the name of Jim McDonald, was with our company for years, right through New Guinea, came home, couldn't take it any longer and went out to Heidelberg Hospital and they locked him in a padded cell. Said he's gone of his rocker and they said he's gone troppo in those days. They reckoned it was troppo.

32:00 It was a shame really. Nice fellas like that just couldn't take it. We had that with the army all the way through. Fellas that couldn't take the strain. You asked the question before how you felt about your mates being shot and the nervous tension side of it, and a lot of the fellas couldn't take it. We were probably lucky a lot us that's all. We didn't take it for granted, but we took it,

32:30 and thought ,"Well OK, we're here, we're stuck and we'll make the best of it." But others couldn't, they couldn't they were shipped out of there very, very smartly.

Did people think the worse of them if they cracked up a bit?

I don't think so, we didn't, because we knew what they were going through, the strain. This fella knew by the name of Snowy Bartlett, he was

33:00 with a chap by the name of we used to call him Coog McDonald, his name was Coogan, and Snowy and Coog were the best of mates all the way through right through the army, right through from Nagambie Road through Queensland over New Guinea, up to Milne Bay and went everywhere right – wherever Snowy was Coog was. Well Coog took over a Bren gun

33:30 and Snowy volunteered to be his 2IC and carry all the ammunition. When they got to Fortification Point, Coog got killed and I didn't think Snowy would ever live without him, but he did, he's dead now but he lasted a few years back here in Australia, but he was terribly emotional. It was like getting your brother killed you know.

Right beside him as well.

34:00 All the time. Beside him. He was the one that got the bullet right down through there, missed his stomach went right through his groin, and came out through the cheek of his bottom, but he was very lucky to get away with that. Because they had been big very heady calibre things, .25 they were big heavy things.

Nasty.

But there you are that was part and

34:30 parcel of the deal, put it this way there was nothing you could do about it. Just soldier on.

So you were saying when you arrived back you went to Royal Park, but you weren't actually discharged at that point were you?

No I wasn't, I wasn't. But the – oh yes, I was discharged in the end but not at that particular time.

35:00 I came back by train, met my mother and father and my father said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I have got to go to Royal Park," and we pulled in there. When I reported in there they said, "We want you out at Base Camp so and so out at Broadmeadows, Somerton." I said, "What the hell for?" they said, "There is a vehicle here to take you out." When I got out there they say they put me in charge, I was a sergeant at the time, they put me in charge of the guards. They

35:30 apparently didn't have any sergeants in the guards to guard the Italians. But that was an experience of its own.

Were they actually Italian POWs [Prisoners of War] or Italian/Australians?

POWs. Well I don't know whether they were called POWs, but they were prisoners of war, they were behind barbed wire.

From the Middle East?

No, no from Australia.

O.K. so they were Italian/Australians who were just being interned as enemy aliens?

36:00 Interned. That's what you would call it interned. But they were locked up there and as they checked them over they were releasing them slowly but surely. But you have got to remember that was in 1946 the war was well over, and they were releasing them slowly but surely. As a matter of fact as a sergeant in charge of the guard, I had the opportunity of getting graft given to me you have got no idea.

36:30 "Sergeant Beard, I have got an appointment with a young lass in Brunswick Street, do you think I could get time off?" I said, "You are not allowed out of here." They said, "It's worth $200 if I could get the time off, or I'll bring you back a box of chocolates for your wife," as the case may be. The last thing I would do is take a bribe because thought I would be really in trouble. And I had gone right through to there and I didn't want to be discharged from the army

37:00 dishonourable discharge or something. But I still let them go, they were all right. And I let them go, as long as you come back and report to me, and they'd come back and wake me up at 2 o'clock in the morning and say they we're back. Supposed to be in at 12 o'clock. But they came back most of them. And they were pretty good, pretty good. They had all sorts of bribes they would offer you, just to get out for the night and the point is they had to be back in the morning for roll call.

37:30 And if they weren't there, I was the one that was going to cop it and they knew that.

I guess by not taking a bribe then they would kind of feel they owed you?

Oh they were good like that, no worries at all. I never had any worries, they always came back. I was there for 2 or 3 months and they always came back.

So you got on with them pretty well?

Oh, they were all right, they were just normal Italians that were interned. Some of then had cafés, vegetable

38:00 shops and worked at the markets. You know they just locked them up because they were Italians.

So it was a fairly cushy job?

I wouldn't have minded to spend the entire war as sergeant of the guard out there. Would have suited me down to the ground. It would have done me the world of good. Suited me down to the ground. Yeah.

Tape 7

00:34 **Can you tell us more about what mateship meant to you when you were at the front line, what is the difference between mateship in civilian life than at war?**

Well, the difference is that you, the way I

01:00 could put it, your life's on the line and you are relying on your mates, whoever they might be, looking after you. If you put one of your mate's out on sentry duty you are relying on him to stay awake and keep alert and warn you of anything coming, or visa versa, you daren't go to sleep or something unless

01:30 it is essential, because you are looking after your mates. And mateship it is different its in lots of ways, a mate in normal civilian life is a good friend, but you are not relying on him to save your life or look after you. But in war, it's a big difference because your mates are looking after you and you are looking after them, and if anything goes

02:00 wrong you can't blame them virtually because you know they are doing their best to look after you. And you are relying on the last man on the trail, you are relying on him to keep his eye on the patrol and make sure everything's all right, and the man out in front you are relying on him to look after things in front so you don't get caught. So it's a big difference between the mateship, one is life preserving

02:30 and the other is not. That's about all I could say about mateship. And you become mates you understand that after the war and you come back in civilian life they are the fellows you relied on and they know you relied on them and you become very, very firm. Very firm mates, and it doesn't matter how long it goes whether its 60

03:00 or 70 years after the war they are still there and they are still a mate of yours and you know you could rely on them. Anyone you couldn't rely on didn't last very long.

Give me an example of that for instance?

Well we had a fella that was in the army, I won't mention his name because he had the same name I had. He just didn't care, to look after anybody, he did things

03:30 which we knew you weren't supposed to do. Up in the islands you'd go out on sentry duty with another fella they are usually in pairs, he would tuck up and go to sleep and wouldn't worry about anybody else. Well they are the fellas that didn't last very long in the army at all.

So they got killed?

No, no they got them transferred somewhere else, out of the way,

04:00 got rid of them, they weren't killed, we just had ways and means of getting rid of people through the powers that be. And most of the lieutenants and cptains understood what was happening and they knew these fellas that couldn't be relied on. And they were better off out of the army than in with us yeah. More nuisance.

Were there any sort of disputes or divisions

04:30 **within your unit for instance?**

Within the unit itself. Not in New Guinea, but here in Australia we had disputes different types of disputes of being ordered to do something and we didn't want to do it, well we had fellas that obeyed the law strictly to the letter and things like that. We had a Captain Sartori, a great soldier a good

05:00 captain, but would call a roll call at 6 o'clock in the morning. So the sergeant would go around and wake everybody up, "Roll call." somebody would ask "What's the dress?" "Come as you are, come as you are." Well this particular chap would go as he was with nothing on. And the Captain Sartori, he used to stutter a little bit, he used to get so annoyed about it and he would

05:30 say. He couldn't do anything about it. And he would say, "Well you said come as you and I was in bed with nothing on." "Next time you be on parade for inspection, Private Russell. You need a hair cut, make sure before you come on patrol by the end of the week with a hair cut." Private Russell would come on parade and nothing had happened. Sartori would line him up and say, "Private Russell, I thought I told you to get a hair cut."

06:00 "I did sir, here it is here." And of course you can imagine what Sartori would be like. He'd get his hair cut, one hair. Say there it is.

How did the officer react to that?

Oh, well he couldn't do very much, but he used to get very, very, very annoyed about those sort of things.

06:30 Little things like that. But mainly here in Australia. In New Guinea you didn't have time to potter around and do the wrong thing. In New Guinea you had to be on the ball all the time, because it was the enemy you were fighting not the – your own soldiers your own group, you were looking after your own group and fighting your own enemy, and most of the fellas I had with me in B Company or any of the companies, they were very, very good.

07:00 They realised the situation and put up with it, I know they didn't like it, nobody liked going to war I don't think and the strain and stress was pretty stressful. In lots of cases and in lots of places, they put

up with it and came out pretty well.

So do you think mateship was the most single most important factor that kept you all together?

Yes.

Would you

07:30 **define it as after undergoing that sort of hardship alongside each other, do you develop a love for each other?**

Not actually a love for each other, but you would do anything for each other, if you understand what I mean, not actually love, like a brother or sister, becomes a brother to you …

Brotherly love.

Yeah, part of your existence because you know you wouldn't be existing today if it wasn't for

08:00 him and all the others around you.

So if you were to compare mateship through your experience what you just suggested as brotherly love, if you compare it to your relationship with say for instance your wife, how would you compare the two contrast the two? Because it's different kinds of love.

Yeah, yeah, and different kinds of love and different situations. And Sergie [interviewer] you have

08:30 you got to remember your life's on the line, you are thinking all the time where's the next shot going to come from, it's not like being at home with your wife where it's peaceful, you are not frightened about what is going to happen next, whereas up there in the islands as most of the fellas will tell you, you don't know what is going to happen from one day to the next. The fella you are talking to or laying beside you in this awkward situation, could be

09:00 dead tomorrow, you don't know. And that's where the problem comes in. And I still think that the biggest problem they have got in the Australian Army, or did have, in those days was the lack of psychologists to pull you through it.

So you do believe in the benefits of counselling?

Oh, yes.

A lot of the WW2 vets don't believe in counselling.

09:30 **They don't believe that. A lot of them don't believe in counselling.**

They may not believe in counselling, but I think it helps you to relieve the pressure about thinking of the worst. When all said and done if I laid awake after the war, it might be 12 months, 2 years or 3 years after the war, I always thought of the worst things. Why I don't know. Why didn't I think of the good times I had during the war. It was always the worst part of it.

Was that because they dominated your

10:00 **mind?**

I think it must be, yeah. I think it must be because they are the domineering things in your mind of losing mates or friends the pressure you are under, it's a big thing. I can understand even going through the present day with these troops going through the desert, not knowing what is going to happen next.

You saying in Iraq?

Yeah, not knowing what's going to happen

10:30 next, whether a bomb is going to hit you or a mortar or whether it's a rifle shot, but it's again that pressure that thought all the time makes you virtually as it did during WW2, made fellas nervous wrecks. A lot went – you've heard of people going troppo? And that was only because of the pressure of not knowing what was going to happen next I am sure of that, they didn't know what was going to

11:00 happen next or where you were going to be and what was going to happen to your mate and it went on and on and on.

With the question I suggested beforehand with male and female – I made the example of your wife being one, but the generic sort of example more just male and female mateship, if you like, do you think that a man

11:30 **can ever have the sort of mateship, say for instance you experienced with your mates over in PNG [Papua New Guinea], is it possible to have that with a woman, or is that just too equal poles apart?**

Yes, I think it is totally different type of mateship. With a man, I am not referring to anything sexual here at all, I am referring to the subjective, the mental element

12:00 in the type of mateship you can have with one of your friends in the army like you did, and what you can share with a woman. Unless a woman has been with you and been through the experiences you had you can't really share the same mateship, because she doesn't understand, or very hard for her to understand what it's all about.

12:30 And what she's been through. It's a different type of mateship really? One is more like a friendship and the other is more like a mateship. They are totally different; because one is the experiences you have shared, the awful experiences,

13:00 not only the awful but the good ones too, but with a wife she hasn't shared the nasty part of a war. A lot of people, even to the present day wouldn't understand what you were talking about when you tell the things that happened during the war. I often think of these poor blokes up at Changi, you know that went through prisoners of war. We were released in New Guinea, some

13:30 nurses that had been tied up with the Japanese and we didn't know they were there, we attacked the Japanese, found out that these women were in a hut, a native type hut, built on the same area and it had 3 or 4 nurses in it. They were released and let them go straight back. I don't know who they were or what they were or how they got there

14:00 but they were held up by the Japanese. And I reckon they would have some shocking memories. Being prisoner of war of the Japanese you know. And those girls would probably be friends for the rest of their life because they shared the same experiences.

So it's a practical thing as well?

14:30 **How did you deal – OK, you have mateship, you gave us some very good examples of patrols and things like that, like you can put your hands out and touch each other, I mean that's a very intimate surrounding isn't it?**

You only did that in the dark so you knew where the other fella was in front and you knew which way to go. But that was part of the deal, yep.

Can you walk us through

15:00 **any sort of patrols that were rather humorous?**

Yes I can walk you through something that was rather humorous. I was in charge of a section of a platoon and there was 7 or 8 men in the section and this particular fella said, "I will give you – (I was a corporal at the time), I will give you a spell corporal, I'll go out in front and you go down the line." So I went down the line about 3 or 4 fellas. About 7 of us in a row and we were working our way

15:30 through the jungle, and the chap in front of me, a chap by the name of Bill Wright, said to me "Corporal take that bloomin' vine that's stuck around me neck." And I said, "All right, is it annoying it", hit with a – get rid of it - I grabbed it and pulled it from around his neck and it was one of those green tree snakes.

16:00 It was about 3 ft long. Non venomous I found out later, much to my delight, and I said, "It's only a piece of aah hell." Threw it into the jungle, he said, "What was it?" I said, "A green tree snake." Well he just about passed out on the spot. He said, "I have been pulling at it." But they drop out of the trees you see. But those green tree snakes they are like a long thin piece of

16:30 vine and there was also another thing we used to strike in the jungle, whip snakes, they look like a brown whip, again 2 or 3 ft long these whip snakes and they drop out of the trees on to you. And of course you are looking – so you have got somebody watching your back all the time.

17:00 **How often did these sort of humorous incidents happen?**

Well,

I mean not just with snakes.

There were all sort of humorous incidents that happened, little things that happened right through that brings memory – we had a situation along the line, as you can imagine, and people say why don't women come into the – why don't you want women in the army. And I say because it just wouldn't work. I can't understand women can do this and can do that.

17:30 One of the things said, we had a pioneer group with us, engineers, and if we stopped for any length of time they would dig up a trench to use as a toilet. This particular place, exactly where I don't know, but they had dug a trench for us to use as a toilet. And then they would fill it in afterwards. Well this particular day we pulled in about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and of

18:00 course the trench was well used and that's all right, then the pioneer got a brainwave he'd pour petrol in on top of it, this bloomin' aviation fuel they had, pour it on top, put a match to it before we moved on, and then filled it in with earth. We were well out of the way of the Japanese so there wouldn't be any smoke or signals to worry about, and not only that that following morning we were on our way in any case. So he poured the petrol in on it, but before we had a chance

18:30 to put a match to it, a chap came along with a cigarette one of the company had a cigarette, he said, "Don't fill it in yet I want to use it." so he used it and he lit a cigarette and dropped it in. You've got no idea, he was black and blue where the thing blew up. Anyhow that was all right, it burnt itself out and we filled it in and away we went. But that was a funny incident and we always had a shot at him

19:00 and we used to call him 'Pooey' from then on. The same bloke, a chap by the name of Grinter, we'd say here comes Pooey Grinter.

What's his name?

Pooey.

No, his full name?

His first name, I don't know.

Was it Leonard by any chance?

No, I don't think so. It should be there in the back of the book.

No, it doesn't matter, I am just curious.

The whole battalion's in there. Yeah, Grinter.

19:30 But that was one of the funny incidents. So they were always careful about digging trenches for toilets and things. Oh yeah, little incidents happened all the way through of course, the funny side of things but mainly up in New Guinea when you were in, if you call the firing line, in the vicinity of Japanese

20:00 you were very careful, there was no such thing as skylarking or anything at all. Because you had to be deadly serious.

Skylarking, what's that?

Well, playing tricks on somebody else or doing something silly. You wouldn't do play a trick on somebody if it wasn't true, if it wasn't right. And we used to call it skylarking you know. Because

20:30 you never know, you do it one minute and the next it is true and you fall for the trap.

What about on the topic of sexuality for instance, soldiers are men and human beings so they have the same necessities and problems as any other man would have in a city or outside the front line?

21:00 Well yeah, they did but …

Well how did they deal with these frustrations?

They dealt with it by putting bromide in the tea. Ever heard of bromide?

Bromide.

B-R-O-M-I-D-E.

I think I have yeah.

And wherever possible they would give you bromide tablets and it calmed things down.

Calms the sex drive?

Yeah, the sex drive.

I would assume that wouldn't work all the time.

21:30 **I don't know, you just put up with it that's all there was to it. There was no worries about that at all. People used to say but didn't you have fellows that were gay or anything there.**

No homosexuality?

No, no nothing at all. As a matter of fact if they were gay or homosexual they wouldn't be in the army they'd be somewhere else, in a hospital or something.

22:00 But you never had any worries there. I can't – any thoughts anywhere along the line from 1942 to 1946 of anything being associated or anything at all, I never had any worries.

How would that be viewed if someone was known to be homosexual?

Well they would get them out, whisk them back to a hospital or orderlies or something.

22:30 **Would all the troops in your unit feel that way as well?**

I think they would.

Yeah.

I think they would. Because there was no sign of anything like that in any of our units, that I know of, particularly in my company, B Company, and the platoons, there was no sign of anything like that at all, of being gay. I think they were sorted out early in the piece, at the camps you know in Queensland and down in Victoria,

23:00 they'd sort them out pretty quickly, because the Officers would find out and get rid of them out pretty quickly and put them back on the hospital staff or something like that.

Now, what about your units and the relationship with the natives, um and I speak of the indigenous people here, was there any sorts of sexual liaisons with the women?

No, there wasn't but I will tell you what,

23:30 but between ourselves we used to say, "They are getting whiter and whiter every day," but you didn't see many native girls, in the islands because they had all gone inland or disappeared. But in the native villages it was very, very rarely that you struck any of the native girls. And those photo albums I have got of Milne Bay and a few others, were only when they started to

24:00 drift back from the hills back into the markets, that you saw any of the native girls, and nobody ever worried, there was no such thing as raping anybody or anything at all.

What about through consent, if there was any – I mean you made the statement before that they got whiter and whiter every day, which I understand what you mean, um, it must have got to a point that they got so white

24:30 **that you just had to have them, I mean?**

No, you have got to be very careful. Because the average Australian would not have anything to do with that all, I guarantee it. No problems at all.

They didn't find them attractive?

Mmmmm.

They didn't find the indigenous women attractive?

No. No. I wouldn't say that about the Japanese. Because they had a lot of problems with the Japanese raping the natives, that's why the

25:00 natives cleared out and got rid of the women went inland so the Japanese couldn't get near them. But with the Japanese, anything could happen there because they carried their own geisha girls with them.

How did you know that the Japanese were raping the natives?

Because we were told by the natives themselves, and not only that we knew they had geisha girls with them because a couple of spots we found, not me particularly, but

25:30 C Company came along at one stage and caught up with a couple of Japanese girls. Much to their sorrow, because the Japanese girls had grenades under their skirts. And when the troops or the C Company fellas got close enough, they'd pull the pin OK. And blew themselves up as well as the C – thank goodness the two C Company fellas got out of it because the Japanese grenades, as I said before

26:00 didn't burst into shrapnel like ours, it more or less went into like pepper and salt and so they weren't really badly injured. But from there on we were warned, don't trust any women at all up there. We went on to Karkar Island, our four scouts out in front spotted a what we thought was a Japanese geisha

26:30 girl and couple of young kids, so we went after them, I was with B Company. And we chased them right around the island and we already told C Company that we were going to go right around the island and they could go the other way, the opposite way, so we were going anticlockwise and they were going clockwise around the island. And A Company went up to the top of the mountain which was a volcano and around

27:00 the rim of the mountain because we knew there were Japs there because they were radioing the shipping positions. Anyhow we chased these women, what we thought were Japanese around the island; we finally caught up with them. It was a Chinese fella with his Chinese wife and 3 kids, they had lived on their own for about 12 years.

And they weren't harassed by the Japanese?

No. No not worried, but they knew where the Japanese were thank goodness. And they told us and we went and cleaned them out, but

27:30 there was only a few and all they were was an observation point, and from where they were on top of the crater of the volcano, they could see right around and report the shipping going either way.

Karkar Island?

Yeah, Karkar Island.

So was there any sort of battle there?

No.

They surrendered?

They just got rid of these – they were in trenches or dug outs, dug in on the side of the volcanoes under the trees

28:00 and it was easy to get rid of them, just drop a grenade in away they went. That was the easy way, never go in after them, because you never knew what was there and what they were waiting for and so it was easy to do what the Americans used to do, drop a grenade in if you didn't have a flame thrower as they used to use, flame throwers the Americans and they'd go to a opening in the ground, like a trench dug in under the trees and

28:30 they'd just put the flame throwers in and that was the best way to get rid of what was down there.

So the Australians would use the flame thrower?

No. The Americans used them. We just used the grenades. Always used a grenade.

So in that particular operation when you were deployed on Karkar Island, when you did find those trenches you threw a grenade in, was that the practice was generally for Australian soldiers?

Not quite with you, say again.

29:00 **What I mean was that on Karkar Island, you said there were you said there were all sorts of trench systems, underground bunkers as well, so what the practice was would the Australian soldiers throw in grenades into the trench?**

Yes. Blow them up. They had radio equipment and all built in underneath. They were reporting. They would come up to the top and report the ships coming past to the Japanese.

They didn't resist, were there any skirmish actions?

They didn't know we were there.

29:30 They were only radio operators. They weren't actually soldiers and they were only just reporting like an observation post.

Like coast watchers?

Yeah, like coast watchers. They didn't know we were there until the natives, not only that the Chinese fella and his wife told us where they were.

I see right. Did actually capture any of them or were they all killed?

They were all killed.

Right. How many were there?

Don't know, we just did our job in the trenches and away we went, got out of it. We were

30:00 back in Madang in a few days, it was 75 miles around, it only took a few weeks and a few days until we were back where we started and away we went again, back to Madang.

You didn't go into the trenches after you threw them out?

No, no.

Why was that?

Fox holes they were they were only about that round, and you wouldn't crawl in there in any case, we used to call them little fox holes. And we didn't want to go in there, it was better to

30:30 clean it out by throwing a grenade in and making sure and then leaving, because they could never survive in a trench like that. No, very – it's like the caves up in Rabaul, I didn't like the idea of going into those caves, yet we were ordered to go in and see what was in there and clean them out. Yet when you were told to do something in the army, and I had a platoon of fellas there,

31:00 we had to go in and thank goodness there wasn't anybody in there until we started up the electric light and once we got the electric light going, well, it was full of frogs. I told you before. But no Japanese, they all got out because they knew the war was over, and they were all congregating there waiting for something to take them home. And most of them went home, not most of them but a lot of them, the first 10 or 20,000

31:30 went home on the top of an aircraft carrier.

With regard to the Japanese were booby traps a big problem?

Yes, all the time.

Especially in PNG?

See what they used to do as they retreated, they laid booby traps all the time. That's why wherever possible we didn't stay with the trails. Because

32:00 the proper place to lay a booby trap was across a trail. So we cut our own way through, made our own trails. But yes, they had booby traps if they left a village, to move out, because they were getting pushed out by the Australians, they would booby trap a lot of things. Booby trap their own bodies, you know, people that had been shot and left there they would put a grenade underneath them, so if you moved the body, boom went the grenade and you went with it. So they had a

32:30 lot of things like that booby traps.

That happened did it?

Yes. Did happen.

So what was the practice – did they actually fake dying as well?

Pardon.

Did the Japanese actually fake like to be a dead corpse or anything?

Oh, no, but the only thing you had to be very careful of was if we struck these geisha girls or Japanese nurses, because they would fake they were giving up and all the time down the front of their dresses or the case may be they had a grenade

33:00 and if you saw them dive down there and pull a pin on a grenade - bang. Because they were very – especially around Lae, a lot of them come out of Lae after Lae was bombed. And they all spread out into the jungles where they had geisha girls and nurses all over the place and the only way – you couldn't trust them.

I remember speaking to a veteran before about

33:30 **when they used to pass Japanese bodies after skirmish actions or whatever, they used to stick a bayonet in or shoot at the body, to make sure they were dead, can you tell us anything about that?**

When I was with the 35th Battalion, and heading towards some of these villages and come across bodies on the side of the track, they would put a bullet in to them make sure they were dead, because if they weren't

34:00 and you past, they were likely to pop up and shoot you in the back. But it was only 1 or 2 occasions, because they were on the move that fast, most of the bodies were left in the villages, the native villages. Hundreds of them in lots of cases. Just left there and gone. They didn't worry they just left them. And half of them were starved to death of course. That was a problem they had.

34:30 Food.

Can you also tell us about your closest encounter with the enemy, in sort of hand to hand combat, when I say hand to hand I mean in that range?

Well that was at Scar Face or Fortification Point where we came down off the point into the valley and came down off the rise into the next valley and the Japanese were

35:00 lined along the top of the hill and we virtually ran into them and they just sat there, and we were something like 6 or 7 feet lower than they were, and they just rolled their grenades down onto us. We were lucky nobody was killed.

So you could see them?

We could see them, yeah. But it was too late for us to – but we were in grass that was 12-18 inches high, and so we just stayed flat as we could

36:00 until they finished rolling and then we just pelted our own grenades back on to them and that shifted them. Away they went once they started getting our grenades, because our grenades are more powerful, they had these shrapnel that if it hit you it affects you, because there's wasn't as bad as that, as I said before theirs was more like pepper and salt. Little pebbles.

Can you

36:30 **actually take us on a patrol or even an operation for that matter, raid that was an extremely difficult one, even if you didn't come across the enemy as such?**

Yes, I can take you on one, I took a section out on – we were half way between Sio I think it was, near Sio and they said, "Go and take a section ahead and see what was going on." and I went out and we

were walking out along a top of a depression and there must have been a company or 100 or more of Japanese down in the hollow and I had a machine gunner with me called Ben Gatty and Ben said, “Ssssh don’t disturb them,” so we went around along this ridge around the other side and we come back the other side and there’s the rest of them on the other side of the ridge. So we were very, very lucky that we didn’t disturb them. If we -

37:00 out on patrol, so we went back and reported where they were and in the morning, they were attacked by a couple of our companies, A Company and C Company, we knew exactly where they were and attacked them. But if we had have just fired on shot we would have had it, because they were both sides of the ridge, like a ridge a volcanic ridge. That’s one patrol we were very, very lucky.

So there were hundreds on both sides?

Yeah, hundreds on both sides and this ridge down the middle.

37:30 **What were they doing?**

They had camped there, they parked there, eating and milling around and some were washing their clothes, they were parked there. We didn’t even know they were there and we came across them. Ran right into them. We were very, very lucky. We struck another lot like that further on, which was over the ridge and Ben Gatty, who had a Bren gun machine gun

38:00 he had taken it over from somebody else because it was too heavy to carry, and we were going up this ridge, and all these Japanese there. So what does Ben do, he puts the Bren gun, strapped over his shoulder it was, hangs the Bren gun over the side and starts using the machine gun like a submachine gun. This was a Bren gun, using it like a machine gun, well

38:30 people went everywhere, Japanese and us too. Because we knew what was going to happen. And sure enough when they sorted themselves out the Japanese, they came tearing up the hill and we’d gone. We said to Ben “What did you do that for?” he said, “I got such a fright I didn’t know what to do.” He had this Bren gun hanging over his shoulder and the easy way was to use it.

So the Japanese retreated?

No, they just regathered their weapons and

39:00 charged back up the hill they came up after us. But when they got up the hill we had gone. Ben fired a round of shots off and we disappeared, we had gone. We went back. The best way was to go backwards and line the trail if they did follow you too far, they got a hell of a shock, a bigger shock than we did. But the whole problem was in jungle warfare you strike –

39:30 wherever you might be going you strike these bands of little groups of Japanese, podded here, podded there, everywhere. Sections f them, little bits of them, you didn’t know where you were going to run into them next. They were a real problem

Would you say the Japanese were a credible enemy to fight in a sense that they operated with professionalism in the jungle?

40:00 I would say yes and no they did what they were told, if they were told to charge a spot, they’d keep charging the spot until they got it, wouldn’t care who was killed in the meantime. Australians were totally different to that, we would do a job and get out, they didn’t they kept coming and that was one of their downfalls.

Tape 8

00:31 **We were talking about Japanese operating differently to Australians, do you think that one of the reasons – say for instance you said the Australians would take an area and leave, or the Japanese would obey an order until they were all dead, how would you explain why Australia succeeded in PNG**

01:00 **in the operations, like the operations you were involved in?**

How we succeeded?

Yeah. Why do you think Australians won most of the battles as opposed to the Japanese losing most of the battles?

No. 1 the Japanese were as I said before, if they wanted to attack an airstrip, they’d attack an airstrip and keep attacking until the last man standing. If we got to that

01:30 stage where we were attacking an airstrip and we weren’t succeeding we’d lay off and try another tactic somewhere else. Another thing we struck at Fortification Point, when we came down to Scar Face on to the beach, when we struck the Japanese, instead of going along the beach to fight another day, they waded out to sea and drowned themselves. Now

02:00 Australians wouldn't do that, we wouldn't wade out to sea and drown ourselves. Because they were caught they were trapped, and I don't know whether it was a religious idea or what they wouldn't want to get caught as POW's, so they drowned themselves. If Australians got caught in that situations we would disappear into the jungle and form up and fight another day.

Was there any change of getting help from Japanese guides or anything

02:30 **like that, like defecting Japanese?**

No.

There was none?

We relied on natives to do that. No hope of getting a Japanese. But I might tell you this, some of the Japanese that we knew had German commanders.

German commanders?

Yeah, German commanders, in New Guinea. Helping the Japanese and guiding them along. I mentioned before about the

03:00 Patrol boat. Fly River and, patrol boat. It was the last thing we expected to find in New Guinea, German patrol boats, but they were patrolling the Sepik River in patrol boats. And the Sepik River is a very, very, very wide river, virtually miles across. But they were using it. But we know this in point of fact by some of the materials that we captured were German. Germans were in charge.

You actually captured

03:30 **German POWs from PNG?**

Yes. Most of us did.

Can you tell us more about that?

No, I can't only that – the only thing I can tell you there is we got a report back that the Japanese were being controlled and guided by these Germans and this was around Wewak/Madang area.

Right, I never knew that.

We didn't either until the time came. We thought the Japanese, but certainly

04:00 Germans there and Germans, Madang in some of those places were certainly helping the Japanese controlling them in other words.

That's very interesting. When you were fighting in the jungle did you have a deep respect for the jungle?

04:30 Yes

How would you describe that?

Well, first of all it's very nerve wracking, because you can't see what your fighting, you know the enemy is there, somewhere whether he be 10 ft away from you or 100 ft you know he's there somewhere, he could have a rifle lined up on you or he could be sitting with a machine gun, or anything, so you have a lot of respect for

05:00 jungle. We found out in lots of cases the Japanese put snipers up the coconut palms and they could look down and could pick where you were and snipe you from up there, and you had no hope of seeing you from up the trees, but they could see down because it is easy to see down for you to see up. But they used snipers quite a bit.

Were they successful?

Mmmm.

Were they quite successful?

05:30 Once you fired a shot that was the end of it, everybody just disappeared in the jungle, you wouldn't stay there once a shot was fired near you, you just dive in the jungle and find them where they were, and if you did find them it was easy enough to bring them down with a machine gun.

With the Owen gun or the Bren gun?

Owen guns or mainly the Owen gun was the best in that manner. The Owen gun was a godsend to us of course.

06:00 The Bren gun was all right but the Owen gun was very, very good for jungle warfare. They could be covered with mud and full of mud and soot and dirt and they'd still go. Even with a bent barrel. We had one chap, what was his name, doesn't really matter, he was a corporal he put his Owen gun down by a palm tree

06:30 while he did his business and he picked it up and the barrel had bent like that, had a big arc in it like that and he could still use it. Fire around corners in other words. They were remarkable machine those Owen guns. Mud, if you had anything else, Tommy guns they weren't much

07:00 good, because once you got a bit of mud or dirt they seized up. But the Owen gun they just went and went and went. Marvellous machine. Matter of fact I have seen one completely covered with mud we were crossing a Mesewang River which was down the bottom of Fortification Point, we ploughed through this mud which was practically knee deep and fellas would have Owen guns which would be

07:30 completely covered with mud, you couldn't see the Owen gun, they'd walk up the Mesewang River and give it a rinse and away we go again. Marvellous thing, yeah.

What about the Japanese, what sorts of weapons did they use?

Well, they had rifles of course, they had these woodpecker machine gun posts which they plonked all over the place, they had a machine gun very similar to the Bren,

08:00 but it had a .125 bullets, it was quite an efficient machine, it did a good job. But their main – they didn't have any short arm weapons like we had the Owen gun, their main guns were rifles or like a light machine gun or like a Bren gun with a magazine on top.

Have you ever actually encountered a banzai charge by a Japanese?

08:30 Encountered a ….

Banzai charge, you know the suicide charges where they charge at you with bayonets?

No, never heard of it.

You've never heard of the term?

No. Got close enough, if we did it was in the jungle and it was just a matter of fighting it out and getting out of it.

So basically jungle warfare is man to man type war, no heavy artillery?

No. No heavy artillery or bombs at all.

What about mortars?

09:00 Mortars, we had a 2 inch mortar not much good, you couldn't fire it through the canopy. In any case, unless you came to a clearing and the worst thing you could do was go out in the clearing, because somebody would pop you off. So mortars were virtually useless. We had a mortar company attached to the battalion and the only time they used it was if they got out in the kunai grass, they could use it, but in the jungle itself it was a waste of time. Jungle warfare was

09:30 hand to hand with light sub machine guns.

What about kunai grass, fighting in kunai grass itself, can you tell us about the most difficult experiences you had?

Difficult experience in kunai grass, you can't see where you are fighting because it's grass which is 10 or 12 ft high, some of it less, 6 ft high and you can't see through, it and you can't see over it and you just hoped for the best. We found out in lots of cases, as did the 9th

10:00 Divvie found out on the coast, was put a match to it. If the wind was going in the right direction, and anybody was in the kunai grass that shifted them. We used to use the kunai grass as protection. If we came out of the jungle and there was a big patch of kunai grass, we'd go through the kunai grass because we knew nobody could see us, rather than go around in the open.

Have you ever had skirmish action

10:30 **inside kunai grass?**

No, no, the 9th Divvie had that in the – along the coast line with tanks and things, they drove thanks straight through the kunai grass. But where we were 8 or 9 mile inland, we had no hope of using a tank because we were on the mountains. Where we were they were tank protection for the 24th Brigade and that's what they used us for, tank protection.

11:00 **Ah, what was it – in the jungle what sort of and the kunai grass for that matter, what sort of insects and animals would you encounter?**

The worst thing was those bloomin' ticks, you had to get that, once you got through the jungle – we used to

11:30 de-tick ourselves at nighttime.

Leeches as well?

No not so much leeches only in the swampy areas. But we would de-tick ourselves by these ticks would bury in and, you never try and pull them out you only break their head off. The easy way to get them out, was, if you could, was to light a cigarette and put a cigarette on and they'd pop out, the butt of a cigarette on their tail and they pop out. And we if you had

12:00 ticks on your back or your neck or something, you'd get the bloke next door to you to de-tick you and he'd go along with a cigarette and just get them all out. But they cause this, those ticks cause this scrub typhus.

What are the symptoms of scrub typhus?

Oh, shocking yeah, twice as bad as malaria and you have hot and cold thing, awful, quite a few died from scrub typhus. I was very lucky because I had scrub typhus and I got into the

12:30 115th Australian General Hospital at Heidelberg and they treated me and then they discharged me and said, what was the words they used, they used particular words, umm, not confirmed. Because they didn't know what it was, because they had never heard of scrub typhus,

13:00 still don't know what it is. You know unless you were an army doctor and been to New Guinea, or the islands, nobody know what – have you ever heard of scrub typhus?

Yeah, I have heard of – I just haven't heard much about the symptoms?

It's caused apparently by ticks. And these ticks get into your blood stream.

I see.

This typhus – kill you.

13:30 Ticks apparently carry it into the blood stream and get into your heart and away they to.

What about plants?

Plants.

Yeah, any sort of plants that were extremely dangerous?

Well, we had the names of plants, we had a what they called a 'wait a while' a common name we gave them,

How do you spell that?

Just wait – wait - a while - a while. Yeah. And that was a vine

14:00 that had a hooked thorn on it and if you tried to crash through the jungle, you'd wait a while all right you'd stop; and back out because it would hook on to you. We used to call it wait a while. I don't know the technical name for it. But it was a shocking thing. But another thing …

How often would you encounter it?

Oh, not very often – encountered it often in the jungle.

So it would hook on to your skin?

Yeah, your skin but clothes was the main thing

14:30 and you had to back out or get somebody to cut it off you. We used to call it wait a while. But anybody who has been to New Guinea in the jungle can tell you about wait a while. And there was a lot of poisonous snakes and things around of course you had to be very careful of, and the lantana was another one, you heard of lantana, people grow it here. That was an awful thing to try and

15:00 crash your way through, they got spikes and they got these razor thorn things and cut you to billio. But you got to know about where they were and weren't.

So you got to know about all these things after a while quite well?

Yeah, we learnt to know what was there and whoever was in front would cut it away or chop it up as you went along, but you got to learn what they were and what they were about.

I heard another story from another Digger that there was a

15:30 **leaf – some people used to grab one of those big leaves to wipe their backsides, and there was a particular leaf that had spines on it?**

Yeah, the gympie.

Is it called the gympie.

Gympie bush. Yeah. Awful you'd suffer from that.

He had got it on his back or something and it cased a complete rash. I heard a story about a

guy wiping his backside.

Yeah, yeah that's happened. We had no paper or anything.

So they used to use leaves to wipe their backsides?

We used

16:00 leaves. You would always be careful what leaf you picked up you always tested it first of course. Oh yes those sort of things, that's true too, those bloomin' I think they call it the Gympie bush, they had little thorns all over the things, you had to be very careful of those.

Do you actually know anyone who has had encounters with the Gympie bush?

Well, I can tell – I don't actually know of anybody who had it but I can always remember but I know of people who

16:30 used to talk about it – be careful of the Gympie bush.

You can't tell us any stories about that?

No, not about that particular one.

Why is it called the Gympie bush?

I don't know why – had the name Gympie I don't know where – I think it used to grow in Gympie in Australia somewhere and it was also up in the islands, a very similar type of thing. Same as wait a while, I don't even know what wait a while was, it was

17:00 a vine with these hook thorns on it and we used to call "Hey, wait a while we're hooked up," so that's how it got the name wait a while. See our biggest problem in the islands was water. Doesn't matter where you went you had to chlorinate your water. We carried chlorination tablets with us, sometimes we were that thirsty and dry we had to take the risk but

17:30 nine times out of ten you had a chlorination tablet, dropped that in your bottle and left it for a little while and dropped another one, which removed the taste and you got your water that way. You daren't drink it from the river because up the river some 100 yards or 10 mile away there was a native village and all their muck went into the river so when you got down to the coast line the water was very polluted as you can image.

18:00 So you had to be very very careful. That was one of the problems you had. And when we did get water out of the rivers which the natives used to, we had to rely on the RAP fellas to have these tablets to drop into the water to chlorinate it. Like having a swimming pool and having to chlorinate it. We had to do that before you drank and the water was awful tasting, but if you didn't half the army would be down the dysentery

18:30 and goodness knows what. Wouldn't be able to manage.

Did you see the jungle as a beautiful place, did you admire it?

Yes, yes. Some of the birds in the jungle. When we had opportunities to look at it later on. Some of the birds and the orchids, the native orchids up in the trees, beautiful they were. Because when you are fighting a war you haven't got time to look at these

19:00 things. But later on when we went back to the staging camps, you were able to admire these things. I used to tell my mother about the orchids. She said, "Oh, you should bring some home." Not allowed to. You weren't allowed to. Because we didn't know what they were and whether they were polluting our own areas. But by the same token they had some beautiful – and the birds of paradise up in

19:30 the north of Milne Bay were absolutely magnificent. Every now and then we would run across a bird of paradise with these big plumes, and we used to think, "I'd love to take those feathers home." Not allowed to.

Did any of the soldiers shoot at the wildlife there?

Mmmm.

Did anyone shoot at the wildlife for fun?

The only time we would shoot at the wildlife was when we wanted a pig.

20:00 When we were at these staging camps when you were up there at the front line like we were with the 9th Divvie for 8 weeks, and we came back to a staging camp with no tents or anything, because they would have a staging camp with cooking facilities and things like that, we'd go out and knock off a pig and the cooks would cut it up and we'd have roast pork and things. But that only happened very rarely

20:30 of course. Because you had to be careful whose pig you knocked off. If you knocked it off and it belonged the village chief you were in trouble, because their pigs were sacred.

You never had any problems with the natives in that sense?

The only problems we had with the natives which I can recall was on the other side of New Britain, and they used to come down and tell us things which we knew were lies. They'd tell us all sorts of things that the

21:00 Japanese were down there and we'd say, "That's funny we have just been down there on patrol." We wouldn't say that to them, we'd say it to ourselves, but we knew they were trying to lure us to go somewhere on behalf of the Japanese, but we wouldn't fall for it. But the average native was very, very good. Very good.

Did you know about the massacres of natives in PNG, that Australian troops had

21:30 **killed a few natives?**

No.

Did you ever hear anything about that?

No.

What was the name of those people Col? The Akiba Tribe.

Oh, yeah I have heard of that.

Apparently there was some sort of, after the war or during the operations they were known to be assisting the Japanese,

Were they?

did you hear anything about that?

22:00 No, I didn't hear anything about that, but there was a lot of natives did join the Japanese assisting the Japanese, that's whey we had to be very careful. We had to rely on our natives to tell us whether they were Japanese natives or not. And they used to tell us. "Him Japan man, Japan man." We wouldn't kill them, we'd get the natives to get rid of them.

Natives would kill them?

22:30 Yeah.

Why wouldn't the Australian soldiers kill them?

Well because we were relying on our New Guinea natives to tell us what – and you couldn't rely on them to tell us yes and he might not be so we let them do the job. And Papua and New Guinea Rifles was a very, very strict battalion. They were trained in Port Moresby and they were very, very good. And we might only have

23:00 2 or 3 the would only be 5 attached to the battalion. And those Papua and New Guinea soldiers were very good, we could rely on them wholeheartedly.

They were from the PIB?

PIB [Papuan Infantry Batallion?] yes.

So they were always attached to your unit?

They weren't attached to all units, but when we wanted them they were there. We used to go back and get them when we wanted them.

So why were they – obviously they know

23:30 **their own country, but why do you think they were good soldiers?**

Because they were first of all trained very well in Port Moresby and also they could smell the enemy, they knew the jungle backwards, they were always in bare feet, they could smell the Japanese, and they knew from their training in Port Moresby,

24:00 the Japanese were trying to take over. So they were with the Australians all the way. Not so much the Americans but certainly with the Australians. There were 2 different lots there was the PIB and the NGIB, New Guinea Infantry Battalions the later stages. But they were very, very good rifle shots. No troubles at all to give them a rifle and ping somebody off. They had better eyesight than

24:30 you had and things like that but PIB was very helpful.

And they were perfect for jungle warfare?

Ideal, ideal. Because that was the environment – they were brought up in the jungles, very good.

What did you think of the other Australian services?

25:00 I don’t know, I had no contact with the navy whatsoever, we didn’t use the navy. When we went across from Madang to Karkar Island, we used American barges to take us across. The Americans supplied the barges from off some of their ships, somewhere down the line. And we used them. So we didn’t see the Australian Navy at all with the exception when we went from

25:30 Wide Bay around to Rabaul, we were on the Manoora, and that was an armed merchant cruiser in those days. It wasn’t a navy ship it was an armed merchant cruiser and we went round and they dumped us off in the middle of the night in barges. The idea was so the Japanese wouldn’t know how many were there and all they knew was that barge after barge was coming in and some of the barges were going in empty, and

26:00 even if they were counting they wouldn’t have a clue what was there. By the morning we were all dispersed, we all knew where we had to go and what we had to do. And the air force, the only contact with the air force was at Milne Bay, when we had that big raid, 100 odd flew across blew up the airstrip, half the Kittyhawks couldn’t land, they had to

26:30 send across to Port Moresby to get American Lightnings to protect us and so that’s the only contact we had with the air force, so virtually the only contact we had was with Americans. And when all said and done we didn’t see much of them either. They were protecting the water ways.

Yeah.

And the Coral Sea and all those.

What about

27:00 **women in the services, what did you think about them?**

Didn’t have any in our services they were all down at Port Moresby or Milne Bay after we left there, looking after the hospitals and things.

So you didn’t come into contact with them really?

The only time we came in contact with nurses was when we went into Rabaul and they landed nurses off some of the ships there and the ships were hospital ships and the nurses

27:30 were looking after any of the Australian soldiers there, but there wasn’t much to be done.

Now, you took part after Madang, you were in operations Gona/Buna can you tell us more about that?

No, it was only a matter of cleaning the Japs – moving them off the trail. There was a trail right across the area and it was a matter of stopping the Japs from crossing from one place to

28:00 another because again it was getting to the stage of a lot of the other Japanese around that they were running out of food. And if you cut off their supply line, that was it. They had no native gardens to eat by or taro to dig up or bananas to come of, because they had eaten them all early in the piece.

So when you say you stopped them from supplying each other?

Yeah,

So you were sent to cut off ...

Cut off the

28:30 trail, they knew that if they went up the trail they were going to run into an ambush, so they didn’t bother to go.

That was linking Gona/Buna, so tell us about the actions you took part in there, the combat actions?

Not very much. Only that as they went past you pinged them off, and that was it, they disappeared, no more came. They wouldn’t keep coming because they realised they were just running into ambush all the time.

29:00 So we had nothing really to worry about there.

What did you hear about, at the time there was a big battle going on for those 2 towns, what did you see and hear about those battles?

Not very much, our job was to keep that trail clear from Japanese to stop them from going from one place to another, which we did. You gotta remember there were battles going on everywhere, in that

29:30 area, there were little pockets all over the place and battles and our job was quite an easy one quite really, actually it wasn’t a battalion it was only part of a battalion, because half of them the battalion had gone across to the island, Goodenough Island and we were very, very low in troops. We went down to our battalion strength there would be

30:00 1,000 or more men, we were down to 5 or 600 or less. But not very much call from there, across that trail. We just pushed on from there and went north, kept going up the coast.

Which battalion were you with at Buna/Gona

7/52nd. Same

30:30 battalion.

O.K. That was a mixture of militia and AIF wasn't it?

Yes.

You were AIF then?

Yes. I was AIF then, my militia number was V28??? and I changed to VX115995. But yes, I was militia early in the piece, matter of fact I was militia before we went to New Guinea as AIF. No difference in the pay

31:00 of course, things were exactly the same, the only thing is that militia weren't supposed to go out of Australia, but they changed their mind of course, they had to send them out of Australia because they didn't have enough troops elsewhere. Had to used them, militia, they didn't want to but they did. They proved in the end the militia was just as good a fighting force as the AIF.

31:30 Names didn't mean a thing.

How was the 39th Battalion seen in your eyes or your men?

They were a very unfortunate battalion in that they were pushed into the Kokoda Trail, mainly militia in the 39th pushed into the Kokoda Trail lost a lot of men, lost 100's they did. They pulled out of Port Moresby and went home to Australia and reformed, didn't go back into the islands again.

32:00 They were really knocked around.

I heard the 39th Battalion was the lead Unit that assaulted Buna – leading the assault?

The 39th?

They were given the honour of leading the assault.

I didn't know that I thought they went back to Australia.

No what happened was they went back to Port Moresby, reformed and they were sent back up.

They lost a lot of men, they could have reinforced and gone on.

32:30 See at that stage we were at Milne Bay, at the other end of the island at the Owen Stanleys, which was just as steep was at the other end but never mind.

I assume that the Buna and Gona battles were sort of conventional battles, so that involved a lot of heavy artillery and all that?

Ack ack [anti aircraft guns] the big 3.5s.

So it wasn't jungle warfare?

No they fired everything in there.

33:00 Same way as the Japanese at Milne Bay, that was nothing to do with jungle warfare because the actual fighting finished along the Owen Stanleys, but at Milne Bay, it was a matter of who had the most ammunition to fire and they had Bofors guns and big 3.5s and you name it, but when the Japanese bombed it, we had nothing, well we had Bofors

33:30 but they couldn't cope with it, you can imagine 100 aircraft dropping bombs, you can imagine the problems they had of course. The, what was the name of the ship, there was a ship in Milne Bay that used to run from Melbourne to Tasmania, I can't think of the name of it, a small trading ship, and it had just arrived in Milne Bay to bring some stores

34:00 in. And we got a report of this raid, these bombers coming down the coast and the original start was 150 of them and finished up there was about 100 there. And this ship and I'll think of the name of it one day or shortly, probably in the book, and decided it would head out and head back to Australia, it was empty and head out down Milne Bay,

34:30 and I can remember watching from the shore, we were along the shore at the end of the airstrip in trenches, and we can see right down the bay, and I can remember this ship dodging the Japanese dive-bombers it was going like this down the bay. And it got home safely to Australia. Dodged all the dive-bombers, the only thing that happened, it blew a boiler on the way down somewhere and it went home to Brisbane on one boiler,

35:00 now what was its name. Not the Kanimbla. I can't recall the name, but it was a well known trader

between Tasmania and Melbourne for years. They used anything they could. I could never understand why they used this Dutch thing, the Bothe, there was no armament there was nothing at all, it was just an thing with open holes and here they put 800 men on the thing and sent us

35:30 to Port Moresby. Nowhere to sleep, nowhere to go on the decks of course, couldn't even light a cigarette during the nighttime, they were banned, it was that hot, and here we are on this bloomin' Bothe SS Steamship Bothe, it was capable of 6 knots, if it was lucky, we reckoned it did about 4. They reckoned if the Japanese

36:00 had have gotten on to it with a submarine it could have come right beside it and blown it to bits and we had this bloomin' PT boat, American PT boat and all it did was run around in circles, had no hope of doing anything. And of course we didn't know that that stage, we thought we were going to reinforce the 39th Battalion on the Kokoda Trail but didn't get that far. We got to Port Moresby and got

36:30 reshipped on of we went to Milne Bay.

Can I ask what action did you take part in at Wewak? Were you involved in combat operations?

No not very much at all. Only chasing the Japanese up the coast?

So you were chasing them from Buna Gona right up to Wewak?

Right up from Madang to Wewak, I was with 35th Battalion, 2 months, actually 3 months, January, February,

37:00 March and we went right up to the (UNCLEAR) [Sepik ?] River chasing the Japs and we weren't going to let them stop to settle in. So the idea was our instructions were, to keep them on the move as much as possible right up to Wewak. That's where I met my brother. He was with the 2/6th Machine Gun Battalion and we went into Wewak, and I went to get some more

37:30 ammunition because they had set up a store there, and while I was there I said to a fella, I knew him, what about a staff sergeant, "What about a clean shirt, I want a clean shirt?" and he went to get a clean shirt and he came back and I looked over my shoulder and there was my brother standing there and I said, "What the hell are you doing here?" I hadn't seen him for years. He said, "I am up here with the 2/6th Machine Gun Battalion , we've been going the coast

38:00 supporting the divvies along there. Setting up machine gun posts." I had a talk with him for a while and this Allan Wilkie in charge of the store there, says, "He your brother?" he said, "You want a new shirt too?" and Jack said, "Yes." So he got a new shirt, those jungle greens in those days. So I said goodbye to him and away I went back to Madang.

How long

38:30 **did you actually spend time with him there?**

I was with him for a couple of days. See I was on the way out, shipping out.

That would have been great for you?

Aye.

That must have been a very enjoyable experience?

I didn't even know he was there. I knew he was the 2/6th, but I didn't know it was a machine gun company and I didn't know they had come up the coast, so it was quite surprise to run into your brother, funny

39:00 the way things went.

So what happened to him did he end up going to (UNCLEAR)?

He went as far as Wewak, stayed there for a while, and then they returned back home. They got back home after we did. You got to remember that when I got home I went into hospital, came out and went back to New Britain. I don't know where they went from there, they didn't go far. Because they didn't come across to New Britain.

Tape 9

00:34 **You mentioned something about being browned off before, what does the term browned off mean?**

Browned off means you had it, sick and tired of hearing about it, that's what we used to call it, 'browned off', sick and tired of hearing about it over and over again.

Give me an example of which context this used in most often?

01:00 Somebody came and said they want you to do something and you already done it, you get 'browned off' because you don't want to do it again. You know, that's the style of thing, just a saying of course, get browned off.

What sort of other slang would you use?

I don't think you could repeat a lot of it now on tape, could you?

Ah, come on,

01:30 **for the record, it's worth it?**

Well, you've got …

You're actually allowed to say anything, you know that don't you, you can, there's no problem with words that are considered swear words?

Yeah. There's no – as regards slang in the army there's nothing different to what it is today, with the exception you didn't use the four letter word because it didn't exist in those days.

They didn't use that word

02:00 **in those days, I am surprised I thought they would.**

No. Well it was 60 years ago and things have changed quite a bit over the period of time, and things that were swear words in those days are just general words nowadays.

So what would be the equivalent to the four letter words in those days, WW2 days that is?

02:30 Well, R-O-O-T if you were going to take a girl out, you know, things like that. Aah, things change quite a bit, if you are talking to a soldier during the Second World War and said

03:00 to another soldier or a girl about fanny that would, in those days, refer to her fanny, between the legs, totally different today of course, use that word and nobody worries about it.

So that was considered a filthy word?

Oh yeah, touch her on the fanny as the case may be. But that was

03:30 another one and what was the other one I was thinking of just then. Americans used to use it quite a bit, you had to be careful if you were talking to an American, especially American girls because they used it and it didn't mean anything to them, I just can't think of it now.

What's it referring to, the word

04:00 **the context of the word?**

If we were talking to a girl and saying you are sitting on your arse, she'd turn around and say, "You are sitting on your fanny." to a girl. Nothing's changed, we used to use all the buggers and things like that. You heard the

04:30 word cunt C-U-N-T, well that referred to a girls vagina.

It's still in widespread use today.

Is it?

Yes. I am sure my friend Colin can vouch for me.

I haven't heard it. Haven't heard it. Hope this isn't going on record.

That's OK. Everyone talks about it, a lot of the vets it's basically,

05:00 **see, that's also part of history nonetheless, it can't be ignored, and people sometimes feel embarrassed because it's something that sometimes was discussed amongst mates I am sure all manner of filth was discussed, what was considered filth, was discussed amongst mates you know. As we do today too, I do amongst mates.**

Of course, yeah. We didn't

05:30 well we were too occupied in Queensland to have any worries at all, and not only that there weren't any girls available in Queensland because the Yanks took 'em all. The Yanks used to take 'em, they disappeared in Queensland. The Yanks had 'em all lined up at Red Beach and all those places, and we didn't see much of them, but we weren't there long enough to worry about it because by the time we moved into Queensland and moved out to go to New Guinea,

06:00 we didn't have very much leave. I can remember coming home on leave and I was only home about 2 or 3 days and who should arrive home, but my brother, the one I was talking about at Wewak. He arrived home just after I did. I said, "What's wrong with you?" and he said, "I think I have got malaria." Well I said, "I'll call the Field Ambulance." and I called the Field Ambulance, and they came to Fisher Street,

East Malvern, that's where we lived and it was a girl on her own. And I said, "What are you doing here?" and she said, "I believe you have got somebody that you think's got malaria." and I said, "That's right." I said, "What do you think you are going to do?" and she said, "Put him on a stretcher and take him to the ambulance," and I said, "How do you think you would get on if I wasn't here?" and she said, "I would go and get one of the neighbours to give me a hand.." I said, "you do this on your own all the time?" and she said

"Yes." And [we] put my brother on a stretcher and took him off to Heidelberg. Two days later I was in there with him. I got malaria too. But this time, two girls arrived to pick me up and take me to hospital. But, it was just a coincidence really. Most of the fellas for some reason, got malaria when they got home, I don't know really whether it was the change of

diet or climate or what.

Did they stop taking Atebrin when they came back?

Mmmmm.

Did they stop taking Atebrin when they came back?

No, no. I bought enough Atebrin home to take it all the way through. Most of them brought Atebrin with them. We had to go - matter of fact I had a course for 14 or 21 days Asprin tablets, not Asprin, Atebrin. So we weren't supposed to stop.

So for at least 2

months you had to take it?

Yes. Because I was only home for 3 weeks, so it was only 21 days of tablets and then I was on my way back again, and I daren't stop because I knew I was going back to – in the end to New Britain and that was worse than New Guinea for malaria. But New Guinea was bad enough but New Britain was a shocking place, mainly because of the water and everything that went with it,

mosquitoes.

So you were mentioning particularly the American troops taking the Australian girls, I imagine that must have been extremely frustrating for the Australian soldiers?

Yeah, frustrating we didn't get much of a chance to get frustrated because they kept us on the move, because Brisbane was banned, we were outside of Brisbane, Maroochydore which is about Caloundra area,

80 miles from Brisbane, so we were well outside of the area, that was a banned area, patrolled by our MPs, Military Police wouldn't let us go anywhere near there. But we heard all about it from everybody else, the Americans were taking over all the dance floors and dance halls and goodness knows what. So it didn't go over very well as you can imagine, didn't go over very well. But there was nothing you could do about it, it just happened

that way. But the Americans enjoyed it. Because that's where they were having their leave, they had their leave back their in Brisbane and Sydney and we were just on our way. They came across from Pearl Harbor, they hadn't been to New Guinea those soldiers, they'd come across from Hawaii and those places, those reinforcements,

none of them had been in New Guinea at that stage, the first troops to go into New Guinea were the 39th Battalion and then they had the 2/6th or the 2/7th went into Rabaul just at the start of the war, but the Japs had so many troops there they massacred them and hung them onto the palm trees, saying earlier, that was a shocking business, nurses and all.

They didn't muck around when they come down.

Just a second while I look at some of my questions. O.K., there's just a few personal questions here. I would believe that the memories of the war were the strongest for you, in terms of your life experience, is

that something that you think about often?

I still think about it very often as a matter of fact, yeah. Think about what's happened to different families, people I knew during the war and their sons got killed, I often think about that, I was only talking the other day I was talking to my one of younger brothers, I have only got 2 brothers left now, Neil and Neville, the others are

dead. We were only talking the other day about I wonder what happened to the Huggins Family. Fellas that went to the war, at the same time Jack and I did, got killed and had sisters and brothers and whatever happened to them, oh yeah, I often think about things like that. I belong to a Progress Club out at

Syndal and most of those chaps over 70, some are over 80 like myself, 80 or older, one chap is 90 years

of age, often we have a chat together, he wasn't in the war but he'll say my next neighbour, he used to work with me at the Herald office, he was called up and went into the army and got killed,

12:30 and the neighbours are still living there, and the mother and father have gone, but the sons and daughters are still around, so it makes you think sometimes what happens to people. There's not much you can do about it, just carry on with life and my concentration these days is looking after my grandchildren, I have got 4 grand daughters and 3 grand sons, and they keep me busy.

13:00 They ring me all hours of the day and night, tell me how they are going, what they are doing, whether they won at soccer, whether the girls are doing well at ballet, or one of them works for, the eldest grand daughter, works for Bosch and she likes to talk about motor cars.

What about, you said that you dreamt about the war before, you still dream about it?

I have nightmares, not exactly dream

13:30 about it little things come to mind that remind you about the war, OK. you don't exactly dream about it. Going back years ago, you could call it nightmares because you would wake up and think about these awful things that happened. Nowadays it is only when something reminds you of it. I get to the stage where this week just passed, Cath and I had

14:00 been to a funeral, a chap I knew during the war, he passed away, he was 81, and the week before I went to another funeral, a chap had passed away. He was 82 and then last, what's the day today, Tuesday, last Friday morning, a chap that we knew very well, he was with the 2/6th in the

14:30 desert in Tobruk or somewhere, his wife passed away. Had the funeral on Monday. Things like that remind you of how things are getting, how old you are getting. Not that old age, doesn't worry me so much, but I think of all the things that pass me by. You asked Cath a question, Cath and I don't talk about the war, the only

15:00 time I talk about the war is when I go to a reunion, and somebody will ask remember so and so and remember something, and I'll say yes and that's about as far as it goes.

Do you want to talk more about it though?

Do I? No. No.

It's ancient history now.

I don't know why I volunteered for this job either. Quite frankly, I got talked into it by Neville Cuthbert, who rang one day

15:30 Said he was going down to Portsea and he said, "I would do it but I am tied up I am going down to Portsea, and I am going to sell it," and he and his wife were going across to Adelaide for quite a few weeks and I said, "Oh well I don't mind being asked a few questions." little did I realise what I was letting myself in for.

You don't regret it do you?

I don't regret it at all.

16:00 I will be honest with you Sergie, you and Colin, I wouldn't do it with anybody else.

What do you mean?

People that didn't know what they were talking about, or what they were trying to do. In other words a person who hadn't been to New Guinea, or a person that was in the navy or something, that didn't understand and I think you have been through it with somebody some of the questions you ask that you knew

16:30 a lot of the things that did happen, or were going to happen, or some of the problems that you get.

Yeah. That's comforting then. That's a compliment to us, thanks.

I don't mind letting my heart, head – I wouldn't do it for anybody else, even the chap that died just recently, Hughie Tom, he had been, he was in the army and he'd been through New Guinea, and Hughie and I would get together

17:00 and we wouldn't talk about New Guinea, never we would talk about all different things that happened outside of it, and the dances we went to before the war and since the war.

It is strange isn't it and you fought along side of him?

Not alongside him but he was in the 22nd Battalion that was our sister battalion, they fought alongside us and we fought alongside them.

Now what about

17:30 **your experiences, I am interested in the psychological experiences here, the triggers that make you remember, now say for instance, scent or smell, if you get up in the morning and you smell some scent, or a fragrance or an odour or whatever it is, does it ever trigger something back to PNG and those days in the jungle?**

No. No it doesn't, even when you think of all the orchids

18:00 on the tree, they have got no sense of smell at all.

Sort of like rotting leaves, for instance in your, would that ever trigger anything back to PNG?

No, no not in the least. I tell you what would trigger me off though, if I could smell human bones, human body.

You've never forgotten that smell?

No, never forgot it never likely to either. A smell all of its own.

18:30 That would trigger me of right away, no worries at all. It's something that you can't explain but it happens, you know. Smells – that's why the New Guinea native was so important, we could smell the Japanese in a certain way, they smelt them in a different way and we could smell where the natives had been.

19:00 We'd go along and I would say, "Some natives have been through here." and they'd say, "Yeah, you can smell the oil the body odour," the oil from the coconut palms and you could pick it up. But you knew they weren't Japanese.

So the Japanese how would you – what's their body odour like I mean from …?

Totally different from ours, totally different from ours. Totally different smell altogether. I think it is because of their diet, their rice diet and everything.

19:30 It's hard to explain the difference in smell, but if you knew them you could pick them no trouble at all.

But is it something you are unlikely to forget either?

You won't forget it if you smell it again.

It's amazing. What about – would you say you enjoyed the war?

No. I wouldn't say I enjoyed the war. I lost the

20:00 best years of my life. From 1942 to 1946, I was just at that age where I was enjoying girls as company at dances and goodness knows what and then it was all cut off and away you went. Then from 1942 to 1946 we only had about 3 weeks break holiday, and that was spent in hospital, and so we didn't get much chance to meet up

20:30 with anybody and meet up with girls again, and go to dances with them or anything of that nature and by the time the war ended, 1945 I got out of the army in 1946, you gotta remember I was 23 years of age going on for 24, so all those youth years where I thought I would be playing football and thought I would be going to dances and sorting the girls out,

21:00 it was all gone.

So you told me you had problems readjusting to life in society again, but O.K, so it's something that destroyed your innocence?

Within reason yeah. You became a man very quickly in the army, there was no such thing as going through a boyhood,

21:30 you became a man very quickly, because you matured very, very quickly. You can imagine 18 year olds having fun playing football, and goodness knows what. How the 18 year olds in this young man's war were trained to go and fight an enemy, and as far as I am concerned, they all matured very quickly.

22:00 The ones that didn't mature were left at home here in any case.

Yeah. Would you ever consider going back to PNG, or have you been back?

No, I haven't been back and I have had a couple of offers to go back and I don't know whether I would go back or not, what I would like to do is go back with some of the fellas that I was with, not strangers, but with the same

22:30 fellas in the same battalion, same company, same section I was with and do a couple of spots we'd like to look at. But I am afraid I might get very emotional, going through it again.

Do you think it might be a way of closing the chapter?

It probably would be a way of closing the chapter, but you will never get it out of your mind, it's always there, I don't care if you went back 10 times. You always think about, you will always think

23:00 about it, and you always think about the awful times and the things, things that happen that throw you completely out of gear, you know, your best mate shot beside you and all those sorts of things, no, no you never get over it, no matter how many times you went where you'd never get over it.

Did you feel that way about, I mean having to have kill Japanese,

23:30 **how did you deal with that after the war?**

Not very well at all, because I often used to think back after the war and think of those fellas had girlfriends too, and wives and mothers and families. And that's what I said I virtually hate war and I hope that none of my grandchildren or anybody else has to go through another war. Because it's a thing you never

24:00 forget, and even if you kill somebody and goodness knows you just can't keep count of the number you do kill, because it's done in by a number of people, for instance, when you raid those native villages that's full of Japanese and everybody opens up with machine guns and rifles and threw grenades in, nobody knew who did what, but you know you got

24:30 rid of them. Then later on in life, after you have been home for a while, in years to come, you think to yourself well all those people, all those people you shot or blown up all had families of some sort, mothers and fathers and daughters you wonder what happened to the, and as I said, nobody wins at war, nobody wins.

Did you ever manage to get photos

25:00 **off Japanese bodies?**

No thanks. I got a photo of a Japanese soldier standing outside in Rabaul, I don't know how I got that, somebody took that and I thought what the hell have I got that for.

A lot of Aussies used to do that didn't they?

Yeah.

They used to search their bodies and keep their personal photos?

Yeah.

Why do you think they used to do that?

I don't know.

It seems a bit strange in a way. But you must have seen that?

25:30 I did many times.

Did you ever think about why they were doing it, did they ever say why they were taking it?

No. Don't know.

In retrospect why do you think they did that?

I don't know what they were trying to prove, I can't imagine, as far as I was concerned it was something I was trying to forget not be reminded of. Well I don't know people, have a lot of funny ideas

26:00 and when you are close to a group of fellas, my 11th Platoon had about 18 fellas who you were pretty close to and of those 18 fellas they have all got different ideas and different things. I suppose you could look at it that they have all got different thoughts and different ways of doing it. And thinking about it, I don't know.

It's like a trophy in a way.

26:30 **It's a bit strange. But like you said, people do it for different reasons.**

Oh, don't worry about that. I can honestly say that when I was with the 35th Battalion, fellas going up and opening up Japanese mouths and taking their gold teeth. Can you imagine that?

Did this shock you?

Yes. I reckon it's awful. I had been with the battalion

27:00 the 37/52nd that was straight forward and didn't do anything like that at all, you get this 35th Battalion come in with youngsters, 19 and 20 year olds, youngsters to us because we were 22 or older, and we'd had 19 months experience up there and even though we killed a lot of Japanese, I daren't go to a Japanese body and turn it over and open it's mouth and look for gold teeth. But these fellas did, for some reason,

27:30 did a lot of things like that.

What other things did you see that they did?

Check them for rings, on the hands, go through their pockets to see what they could salvage for souvenirs watches and things. We never did that, we left them to be and went on our way. Didn't salvage. People used to say, "You want souvenirs of this?" and [we] said, "No." we left it to pioneers behind us to clean up

28:00 anything we left. But I was surprised at the 35th Battalion that they went through the Japanese bodies looking for souvenirs.

Would you say anything to them?

No. Wasn't my place. I was only attached to them. A couple of other fellas and myself attached to them to guide them through the area to the first part their experiences, to tell them how to treat the natives, what to

28:30 watch out for and quite frankly we were all glad to get out of it. There was, I don't know exactly how many of us, there were quite a few of us, attached to the 35th.

What rank were you with the 35th?

I was a corporal. I became a sergeant when I came back.

With these experiences, do you think – I am not sure if I asked you this question before, but were you religious, you weren't religious were you, to begin with,

29:00 **how did this change as a result of your experience in the war, I mean your view on religion after the war?**

After the war I used to say to the boys, well somebody was looking after us. You know you think that, because lots of us came back unscathed, somebody was looking – I used to say to my mother, "Well somebody is looking after us Mum," because Jack and I got back all right, that was the older brother and she was

29:30 religious in that respect she wouldn't miss church or anything at all. And um, my views from a youngster going to kindergarten, going to church with my mother of a Sunday morning every now and then I got my arm twisted and I was one of five, and one of us got dragged in every Sunday morning, Mum would take one of us

30:00 to church. I got to the stage where OK,church was part of our life, not my father, he was didn't worry about church, didn't have anything to do with the church. But Mum did and I think that sort of training catches up with you later on in life. During the war I would go to church services, in the army,

30:30 if they had a church service, I didn't care whether it was Catholic, Jewish or whatever it was. But most of the other fellas were the same, but we had to believe in something I guess. And then we went right through the war and then when we came home, my mother used to say, "Would you go to church with me on Sunday?" and I would say, "Yes Mum Jack's going next Sunday," or so and so is going next Sunday. But will you come with me.

Do you believe in God now?

Yes, I do.

31:00 **But you don't believe in religion so much?**

When you say don't believe in religion, I believe there is a super being somewhere that looks after us, and I am like Cath, we work on the assumption that whatever will be will be. Somebody gets sick or gets killed or something like that, well it was meant to be that way.

What do you think happens to people, after living in an environment surrounded

31:30 **by death and constantly thinking about it and trying to survive, do you think that in retrospect now and do you believe there is an after life?**

Quite frankly I can't answer that question because I don't know whether there is if there is, nobody has come back to tell me. I know there is an old story about somebody asked the priest was there a golf

32:00 course in heaven. The priest said, "I don't know, but I will find out for you and let you know next Sunday." When next Sunday came along, he said to the priest, "Well did you find out?" and the riest said, "Yes, there is a golf course in heaven, and you are hitting off next Sunday." In other words you'll be up at the golf course pretty soon and you will think

32:30 aah, no it's very hard asking these questions because.

Can I interrupt you there, would you say that, that what the questions you wanted to answer then, during and a little bit after WW2 are the same questions you are trying to get answered now would you say that?

Yes.

A lot hasn't really changed.

Yes, yes. I agree with that.

33:00 With all that has passed in between, still got the same questions. Same answers. Same questions, doesn't change much.

So it's almost like you have to go in a circle to come back to realise that…?

Yes. And a big gap in the meantime. Why was my mother and father killed Mum at 67 and Dad at 63, ready to retire that

33:30 year, why were they killed at that particular time. There's no answer to that, Cath and I used to often talk about that, it just happens. Cath and I often used to talk about that and she'd console me and say that it must have been meant to be somewhere along the line.

Who knows. It's a difficult thing to tell. This is a little bit of a tangent; we haven't got a lot of tape left,

34:00 **so I will restrict my questions to the more specific questions. Now, there are some films that have been made about WW2, and I wanted to ask you about? The Thin Red Line, Saving Private Ryan, I am not sure of the other ones, I can't think off hand, now you have seen those two films,**

34:30 **what do you think of them, are they are correct depiction of a soldiers life?**

No.

Why is that?

Exaggerated.

How?

In lots of ways, I don't think they were a true picture. OK. In other words I think a lot is put into it to glamorise it in a lots of cases and war should never glamorised because we said earlier nobody wins a war.

35:00 And No. 2 is they never show in lots of cases, the grim parts of it, when some fellas, sometimes they do but not in all cases. I think on the average everything sort of comes out on top and it's a great thing to win but it's not always that way.

Now if you look at Saving Private Ryan, it's a very different film to The Thin Red Line?

Yeah. I got to agree.

Tell us what you thought of The Thin Red Line?

35:30 Well, I got to remember what it was all about now. I generally steer clear of them as a matter of fact, Hitler bombing London and all those if I can possibly do it and stick to something that is realistic, but I think a lot of those things that you hear or see are

36:00 exaggerated, the things that happen are exaggerated, that's the only thing I can say about them.

It was a very deep film, Thin Red Line, like say for instance that attack on that hill, that was kunai grass wasn't it?

36:30 Yes. Tiger kunai grass.

Tiger Kunai grass OK. And the relationships between soldiers and officers, even though it's a bit one sided, it doesn't show the Japanese side very well. Is it – do you think it was too deep?

I agree with you. It's not always as easy as they make out it is and a film they should show both sides

37:00 of the argument and the only way to make that happen is to show what happened to the Japanese as well as the Americans or the Australians as the case may be. I think they are inclined these film makers, to exaggerate them. To make war glamour, glamour in war there's no such thing.

It intrigues me, there's a part in that film

37:30 **where the young guy is leaving one of the islands, I don't know whether it is Guadalcanal or whatever, and he's on the ship and he's watching the island going past, remember that scene, and he's lamenting about the past. Anyway when you were at Wewak, and the war, sorry you were at New Britain when the war was finished, you were transferred from Wewak, when you left New Britain eventually, you left on ship,**

38:00 **what was going through your mind when you were seeing you know the island disappear?**

Well quite frankly I will be honest with you I was quite glad to see the last of it. At last we'll go home to

stay. As it happened we got home to stay, as it happened I got transferred and did another 3 months here in Melbourne, but that was beside the point, I knew it was all over and here to stay and I think in lots of cases it was a sense of relief. The boys were very happy on the boat coming home, quite surprising change of attitude completely. Change of attitude completely.

38:30 The first time we came back, it was totally different to the first time, because the first time they knew it was only a leave and they'd be back again, and the last time we came back to Brisbane it was a totally different atmosphere.

OK.

Their wives and loved ones and that was it.

39:00 **Would you describe your experience in PNG as a haunted place in the sense that your experiences there were haunting to you now?**

Well yes they would be too. You could use that word haunting, yes I guess so. Nobody knew what New Guinea was like that was the problem. We went to New Guinea blind-folded; we didn't know what a jungle was

39:30 to speak of compared with Australia, and we didn't know what we were getting into, but we learnt the hard way experience is one of the hardest things and after 19 months there it was very, very hard to explain to the 35th Battalion when they arrived, what they were getting into, those youngsters just thought it was home and hosed.

What about you impression of the jungle before you went, now I believe your

40:00 **only access to that would have been Tarzan, in civilian life, so what was your impression at that time?**

It was an awful bloody place it was I thought jungles, didn't like it at all. My brother had a better idea because he had been at Cowra NSW, and was learning to fight jungle warfare there. But as far as I was concerned I didn't have a clue what jungles were like and like you were saying I probably remember Tarzan as a

40:30 kid, flying through the jungles but that type of African jungle is totally different to New Guinea Jungle.

Unfortunately we've only got about a minute left and the one question I want to ask you and I want to leave it to you to answer in whatever way you see fit, firstly this is for the record, if there is something about this interview that you would like to – that you haven't said yet and you would like to say for future

41:00 **generations, anything that you haven't told anyone else, that you would like to discuss you would like to say.**

No. I don't think there's very much, I think I have opened up a enough in the last hour or so, to let you know and I told you earlier that you are the first two that I have really opened up to I haven't even discussed fully with my mates, just the funny side and things, with my mates that I was in the army with for years.

41:30 I am grateful in one way to get it off my chest, in another way, I am sorry it's me that has to do it do you understand, I would like somebody else to tell the story and I'll listen to them.

Are you happy you have told your story now, do you think it's an important part of the process of healing?

Yes, it could be to be able to let your hair down by all means, and tell somebody about it, which I said to you

42:00 earlier I am thankful for.

INTERVIEW ENDS