Australians at War Film Archive

Charles Shailer (Glen) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 **Okay then, could you just tell us about where you were born and your early childhood?**

I was born in Brisbane actually, Stones Corner. My parents were both born here locally, Slacks Creek, it was then known. My grandfather came here as a ten-year-old boy and, with his brothers and sisters, and

01:00 of course their parents, 1866.

And tell us about growing up in the early years before the war?

Growing up in the 1920s was a very pleasant experience, I would think, thinking back over the years. And horses and animals all looked in good health.

01:30 Motor cars hadn't appeared, and wagons and horses and bullock teams and horse teams were the order of the day. And the motors gradually came in during the twenties and we thought that was great. To get a motor car ride – it was – every boy wanted to be able to speak in school in regards to his experience of a motor car ride. And an aeroplane went over, well, you had permission to go out and see the plane,

02:00 which was very, very rare those days. Of course then at the end of the 1920s, that's when the Depression started. I was still going to school. I was going to be educated: my father said I should have an education. I was doing quite well at school; I didn't have any problems there. But then things didn't look good in the financial side,

02:30 and when I was trying to leave school, he said, "No good going to high school, you better stay home on the farm and work." I didn't mind either, because I loved growing things, and I found that quite rewarding and I learnt so much about plants. And we had a mixed farm, fruit, vegetables and the dairy as well, and we could in those bad times – we could almost live off the land.

03:00 The property was not frost-prone, bananas and pineapples grew on the hills, and vegetables down on the flats, and that's were the grazing area was too. During the thirties then, the droughts came in, and they were terrible times. Unemployed people used to come along to have a meal. We would always find something for them to eat. Singers, swagmen [homeless travellers]. They used to camp under the schools, under the bridges, railway bridges and places like that.

03:30 As I said, there wasn't any money about and there looked like there was a war looming. I've been asked, "Why did you join the army?" Well, before joining the army, I had left home because I wasn't making any money, good experience, but no money. So I went to the northern rivers, worked on a farm there for a few months.

04:00 That was a great experience too. They gave me a race horse to ride too, after cattle, and that. And winter came, and I went up to the Fassifern area, round Harrisville way. I worked there until the end of the year. So I saved up a bit of money to buy some tools to start on this place, where we are now.

04:30 And working up here on my own, I went into reforestation. The property had been cut right out and the bushfires had ravaged it in 1936. The home that was on it was removed, the wire of fences all removed, the place was no income off it, couldn't make an income off it at all. After reforestation, the timber died and I had fellas came in to cut wood

05:00 and I was getting some royalty for the wood. But working on my own, I think, when the opportunity came to join the army and I could see there was a war coming, I could anyway, I thought I could, I didn't want to be a civilian in uniform so I joined the militia in Beenleigh. We used to go, there were a few other fellas locally, we went to Beenleigh,

05:30 and trained there once a week, once a month or something. And then we had one camp in Brisbane, in Enogerra, first camp. After that, that was in May, and then the war started in August – no September. So not long after that I was called up, and my first army service was at Archerfield,

06:00 guarding Archerfield Aerodrome. That was a nice experience too. We were billeted with a tent, but the air force looked after us in regards to our food. It was very nice to go along with the air force fellows and enjoy some good food, sit at a table and it was a good experience as well. Then following on to that,

06:30 we had training camp at Enogerra, three month training camp, that was a lovely experience. We used to get plenty of leave, didn't say we got plenty of leave, but every opportunity I had to go on leave, I took it and enjoyed myself really. And that camp finished and I was back working here on this property doing some timber cutting and thinning out the trees that needed to, the ones

07:00 that were bent and had defects. I removed those to let the good trees develop. Then when the Japanese came into it, that's when I had fellas come up here. They were camped here, cutting wood. Then the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and we were called into full time service.

07:30 I was still at the CMF [Citizens' Military Force] at the time, I hadn't joined the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. That was fulltime. We met the first Americans that came into Brisbane. I was on leave that night when they came to Brisbane. You could see that they were new. Very easily picked, they seemed to have money and we changed money and coins. We had a good relationship there,

08:00 but then it didn't last that long because our tables where we used to have our meals were taken away and given to the Americans. And we were sitting on the ground in the dust to have our dinner. Then there seemed to be a lot of apprehension about the danger in which

08:30 Brisbane was, or Australia would be invaded. I didn't see it that way. The distance didn't seem to be too great to me. Anyhow, we were patrolling around Brisbane, right through this area here, from Cleveland to Eight Mile Plains, right through the bush here. Patrols. And then one afternoon there seemed to be a panic, we were out manoeuvring or something, I can't just recall where.

09:00 But they were yelling out for "Shailer, Shailer!" they want Shailer. I thought, "Whatever has gone wrong now?" Anyhow, I had to report to a truck, picked up on a truck with a few other fellows, we went up to Redbank Rifle Range to test our shooting skills. And I had been fairly good at that. And it appeared that they wanted snipers, for when the Japanese invaded, they wanted these snipers

09:30 'to hold the fort', as the saying is. I had done very well that day, I've got a photo if it here actually. I think I topped the score. And then after that, it wasn't very long after that, a week or two after that, we moved to the Brisbane Line at Caloundra, it was known as the Brisbane Line, and I was in an advance party there as well. We went up one Sunday afternoon, and the

10:00 U.S. battalion came up afterwards. We were putting barricades up along the beaches and patrolling at night time. It was generally doing things pretty toughly, we had tents, but we had hard floor boards, there was no palliasses. I remember clearly, there a ship was going in, and I think it was an officer, I don't know if he was a captain,

10:30 I didn't know. He says, "There's our Bren guns there." he said. I said, "How would you know it they are Bren guns?" "Oh yes." he said, "A boat had been diverted from Singapore. Those guns were going down to Brisbane. We'll be getting our guns from there." And believe it or not, midnight that night, we were called out to clean the Bren guns, they were still in the packing cases, all still in the grease. We were called out to clean our Bren guns, so that was the first Bren guns that came to the battalion.

11:00 I did hurt my back there on a patrol. Stepped in a hole in the pitch dark and I was laid up for a while. Then we were brought back to Brisbane. After that – was then in April – and I remember being told that three months we would be in action. That was in April. Then I had a – developed a cyst on my face – that was removed at the hospital too.

11:30 Had a bit of a bad trot there [a run of bad luck]. And I went on leave at the weekend from the hospital. When I went back on the Monday morning, the camp was gone, they had moved. They said you've got to go down to the station, heading to Townsville. That was a story, in suburban carriages, crushed too. That was the Coral Sea, the battle had started.

12:00 So we arrived at Thursday night, four days it took us, we arrived at Townsville on the Thursday night. At Mount Stuart we stayed there, for a while. Cabin on the ground. Really tough it was at Townsville. Hard dry ground. And we moved about in a few places there. But I do remember the first aeroplane bombing mission at Townsville.

12:30 Some of the fellas were still on leave. I heard the plane go over, I thought, "That's a strange one." didn't take any notice really, and the next thing I know the bombs were dropping. Everyone realised, and the attack started then, a bit late then, the plane was going back to bolt. We were just on the outskirts of Townsville, Aitkenvale at the time, then they moved us to Louisa, then we moved to Blue Water Creek. And there was another raid, that one was rather spectacular

13:00 because they knew this one was coming, and the air force was out and they were firing, you could see the trace of bullets flying into the plane, I thought they were going to bring it down, but it got out of the search lights and got away actually, went right back to bolt too. Then we went to jungle training. We were the first brigade to do jungle training at Mount Spec, preparing us for New Guinea. And in between those times, I was

13:30 doing some different courses in the battalion, I got a drivers licence and I was a sniper. I also took a course in pidgin English. And Colonel Amies gave me the freedom of the battalion area, and I could go anywhere and pick positions for sniping. And he didn't tell one of his officers, and when I went into officers' area, he objected to me being there.

14:00 I suppose he had a bit of a reason, because I had another objective in mind too. I had found a bee hive's nest and I was going to cut the hive out. It was low in the mango tree and I was going to get some fresh honey, and he wondered why I had an axe and a gas mask, because I had the gas mask to stop the bees from stinging. I didn't get much honey; it was a bit of a failure.

14:30 That's the bit we finished our training, and then we shipped to Milne Bay from Mount Spec, flew over the ranges from Townsville. And I was on leave when the battalion left, just after Christmas in 1942 so I travelled to New Guinea with different troops. To Milne Bay. In the Duntroon, which was rather a pleasant ride actually.

15:00 The Coral Sea was very smooth and purple in colour, and the flying fishes were flying. It's a bit of a strange feeling leaving Australia. I remember there was a padre, and just getting dark, and we could see the mountains in the distance, and I didn't know what mountains they were. He said, "That's Cairns there." he said, "We'll be leaving, we'll be going out across the sea." and that's the last,

15:30 that's Australia, you were wondering whether you would see Australia again and I certainly did. And arriving at Milne Bay, well it was Samarai first, we were going through Samarai, that was very nice, very picturesque. Then up the bay, about lunchtime, the reception we got was, "There's an air raid soon, there's an air raid soon. Get off the ship quick!" We were ordered on to one side of the ship and it tilted.

16:00 The ship had already been sunk, and at the wharf. Gili Gili wharf. We had to walk over the ship… Shame it was. Been shelled in the battle of Milne Bay. And I went by truck to the unit, got a great welcome. We suffered some very heavy raids, bombing raids, at Milne Bay.

16:30 I don't know whether or not to go into detail with that now?

17:00 Well, we went from Milne Bay, we were shipped to Oro Bay, that's near Buna. We were there for only a couple of weeks. That wasn't a very good site, the old battle ground. I've got some photos there.

17:30 And then from Buna, we went to Morobe, we were there for a short while. And then from Morobe we – by barges up to Nassau Bay. That's where there had been landing there. And then from Nassau Bay, we walked to Tambu Bay, just when we were going into action. I know we had to clean all the extra treatments of the guns, machine guns, and everything, magazines, everything had to be examined.

18:00 Magazines, Bren magazines, hold twenty, we always loaded with eighteen. And I'm counting these in and getting confused and I'm running a temperature and I thought, "Goodness me, I'm going to be sick." Anyway I'm running a temperature and I went to the ADS for a few days. That's the Advanced Dressing Station, and during that time the unit went into action. And after the action, I'll tell you about that later, I think we went to

18:30 Lae, on the Buso River. And then up to Nadzab. There was a big patrol up there that I would like to talk about too. And then in April I was selected, one man from the battalion, Colonel Amies recommended I be selected to go to training. Infantry training. Australian School of Infantry in Victoria. I was very proud of that actually.

19:00 I passed there quite well and then trained at Cowra. There at Cowra for the outbreak. Prisoner of war outbreak. A very serious thing actually. And then I contracted malaria. Thought I nearly died. And after treatment, I went on leave and convalesced.

19:30 And when I finished the tour of duty, I went back to my unit at – they had been moved to Bougainville. That was at the end of the war. I found so few of the old New Guineans, so that was amazing, nearly all new recruits. I wasn't posted to my old platoon, I was posted to

20:00 Seven Platoon, it was. To get to know these fellas – a bit difficult and stressful. Shelling, very hard time. And after the war finished I came back here to Slacks Creek, it was known then, and back to this property. I wasn't as fit a man when I returned as when I left.

20:30 I had all sorts of dreams that this was going to be, that this was going to make my life. I bought another property down on, near the Pacific Highway, built a home down there from timber off this property and reared a family there. Married of course. A good lady she is. Reared a family – four daughters. And once I established myself, and I decided

21:00 that its time someone tried to get into the committees around the councils, get the place developed. And of course that wasn't as easy as some people thought. When you're running for council, usually a lot of starters, in those days there used to be, and I was successful in my first encounter. That was the Albert Shire,

21:30 office in the Gold Coast. Very rewarding, very disappointing, councils. I was on councils from a period from 1961 till 1985, but I was on and off for a couple of times. You would win elections and lose elections. Just had to take it, the good with the bad. I had no regrets,

22:00 because being with the enquiries that were held, they were held in Brisbane. I had no fear, in a matter of fact, they even came up here in this room taping, getting tapes of what I had been doing on the council. Very interesting. I wasn't only on councils; I was on the fire brigade.

22:30 There's an old helmet up there that was a gift to me after I retired from there. Twelve years on the Gold Coast Fire Brigade Board and three years as chairman. And the CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of the Committee of Direction of the Food and Marketing, I was there for eighteen years too. Six years on the executive committee there. I've led a very full and interesting life. When I finished there in 1985,

23:00 I decided I would build something up here that would be, something to be proud of, for my family and the district, Australia in general, really. That seems pretty well received, when people come from overseas they think, "What a lovely place." and they come back again.

Good okay, now we go into detail. Okay now tell us about

23:30 **your family that you grew up with, your parents and brothers and sisters.**

Well, my parents both were reared in the area, both went to school together, and they were the same age. Dennis, my mother was a Dennis. And actually, I'm descended from four different pioneering families,

24:00 the Fullers, the Shailers, the Dennises, the Markwells. So I'm true blue Australian I suppose, from the very early days. My great grandfather, he was a very energetic man, a big powerful man, educated, called a spade a spade. And he was the first clerk, when local governments first formed they were called Divisional

24:30 boards, and he was the secretary of the board. And by looking at old records, he was just about the council, with all the things he had to do. And my grandfather – he was a timber getter mainly, understood the bush and the trees. And then he decided to go into citrus and he planted an orchard,

25:00 a big orchard, and the certificate said it was the best in Queensland – and in 1914 it was the best citrus orchard in Queensland. He was very proud of it. And I remember sweetest mandarins or oranges I ever tasted. The orchard had artificial underground irrigation and when it worked it was amazing, it was all done by hand. And I think I had a very good background for my future in just sort of copying what he'd done, in

25:30 how he'd done it, see? There was four sons there, my father was the eldest. He used to, I can remember him driving to – the wagon – to the Brisbane markets. Before the motor vehicles came in. And I remember having two little rocking horses; I named them after the wagon horses. Dandy and Prince.

26:00 Three horses, Rosie, Dandy and Prince. And I used to ride, well I couldn't ride them myself, I was too young, on Rosie the horse, I loved that. Then when he used to go in every night early in the morning, he had to get up about half past six and go from Daisy Hill, his father lived on Day's Hill, he had to go on to Shailer. They lived down on Shailers Road you see.

26:30 And my brother Charlie used to yoke the horses and have them ready to go, then bring home an empty load of cases. This was during the winter time, very long hours and very hard work but rewarding. And then about 1926, I think it was , the motor vehicles came and they took over from using the carrier, grandfather used to

27:00 get a carrier to take those to the market. And my father was out of a job. And that's when he got on to farming his own farm. And I remember in 1928, there was such a crop on, they couldn't handle it and he went over for three months helping them, and one of the other brothers had appendicitis, and he went over to help them. And I remember that year too, was a wet year, and we could go over and eat as many mandarins as we liked. I remember they said, "That kid will be sick."

27:30 But no, I could eat those mandarins, and I never ever was sick. Then of course my father started dairying, the boys coming on, milking by hand, and we had to help with the milking, all of us boys, there was three boys and a girl. And Mum was a bit unlucky,

28:00 because the first baby boy, older than me, had died. And then there was myself, and twins afterwards, and they died, so I was the only one to survive out of the first four babies. And the other brother Con, and then Mark, and youngest, Nancy, was a sister.

Was there any reason why she was unlucky?

I don't think so,

28:30 I don't think so. The twins was premature. They all lived and that, you see. When I went for an examination, for insurance, the doctor asked me, I think I told him, he said, "Did they live?" "Oh yes." And he says "That's nothing, today they would have all lived." So its not, its just one of those unlucky things.

29:00 Never had medical attention like they should have, not like they do know. My brother then, you see, the Depression was, I was home working, my brother was nearly four years younger than I was. He was

educated, he became a school teacher and a school principal. He went to the war as well.

29:30 I dunno what else…

That's all right. Tell us about your school, your schooling?

My schooling, that was, I had no problem at school. Matter of fact I was quite good at maths, I used to help the other kiddies, the teacher, told me to correct the other kiddies' work,

30:00 other children's work. I loved sport. I loved cricket and tennis; I could handle it quite well. I remember the teacher saying one day I could represent Australia not too long, before I left school actually and I thought, "How silly can you be?" But she didn't know what it would be, but it could be sport, could be

30:30 politics, didn't think it would be politics. Could be something she thought. I never treated it seriously, ever, until I was in the School of Infantry, when I was doing the exercises in the School of Infantry in Victoria, and all these people there, all these visiting generals and that there and when I finished, I thought, "Well, I am representing Australia."

31:00 And that cricket ball up there, I bowled that to Doug Walters [Australian cricketer]. He was opening up, well, I opened it for them, the indoor cricket centre when I was the mayor. And I had to bowl this ball to him, it was strange you know, I could leg break it and I never had a chance to practice at all. And I thought, "I would try and bowl this one I used to get wickets with." and sure

31:30 enough, it happened. It did break and he was a little surprised. And all the crowd was at the back, "Do it again Mr Mayor, let him see it wasn't a fluke! [lucky]" he says. And cause the next one wasn't quite as good. But it was all right. They enjoyed it. He said,"Jeez, you haven't lost your guile." But that's how things just happened,

32:00 you don't plan it, it just, you're there at the right place at the right time, I suppose.

Take us through that delivery.

Well, I used to love cricket, and that was in Bradman's [Australian cricketer] time. I used to read all the articles in the paper, about how to spin a ball and make it break. My brother was a left hander bat and I was a left hander and you had to break the ball, left handers like the balls to leg break, because

32:30 it was breaking the right way to hit to the leg side, see, I used to get it near the leg stump. And he loved it. And I thought, "Well I've got to counteract this." you know, my own experience and he was the same, so I had to break the ball back into him, instead of breaking to the right hand bat, breaking it into the left hand bat. So I had to practice and practice, so I threw the ball so it spun and broke from the left. And that's how I developed that leg break.

33:00 And then, bit of a top spin too and then straight through. And you know, the batsman never realised what was coming. I used to play for the, couple of years for the Slacks Creek team, and then I would represent the company in the battalion. When we had cricket matches, I'd make company member for the cricket team.

33:30 **And when you bowled to Doug Walters, you bowled this delivery?**

First one up! I didn't think I would be able to do it actually, I didn't think it would work! And it did! Surprised everybody, I think!

And he just blocked it?

Oh yeah, at the last minute, you know, he blocked it. But he was surprised, he didn't expect it. And I didn't really, I was very doubtful it would work.

34:00 **And so what happened with school?**

With school, see I left, like I said previously, just before I was fourteen. Actually, really thirteen, because my birthday was in May and we left for Christmas holidays, six weeks holidays and then there was an outbreak of polio, infantile paralysis and the school was closed

34:30 until, May or sometime. I just forget the time now. I went to school for three weeks, and it was drought time, and I thought, "What's the good?" you know, so I left school just before I was fourteen in the middle of a drought and that was all the schooling I had actually. But I didn't, I wish they would have

35:00 had more schooling, you know, when I joined the army, I wished I would have had more schooling in life but I managed without it. I can write a good letter if I wanted to. Could add up my money and my money. See that I didn't get robbed of change and kind of –

35:30 **And so you left school – what did you go on to do?**

That's when I worked at home on the farm, the mixed farm, for a few years, and there was drought practically all the time, on and off, and I went down to Kyogle and worked down there, then back on to Fassifern

36:00 before I came here and then joined the army. 1939. And then I still worked, I was only in militia, and I worked in between the training camps.

Describe your kind of experience with the Depression?

Oh well they weren't good experiences. After the 1920s being such good years,

36:30 everything green. Little floods in January, not big floods. And then the Depression come, the cattle were hungry and we had to ration out the food to the cattle. Stray cattle used to come into the property because the grass was a bit sweeter. This country – all this open country out here – timbered country, people were putting their cattle out here and shepherding them to keep them alive.

37:00 Cleaning out the water holes if they get bogged, in the water holes and clean out the water holes and pull them out of the bogs and some of them would get that weak, you'd have to destroy them and burn them. And without irrigation, the crops weren't always successful but we always, it was amazing if you saw the way it was managed. We were never short of food.

37:30 But some people were, there was hungry people. The swagmen on the roads. Walking along the roads, they had to go to Beenleigh to get the rations, from Brisbane to Beenleigh to get rations; the idea was to keep them out of towns. Then they they'd have a rest and if there were rain they'd get under bridges or other places to camp, and then they'd wander up the side roads where we were,

38:00 on the Daisy Hill Road, they'd wander up and get a meal.

What did you think of the swagmen?

Oh mostly the swagmen were quite respectable, they were dressed, poorly dressed, looked sad looking. But basically they were mostly pretty honest fellows, I though, some of them were First World War veterans, and there was even

38:30 professional people walking on the roads and that's why my father said, "You know, when the professional people can't get work what's the good of you being educated, me educating you?" They were sad times the thirties, people today can't realise there were families, and the father would be out of the work, four, five kiddies and not much feed on the tucker [food] table.

39:00 Even came out into the bush, here beside the water holes, building hovels, we used to call them, out of anything they can get from the old galvanised iron or bitumen drums. Bitumen roads, that had been built, a lot of bitumen drums, they flattened those out and make walls out of them. White ants on the floors of their tents and

39:30 children never had many, what should I say, getting stuck for words, choice of clothes to wear. Scantily clothed.

Tape 2

00:37 **Sorry I know you outlined it before a little bit for Kiernan [interviewer], but can you describe to me the motivations behind that decision to enlist?**

Well, the motivation was I could see there was going to be a war, I had been reading the papers there, the war would be imminent.

01:00 And I didn't want Australia to declare war and not be prepared. I was in that age group where I thought I should have some training, background training, and that was principally why, but then the company of other young men, that was another thing, the mateship, and then the army life, and I enjoyed that, I had no regrets, I was very happy in all those training periods, and when we got to New Guinea,

01:30 that's when the trauma started. The real, real war.

Can you tell me about some of the things you were reading in the paper at the time?

There was Hitler in Europe and invading Poland, not Poland, the other place there, before Poland. He took some land and the way they were arming. Churchill reported, we would hear Churchill [English Prime Minister], we used to have a wireless set with headphones, and hear Churchill used to speak,

02:00 Sunday afternoon, I think it was, anyway, some of the speeches he made; they were very, very stirring. And I thought this man knows what he's on about, you know. I was proved right. It all did happen. I remember him saying it was only three hours flying time to the capital city of this nation, he said, you know. We're not trained, we're not prepared. That sort influenced me that something was going to happen.

Did you feel much of an allegiance or I guess a need to protect, you know, the Empire, the British Empire?

02:30 Oh well, yes, but, see Japan was, my grandfather used to say, “Japan’s a danger here.” And I thought, that’s why I never joined the AIF, I joined the Australian AMF [Australian Military Forces – Militia] you see, and that proved right too and I remember the old Smith’s Weekly newspaper, they had a cartoon there.

03:00 And there was two people in bed, and the man, the gentleman is looking for his trousers to put on, to dress himself, and he says, “Where’s my trousers?” And the captain says, “I’ve sent down to the armoury to get a button riveted on!” – you know I thought this is why Australia will be a Japanese colony in fifty years time. And that to me, that struck a story, we’re not prepared, when we’re not sewing buttons any more.

03:30 **Right, are there any other ways that at the time you were feeling that the country wasn’t prepared or that there was..?**

I don’t know, it was that long ago now, but, well, there didn’t seem to be any soldiers about. There didn’t seem to be a proportion of uniformed people about at all. It wasn’t much in the newspapers,

04:00 you didn’t read much about our own defence forces in the papers, not that I can recall anyway, until we went in on our first camp and most of the soldiers were only recruits then I suppose. Rookies would be a word. We had dysentery, apparently the meat was stale and we all had dysentery. We had to bring in the brandy bottles back round next morning, whisky; it was whisky, to cure us.

04:30 Well, it was very effective too.

What were your expectations of army life before you went in?

Oh, I thought it would have been tougher actually, the training periods, I thought it would have been tougher. You’d read in the newspapers they were training hard, making them very fit but to me that was a joke because I was very fit anyway, because I had been working hard.

05:00 And to me, it was a – I liked it, to be quite honest, I liked it. The food was good, the clothing was good, you could leave and go to Brisbane, hop on the train and go to Brisbane or get a taxi back; sometimes we’d club together, five of us and get a taxi back again. The girls were good and you know – we –that was a good life I thought. For a time, you know, after three months well, we would move on.

05:30 **Can you walk me through the process of enlisting, how did you do it, where did you go?**

Well, what happened, they started a platoon at Beenleigh. And I’m not just sure how it started, I didn’t go on my own anyway, there was three or four of us round the district and we had a vehicle and we went over there and enlisted in Beenleigh. Doctor McGregor was there, we had a medical examination and we signed the paper and we were in the CMF [Citizen Military Forces]. It was as simple as that, then you had to train

06:00 and sleep armed, and to drill and that. We had only done that a couple of times and then we were into our first camp at Enoggera then.

Can you walk me through a typical day of training at Beenleigh?

I used to be just at night training, 8 till 10 o’clock at night and then we’d walk down to – march down to the Yatala pie shop, over the river, do you know where that is, you know, and they were good pies, have a pie and march back again.

06:30 No, that was, that was fun I suppose. Some people seemed to think it hurt; you know the boots and they’d get blisters and that kind of thing.

What were the general things that they were teaching you at the CMF?

Just drill, and the sloping arm, rifle work, that’s all we get at Beenleigh. But when we went to Brisbane, at the Enoggera, then we were – Vickers guns? –

07:00 Vickers guns and mortars. Although we did have training, that’s right, we had a rifle shooter on the Beenleigh rifle range, and it was the first time I had shot out of a .303 [rifle]. And bless my heart if I didn’t win the prize, five shilling prize, five shilling was quite a bit of money in those days. And then when we went to Brisbane, the Vickers machine guns, they’re the ones the water cools them and you sit behind them

07:30 and any guns, I used to love operating them. And then the mortars and then you had to wind the handle and level it up for the range, the range and fire. Non-explosive, but you used to fire. I got quite good marks on that too. I was very pleased with myself to be quite honest.

08:00 **Can you tell me about the first time you fired the .303 and you won the prize?**

The first time I fired, well you see my father had a .303, a Boer War rifle he had, he was in the rifle club as well and he was a good shot. And I always had a .22 and used to shoot the crows and got magpies, got a shilling a head and sixpence for the scrub magpies, and that was money too.

08:30 I was a bit practiced with .22 so to go on to the .303, I didn’t sort of, it didn’t excite me at all, it was just a matter of course.

And how do you fire a good shot? What sort of things do you need to do?

Ah well, you've got to line the tip of the foresight in the centre of the view of the backside and line onto the most central portion of the target. And you have a very steady finger; you slowly squeeze your finger, bang!

09:00 Bullseye!

Is there anything involved physically with the rest of your body between breaths?

Ah well yes, you've got to have your heels flat on the ground, and I've got a photo there when we rushed up to Redbank that day. Flat on the ground, keep yourself firm and steady and you gotta breathe right, you don't start puffing and blowing, you've got be, oh, very steady, calm and collected,

09:30 cool, calm and collected. And keep the – well – keep the rifle in very good condition too. Your barrel must be smooth and shiny and bolts slightly oiled and it tells you all that in the book.

So when you were at Beenleigh, just how much time were you spending in training?

Oh it was very little, it was just night training. I don't know if it was just was once a week I think it was, I'm not quite sure whether it was once a week or

10:00 once a month. Because we didn't do much there, there was only a couple of nights at the camp in Brisbane and then we were back between, when the war started, there wasn't much there at all. A bit of a waste of time I thought. Beenleigh was.

Well, tell me about when you went to Enoggera. What were the differences?

You lived it, you lived it then all day. It was first thing in the morning the bugle would blow and you were out of bed

10:30 and roll calls, and breakfast and you had to move, because you had – be clean and tidy – shaved and your bath had to be cleaned and your bank of folders, you know, everything had to be done, spick and span.

How much time did you have to do that?

Well, six o'clock we rallied, and we'd have a bit of time, breakfast, and I think 8 o'clock, then on parade. I think everything ready to march off.

11:00 **What sort of things would they feed you?**

Oh, rolled oats, there used to be all this porridge, and tea, sometimes we would have meat about three times a day, there was plenty of food as far as I was concerned.

And what were the main things they were training you in at Enoggera?

Oh they were the rifles, machines guns, drill work, mortars, Lewis guns.

11:30 **What does drill work entail?**

Oh it was marching, and sloping arms, and forming four-two deep and lining up eyes right, lining up and…saluting, you have to do the whole lot. Border arms, slope arms, fixed bayonets and –

Were you enjoying learning this?

Yep loved it, loved it.

Why were you, what sort of –

12:00 Because I could handle it, I suppose, I didn't have any difficulties. I never had blisters; I was in good health, very good health when I think of it, when I think back to those days, just thinking what you could do. You could go on leave and you'd get home at twelve o'clock and up fresh next morning at six, into the next day.

How did you feel about going into quite a regimental life?

12:30 Oh well regimental life, you know when everything's regimental – you've got to do everything just exactly right. Watch where you walk, you don't walk across the parade ground and you don't do this and you don't do that. Well, it can become a little bit stale I suppose, whereas when you get out into the active service, you're more of your own man, you know,

13:00 and you could have a… but well, I used to when I was a sniper anyway, I could go out for a walk and get in with the cooks, "Give me a sandwich, I'm going out for the day." and everyone was happy. You know, I was happy, and seeing new scenery and doing the right thing, too, I didn't just go walk idly away there was always a purpose to what I had done. Take someone else with me sometimes, get down on the creek and find some oysters, some coconuts or something. That was in Townsville, I'm talking about now.

13:30 **So how important do you think the discipline was that you were, I guess, that you adhered to initially?**

I think it was very good to have discipline, to learn discipline. To be able to take orders and give orders. Very important indeed and not accept any backchat. I think it's very…because you got to have orders so that everyone can be heard. When an officer is giving orders you've got to

14:00 be quiet so he can be heard. It's very important that he is heard, whether you agree with it or not, but you've got to have that respect.

I guess coming from a civilian kind of life, was it hard at all to get used to the army life?

Initially, but – first couple of weeks perhaps. I suppose it was the first couple of weeks but apart from that, once you got into routine, it just flowed.

14:30 You have to write a letter home, and it was very good: the postal service, I could write a letter, post it at Enoggera ten o'clock, my mother would have it nine o'clock next morning. Better than we got today. It was amazing, you know, to find time to scribble a letter, in between your regular routines.

15:00 **You mentioned that you went on leave when you could go on leave at Enoggera. Where could you go? What would you do?**

Brisbane, Brisbane. Pictures mostly. At the weekend, we had a trip, oh you would always get someone to go with you, nearly always, odd times I went on my own, but someone to go with you, sometimes there's three or four of us. But usually you managed to get five to come back on one taxi fare. We went up Lone Pine one Sunday,

15:30 I remember, I hadn't been there before. Used to play cricket with strangers there, we would all join in together, make a cricket team, two cricket teams or something like that. I really enjoyed that. And came back, and then went out to see the auntie on the tram and took my mate out to see her at Annerley. Old auntie had had one leg, great auntie actually. And get back

16:00 to camp before the midnight, 23:59.

What was Lone Pine like, at the time?

Oh, was a nice place to play cricket. And I remember going up the steep bank from the river, a lot of steps to get up there. And I don't remember that much about it any more, you know.

16:30 **But it wasn't, they didn't have the animal park thing there?**

I don't remember it then, that was back in 1939, 1940.

What sort of jobs did they give you when you were at Enoggera?

Well, jobs, it wasn't really jobs; it was sort of training with the group. We'd all done the same thing as a group. Orders were given and we would all do the same thing

17:00 and we would be instructed. No, oh, if you misbehaved yourself, you'd be peeling potatoes, instead of going of leave, you wouldn't be given leave, you'd be peeling potatoes up at the kitchen. Or on the wood heap, something of that nature. That would be a job in my book.

You mentioned before that you were guarding the Archerfield Aerodrome.

17:30 **Can you tell me about what you had to do there?**

Well, that was immediately after the outbreak of war. And we weren't very well trained those days, and it's just, you know, I felt a rookie really. We sort of had to guard the perimeter. There was an officer in charge, there was only about thirty of us. I doubt if there was thirty of us. Officer in charge, you know, that. And

18:00 I remember there used to be dumps of petrol, forty-four gallon drums, petrol. They used to – with the contractions of the heat and the cold –they used to boom a bit sometimes, you know, make a noise, and that, you used to be wondering if there was somebody interfering with the drums, you see. That was in my mind, I remember that, and

18:30 the – what I do remember mostly about Archerfield is being able to get close to the planes and see what they looked like, and see the planes landing and taking off. But the food with the air force fellows there, we dined with them and the company there was really good, they used to be really witty and to me, coming from the countryside I suppose,

19:00 getting amongst these fellows, I thought, "Gee, I'm on a higher plane now." I really felt somewhat a little bit important, well I was really a new chap to the game.

What sort of planes were at Archerfield then?

There were mostly Tiger Moths, there were Wirraways. I don't think there was any Wirraways there at that time, but they had Wirraways afterwards. Training centre it was. But I think some of these fellows

were more experienced pilots, when we used to have our

19:30 lunch and meals you'd hear the stories, you know, they were very, very interesting. Very interesting indeed. I enjoyed that little stay, only about a fortnight, I think.

And what did the actual guard duties involve?

Well we didn't do any during – or did we? I know we were on all through the night. But I think daylight hours there may have only been one or two on, during the day. And that would be patrolling up along

20:00 the boundary fence. I know there used to be an audience there for Saturdays and Sundays that people, the public used to come right up to the fence, and we used to talk, we'd be inside and they'd be outside, and there would be a lot of chatter, a lot of questions.

What were they hoping to see?

They were seeing the planes land, seeing taking off and landing. I think you could see what kind of planes was there and just for, nothing else to do, a lot of people never

20:30 had motorcars back in those days, and ride bikes, or walk down to the aerodrome.

You mentioned before when you were at school that it was exciting for a plane to fly over?

Yes, that's right, it was too.

Can tell you tell me about this excitement, did it continue on to when you were….?

Well, the teacher would allow us, you'd hear the plane coming, the teacher would allow us to go out of school, and because by the time we go out then had a look, there was a lot of trees around

21:00 the plane would probably be gone. Sometimes we used to see it. It was very rare, it wasn't very often.

Did you still have an intense sort of interest, in planes while you were guarding Archerfield?

Oh yes, I, because we didn't really see that many then. There used to be the flying boat, used to cross here, the Sunderland flying boat, used to cross here, from Brisbane to Sydney, and I always liked that plane.

21:30 And when I flew in one myself when I went back to Bougainville, I was in a Sunderland and that was, you know, a trip to remember too. We had go to the back in the tail, it couldn't go over the mountains in New Guinea, we had to go back in the tail to get the nose up to get over the mountains. But I always felt safe in the Sunderland, I only rode twice in them but somehow I felt relaxed and safe in a Sunderland.

22:00 **You mentioned that just before you started the guard duty at Archerfield, the war had been declared. Can you tell me your memories at hearing the declaration of war?**

Well, I just don't remember too much about that. It was pretty imminent just a week or two before I think. And I know I had some scrub cut down here I was going to plant some bananas,

22:30 it was the first year I was back here and the first thing I thought, "Gee, I must burn that scrub." and I burnt the scrub and I know I planted the bananas and pineapples and paw paws, you know straight away in that period between Archerfield and Christmas time. I remember that, it was a rush to get that done. And whether I had thought in my mind that, really, I'm not going to water them for a while anyway…

23:00 but I got the first crop off though, days before I did go away. But I, as far as the actual declaration, I don't remember too much on that. Just happened.

And so when were you called up to go away for more training?

Well after Christmas

23:30 there was the training camps, that's three months and then I was back here working again. That was Pearl Harbor, that's when we were called up on full time business, now fella, it's the real war, it's real. And the first, we were at, ah near Geebung,

24:00 Chermside and when I went in, we had a big tree cut off, all forty feet of it, a big old white tree and a ladder strung up to it and we had to go out there to watch out for Moreton Bay, to see if there was any enemy ships coming in. And I was up there during Christmas dinner time, I know that. 1941. That's where I was. And then

24:30 I don't know why, they gave me a job to go up to, battalion headquarters to build this shed. They wanted a bush shed. Why they got me I don't know but anyway there was another fellow there from pioneer platoon and we built this shed. I think it was a rec [recreation] hut, something like that. Brown sapling it was. And we got on together very well together, I enjoyed that. But then immediately, that wasn't long,

25:00 a week or so, and then immediately after that, I go up to the battalion headquarters, they want, they're going to train soldiers on explosives and I said, "No not for me." Yes, the Japanese were going to blow up the bridges and blow up the railway lines and I don't know what, they'd reckon we'd have to do.

25:30 And I thought this was, you know, not the right thing to do and I didn't want to do it. But anyhow, wasn't there to say no, you do as you're told, we had gelignite, fuses, set the charges, went through the whole drill. That's where I learnt my first explosives experience. And where we were to put them and we had the gun cotton and I thought,

26:00 "How amazing!" – you cut through the railway line like it was cheese. Just take the piece right out of it and then you take that part of the railway away. Then the train comes along and becomes derailed. And where there were the most sensitive positions to put these explosives, on the bends and near the bridges and where they'd do the most harm. Bit frightening because I thought this is not going to happen here, I didn't think it would happen here and it didn't. It was more or less a waste of time but I was going

26:30 to be one of the bunnies that was going to blow up after all this nice work had been done. And we blew up the pieces because we think the Japs would be here.

What was the general feeling around, I guess, Brisbane, at that time about the Japanese?

A lot of people left Brisbane, quite a lot of wives, even some of the men had left their work, even some of the officers, their wives had left. Went inland towns, the desert, Toowoomba, Stanthorpe.

27:00 It was amazing the people who left. And I thought that was strange too. I didn't think we were in any imminent danger.

Why not?

But a lot of people did. Instinct I suppose. They're so far away. Look at the distance they have to come. And then I remember one night about three o'clock in the morning. That was total darkness. We were called out. Pitch black,

27:30 it was. We had to get going, it was sort of, everyone was panicking, I don't know, and blokes were putting their right boot on their left foot, and all this and get along the road and we marched down to Enoggera, no, not Enoggera, Nudgee, and the swamps, the tea tree swamps there. Our munitions trucks they were bogged, they were still back at camp and we were out there without any ammunition, supposed to be Japanese aircraft carrier out to sea and they were going to be bombed and oh, it was just a lot of, oh

28:00 I couldn't believe it, you know. Couldn't believe it.

And were you still a good shot at the time?

Oh yeah.

And how did that work into your training, did people recognise this?

Oh, well, that's when somewhere around that time there, I was called back,

28:30 we were on a manoeuvre, and now I had to report at the double somewhere, down to the truck, "Shailer, Shailer!" they're yelling out. I wonder whatever was wrong? And everyone had looked through the records and found that he was a good shot, and rushed it up to Redbank, army rifle range; we had a shoot off there. I think I was the best shot there that day.

29:00 And you know I wasn't feeling at a hundred per cent, but there's a photo of it there and I know that the bag, I didn't even have time to pack my pack properly. You know, and the bag's a bit tight and not packed as it should have been and I've got the, I'm using that to rest my rifle rest. To hit the bullseye.

Can you explain how that works, tell me?

Well you just lie your pack on the ground, on the, and you put, and you lie behind it, and have the rifle

29:30 resting on the pack.

Is there a special way that you should pack the pack for it to work?

No, as long as you're comfortable and then have your heels flat on the ground. Your feet spread apart and you lie oblique to the target and both heels flat on the ground. Get yourself firm.

Is that while you're lying down, with your heels?

Flat on the ground.

Oh? Is that a hard thing to do?

Oh not when you, oh might be initially, I think you get used to it,

30:00 once you find out the advantage of it. You do it automatically, yeah.

What's the advantage of it?

Oh you're firm, you're body's firm. You're not limp. Everything has got to be firm. Not uptight, but not loose either. If you're loose, you're not firm when the rifle fires the shot, the .303. You'll feel it, can get hurt.

When you're in the, I mean, the field, would you use your packs in this way?

Oh no, no no. That's when you're on the range.

30:30 If you're in the field, and you're shooting at the enemy, well you like to get behind something anyway, don't you? Find a log or something or rather. Normally when you're at the range, you normally don't have anything. Some of the big rifle shoots later where I was involved, there was nothing at all; you just had your elbow on the ground. And that's the way you're really supposed to be, that day, we used the packs. One in: all in.

And what was the result or the outcome

31:00 **of you, sort of, being one of the best shots, or being the best shot at the rifle ranges that day?**

Well, I got a special rifle. A specialist sniper's rifle. I got telescopic sights and I had a compass. I had my own watch and well it wasn't until we got to Townsville that I got really into the sniping business. I remember when we moved

31:30 to Caloundra, I was in the advance guard, and we went up there, and I though I'm going to get a feed. We camped on the ground and we'd only had a bit of cold tea, and I knew some people not far from where we'd camped. And I'd been at a fishing weekend at Caloundra, and a fellow

32:00 that went past said that was Maisie's home there, so I knew where Maisie's home was. So I thought I'll go up there and I'll get a feed, you know. And there I was, everyone had been on cold stuff, anyway I went up there quickly but I missed out, they didn't invite me to tea but he said, and he'd been a World War I veteran, and knew my mother and father well, same age, and what do I do? I said, "I'm a good shot."

32:30 "So you ought to be." that was just natural. I said, "Why?" "Well, your father, he used to be in the rifle range, he was a good shot, you ought to be too." That was nothing; he didn't give me any credit at all!

Did he tell you any stories about World War I?

No he didn't.

Do you wish that he had?

I don't think he had too many stories to tell actually, I don't know, he never, I don't think he was in any trouble, wasn't wounded at all or anything like that.

33:00 I don't really know.

How long were you at Caloundra for?

I was in Caloundra until – oh well about a month, five weeks.

And what sort of things were you doing there?

Oh, defensive, barbed wire, entanglements along the beaches, patrolling and things of that nature.

And so when did you move up to Townsville?

That was in May. Coral Sea Battle.

33:30 That was over there, imminent, they knew that was coming. They'd tell us we'd be in action in three weeks. I never knew they'd had intelligence, I would think now in hindsight they had intelligence that something was going to happen. We were rushed to Townsville– fifteen battalions – in suburban carriages. Well, we took four days to get there. Landed and detrained in the dark

34:00 amongst the spear grass at Stuart station, near the jail. We were camping on the ground for weeks afterwards. They gave us leather leggings for the spear grass, used to get in the legs, used to get ulcer sores. And this was stuff that – and that's when I came into being as a sniper. Colonel Amies gave me freedom of the battalion area.

Tell me what you do as a sniper?

Well

34:30 we used to have a bit of practice on the range, I suppose to keep our eye in but then the position, see when Colonel Amies gave me freedom, I could go all around the battalion and any company, and pick out which were the best positions to settle down, which way the enemy may come. Where I could have the most effective position.

35:00 To shoot the enemy. To engage the enemy I suppose is a better word.

How were you feeling about being made a sniper?

Didn't worry me, I was a little bit proud I suppose, but I didn't I didn't think I was super by any means, still one of the boys.

What sort of freedoms did you have, that you were mentioning before?

Oh I think that was, yeah, that was a plus,

35:30 definitely a plus. And that I could go out, I'd have a day, I'd go down to the cooks, I'd always got on well with the cooks. They'd give us a couple of sandwiches and then I'm going out for the day. And no one seemed to care, you know. I was virtually my own boss a lot of time, incredible it was. And these little courses that came up, in two days, these were the driving courses and this was all in between, I was fully occupied and really enjoying life. I felt I was doing something useful,

36:00 I didn't feel I was ineffective, I felt confidence in myself, it gave me confidence, especially learning pidgin English and that was so useful afterwards, and same with the driving the truck.

How did you learn pidgin English?

One of the planters came from, was sent back from New Guinea because we were doing the jungle training. They'd found out, you know, that you must have some experience in jungle training.

36:30 And that was part of the jungle training. There was a group of us selected for that too, and I enjoyed that, it was marvellous. And I found out afterwards, marvellous, how you can converse with the natives over there. And they were so thrilled when you talked to them in their own language, you know. Tunani [good day], this was a word you'd say. Oh, you know, oh they'd open up their hearts to you straight away. Marvellous it was.

37:00 **How did they go about teaching it to you? How did they structure the lessons?**

They'd tell you in stories, they'd tell you a story and then they'd relate that in pidgin English.

What kind of stories?

Well, one was like this. The fellow, they had a piano box, and the native couldn't describe this sort of piano box, you know, couldn't describe piano,

37:30 that's right, he couldn't get the word piano, and he's trying to make the planter converse with him, talk about this piano. And he said, "Fella, him come along box, and fight him teeth and he cry out loud!" And they couldn't – that meant the piano come along in the big box, and you play it – 'you fight him teeth', 'you fight him teeth' the right notes, 'him cry out loud'.

38:00 That's how he described the piano. And then this other thing, we'd tell him to saw off the limb on the tree, prune the tree, and so he takes the saw up and he sits on the limb on the outside and saws it on this side. Of course the limb breaks and down comes the saw, native and all. See? And this – like that, you know, they just sort of, they couldn't get things related?

And so how would they then bring the language into this?

38:30 How would they bring the language in? Well, see it's a case of necessity. And you'd be signing, and sign language and you'd get a few words in and gradually you get to understand each other. But some of them down on the coast, they'd be pretty proficient in pidgin English. But once, the further you got inland, well then, the less they understood it. And I could tell you

39:00 later with that being the last big patrol, the four day patrol in New Guinea. Well the king, he couldn't speak of a word of pidgin English. Couldn't even speak a word of pidgin. And the difficulties you'd have trying to get him to understand –

How much pidgin do you remember?

I remember, I remember a bit of it. When the necessity arises, it seems to come to you, you know.

39:30 But I used to – that's another job I had too then – they'd used to have these native gangs, working gangs and you'd have to go out with them, supervise them for the day and the story used to circulate – this fellow with the glass eye, one of the planters had a glass eye and he put the eye – take the eye out and put it on the post and tell them, "Him looking on you all time."

40:00 He'd go away for the day, and they'd keep working because they'd think that the eye could still see. Things like that.

Tape 3

00:40 **So just can you go through that story again about the Bren guns, when did you see them?**

Well, we were up near the headland, at Caloundra, and we were just looking out to sea, with an officer and myself. There were a couple of others there, but, he said, “Oh, Bren guns are on that ship.”

01:00 and I said, “How’s that, how’d you know that?” “Oh.” he said, “The boats been diverted from Singapore to here.” anyhow, so far so good. In the middle of the night, called out, “The Bren guns have arrived!” Oh they arrived in cases, still packed in grease, we were cleaning the grease out of the parts and still putting the guns together through the night in the dark, you know.

01:30 **What do they look like when they’re packed in grease?**

Oh, well it’s all gummy you know the colour of grease and, packaged and wrapped. I don’t remember too much more about it, in the middle of the night, half asleep I suppose we were. It was quite excitement then, I don’t know when we went firing them, I just can’t remember that, but we must have had some practice.

02:00 But there was a shortage of ammunition: they weren’t allowing us to use a lot of ammunition at that time. I know as a sniper I was given so many rounds and never had all the ammunition we wanted. But the Brens were very good. I loved the Bren gun, you could fire one round or you could fire a burst, very accurate and they never seemed to let you down. If they ran hot you could put another barrel on, change barrel. They sure ran hot too.

02:30 **Was it a relief to …**

Oh yeah, it felt better because old Lewis guns they were World War I, and they were becoming you know, used to rattle and the Vickers guns, you had to carry water with them to keep them cool and then they used to steam to give the position away.

That can’t have been good. We were just talking before about jungle training. I guess can you walk me through some of the main things they took you through in jungle training?

03:00 Well, I remember that fairly clearly the – shifting up from Blue Water Creek, between Townsville and Ingham, uh, going up to Mount Spec and the Paluma Ranges, because uh, that was the first time I think that I was forward scout,

03:30 and I was told that I was leading the whole brigade on this exercise and I know I also was told that we could be ambushed any time and I was to take all precautions in that we got there safely, to me this was very, very real. And naturally I didn’t walk the full marching pace, and they said I should have been moving faster, but

04:00 what would you do, you’re going to move fast and get ambushed, or are you going to take it steady and be not ambushed? Anyhow, I didn’t know a lot of – I felt a lot of reliability there in doing that. Anyhow we, I think we went when we got to the range we went up in trucks.

04:30 The road had been built for the relief workers during the Depression, and we went up in trucks because we knew there wasn’t a lot of room in the back of the truck, there was only inches off the solid rock, where it had been cut out. I also remember walking up the range, so that must have been another exercise, we were doing night training as well so, I know in amongst all this jungle right up in the aspect there was houses, these houses built and I said, “How odd to have these houses.”

05:00 and then the first night in the jungle, it was so dark you couldn’t see that hand in front of you and these palm trees there, and it was came rain and we’re half wet and I cut lot of palm leaves off and made a bit of a shelter for myself so I didn’t get really wet. Some of the fellows got wet. And we lived in that jungle there, training and compass bearings and night and day. We’d done quite a lot of night work.

05:30 And they had supplies that came up by donkey and mules, and they found it so hard we’d hear them they’d be exhausted, and, they’d were beyond treatment, they used to shoot them at night, we used to hear them shoot these animals with the .303s at night, dreadfully cruel. And I also remember, we were doing this compass bearing at night, but I’d had a little bit of practice with the compass

06:00 and I had this section and we had to – we were given this exercise – I just forget the distances now but, I know it was, oh, two or three hundred yards or something like that and through the jungle, and there’d be vines and sticks and rubbish, and so many paces, I worked out the distance in paces and I got the fella behind me to count the paces while I held the compass and the bearing and then each man held his

06:30 bayonet scabbard to the fellow in front so no one would get lost and we’d keep contact. And uh, anyhow, when we got to the – a reliable man behind me, he’s still living as a matter of fact – ninety years of age, Bill Mackett and, and I had him counting, and he used to give me the nod, when the measure was up, the distance was up, now I thought, we turn left, direct turn left

07:00 so many paces we will be on the track. And I couldn’t believe it, when I walked those three paces whatever it was, we were on the track, everything was exact! All behind, they were all growling, “We’re lost! We’re lost! We’ll never get out of it, never get out of it.” and I couldn’t believe it. We were spot on, you know. That was a night to remember and we still talk about that, when we met. “I remember that!”

he said, “I remember that!” And that was some of our gunner training.

07:30 **What was it like hearing the men behind you growling about getting lost?**

Oh well, you know, at that stage I was pretty confident, I didn’t hold their point of view, that was the point there, I knew I wasn’t completely lost, but I never thought that I’d be sort of right on it, I’d be so accurate because the compass bearing at night, but it was so dark the compass stood out so clear, the bearing I could see it so clear, I concentrated on that

08:00 and I left the other fellow to count the distance and he’d done his right, exactly right too.

In that sort of position is it hard to maintain your self confidence when other people might not be…?

Oh it can be, yes, it can be, but I knew that they was thinking was wrong, I concentrated on what I was doing, let them, that chap, let them carry on, they’re happy doing that, let them

08:30 when you get there you’re proven right in the finish, they’re all quiet then, I was right they were wrong, it was just simply sticking to the plan that we were supposed to do.

And how long did you spend in camp in the jungle?

Oh, more than I could tell you, it’d be three weeks I think. I’m not too sure, because that’s when

09:00 that course came around for pidgin English, when we were there, and I sort of didn’t finish it with the others, I was sort of went through, we did some of it there and we did some it at Blue Water Creek and I think if my memory serves me right, I went back a week or so, I think it was just a couple of weeks, I’m not too sure on it now, but I know we’d done our exams at Blue Water Creek, I know that.

09:30 And then the heavy rains come and the camp was flooded out, Blue Water Creek, and from up in the jungle we come back and the tracks were bogged, and we had to go right down on the high bank of the creek, all the dramas. Snicking big army trucks out on the roadway with a hundred men on the back, it were marvellous, just pull them through the bog to the axles.

How tough…

It was all good training you know, for New Guinea.

Yeah I can imagine.

10:00 **How sort of, toughened up were you feeling after those three weeks in the jungle?**

Oh I didn’t feel any difference really. A bit tired from lack of sleep, that was the main thing, tiredness and the labour of doing that course, wouldn’t have affected me quite as much as some of the others, some of the other fellows who were out marching while I was listening to lectures.

10:30 **How do you deal with the lack of sleep in that situation?**

Oh well you just carry on, carry on. I think you get used to it, you get used to no sleep, because when we were in New Guinea, it was nothing to go without sleep for a night, it was just, said thing. Two nights I remember going without sleep for two nights.

11:00 And then eventually I went to sleep for about five to ten minutes, and you wake up with a jerk and think you’ve been sleeping for hours. Otherwise, New Guinea, was very, very tough.

When you think about your jungle training now retrospectively and compare it with your time in New Guinea, how well prepared were you?

Oh it made a difference, not quite so much to myself,

11:30 because I’d been in the country here and we’d had a few pieces of scrub around the place, and these chaps in the unit from round Beaudesert and Canungra in the scrub country, rainforest country, and they knew all about it, you couldn’t teach them anything about it, and that was one big plus we had, we had some fellows who were mature, and they understood it and they could bring the other fellows into line, you had to watch for these Gympie trees, it was a stinging tree, terrible

12:00 and they’d point that out and say, “Don’t go near that tree.” and different features about the jungle, different water and so on.

What other sorts of, I guess, natural features did they teach you about the jungle or the stars?

Oh the stars, that’s a good one. That’s at Townsville, there was the sniping and the stars. We had an officer there, he used to call everybody Jack, and they said,

12:30 “Where’s north Jack? Where’s north Jack?” “See?” And I guess, the Southern Cross and the stars, he says, “You put yer hand across – you span your hand across – and 25 degrees over north, hand from the stars, north’s up here.” “How’d you know that? How’d you know that?” “Well it’s just practical isn’t it?”

How does it work? Can you tell me?

Well you, say you're on this, a star, Southern Cross, you know where that is, what bearing that is,

13:00 and you go 25 degrees and that's so much more to your bearing, and you go around and you get to the north. From there to there, used to count as 25 degrees. Used to be in those times anyway. They knew the bearing of where that star is, you knew the bearing from that you didn't need to have a compass. You could tell from the stars.

Wow.

13:30 I learnt that at Townsville. Probably on this exercise. They're very handy but when the cloud is out it's a different story. And in the jungle you can't see, you got to be in the open to see the stars. Then in New Guinea I don't think we used the stars, I don't remember using stars in New Guinea. Did at Townsville though.

Then how did training finish up?

14:00 Well, we finished up at Christmas. And then I came immediately after that, I came home on leave, to Brisbane, I don't know how many days it was, while I was on leave that's when the battalion, brigade embarked, 29th Brigade shipped to Milne Bay.

14:30 And then I went over, when I came back from leave, I was surprised everyone was gone, except a couple of us, a few of us on leave, then we went on the next boat I'd say, that was January '43.

When you were on leave at that time, what was the feeling like in Australia?

Strange you ask that, because when I went home

15:00 and went to bed at night the rain falling on the galvanised iron roof and I'm dry in bed, you know? It really felt cosy, that was one of the main things at home and then the dog came to meet me, you know, I hadn't been home for so long the dog came to meet me, knew me, that was, that was a good part. I don't remember much about that leave; it wasn't very long, matter of days.

15:30 Long train trip from Townsville to Brisbane, you know, it was a long trip down and a long trip home.

And what was the Duntroon like that you travelled to New Guinea on?

That was lovely, a passenger ship, 10,000 tons and there was plenty of room on it. I was a tourist on the cabin actually, and look out the porthole and I used

16:00 to like to go out on the deck and see the blue water and purple coloured water and the flying fish coming out, and the corvette zigzagging in front for submarines and it was quite a nice trip, I remember Cairns, we went up the coast from Townsville to Cairns during the day,

16:30 and it was just getting dark and there was a padre on the rail on deck and we were both there together, I don't know if there was anyone else there, and he's says "That's Cairns out there, the last we'll see of Australia." I thought, "Goodness me, strange sort of feeling."

Can you tell me what sort of feeling?

Oh well I don't know, just, "Australia. I'm leaving Australia. I'm going to be lonely after I leave Australia." something similar. I don't know what the feeling would be. I always sort of got that picture in my mind,

17:00 the ranges at Cairns – we're going out on the Duntroon to Milne Bay.

Was it a significant realisation for you?

Well I think it was, and see then the fellow I shared the cabin with, he sort of had a premonition that he wasn't going to come back and I think that might have sort of made it sink into my mind a bit more serious because he didn't come back. There was three fellows

17:30 that sort of said they didn't expect to be coming back. And it all happened, all three of them.

What did the man in your cabin say to you about not coming back?

He didn't say, he just didn't think he'd be back. Just like that. Of course you don't elaborate on those sorts of things when they start talking like that, you don't sort of, well I didn't like to carry it on any further: "Why do you think that, hmm?"

18:00 I used to think that I'd hate to be badly wounded, that was my, be killed was one thing, to be badly wounded and be a liability for the rest of your life, that used to bother me, even though when I was doing all these dangerous scouting jobs and like them.

What were you thinking about, I guess, possibly facing death on that trip? Did you think about that?

When was that, not on the boat?

18:30 **I guess as you were heading into conflict and that sort of thing.**

Well, I don't know, don't let that dwell on my mind, I always liked to think I wasn't a coward, I had courage, I was in good physical condition and I'd be a real man, and that's what I was brought up to by my father and grandfather, your grandfather's, "You've got to be a man! You've got to be a real man!" you know,

19:00 I thought I couldn't let them down; I've got to be a man too. You don't let those things undermine your confidence.

How do you control something like fear?

I don't know. How you control it? Don't know if I can tell you here. How you control it? I know in the big air raids in Milne Bay and I'll get to that later,

19:30 we'll get onto air raids in Milne Bay, I can tell you something a bit graphic there in regards to being frightened. You get frightened, you don't know when you're going to get frightened, but you do get frightened. I don't think there's any question about that, but it's how you conduct yourself during those periods and you have to set an example to those men you're leading, you don't, not going to

20:00 get them to follow you if you let them see you're frightened and unable to carry on, that's the worst thing you can do, I suppose that's one of the reasons, you've got to set an example and prove yourself to be a real man.

Can you tell me about when you first arrived at Milne Bay and what you saw?

Well the first at Milne Bay, about twenty-one.

20:30 We get there about lunchtime, we saw, next air raids coming, and the people on the wharf there, Gili Gili wharf, and a sunken boat there that was showing on it's side, "Oh hurry up and get off." and of course, everyone went on the one side of the ship and it tilted, and down we went, and across over the boat onto the wharf, felt a bit better on the wharf

21:00 there was no aeroplanes coming, no sirens going, it was pretty quiet, loaded us on trucks, we went out to the battalion.

What was it like meeting up with the battalion?

Oh they were very happy, very happy. Oh there was going to be more air raids coming they reckoned but, we were in tents, we weren't too badly off. For a while and then,

21:30 there was a air raid, hit a direct hit on one of the tents and killed six fellows. And then we moved right down right onto the water at Milne Bay near the flying boat base. We're in a nice – Indians built it – sort of a home, pretty dark inside, but, quite big open room, quite comfortable and dry and quiet and even had – used to call it a

22:00 WC [water closet], walked out over on the water, on the jetty, little house and come back again we didn't have any worry about toilets. And um, I also remember the air force, they had Catalinas, four young fellows came down to us, they were going out that night, nice blue uniforms, 18 or 19 years of age, and they went out and they never came back.

22:30 I thought that was very, very sad, prime men, trained, young strong, educated and wiped out overnight. Or you never seen them any more anyway. And of course, I had to have an argument with a coconut too. I went out to get one down, get a coconut, mix my rations. Always loved coconut, of course it came down and hit me on the head,

23:00 knocked me onto the ground, blood everywhere, one of the fellows came out and he sees blood and he thought the Japs had got to me, see? He run back, he didn't come help me, he went back to get the others! Next thing there's five of them come out to rescue me you see. But I got on my feet, must have looked terrible though, still got bit of a scar and blood all over my hands and uh went to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post].

23:30 Then they get the doctor. Oh they thought I was in big trouble, he's squeezing my head and couldn't – no movement, he thought I'd have a bad headache but it wasn't too bad, bit of a headache and had to come back and see him in the morning, anyway next morning wasn't too bad, couple of days off and that was it. But when I wore a hat it used to hurt a bit for a while.

Did you get to eat the coconut?

Don't think so.

24:00 I don't think so. I couldn't tell you that, the others might have brought it in, I didn't bring it in I know that, it was a big one too.

Would you often...

The leaf was bent over, you could just reach it, I'm pulling on it and it loosened the coconut, and it

wouldn't come you see and I just looked off, and I looked… and I never had time to shift you know. And it knocked me flat on the ground.

24:30 It was a good hit.

What were your main impressions of Milne Bay at this time?

Oh, impressions of Milne Bay, all the coconuts and the bog and the rain, of course and the air raids, um, pretty busy place, with the aircraft base, the Kittyhawks and Americans, very noisy. And then the big air raids,

25:00 when we were shifted to Bomb Alley, they used to call it. Number 3 airstrip, right beside the strip, the metallic strip, the metal strip. And there was a company headquarters and then a battery of ack-acks [anti-aircraft], 3.7s. Then there was my section, then there was a strip. On the other side of the strip there were petrol dumps you see. And the Japanese bombers

25:30 used to come right down up the bay, that's where they used to aim, aim for the strip and the dumps and the batteries. The first night we were there quite a few killed in that vicinity. The first night we were there we never had time to dig trenches, dig deep enough to accommodate us. Now sure enough the bombers come over, we could hear the little the rattle or the metal noise,

26:00 and someone said, 'That's the bomb bays opening." and we thought, "Oh, bomb bays." We didn't sort of believe that. And sure enough it was, we could hear the bombs coming down, 'swish, swash, swish, swash', right over us! "It can't miss us, it's curtains!" We were saying our last goodbyes more or less, it sounded like we would be blown to pieces. Anyhow, it was louder and louder,

26:30 and next thing BOOM. Just the other side of the strip, they'd missed. As soon as the first one there we thought, we're right now, but the others didn't but I thought we were right now because they kept going that way, in that direction. And then the petrol drums started exploding and the ack-acks blasting and the sky is, you've never seen anything like it with the exploding shells, exploding bombs, and the rattling

27:00 on the strip when the – immediately afterwards, we heard this noise was like a cannon fire, was like a shell coming. We thought it was odd. Cause we all rushed back to the bits of trenches we had and the first, I was the last one in, that was my principle, men's always first. Last man in and I went to jump in and they hadn't moved properly and gone far enough

27:30 and my boots landed on the shoulders of the fellow in front of me. And he starts yelling and but there was nothing else to do, I didn't realise, it was dark, you couldn't see properly. And this noise is coming and all of a sudden we realised what it was, it was a jeep coming down the metal strip. They'd been sent down by battalion headquarters. They thought we'd all been blown up, they expected the worse. Yeah we'd been blown up. But they missed us, missed us.

28:00 That was the worst night in New Guinea, but we had many nights. During the lunchtime, the middle of day they'd come over in swarms of planes, they used to take the bay over the Japanese air force, at times when there was a raid on. The Zeros used to come over with the bombers above them, protect the bombers and then when the bombers left, they'd come down to strafing over the coconut level. Ships, and some of the fellas they could see the Japanese pilot's teeth, they were down that low, he was laughing at them.

28:30 **What's the normal immediate routine that you – through when you first – can you walk me through what happens when you first get notice that there's an air raid coming?**

Well, the sirens go first. That's the first indication, the sirens go and it's not long after the sirens you can hear the plans coming, you know where they were coming from, they usually used to come up the bay.

And then what do you do?

Well then you get ready for the trenches.

29:00 I didn't, I was never in a hurry to get into a trench. Because you'd watch where the plane was and if it was over there, the right or the left, it wasn't coming overhead, well you didn't worry, you looked for the view, the scenery. The dog fights. You'd see the planes coming down, on fire. Some coming different ways, some would corkscrew down, some would tail, engine tail, engine. Some of them would come on a circle,

29:30 oh, scenery, you'd never seen anything like it. The smell and the noise. Good entertainment.

How do you reach that line when its, when you can comfortably watch, rather than be afraid that you're –?

As soon as – you'd hear the planes and the searchlights would be going too, that's something I forgot to say, they'd line up on a plane or two. You could tell but then there would be

30:00 more waves of planes coming through, you could judge by the sound, whether they were past you, or whether they were still coming. When another wave's coming, you get back into the trenches quickly

but I used to like to watch wherever I could.

How much protection did you the trenches offered you?

A lot of protection really. Almost a direct hit.

30:30 But shell fire, when the dirt's falling in on you, you know, you're not on real solid hard ground, and the shells are bursting and the shifting the earth on you, that's frightening. In fact that walking stick there, that's a shell went and marked that. That shell didn't miss us by very much.

What does a shell look like when it explodes?

Oh they just, I always just looked away,

31:00 you didn't see them explode, you've got your head down when they're close, when they explode in the air, a big flame, jagged flame.

Were there many losses due to air raids at this time?

Considering the amount of bombing, I didn't think there was such a great loss. Cause, I dunno whether we always knew how many were lost, but the

31:30 ah, the, we'd been in different places during the day, we were down in number two strip and we'd been on the number one strip, gurney field. Raid came on rather soundly, the Americans tried to intercept that day, as well as our own and P38 was right through the formation of the Japanese planes,

32:00 right through the middle of them he went. One of them, I don't know whether it was him or another one, Japanese planes landed, and when he come past the control tower he was slumped over his wheel. They thought he was more or less dead, but he landed the plane but he was dead when they got to him. We were there that day.

32:30 Right out in the 'drome [aerodrome]. There was another occasion when we were inland a bit, I forget the name of the place, near a little creek in the palm trees, and there was a big raid on, one of the biggest raids. Just having, just starting dinner, I didn't worry too much about the roads but you could see all these, they were well in the bay before sirens went off. You could see all like moss,

33:00 the Japanese bombers, well I thought, oh, I'd finished my dinner. And because it was a fair way off, I didn't finish my dinner, I sort of lost my appetite! And that raid went on for quite some time. Right near the last of it, some Japanese plane come across and he dropped the bomb, I'm watching this one because it was quite close, I could see it had a bomb; it could be almost in line but not quite. Anyhow he did drop a bomb,

33:30 only about two hundred yards off. And it was an American and a native in the trench. And the native seen the bomb coming, he thought it was going to fall in this fella, he jumped out and then the bomb fell in where he jumped out, he got away scot free and the other fella was, finished, blown to pieces. And that was only a hundred yards off. I'd seen it but didn't see the personnel.

34:00 You get all this afterwards. That was close enough.

Do any thoughts about fate or chance or luck come into your head?

Oh yeah, there's gotta be. Cause you know, though you'd watch the native he could see, well I used to watching too, he could see the bomb coming, you could see shells coming if you were in a certain line, and ah

34:30 a sense of escape. I was quick moving if frightened.

How much were you, did you know about some the major battles that had gone around Milne Bay earlier on?

Not a great lot, but we did have a bit of information from some of the fellas that had been there. Some of our men had gone. They had jumped battalions, they changed battalions.

35:00 And they went to Milne Bay in 61st Battalion. We got a bit of info from them. We knew a bit that went on. But not a great deal. Mostly it would have been from letters or if they'd been wounded or they'd got the news and it would come sort of back that way. But they, we were in Milne Bay

35:30 we fought that battle, the Battle of Milne Bay, as a manoeuvre. And there were all these dead Japanese bodies all round the place, it was a terrible stench, and even though they bought the fighter planes too, they were just flying over the coconuts, and the .5 shell cases, cartridge case , shell .5. And they were falling on us and they were hot and the noise! You've got to experience these things you know, the noise and the heat, you know, it was tremendous.

36:00 We went right down where the Japanese landed, where the oil and ammunitions, that'd been burnt, most been burnt, but there was still stack of ammunition there. That was for the Zero fighters, heaps of them, as big as this room here. All bullets and cartridges. There was another occasion when I went down to that ground with, when General McKay came up, and he went,

36:30 I was one of the fellas picked for guard of honour, to go down with General McKay. And he made some presentation, some of the natives there, they put on a dance and sort of things. I had an interesting time.

You mentioned before that there were still Japanese bodies there. Were they not buried?

No, not properly no. As a matter of fact, some of the fellows used to be getting the gold out of their teeth.

37:00 You know, that's stupid but that was, that happened.

What was going through your mind when you saw the bodies there?

I was glad I wasn't there. I suppose you'd think that how war – how terrible war is, you know. Think that human beings would come there and well, I suppose they never had time to bury the dead,

37:30 well, that happened every war zone I went to. The Japanese seemed to leave the dead where they fell.

Should the Australians…?

Everywhere I went they used to do it, I'd seen that many dead Japanese bodies, it doesn't make any different any more.

Should the Australians have buried the Japanese bodies?

Well how could they? Plenty of other things to do.

38:00 You just keep away from it. In certain instances they'd bulldoze them, they covered them over, they bulldozed them, and cover them over. You know, up near Lae there, freshly, not dead very long, sitting against a tree, and we thought that's another point, why he wasn't buried before it become fly blown, someone had

38:30 to come and retrieve it. Something with the Geneva Convention. Some story it was why it was left there, who's authority, who had authority to bury it. And we used to walk past it, fellas used to get sick. I thought that was very wrong. Anyway, that body was there for days. Same at Garet, when they were there for days, someone had to come and examine it

39:00 in order to get final approval.

When you saw Japanese bodies, did this make you feel differently towards the Japanese?

Oh, I dunno. I didn't feel a great deal of difference towards them. There were the things that they'd done and the natives told me that they'd done. I thought, well, you deserved it. That's one way, that's how I looked at it.

39:30 What were they doing here in the first place? I never had any sympathy for them. That's why. I think that's about all of Milne Bay.

We'll just change tapes….

Tape 4

00:42 **Tell us about that patrol in Milne Bay?**

One of the main patrols, one of the most interesting patrols I was included in was a patrol over the range, over the Stirling Range, to Topura,

01:00 where the Japanese were going to send another force in, when they landed in Milne Bay. But the air force, the Kittyhawks had sunk their barges, so therefore they wasn't able to make that landing. On the – it was three day patrol, we went right up to Topura, and I know

01:30 that there were a few coconuts there. They weren't really good ones either, a few nice trees. And we came back to the bottom of the range, on the second night. I know we were worried whether we would be able to get back over the range, and back to Milne Bay in the next day. We set off early and climbed and climbed and climbed. About 2 o'clock in the afternoon, I remember, the sergeant looked up, he says, "We got to go right up there."

02:00 And we thought, "Well, we didn't get to the top of the range." Anyway, we kept going, we got to the top and when we reached the top there was quite a level track, and there's moss and our boots all changed colour from walking in this moss. And we seemed to recover, I don't know if it was the height or what it was, just the thought that we had reached top, but we seemed to be refreshed.

02:30 And we quickened our step and got down the other side and some truck picked us up. And we did get

back; I think it was dark, almost dark when we got back to camp, exhausted, to find that the rest of the camp had moved. The company had moved. We had orders to embark, leaving Milne Bay to move up the coast. And here we were, as tired as could be. And went to a staging camp,

03:00 there was mud, oh, six inches deep. Mud everywhere. Then we had to – the next day we had to cart our gear down to practice, for the LCIs [Landing Craft Infantry] we went up a landing ship. Infantry. Our gear had to be all lined up along the beach for each ship to come in. It was all allocated. Then they decided, nah, we'd done it the wrong way, we had to

03:30 carry it all back again, back and up, back and up along the beach. By the time we embarked we were absolutely exhausted. Well, I was anyway. Days and days of action. That's our – in one way we were sort of glad – in another way we didn't know what we were going into when we were leaving Milne Bay.

04:00 I don't know. Oh there's another thing at Milne Bay too. Down at the end of the number three strip, they had to have the company headquarters – were to have a motorised connection, otherwise the jeep track, at least there was a creek there, I saw it on the maps. Now this creek had to be bridged. And the company commander come up and early one morning, because we used to lay in about some mornings after air raids. He's coming up early and the guard said,

04:30 "Oh here's the captain come, skipper's coming. What's on? Something's on." And he wanted to see me and we walked away so the others couldn't hear, he said, "I want a bridge built across this creek." He says, "Think you can do it?" I said, "What men have I got? What materials have I got?" He said, "Any men you like, any men." I said, "What's the seriousness about it? We've been here so long." He says, "The general's coming this afternoon, the general's coming at four o'clock and we must have transport to the company headquarters."

05:00 And he says, "I'd give you what men you want and you can have the material from battalion headquarters, the tools." he says. I picked them out, twenty-five fellows I picked out, I hand picked them. And the saws. And I judged which men was for the different jobs to do, and saws and wedges and axes. And we built that bridge, we had it done by half past two. And we had a bridge there that vehicles could drive over.

05:30 And that's by getting men who knew their job and willing to work. I told them, "When you finished the job the rest of the day's yours." And they really sweated it.

How did you design it?

Well it was just a simple, like the posts, was no strict measurements cause you had tape of course, and cut the trees accordingly for the posts, cut the round trees and then split the decking. Then put logs and we had plane wire.

06:00 And then put it on the plane, wired it and mortars it into place. It was soft timber of course. They really were. But twenty-five men working, they knew what they were doing, all of them.

Tell us about some of the life you had at Milne Bay? Like apart from the fighting, what would you do for entertainment?

Well that was very, very little because you'd always have guard duties at night. Plus the bombings, there were

06:30 odd picture shows [movie screenings] , not very much. Cause you see the air raids come in. And the trucks would, we had Negroes, American Negroes, they were driving trucks and graders. And the raids would come and they'd really put their foot to the floor. It was really dangerous to be around if there was an air raid on, along the roads.

07:00 Because the air raids wouldn't be raining, when the air raids were on. There wasn't much at all in Milne Bay. You'd be digging trenches, making roads, unloading ships, patrolling. There was always some activity going on. Of course there was rain, a lot of rain too, a lot of rain in Milne Bay. And it was nice, in the morning, when we go out in the morning,

07:30 first thing there the sun coming up, the sun would be just up. And it wasn't hot: the weather was quite cool. And of course during the day it was a sweat box. It was the best part of the day. Travelling along the tracks early in the morning.

When would the rain come in? What was that like?

Oh steamy and hot. A lot of fellows had skin infections and dermatitis

08:00 and tinea. A lot of skin infections. A lot, some of the natives had skin infections too. Ring worms and things of that nature. A few natives there, not too many, they'd go out on a party, sometimes we'd meet them. I'd say, "tunani" to them, and they'd all smile, someone who knows what we're talking about. They'd just repeat the word, "Tunani, tunani."

08:30 means good morning or good day.

What would you talk about with the other men?

When the mail would come, everyone would discuss each other's mail. There was no secrets, you know, we knew everybody's business, and all the family business, so it was you know, the friendship was really great there.

09:00 But you didn't move about at night time to talk. See ah, other places seem to go around at night visit each other in their tents but that didn't seem to happen in New Guinea, it would be so dark, and air raids. When you finished work you got into the camp or tent or wherever you were. Not fond memories at Milne Bay really.

09:30 And there's – we used to get a few fish, when a plane crashed into the cattle. There's a few cattle used to graze amongst the coconuts. They were damaged from the shrapnel, from the ack-ack guns falling on them and anyway, these Kittyhawks were landing and they hit these cattle. Someone said, "Ah well, we'll have fresh meat for tea [dinner] tonight."

10:00 and we did have fresh meat for tea! That's right, I remember another occasion we were on a working party, and air raid, the officer in charge, I think it was an officer, I think it might have a sergeant, but doesn't matter. We didn't disperse; we just marched along in threes. The first time it ever happened, I remember it ever happened, the shrapnel from anti-aircraft

10:30 was falling on us, and blood was coming and I'm holding my rifle over my shoulder, cause we took our rifles everywhere, over my shoulder so I didn't get hit by shrapnel. A few of them were hit, and they kept marching, not seriously hit, but enough for it to bleed. I think that's about…

So you kept marching, shouldn't you have been taking cover?

I thought, I would have done it if I'd have been in charge, I would have dispersed a bit.

11:00 But then still it wasn't bombs, it was only the shrapnel. But I suppose if you did take cover you wouldn't, might fall there too see?

What did you think of this officer's actions?

I think I would have stopped and dispersed. That's what I would have done but I thought it could have been a bit foolhardy, keeping out in the open. Because usually with shrapnel under the palm trees, you would've been protected a bit,

11:30 you know, you got close, close beside a coconut. You'd have been fairly safe from it

What was the logic behind it, do you think?

Oh I dunno. You'd have to ask him!

And how did you get along with the Americans? What did you think of them?

Oh well, we don't, ah, diplomatic relations, the Americans,

12:00 they weren't trained to the, ah, to the conditions that they were settled, you know, fighting in, I don't think. Not like we were. I felt we was, our training was much superior. And I was – there wasn't – very many Americans at Milne Bay until just before we left, and a few more came then. I was

12:30 speaking to an American captain, oh, we had quite a yarn, a matter of fact. Sort of, I was amazed; think he was a captain, and the questions he was asking me. You know, but he should have been telling me, instead of me telling him. But he was good, he was a gentlemen, he was after information and he was getting it. As far as I was concerned.

What kind of question was it?

All about the, what we done, where we'd been,

13:00 and what to look for, what to look out for. Sensible questions. I didn't, I enjoyed the talk with him. But I think you know, he was a captain, he should have been better informed. But they were very generous, the Americans were very generous. They'd give you food,

13:30 things like that. Even they, their stores, they never, we used to have to sign for everything we wanted out of the stores, pipes and stuff like that. They'd go and help themselves. We could, different instances, we could go and take it too if we wanted.

Why do you think they weren't as informed as the Australians?

Oh well, I suppose they hadn't been in the war that long had they? Australia had been in the war a lot longer than what the Americans had.

14:00 **Can you tell us about your CO [Commanding Officer], Colonel Amies?**

Colonel Amies, I had a wonderful respect for Colonel Amies. We seemed to have the same ideas on different things and first of all, when the snipering angle there, the early days, he gave me freedom of the battalion,

14:30 I thought that was something to be proud of. I never let him down, well hopefully I never let him down, didn't think I did. And meet him occasionally, and I remember we were playing cards as a pastime; we were playing cards, we playing poker. Threepence and sixpence were bets, and I used to do all right with poker for some reason or other. I never owed me any more. And he was coming; this was just after tea, just before dark at Townsville,

15:00 and he was coming around and well, he says, "Oh, the colonel's coming. We can't play this. Stop, stop." And I said, "Oh no, keep playing. He can only tell us to stop." And he's seen us and over he came and he's standing behind us and we never got up and saluted him we just went like we didn't know he was there, playing our cards and he said, "Don't make the stakes too high boys, will ya?" And he went off, that was that anyways.

15:30 A lot of other men would sort of tell you what to do or what you didn't have do to but he saw we were enjoying ourselves, not doing anybody any harm and we weren't making stakes too high and he was happy with us. And then afterwards, people would play poker without any fear of the colonel reprimanding them. There were several occasions, when inspection up further before we

16:00 went into Lae, he inspected us. There was only a few of us left. That was after the battle at Salamaua. He complimented me on my section, and gave me good praise and I enjoyed that. He was a man amongst men, he was very well respected. And then I met him of course

16:30 a few times after the war, when I was on the council, and I asked him why he selected me to go to the Australian School of Infantry. Oh, that was forty years afterwards must have been. And I sort up plucked up courage to ask him. Oh, didn't know if, thought he might not remember, anyway. He said, because, he said, "When I used to inspect the battalion you always had the best section."

17:00 And that simply that. We sort of had something between us. See eye to eye. I went to his funeral too. It was bit of a sad day. Became a brigadier later.

What was his decision-making like?

17:30 Ah decision-making, oh, it's all very well to talk on hindsight isn't it? I thought he was all right, as far as I was concerned anyway, any decisions he made where I was involved, I was happy with, put it that way. There may have been some of the bigger decisions. I don't know.

18:00 I know when I spoke to the brigadier after the war, not long after the war either. He was, he stood for the mayoralty of the Gold Coast, and I was in Albert and he lost the same year, actually. I won my seat in Albert, he lost, he didn't get it. I visited him, and came up about Colonel Amies, he said "Oh, fine man, very clear mind,

18:30 a very clear mind, and a fine man." They used to call him 'Hell Fire Jack' – Colonel Amies, I asked him one day, "Why?" He said, "That came from the desert." he said , when the, our – what happened, he was a captain at the time, Brigadier Monaghan, I don't know what he was, he might have been a colonel then

19:00 he drove up, he captured a tank or something, he drove up to Amies' position, and of course the German fighter planes came over and they seen the tracks of the tanks, of course they knew where his position was, of course they strafed them. And it was among rocks and things, there were bullets and sparks flying everywhere. And he was in the middle of it. And then they called him Hell Fire Jack. That's how he got the name Hell Fire Jack. But some of the other fellas used to call him Dapper Jack, I think,

19:30 you know, he used to dress, keep himself dressed nice and clean and tidy. No I had a very high regard, I don't know what others had, but as far as I was concerned, Colonel Amies had my full respect and support.

What did you personally learn from him?

I don't know

20:00 whether I learnt anything really personal but – he gave some lectures, not lectures, they were talks about the Middle East and England, he'd been to England too . That was when we were at Milne Bay. That wasn't – that was – Colonel Amies gave a talk, not officially, so as to

20:30 keep our attention, and probably learn something at the same time and do it in a manner that's informing. But that's how I took it, you learnt things in that regard, I suppose. I would say that his dress was, I liked to think, that I know he dresses like that, why wouldn't I dress like that? And that's what he said to me on one of the parades, he said, "The way you turn out…" he says. What did he say now?

21:00 "You practice self discipline, and your men will follow your example." I suppose that sort of follows down doesn't it?

What did the 15th Battalion gain from Amies do you think?

Oh, I think they gained from his experience, being an old soldier, a true soldier. Middle East, he was more,

21:30 had more experience than most of the other, some of the other colonels. I think that was a plus.

Did he inspire them?

I would say so. Well I can't speak for the battalion but think –I never heard criticism of him in my company anyway.

22:00 **Okay so you were at Milne Bay, where did you go from there, take us through the process of where you went.**

Well when LCIs – we went to Oro Bay, that's near Buna. And then we, I think the idea was to let us see the battlefield of Buna, Salamaua. That was really a

22:30 sad experience. We saw those young lives were lost there, to drive the Japanese to the sea, such a short space, and the graves there; they were dug and were buried as they fell. You could see the gravesites by the extra green on the grass patches, the grass and weeds. And they had the name on the bit of cross and that was very,

23:00 very sad. And to see the Japanese bunkers there and the trenches were still intact! They were built so strongly even though twenty five pounders hitting them, they were still going to, they wouldn't be killed inside, and these fellas were attacking positions like that! It was just suicidal. And the water's only a stone's throw away. Totally unnecessary. I felt terrible about that, I though what a blunder,

23:30 sending these young trained men into a situation like that. That made me fearful of what was ahead of us. And then there was the rotten bodies, the Japanese bodies there that hadn't been buried properly, the smell. I remember the medical officer, well one, he wasn't our medical officer,

24:00 I don't know where he came from, who he belonged to. He says, "I can smell a dead body, I can smell a dead body." Of course. And ah, looked around, you could see dead bodies all right, Japanese. And then the typhus see, some of the fellows got typhus there, the rats were at these bodies and the insects on the, ticks on the rats and that's –

24:30 dead carried the typhus, and our fellas sleeping in the grass. Some of them died from it too. That was another blunder, going into a place like that. But still, can't be right all the time.

And why exactly were they taking you there?

I can't tell you really, I think it was the view of the battlefield. I think in that respect. I got a souvenir there,

25:00 the Japanese, where the Japanese strip was. Old Zero there, I got a bit of Zero there. Aluminium, and then where they built the bays for the aeroplanes, the bomb craters. Although we'd seen the battlefield in Milne Bay, there was far more damage caused there than it was at Milne Bay,

25:30 to the environment. Then we left Buna, we went up to Morobe then, in that rusty old ship. And we were in Morobe for a month of so, and then we went to Nassau Bay. Unloaded a few ships and a few shells, and that's where

26:00 the Americans had their torpedo base there, they'd go out every night, looking for ships to torpedo and shoot at with 4.5s. Oh, .5s , that's right, the guns.

Just on Buna, did it seem strange to you that they would take you here, your opinions of the way the battle was conducted.

26:30 **Did it seem strange to you that they were showing you?**

Yes, it did. It did seem. I don't think you know, what were we gaining about this. It did seem strange that we were there. They were building some sizeable huts there, like they were going to, they were only just starting to be built. They were going to make a camp out of it or something. A staging camp or something or rather. I don't know

27:00 **Was there anyone who was talking about this danger, these health dangers at the time?**

No. They didn't know until the typhus developed.

Okay.

Symptoms developed.

27:30 **And what were they going to do about the Japanese bodies at this stage?**

I dunno. Nothing done there as far as I'm aware of. Well we were there only a very short time; a matter of days really, might have been a week. Wasn't, we weren't there for very long, at Buna.

Was there a heavy atmosphere at this scene?

28:00 **What was the atmosphere like?**

Oh, I dunno. No difference in the atmosphere much. We didn't have anything to do, we didn't, we weren't on guard duties, might just have a sentry out a night but was – I don't remember doing any drills. Just walked about.

28:30 **Okay, you mentioned you were moved on to Morobe? Describe what activities you were doing?**

Actually, Morobe, we didn't do a lot there, we unloaded some ships. I remember unloading

29:00 shells, anti-aircraft shells, and they were a rush to get them off the boat, we wanted to get away before daylight. We were carrying these out onto the beach and we couldn't get it done, we were tipping them off, straight off the barge or pontoon into the water. I remember one night I was on guard and I was supposed to be in charge of the Americans and all, I couldn't see the reason, I hadn't been briefed on it properly,

29:30 how I'd be managing the dock. It was an American dock really. And someone – the clock was missing. And they were sort of blaming my crew for the clock, the missing clock. Never did find it anyway. We grenaded a few fish, I know there was a big home built there by,

30:00 it was – that was New Guinea, when the Germans settlers were. There were a hundred and twenty steps up to it. They used to drop the mail, it was delivered by plane, they used to drop the mail out near this house. And we were camped just behind the house, and sometimes the mail, it was dangerous really because the mail used to go on the other side of the hill, it went right the way down. Well if it landed on the northern side of the slope it would have stopped there.

30:30 Because that's the way they used to – the plane used to arrive. There was another place I was glad to get out of, in a way. We seemed to be running out of frying pan into the fire as we moved up further, were getting closer to the firing line. We could hear the guns and the war going on from Morobe, that was our first sound of actual warfare,

31:00 land warfare.

And then you moved on to?

Nassau Bay, we went by barge to Nassau Bay. We landed there just before dark, and of course we were on the sand and I don't know, someone says, "Oh, little bomber comes along here at night, drops a couple of bombs,

31:30 don't shoot at it, just let it go." Sewing Machine Charlie, they named the plane. And sure enough it came along, dropped a couple of bombs in the sand, I don't think anybody got hurt. I think odd times it might have been someone got hurt, but no one got hurt the night or two we were there. We moved a couple of nights,

32:00 we moved a little bit up the beach, near a creek. And the Japanese barge came round, chug, chug, chug – we didn't know it was a Japanese barge. Someone went out and they seen where they got out of the barge and walked up the muddy bank creek and then they went back again and out. They were very cheeky. Went away, know one knew what he come for, or what he took,

32:30 or anything else! The next day, then we marched to Tambu Bay. That was our first action there.

Just before we come to that, can I ask you about Sewing Machine Charlie, why wouldn't you shoot at this?

Oh we'd give our positions away. That was what we were told. I think it would have been pretty easy to get him down. A few Bren guns, I think we would have been able to bring him down.

33:00 But he wasn't doing much harm, we would have given our positions away. It had a funny sound, seemed to be a slow revving engine, choosh, choosh, choosh. He was very quiet.

What was the nickname about? What was the story of the nickname?

I never heard the story, it just was. I think by the sound, by the sound of it.

33:30 You know, like an old sewing machine. That's all I put it to. I don't know the full story. There's a funny thing, at Nassau Bay, when I went to the school, the Australian School of Infantry, one of the fellows there, him and an officer made a reconnaissance of Nassau Bay, before the Americans came in. He told us all about it.

34:00 It was in the papers, I've seen it recently. I've forgotten his name now, but he told us the whole story of Nassau Bay before the Americans came there. Well the Australians on both sides, the Australians had the lamps lit for the Americans to come, to arrive, the right position to arrive. And of course, people think that the Americans took it over,

34:30 Australians was there first really.

Okay then, tell us how you were feeling, were you prepared to go into action at this stage?

What were you thinking at this stage?

Well it was prepared in one sense but it wasn't physically prepared. I – it was a very big day. The march from Nassau Bay to Tambu Bay

35:00 was a very trying day. And I often used to carry part of someone else's gear beside my own, I was one of the fortunate ones, you know, who was strong and usually these, tricks like these, were no problem. But I just wasn't feeling quite as strong as I ought have been, and some of the fellows were tiring, and the captain comes down to me and says, "Could you carry so and so's gear?" I told him, he didn't know,

35:30 I told him, "Look." I said, "I'm in trouble today. I think I can carry my own, but that's all I can do." He seemed a bit indignant, that I should have been carrying someone else's. Because I was, when someone got weak, I was one of the first to be loaded with extra gear. Anyhow, he didn't insist, anyway, I was glad to get to Tambu Bay, the American gun men, the artillery were there.

36:00 Just near where we camped, just near our tent, we couldn't sleep. They used to fire off these shells, now and then, throughout the night. They gave us stew and coffee, it was the best meal we'd had for a while. Then I couldn't sleep, I never slept at all that night. I think the coffee it was, and not being well. Next day we moved on, and we're preparing for action and I'm feeling ill then, quite, I couldn't remember the confusion

36:30 of landing, of loading the magazines, the Bren gun magazines, to eighteen, and I'd get confused before I got to eighteen cartridges, so I thought, "I didn't want to, they'd think I'm a coward, we're getting ready for action, and Shailer's not here." So I went to the RAP the next morning, and they took my temperature. "Oh, you've got to go and down to the ADS." Up the creek it was,

37:00 to the ADS. And I went up there, "No, you're staying here. You're not going anywhere." Had my rifle and all with me as well, we had to take our rifles with us everywhere. Next minute I'm in a bunk, they had tiers of three bunks and I was in the top bunk. I was three days there. I could hardly eat anything. I remember the padre coming to see me, and he was all dressed up, and I thought

37:30 it was a bit odd to see someone dressed up nicely there and everyone else is showing their wear and tear. The worst part of that was, in that time, you see, the unit went into action straight away. And when the wounded were coming back, you could see them there, I wanted to go down and talk to them and I wasn't able to. I was able to see this fellow, I knew him quite well.

38:00 He was in the same company and he was laying on his side, there was blood everywhere. Trousers were wet with sweat and dirty, and Sallaway, was his name. We used to, his nickname was Sally. I gotta get down and see him, how bad he is. I went down and as soon as I spoke he knew who I was, but he didn't move. You could see his teeth; he smiled a bit, "I got a homer."

38:30 he says, "I got a homer." I said, "Where are you hit?" "Oh, in the leg here." he said, "Right through, it's gone right through." "Did it hurt?" "Oh yeah it was burning, it was burning when it hit." He was, what he'd done, he'd won an MM [Military Medal] for it actually. That was a medal. He went to help one of the fellas who was wounded and he went to get him and of course the fellow hit him as well. But he didn't get a homer; it wasn't really that long before he came back again.

39:00 One of the sites there. They were bringing the wounded in, it was the carriers, the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels [Australian Army term for indigenous Papua New Guineans in World War II] were bringing the wounded in. And that was on the other side of the creek and to see the, they were only slightly - weren't strongly built, and to see them holding the stretcher, the four of them, stretchers with two poles, one

39:30 to each end of the poles. And it was so steep, it was hard rock and then the rock went straight down. And the fellow on the bottom side, he had to hold his pole up to keep the stretch level, you see. And his bare knee on the rock, this little fellow with his bare knee on the rock, moving it on the rock, I thought, goodness gracious that must be hurting, to keep that stretcher level, and the fellow, I don't know

40:00 how badly wounded he was, but he had his hat over his face, I know that, and he wasn't moving. And I thought here are these wild men that could be so gentle and so kind to Australian soldiers. You know, it was a great feeling to think that they could be so gentle and so kind.

Tape 5

00:38 **If you'd like to tell us where you were next?**

I left Tambu Bay after the fall of Salamaua, which was captured by the 29th Brigade. To join the battalion who was taking up the position between Lae and Salamaua.

01:00 Not very far below the Markham River. Now to get there, I had a few different types of transport. First of all, it was a ketch, I think you'd call it, left Tambu Bay and went right around the peninsula, the isthmus peninsula, of Salamaua

01:30 and we landed at.... and I remember this trip because they were expecting Japanese Zeros to strafe us.

And I kept close to the machine gun, it was mounted on a tripod. I had my – I took my boots off and left my socks on – I usually didn't wear socks during the day, and so that my white feet, if we were sunk, my white feet wouldn't attract the sharks. And I felt confident,

02:00 if I could get to that Bren gun, I would have a chance to shoot a Zero down. But it never happened that way. We landed on the beach at 5th Division headquarters and there was a chap there I knew, and he was a driver. We just sort of walked into each other, and he said, "Where are you camping for the night?" I said, "I dunno, I have no camp provided for me." He said, "Oh, you can join me if you like, under my net." So the two of us got under a mosquito net and camped on the sand there for the night.

02:30 Then the next stretch, it was a dug out canoe, or lakatoi, we'd call them. Dug out, a bar and a float to keep it level. And the natives rode me up the along the beach, and we landed somewhere along the beach, I couldn't tell you where. Then I had to walk to join my unit, the section. And when I got there,

03:00 the welcome I got, it was just unbelievable. They didn't know where I'd been, hadn't heard a thing, could have been back to Australia, or anywhere. It wasn't very long, and I got some boiled lollies, and some jellybeans somewhere at the ADS, I dunno where, but I had these and I gave it to them and you'd think I'd given, you'd think they won the casket [lottery] or something. The same old tucker and you get a couple of sweet lollies. It was into action straight away,

03:30 hardly action you'd call it. We were patrolling and we knew the Japs were around. The first patrol I went on in the morning, there was this dead Japanese sitting against a tree, corpses against the tree. And we had to walk right past it. The swamp on one side, the sea on the other. Some of the fellas became sick, they were losing their breakfast very smartly, but I didn't, it didn't make me sick. We went up to

04:00 Markham, not quite to the Markham, Labu and back again. Connected with the other company and came back again. A day or two after, we went, we were to go up the Markham River and I was leading scout. Up the Markham River, near the mouth of the Markham River right up to Markham Point where the Japanese had a camp. And I was leading scout that

04:30 morning, most of the morning actually and I thought it was a bit risky. Very wary of tracks, of movement of any kind. We couldn't see anything, couldn't see anything and suddenly we came on to this Japanese camp. And they had these sort of, dummy Australians, an Australian type hat on it, where they were using for bayonet practice and all this and everything looked in order. And I thought, "Gee, we've got to be wary here." Anyhow – we got some –

05:00 the party went round, there was no Japanese there. Some of our fellas went into the Japanese camp, camped in the Japanese huts, but I wasn't going to attempt that. I thought, "I'll stay out." and I slept on the ground on the bank of the Markham River. We were there for a week and we didn't find any Japanese. We came back to our old camp, which was down on the beach, near the water, swamp on one side, very narrow stretch and the high tide, the wind behind it, and the water would come right over

05:30 the swamp where we were sleeping. And a message came through, there's half a dozen Japanese further down one of the creeks. And we've to go down and pick them up, half a dozen of these Japanese. Along comes a barge, nineteen of us, boarded the barge, there's a lieutenant in charge, a sergeant, two or three NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers], including myself. We landed at the beach of this village

06:00 and the natives were all very excited. And I knew straight away that there's something not right. There's more than six here, just the way they were carrying on, you see.

And how would they carry on?

Oh screaming and running and very excited as soon as they seen us. And I wrote six in the sand, he's going sixes, sixes, sixes, and I wrote six in the sand. And he calmly wrote a nought beside the six.

06:30 And that would be right. I sort of understood straight away. It was more than six. So I reported this to the officer and then he tried to call the Americans back in the barge, cause they had left, they just left, soon as we were unloaded they pulled away. There's no chance, there we are. What do we do then? First of all, I was given the task to make a reconnaissance

07:00 through the village, to see if there was any Japs in there, sick or otherwise. That took some time. Anyhow, speaking to the chief, and he seemed to be a very sincere fellow, had his cap on, saluted me. Very sincere, I said, "We're very thirsty." "You stay. The water, he come, he come." Anyhow, I wanted to see where the water came from you see, and he showed me, "Come, lovely water come

07:30 from a waterfall, you see?" But on the other side, a big steep bank like this. And of course that was their toilet, there it was over the bank and that went down into the creek and went away. So we got water from the waterfall and we had the water, we had fresh water from there. Anyhow, we left and when we left, he stood to attention, he saluted, and

08:00 "King across the sea, whether youse faithful or not, but king across the sea." That was, he was on side with king across the sea. 'White king across the sea', that's the word he used. And I thought that was very good. I understood afterwards he was very loyal and could be trusted implicitly. So I reported back to the officer, oh right oh, we gotta get back after, chase the Japs back up the beach then. So we

08:30 went up then. And I'm leading scout again. I don't why I was given such a heavy load really because I

was really concerned that those figures were pretty right and there was, we had something to contend with. Actually later on, they found out there was ninety of them. Even if there was only sixty came down there. Anyhow, all the afternoon, we followed these up and then – I was – someone would relieve me and I was

09:00 forward scout again and I seen where the tracks had been brushed out. And I thought, "This is an ambush. We won't, I'm not going any further than here." So that's where we stopped and went back on the beach and camped on the beach that night.

How were the tracks laid out?

They were washed, with a bush, a green bush, like a green bush, dragged out all over the tracks. And the tracks suddenly,

09:30 quite a lot of tracks, and then there was no tracks. What they'd done, they just went in to – and they had an ambush for us, because next morning when we went in, we sent for a message for help then, I don't know how it was sent; we had to get more reinforcements. And when we went in and seen where they had fire lanes, that's where the machine guns, as soon as we went into the scrub, they would have had us. Very fortunate. We seen all this

10:00 and we knew then we were in trouble. We thought that mightn't have had arms, but they had machine guns, they had grenades and they were quite well equipped. And they were definitely pretty strong, for the distance they had travelled. So, the reinforcements arrived the next night, yeah, the next night, then we were going to attack, so we went into a creek and we could see where they were, they were in huts. The Japanese were in huts, the smoke was still coming out of the chimneys.

10:30 And righto, we attack at dawn. We stayed there. Slept there that night and we attacked at dawn, and that's when we – the next morning – when we, the bullets were coming across in front, right in front of me, they said, "Keep going, keep going." I said, "Oh, I don't want to walk into this." Get down or go round. And then the firing stopped, the Japs, they must have went in a hurry and then we crossed the creek. There was

11:00 another section in front of us, it wasn't the first section we crossed, I know that. There was all this Japanese occupation money, heaps of it! All lying around. And the huts were there, quite intact, they weren't damaged at all. The Japs had gone, we missed them. We should have, I dunno, should have had a different plan actually, should've been round the other side. But, ah, it's all right in hindsight I suppose. But then there was other papers and things there but I wasn't going to touch anything.

11:30 But these photos I showed you here this morning, that where they were picked up. Thrown away and this other fellow had picked them up. And we followed them, we pursued them up the hill, pretty steep hill and we went right out there, a couple of hours or more. Very tediously. And then we thought, they should have stopped by now because they would've been tired, but we were getting tired, and we were looking around,

12:00 and here's evidence where they'd been, they'd been sitting down. We counted forty-two seats where they sat down, they'd break the leaves off the trees and sit on the leaves instead of sitting directly on the wet ground. I counted forty-two of those. There was different grenades, bundles of grenades just thrown away, some other stuff there thrown away. But I wouldn't touch it, I told all my men – "Don't touch anything, booby trapped, goodness knows what you'd get here." And we were hungry, and they must have been hungry,

12:30 and we never had food with us. The best thing, no good going further, we were still climbing. Long way from base, no, never had, RAP fellas with us. We went back to the shore, so hungry and tired, didn't know what to do next. And we looked out to the sea, and a wave breaker came over, and it was full of fish.

13:00 There's our dinner, our feed for the next day if we can get it. So, we'd have to grenade, who's going to throw the grenade, Shailer throws the grenade. Shailer he gets his grenade and waited till the wave come over and there's all the fish, he threw the grenade in behind the fish, quite high, as far as I could behind the fish, because the wave would bring them in. And it exploded and there were fish everywhere. And it was

13:30 only, out of the nineteen, there was only three of us could swim sufficiently to get – to retrieve some of those fish. They were all in the sand under the water, but it was hard because the breakers were breaking, going back and forth. But we got a hundred and twenty-seven fish with one grenade. So we had fish for tea and fish for the next day and by that time more food had come in. So they say, there's a saying, providence

14:00 provides, and that's one of the occasions when it really did and it was appreciated. Now the next day, that's right, there was more reinforcements came and I think there was some PIB [Papuan Infantry Battalion] blokes and we headed back up to the company area, and we were the only company left there, the rest had gone to Lae. It was only 8th Company left. I knew there was Japanese there, because I could see the fairy lights and they were telling us, "There's no Japanese

14:30 there." But you knew the fairy lights, dream light, they were signalling to the barges to come and collect them, they were evacuating you see. And they were coming in regularly but I don't think any

barges, I never heard any barges come in after I'd rejoined the company you see.

What did these lights look like?

Green fairy lights. They just fired them up from the top of the hill and they'd go out and loop over,

15:00 same lights you would see in Brisbane this time. Only they were green. That meant they were safe to be rescued, I would say. That was the last bit of excitement we had there. Then we had to patrol there was crocodiles there and the dead Japanese. Wasn't very pleasant. And that's when

15:30 Colonel Amies came over and inspected us. And he was very pleased with our turn out, considering we were a pretty bedraggled sort of a crowd. You know, under weight, everyone was right under weight. I think they said there was a two stone battalion average, two stone under normal weight. We were sort of, almost wrecks. Then we moved to Lae, went on a barge to Lae, and Lae was just absolutely blown apart. There's nothing there, only the big

16:00 bomb craters, galvanised iron and the news we were going to be moved on. MacArthur wants to send us up to Saidor, well, we weren't fit. And someone notified the medical authorities and the medical authorities said, "No, this unit stays where they are." This was the story we had. "They don't move, they're unfit to be moved on any further. They must be rested." and I fully endorsed that.

How did you come to be so unfit?

16:30 Lack of food and conditions! Camping on the ground and the wet, no facilities. And going all the time, you know, lack of sleep, and you know, we'd been there twelve months, oh not twelve months, we were twelve months in Lae, we'd been there from January to October.

What could they have done to have helped this?

Well, they could have provided us with better food. More transport and better food, instead of,

17:00 could've had the barge, we could have moved up and down the coast in the barge, instead of walking up and crossing these rivers. You see these rivers we had to go out in the bar, you'd get wringing wet. Wet day and night a lot of the time, not always, but a lot of the time.

Why weren't they doing that?

Well, how could they do it? There was a case of, there's a war, you just can't order something, you know it's going to arrive, and we never had money to buy. We had brand new money in our pockets and we couldn't spend it.

17:30 Fellas running out of tobacco, and they were cranky, and oh gee, all these things add up. No home life, no home tucker, no home food, no mail, we weren't getting mail then either. It tells, it tells –

How were they when they got cranky? What would they do?

Become abusive, they'd abuse their best friends and that see? And you couldn't abuse them back because

18:00 they're breaking down and they're starting to cry, you can abuse them, you can bring them back to life, normality again, but when they're in that frame of mind, it was a different kettle of fish. They're ready to fight back, you see. That's a different story.

Were there any fights that you remember?

Oh yeah, they'd be fights, oh yeah. Real fights, get a ring around and into it, bare fists. Oh no, they were real men, not boys you know. Anyhow, we

18:30 rested in Lae until Christmas time, you know, you could see the mood of the men change. They were beginning to get happy again, talking about home, the old stories. Pulling each others' legs. One afternoon, getting on in the afternoon, I was in the company there, I was having a rest, as a matter of fact, and there was another fella in the tent with me, and all of sudden, "All officers in the NCOs report

19:00 to the orderly room, at the double." Gee, at the double? Were we going home? So I didn't rush down at the double because I was nearer than some of the other fellas, and these other fellas were urging, "Get down Glen, get down Glen." and hear what it was all about. Anyhow I didn't double down, I took my time, and righto, a movement order, we're moving tomorrow morning to Nadzab. That's twenty-two miles up, that's where the big

19:30 air base was. And there's Japanese up there and they're worrying the Americans and we've got to see, capture some of these Japanese. Next morning, six o'clock, eight o'clock, some time, collected our transport and away we went. To Nadzab. I wasn't concerned in any way; I remember I had a beautiful sleep

20:00 that night, I wasn't worried at all. We camped right beside the Americans; they were up off the ground. New sawn timber. They had really done things properly and they'd developed the base, a pipe line, a fuel pipe line, from Lae to the air force base. Anyway, we wasn't to lose any time, we had to find where these Japanese were.

20:30 It was decided it would be a four day patrol and we weren't to cross the river. Markham River was one boundary, and the 7th Division had the western southern side, the tributary, the Busu I think it was, the Busu, I forget the name of it. River, the tributary of the Markham. And the

21:00 7th Division had the other side of it, I think it was, and the 9th Division had the other side of the Busu River, and we were responsible, the 29th Brigade was responsible for the centre. We were just inside our area. Anyhow, we started off first thing in the morning, somewhere along the way, I remember a banana plantation, bananas just ready to harvested, no ripe ones, just ready to be harvested, green and they was planted on the square, properly organised. They weren't native plants,

21:30 so these were Japanese. But there's no one been there. The first day, there was nothing more of interest. And first thing next morning, could hear the planes coming in, the Japanese were raiding Nadzab and we were out in the scrubs. We were glad we were in the scrub. We took off the second day, and I remember at 11 o'clock, kunai grass, and jungle and– it was that hot, you had to stand up when you were in the grass,

22:00 because if you sat down, the heat was so oppressive, you could hardly breathe. There was no sort of rest, you had to keep on going, it was pointless in standing still. We got into the jungle again and we find the paw paws, and all fruits, ripe to pick, ready to eat and we had a feast today. Some of us didn't because it affected their stomach, but mine was all right. Carried some with us. I thought, "There's nobody here, this is a joke, you know there's no Japs round here."

22:30 And we climbed and climbed, and it was getting steeper and steeper the further we got up. And we were starting to think, fellas were starting to get tired and couldn't go any further, and we gotta camp but it was so steep, we wouldn't have a comfortable night here. We kept pushing and pushing, carried a couple of the other fellow's gear. And we got to the top, the air was different – you could sort of – different air, and it levelled out,

23:00 we must be at the top. And then we see a mule track where it had been sort of widened for a mule track. The Japanese had come to there and widened it to bring their mules, their pack horses up. And then it was the native village there, all deserted and it was in good order. There was tomatoes, red ripe tomatoes and pumpkins, all there to eat, you see? Japs, no Japs here! We sort of gave the game away in a sense and, eating vegetables we had

23:30 for tea that night and we put these tomatoes in it, and we had these paw paws and we had the pumpkin in it, and boiled the tea, we had a pretty good night. Two days of hard yakka [labour], climbing the range, and we were right on the top, see? Everyone was in a good mood. Next morning we start off early and I was going to explore the mule track a bit, you know, just have a better examination of it. Couldn't get anyone to come with me. I'd have to do it on my own.

24:00 I didn't go on my own. Next morning we start off early and we going for some hours, mostly through grass, right on top of the range, we were going around the river that we followed up. We were going round that and going down the other side of it. And we stopped for a rest, just a bit of a rise, comfortable going it was, and having a rest, and we looked back where we had come from, and there's two persons.

24:30 One of them had a coat on him. I says, "It looks like a Jap!" And we looked, they're not Japs, we could see by the hair, they're not Japs, and they're standing and looking and we're standing and looking, and I said, "Oh, better get someone round out back, let's guard here, they could be behind us too." In front of us, and behind us. Anyway, we were beckoning them up, that's the officers' area,

25:00 beckon them up, beckon them up, waved them up, they come running up to us. And he was, he says to the officer, "Keesup, keesup, keesup." and the officer couldn't make out, and he's getting him to repeat this, and I didn't recognise what he was saying either. And he says "Come over here, and see if you can get some sense out of this." And first time he said it, a bit of luck, the first time he said it, I got it, I got the message.

25:30 "Your king is sick." oh yeah, "Pills, pills, pills, pills." We'll give him some pills and then we'll take him back. And I suddenly thought it would be nice to talk to this king, then I said, before that, better instruct him how to take his pills or he might take the lot. We gave him eight or ten, oh yeah, we got the pills, give him the pills,

26:00 then I said, "Sun he start, two fella pill, sun he start, two fella pill, sun he start, two fella pill." "Sun he go down, sun he come up, King all right." Oh, oh, oh. Now he said the same to me, oh, it was funny, he's so quick, his actions, his reflexes were so fast. Then he turned to bolt again, I said, "Oi, oi,

26:30 me want to talk to your king, me all right? You all right, me talk to your king?" "Yeah, yeah, yeah." So I go down and talk to the king now. And of course, I take some fellas with me, they all wanted to come, no we don't want to all go down there, the king is sick see? He might have a disease, we have to be careful. About half a dozen of us went down, and the fella took us right round, where the king was

27:00 and he's lying on a cane sort of a stretcher thing, only a lap-lap on, big strong man, about six foot two, six foot three. Beautiful set of teeth, but he was a little bit stiff in his movement. And he introduced me to the king, and they had a fort there. We walked right past that, and we never seen, smelt a thing, absolutely amazing how they camouflaged themselves. And there was all men there, no women, no

cooking facilities; everything must have been brought in to them,

27:30 and the weapons they had, spears and arrows. Bows, arrows, spears, clubs, shields. It was fantastic. The king, then I'm trying to do a bit of pidgin English to him, nup, he didn't understand it, all had to be demonstrations – had to be – had to demonstrate, you know, sign language. And the fella, he didn't talk pidgin, he'd only get odd words. Couldn't put a sentence together.

28:00 And then I indicated to the bow and arrow. Shoot his arrow, and he obliged. A big bow, made the bow according to the size of the man I think, and he shot this arrow and it went level trajectory, you know, level and straight right down through the bush. The power he had behind that, frightening and silent. No sound! It was an object lesson – if ever there was one – these wild people.

28:30 And then we had to get on because we couldn't really get much sense out of it. But that's something I won't forget in my experiences, he knew it. That was the third day. Then we left, and it was going down hill, and it was a strange thing about this, it was up, like saw teeth, a lot of New Guinea in the ranges you go up and down like the sores in a teeth. But this was a gentle, for two days, we were up, up,

29:00 up all the time. And we were coming back down: it was pretty much the same. And we got back to the main river again, Nadzab I think it was, and look about a couple of hundred feet down into the water, these gorges, really dangerous and one of the fellas, the draught in the gorges blew his hat off, and he went to retrieve his hat, and then he found that he couldn't

29:30 get back up and he was right on the brink. I don't how he didn't, I nearly grabbed him, and I'm glad I didn't, because we both might have went. Then the fella behind me, big strong fella, and he closed his eyes when I got down, you know, sort of to save myself to lie down, and this fellow, he's hanging on to two tufts of grass, and he couldn't get up and he couldn't get down and there he's stuck, see? And someone had the

30:00 presence of mind to put the rifle out. Someone else too, it was more than a one man job to retrieve him, rescue him, and two or three got behind each other and pulled him back out. The jaws of death, he was pulled out of the jaws of death. Then that was in the afternoon, and then we got fairly well down, we had to cross the river back again. That was the main issue there,

30:30 we found our way back to the banana patch, and we cut a few bunch of bananas and we had some straws and we ripened those in drums when we got back to the camp. But that was one of the most interesting, the last major patrol in New Guinea, that was. And we didn't do much else there; the hygiene sergeant nearly blew himself up

31:00 with the toilets. We used toilets, which was very effective. We cut out 42 gallon field drums, fuel drums and we put diesel oil on them, greaser, and stuff and might have smelt a bit, but nothing like the American toilets. He struck a match to see what it was like, in the night, and of course the thing exploded and methane gas, it exploded, and the noise, we thought he was badly wounded,

31:30 all he had was a bit of muck over him, wasn't seriously hurt. But the Yanks, they put on picture shows and you know – although we had our own Australian food. But compared to the Americans, we weren't in the same class; they had beautiful meals, good conditions.

Like what?

Oh ham, and Australian fresh fruit and vegetables and meat. Oh they were, just like your civilian life in Brisbane

32:00 probably better.

What pictures?

Oh, I didn't mind the pictures. The pictures hadn't been seen in Australia. When I came back to Australia, the same pictures were showing in Sydney, as what I'd seen in Nadzab. Six months later.

Do you remember any?

Oh, I couldn't remember them. They were good pictures. The girls, the actresses at the time. Judy Garland stuff,

32:30 there was all sorts, they were American, I think they were their own. But they were good pictures. We had to get along early to get a seat. A reasonable seat. So we'd take a – we'd go before dark. We never had anything else, much to do at Nadzab. We'd proven that there were no Japanese there, well, not where we went anyway. There might have been some stuck in a swamp somewhere, but we covered a lot of territory on that patrol.

33:00 **What did the natives tell you about the Japanese?**

Well, they couldn't. "No Japan man, no Japan man, no Japan finished." 'Finished' they used to say. "Number ten, number ten. Japan man finished." That was, that was their stock story.

What does number ten mean?

No good, Australia number one. Japan man number ten. Well that was it. They were quick to tell you

that.

So number ten is?

33:30 Bad. No good.

How did they camouflage their fort?

Well, they just let the natural bush grow round it really. And never, and kept the single tracks – never – the grass was always standing. They just had single tracks through the grass. And the main track, the track that we travelled along was, it was hardly used, you couldn't think it was freshly used; you don't get cute with those kind things,

34:00 it was fresh tracks we were looking for all the time. And it didn't look like it had been used recently, not recently, because they're bare foot and they didn't travel, they had another outlet, they were coming up the creek on the other side, I'd expect. But they were fit, small fellows, all shapes and sizes, but they all seemed to be fit, except the king, he was sick, but to look at him you wouldn't think he was. Oh, what a specimen of a man, one of the best I'd ever seen.

34:30 Couldn't converse in pidgin English, or anything at all.

How did he compare exactly with the other natives there?

Well, he was outstanding in his physique. He had everything about him, he was well built, his teeth, his arms and legs, and you know, almost a perfect specimen of manhood. Well the others, some others were quite good, very muscly,

35:00 sinewy, and tough looking but they never had the same shape about them. And there was only this one fellow with this coat on, and that puzzled me. Because I thought there could be a connection with the Japanese, but later on, we sort of, we thought it could have come from the Dutch. The Dutch had some of that territory there, some connection with the Dutch.

35:30 And that's where the coat originally came from. I – honestly – I don't know. But we couldn't have been really that far from the coast, the north coast of New Guinea, by the air, the difference in the air, right up on the top of the range.

What was the environment like around there?

It was quite cool and once you got out on top of the hill, it was a different climate,

36:00 environment was different.

Did you see any native women?

No, they were, it was all males. We never saw any native at all on those whole four days; those were the only natives we saw, the only persons we saw. Didn't see any Americans, any other Australians, Japanese, or natives. Except this fort,

36:30 I'd call it a fort anyway. Because I couldn't see any other reason there, they were doing nothing else. Definitely were not cooking for themselves, just there watching.

What do you think they used it for?

Well, I don't know. It would have been some reason; I would have liked to find out. But we couldn't converse with each other; they had some reason to be there.

37:00 They put a lot of work into it. It was covered and sleeping quarters. And nothing else, no garden and. Everything looked so natural around it, they must have been very careful how they moved.

Did you hear stories from natives about fighting the Japanese? Between the natives and the Japanese?

No, no. Not ah –

37:30 I don't think there was, well, there was the PIB battalion, and they were in Bougainville, they were in New Guinea too. But we never had anything to do with them, not to my knowledge. But, ANGAU [Australian and New Guinea Administrative Unit], see , that's the administration unit of New Guinea, they commandeered a lot of the fit natives to be carriers, hundreds and thousands of them, they would have been carriers, I don't know how we would have

38:00 managed without them. They used to get a bit frightened, they could toil, but they weren't as strong as we were, they were tough, and they could march, and all this, but they weren't in the same boat. Because we had beds and generally our food was better, and our blood was in better condition. But they were, their feet, with heavy loads, their feet used to get sores.

38:30 **Did you talk with them?**

I could talk pidgin with most of them.

What kind of things did you talk about?

Oh Japanese mostly. “You seen Japanese, you find Japanese? Ah you catching meri [woman]? You catching meri?” And they say, “You catching meri long Australia?” “Oh yeah, me catching meri long Australia, oh look, me look em, me look em.” and I’d carry it in my wallet see? There was m’ladyship here. Oh, oh,

39:00 oh! Oh yeah. No, they were, you know, when you could talk with them, their reaction was spontaneous, you know, and they loved it. They loved it. Unfortunately, there could be misunderstandings, you had to be careful. You could say something that they’d take up the wrong way, you could see by their look or expression, you might have said the wrong words, there’s different meanings.

39:30 Different words. Different meanings, same words.

I think that’s the end of the tape again.

Tape 6

00:36 **Tell me what happened when Colonel Amies asked you to go and see the brigadier?**

What happened then, there had been a story, someone in the battalion was going home to Australia. He had to be a good rifle shot, he had to be this that and the other. And I dismissed it. I didn’t get onto any of the choice things,

01:00 and it went out of mind. And one of the fellas said, “You’re the best NCO in this company.” He said, “You might get it.” I said, “Well I don’t believe that.” Oh yeah. Next thing, a jeep’s coming up and I had to report down to the brigadier, and I went down, local fellow drove me too, he was driving the jeep and he says, “Oh, you’re going to be a lieutenant, all the things that you do.” Anyway, I went into the brigadier,

01:30 and he’s sitting there in his office, and I saluted him, and I was very nervous. And he said, the first things he said after saying g’day, after greeting me, was, “I’m sending you back to Australia. Colonel Amies has been telling me about you. Because your unit is proud of you, and your family should be proud of you

02:00 and you are a credit to Australia.” Well, I couldn’t believe my ears! I thought,”I’m in a dream.” you know. And he said, “But remember, you’ll be visiting the capital cities of Australia, and you’ll be meeting important people.” he said, “and they’ll be inviting you to their homes.” I thought to myself, “No, can’t be right.” And he said,

02:30 “You must accept those invitations.” he said, “And visit their homes. But remember, you must dress correctly, wear your rank and your ribbons and behave yourself.” And he wished me good luck and all of the rest of it, and dismissed me and next thing I’m on a plane heading back to Australia.

Did you tell the rest of your….?

Oh yes, they were all happy. They were all happy.

03:00 Somehow I had a very good rapport with the company. Every man in the company. I was only sorry they weren’t going too – up to the – had my bag packed – and up to the airport at Nadzab, and leave by plane to Australia. And the Douglas plane, just from America. And when it got over the Markham River,

03:30 it hit an air pocket, and it looked liked it was going to crash land. And then it came up again. I’ve never been air sick, travel sick, in my life but I was very nearly that day. Over the top of the Owen Stanleys [mountain ranges], and down to Moresby, only there a day or two. And then the plane flew home, a brand new plane, a Douglas aircraft from America. American water in it, I had a taste of American water and it seemed a long way from Port Moresby

04:00 to Townsville. All afternoon we flew, right down the north coast. Australia seemed to be that big you’re looking at it, all these trees, all the way from Torres Strait all the way down. It was dark, well and truly dark by the time we got to Townsville. Got to Townsville at Garbutt and got out on the ground. It was a relief to be back in Australia in one piece. And seemingly pretty healthy. Home and everything seemed so different, women’s voices, I never, you know

04:30 hadn’t heard women’s voices for so long. And that was one of the things that sort of went on for a while too, even when I went to Melbourne. On the train, the catering, the women’s voice, sounded peculiar, peculiar sound, I dunno, might have been just me. Well that was the home leave and after that I went to Melbourne, Seymour, sixty miles north of Melbourne, the army camp. Cold. Australian School of Infantry. School for instructors.

05:00 And overcoats everyday, all day. And fellows would get chilblains from the cold butts of the rifles and I wrote home to a neighbour, a lady used to do some knitting, and could she knit me a pair of muffins and about three days, they were back. Incredibly fast. Done it all night. Mittens…I said muffins, mittens. They were good, woollen, they were good, I used them.

05:30 Anyhow, we went through this course, it was tough, 10 o'clock at night, six in the morning until 10 o'clock at night. Cold. Icicles from the tent, hanging in the tent. The clothes would freeze inside the tent. And when the examinations come, very fair examinations, no chance of cheating. There was practical, written and oh – demonstrations.

What kind of things did they teach you?

06:00 Oh, all about rifles. Small arms fire. Infantry stuff, all infantry stuff. Gas, mortar bombs, and all that. More or less what we'd been doing. But we were doing it, it was specialised, we were instructed the correct way.

Did you learn a lot of new stuff?

Well, I improved on it. I didn't really, didn't really, oh I think handling men

06:30 in the formal way, yes and in command, parade ground exercises and drills and stuff like that. You didn't learn jungle warfare, it was see, the recruits. We were going to instruct recruits; therefore it was the first introduction to the army. Anyhow, when it came my turn came to do the exercises, to take the platoon,

07:00 we had to do all this exercise to demonstrate how good you were at power of command, and men would act according to your command. Every afternoon before dismissal we had go and be dismissed and inspectors, and arms be inspected, you'd be inspected; everything was done very, very formally. And usually you used to be – you used to have a bit of an audience. Especially at weekends,

07:30 Saturday night, Friday night, they'd usually be some people, some civilians, a few army people. And this particular time when I had the platoon to go through the exercises, to go through the final exercises, all these generals, and brigadiers, and colonels there. And I couldn't believe it and it was a distraction. I thought goodness me, my hearts pounding; I've got to get a pass. You have to judge the distance before you started the command, you have to guide them to a peg you see,

08:00 and in the first thing is, you have to make sure they're all in step first , and bands are playing and there are other troops further around. You had to get them in step and have your command according to the band and the music, and the pace and the peg in mind. And do your own stuff, you own actions as well. And I started off with the left, left and got them all to the right, and that was right, and then I thought, the distance to the peg, I've got to start now. So you don't go too far.

08:30 You're not shuffling, and it become very hard. And it was 'At the halt.' 'On the left.' 'By the right.' 'Full platoon'.' And then you'd hope they're going to do it right. And they hit the peg just right, they came around like a gate, and when I walked, marched up to right dress, there was only one fellow out of line, he was

09:00 about third man down. Gave them a right dress, and I've just got him to move, and don't let anyone else shuffle because that's often happens and number three back, steady, because he might go too far, steady, and he backed in. I remember this so clearly. Back steady, number one rank steady! It was

09:30 perfect you know, I couldn't believe it. Number two seemed to be good enough too and number three. And I thought, "Now I hand over to the officer for inspection, eh?" Marched up to him, saluted,"Your platoon for inspection sir." and we go around, and everything was right. And this is, you know, the one that was being judged. And I thought, "I've won this, I'm getting through this, they can't fail me here. I'll be off to a training camp,

10:00 I didn't know where." And so that was something I'll always remember. And of course then it was off to Cowra, posted to Cowra [POW camp].

Just a question. Having been like in an intense jungle warfare situation, did all of this drilling and marching, how did it seem?

Bit of a pain in the neck actually. It's a pain in the neck. Because,

10:30 I didn't mind parade ground to begin with, I thought it was good. Even at Lae, the big parade after there. You know, but you get a bit sick of it, nothing comes of it. Whereas, when you're in jungle fighting, something comes, one way or another, something happens. You don't stand still. You go back to Cowra. The first meeting at Cowra didn't go well,

11:00 on the train all night, and I remember going in, the rabbits, there was thousands of them, in the morning, the first daylight in the morning. Everywhere, on the fence, up against the wire fences, the wire netting fences. And I didn't put my good clothes on, travelling on the train all night, you know, I'm not going to put a dress suit on, keep it a bit clean. And I didn't know we would be inspected by the colonel at the camp

11:30 at Cowra. So we lined up for our greeting, you know, before we – the first thing had happened. We weren't allowed to go to the hut, cleaned up, straight off the train, stand over there, the colonel's going to visit us. The colonel comes along, looks at me, and says, "Clothes uh?" Has a go at me, picked out me straight away, see? Because I never had a chance to get issued with new clothing, see either? I could see, we're not going to get on.

That was just the start of Cowra. Went down and allocated to a hut, don't know anyone, no one knows me and they think this fellow I suppose, and I hang up my coat in the hut and they see the two blue chevrons: "Oh, he's an upstart, he'll think he's better than us." You got that feeling, see?

What did the two blue.....?

Oh, overseas service, two years overseas service. One year and a part of the two years. And it's marvellous, the civilians knew that too in Sydney, they didn't look at anything else, your ribbons or rank, they'd see the two chevrons.

Why did the guys in the hut, why did they think it was a bad thing?

Well, they never had them. Sorry, I should have told you this earlier, I forgot. See, I was picked to go back to bolster

up the training battalions. Because, beginning of the war, they sent the people there, and a lot of the fellows there were not medically A1 fit. And they kept those for New Guinea. And the recruits would find out oh you'd never been to the war, how can you tell us how to be in a war? It was getting out of hand. So they had to – they decided – the safest strategy, was send people who'd had experience in warfare to go back and instruct, they'll

be respected more than the fellows who hadn't been. That was the idea of it.

And ....

So then there was a bit of a difference there. There weren't many of us there, there was the sergeant, major he was then, he was RSM later, regimental sergeant major afterwards, and it was Grogan, the Kokoda veteran, and he was in the same stamp as I was, he'd been down Kokoda, and I'd been in New Guinea,

Lae. And I suppose there was a common interest see, because we didn't know each other until we got together there. And these fellas, I felt a little bit unease, I wasn't welcomed, let's put it that way. Even by the colonel, and then this following up you see. Then there was this other fellow there, he was a rough and tough footballer, and he was a nephew of Sir Earl Page,

and they lived over the border, northern NSW. And, "Where did you come from? What river are you on?" And I says, "The Logan River." Oh! It struck a bell straight away, "Good country, good country, oh yeah." I says, "How do you know?" He says, "I was up at the Stinson Crash, rescuing Stinson in the desert." And then I had a friend, that was my first friend, but he wasn't my type, you know, but still he sort of, broke the ice with the ice amongst the other fellas, because although they were all from Australia, I think I was the only Queenslander there, actually,

at the time. And also, came there later, there was a General Savige's nephew, but he wasn't there then, he came later on. So there was two pretty important fellows there. It wasn't long, and after that it just settled down, I'd only done a few days instructing and there was talk of a the breakout.

Can you just tell me a bit about what you did as an instructor? Can you

explain?

Oh well, you do the same as with all the infantry. When a man comes off the civvy [civilian] street, he's go in and learn how to stand up properly, and you've got to teach him how to stand up properly, to obey commands and dress himself correctly and learn how to use fire arms and all that sort of thing. General warfare, well the beginning of it anyway. You'd have to

inspect them on parades, supervise their, when they go to lunches, they'd be someone watching them all the time. And what the bugle calls were – general army life.

And how did you find the new recruits that you were training?

Oh we used to call them zombies! They weren't, some of them weren't too bad, there was some,

all walks of life and there's two fellows misbehaving themselves, and they came to the parade with, lunch parade, with their hats on, which wasn't a really bad offence but the officer there, he was abusive to me for allowing that, and not sending them back, and not disciplining them. Of course, then I had to carry that back to them and I'd given them a bit of a dressing down, "Report to me at 6 o'clock." I got them up there and give them a good talking to

and I said, "If it ever happens again, they'd be in A4 (UNCLEAR)." I gave them all, you know, a good dressing down, and they assured me it wouldn't happen again and it didn't there. But at the end of the war, meet them up there at the Meevo. Just after the end of the war, at the picture show, I saw these blokes. These two same blokes, I thought what, I said, "What are you doing here? You shouldn't be here." "We didn't do what you told us Sir; we didn't do what you'd told us to do Sir."

They'd broken the law again, see, they were sent to the front line, instead of through jungle training at Canungra. So they went to front line and they got a medal where their mates wouldn't have because they wouldn't have reached the front line. That's one instance. But I want to get on to the break out.

Would that be right? The talk in the hut

18:00 was the Japanese were going to break out. All the Japanese, they're going to break out. There's going to be a break out, it was common knowledge, gonna be a break out soon.

How? How was it common knowledge?

I don't know, someone was leaking: I don't know if it was the guards or how it came to be. But they were talking, in Cowra, you'd come home from the pictures, that night, and there's the break out. "It's on tonight." the fellow said, one of the instructors said. "It's on tonight." Because I was that used to hearing it, I didn't know, it might be, it mightn't be, who knows? And sure enough,

18:30 couple of hours time, bugles start to blow, and we look out and all the huts were alight. The Japanese huts were alight. You could see it from our hut, right across to it, just across from the other hills.

How far away were you?

Probably a mile or so. About from here to that mountain over there. That's all. You could see the huts quite clearly, and as a matter of fact, it was that bright, you could read the paper, by the brightness of the lights. Anyhow,

19:00 everyone called out, the guards, the recruits there were all excited. And so were a lot of the instructors. I just couldn't believe it. To me, I was strangely calm and Grogan comes over, we had to go down to the training area, the bull rings where we used to train during the day. Each company platoon had to go to their own training area so they'd know where they were.

19:30 And we were afraid that the Japanese would attack and get the weapons off the recruits you see. We weren't – get their bayonets and things, so they were all kept. But I had my bayonet, and Grogan comes over and two clips of ammunition and three ammunition, he said, "Put them in your pocket, put them in your pocket." So I felt quite relieved

20:00 I suppose, I got ammunition, I've got a bayonet. I wasn't concerned, but some of them, they were really frightened.

How did the break out happen? Do you know the details of the sequence of events that happened?

Well, there's quite a lot of books on it, but I don't, I'm not going to go into that because I'm not sure. I only know what I read in books, and

20:30 just the rumours that went around the place.

What sort of rumours?

Well, that they were going to break out, they weren't being guarded properly. They were very discontented but they just wanted to break out. And I don't think the Japanese planned where they were going to go even if they did break out. That would be what happened. They just sort of didn't care. I don't know, but what I do know, is that the next morning, I was up at

21:00 battalion headquarters and there was these Japanese were there. These Japanese prisoners there, about six or seven of them and they're sitting on, just off the road like. And I think it was Grogan, there was someone else there too, told them to get into the truck. Because they never moved, they wouldn't take orders, they were sullen, and just sat there. A couple of times you know, its

21:30 as if they never heard it. One of them gets hold of their feet, and one of them gets hold of their arms, some of them can hardly move anyway, there was just blood everywhere. And there were just tossing them up in the back of truck like they were pieces of fire wood. The whole lot of them. One on top of the other. It was like that. I thought it was a bit cruel in a way. I don't think I would have handled quite that way. Uh, they weren't doing anything. But the point was,

22:00 another point was I was amazed that they never murmured, they never spoke, you'd really think they were sacks of potatoes or something. That's ah, it amazed me, they just drove off and I never heard any more of that. The bodies were left there, we could see the bodies through binoculars quite clearly, they were hanging all over the wire there for days.

How many people were killed?

Two hundred and thirty-one, I think.

22:30 And there was four Australians. One of those was, used to farm bananas, his uncle, Doncaster, he was murdered by the Japanese. After some of the ones that escaped.

And during the night, when were they all shot?

During the night and early hours of the morning. There's a – where is it? – the wire in that fence over there, in that memory box,

23:00 that's a photo of the Japanese camp and an original bit of , bit of barbed wire from the camp. They called it a memory box. I went down to the fiftieth anniversary of the break out, I went to quite a few of them, I'd like to go to the sixtieth, I don't know whether I'll be well enough or not but it's so cold, horribly cold at that time of day.

And what did you do that night? Were you up all night?

Yep, I was up all night. It was a night without sleep although I did get

23:30 an hour or two of sleep, I suppose, in the middle of the night. While I was minding the recruits you see, that was our worry, none of them were hurt, talk to them and keep them interested in something or other. It was down on the railway line, couple of them committed suicide, threw themselves under the train, that was just down in front of us actually. Wasn't far away.

24:00 And I don't think Cowra was the same afterwards. The camp didn't seem the same just afterwards. Of course they'd already broken, that was quite a lot of talk about it, before.

How did you feel about two hundred of them being killed?

Oh, it didn't worry me; I'd seen enough in New Guinea, you know, didn't bother me.

Do you think it was the right thing to do?

24:30 Well, what else could they do? You see they broke out, if they hadn't broke out there wouldn't have been any killed.

Did they have weapons?

Pitchforks and knives, clubs and all that kind of thing. They never had any firearms. Well, when they captured the machine gun well, they'd thrown the lock away and they couldn't operate it. Before they were killed, they got the lock out and threw it away. So the story is, you see, I expect that would be right.

25:00 **From where you were with the recruits, did you see them as a threat? The fact that they'd broken out?**

Yeah , you could see that they had broken out, by the light of the huts and that. All the shooting and the gunfire, oh, it was loud and clear. I might have thought we might have got some ricochets or something. But I didn't hear anything.

But did you feel threatened or worried that the Japanese would, did you feel in danger?

25:30 No, not really, I thought… But a lot of them were, felt they were in danger. But somehow I didn't because I had these, ten rounds of .303 and a good rifle, I suppose I wouldn't have been supposed to shoot them but, life is precious, I wouldn't have hesitated.

You weren't supposed to shoot them?

No.

Why?

Well, under the Geneva Convention, they were prisoners.

26:00 Unarmed prisoners. You're not supposed to shoot unarmed prisoners.

So what did you think about the fact two hundred of them…

Well, they were attacking us, it was kill or be killed.

But if you'd have to make that decision?

You see this fella that was killed, if he had used his firearm, this Doncaster, lieutenant, well he probably wouldn't have been killed.

Was there much talk

26:30 **in the following days afterward about the situation? About whether or not…?**

Well, the camp talked about it. There was nothing else, what should have been down and what shouldn't have been done, and why the bodies are all hanging on the wire.

Why were the bodies hanging on the wire?

Well they had to get people from representing this Geneva Conference to condition these prisoners, what caused it, and investigation, why it all happened. You see? The evidence had

27:00 to be all left there for them to come and see. Just as well it was cold weather, cold icy weather.

How did the recruits react?

I don't think they worried too much. Come daylight and they could see everything, the firing had stopped, life just went on. Then following that, this is when the Cowra story really gets –

27:30 really interesting as far as I'm concerned. I felt a little sick, and I thought I'd passed the – I hadn't had malaria, in New Guinea, never had malaria, never any sickness, no hospitalisation, one of the few. And I'm feeling crook. I went up to the RAP, little bit of a temperature, not much, light duties. It was light duties up on the wood heap,

28:00 splitting wood for the kitchen. And I'm right again, that's malaria, good one day, bad the next, every couple of days it would come on. And I went back to the doctor again, in a couple of days, it was the same thing. This went on, oh, then he sent me up to the hospital. Went up to the hospital, took me temperature, I was all right, go back again. And I'm laying in the camp sick, and I'm gradually getting worse and worse, went up to the doctor, "Oh I'll sent you up to…"

28:30 Well he told me I was malingering! After all I'd done, he told me I was malingering! "I'll send you up to the hospital for observation." So he sends me up to the hospital and I'm getting worse and worse, no medication. And I got really bad, I'd had some blood tests and they were negative because they'd taken them at the wrong time, when I wasn't – when my temperature wasn't high enough. It never showed anyway.

29:00 And I got that bad; I thought I was going to die. Neglect, they'd put me right near the door, the first bed on the right as you go into the hospital ward. I hadn't eaten, vomited everything, just finished. I was lying on my left side, and I can remember I felt someone sitting on the bed. And it was the sister,

29:30 one of the sisters. She says, "I want to have a talk with you." I says, "All right." And she asked me all about family and home life and all this sort of thing. And she says, "What do you think is wrong with you?" I said, "I got malaria." And I said, "Why won't you treat me?" She said, "We don't know whether you do have malaria."

30:00 "And how do you know you got malaria?" Well I said, "Well, the hundreds of fellas that I'd seen in New Guinea, my own mates, it's the same symptoms." Well she said, "We don't, we think you could have something else." She said, "and I've nursed a lot of malaria patients and they are not nearly as sick as you, you are so sick." she said. "Tell me something, I know that." "You are so sick."

30:30 "Well why don't you give me something? Quinine, Atebrin, something." She didn't know, I didn't think I'd talked her into it. The doctor hadn't prescribed anything, I was just left there, you know. Never washed me, nothing at all. And one of the nurses, some of the nurses wouldn't come near me and I was surprised that she had come and sat on the bed. Because they were, you know, he's

31:00 not malingering after all! And the next thing, she comes back; she's coming back with a medicine glass with some quinine in it. Must have changed, I must have convinced her and she changed her mind. Nurse says, "Sit up." and I sat up, legs dangling over the bed, she sits up beside me, her beds dangling over the bed and then I started to retch and vomit.

31:30 And of course, there was nothing there really, it was dry retching. And then what she does, she puts her arm around me and held my nose, see, and as soon as I opened my mouth, down went the quinine. Like a little kid, see? And then two boiled lollies, she must have had them in her other hand, pushed them down with two fingers, right down my throat see?

32:00 Bare fingers! And of course the reaction to that, you know, whoah, retching , and it came, the quinine and the boiled lollies came up so hard, she reached for the kidney basin and she bringing them across, and I aimed to get it and the lollies hit the basin so hard, one of them, one of them didn't get out,

32:30 hit the basin and flew out on to the floor of the ward and the noise eruption and a whole line of patients from the side of the ward, all sat up as one. And I felt that horrible, with the spit and the slime, and she's in the middle of it all and her clothes and her hands and I could do nothing. I was just finished. I could do nothing at all. And she lays me down on the bed.

33:00 She said, "You're so sick." And that was right. And there was nothing more she could do, she couldn't do any more. She could've given me a needle but she wouldn't advise that. "You know what that might do to you." "Yeah, I know."

What could it have done to you?

Sterile. That was the story, we used to talk whether that was or right or not but anyway it might be or might not be. Anyway she said, "Try and have some rest."

33:30 she says, "and I'll see you in the morning." I was, I don't know how I remember this so clearly but then the, I was seeing all sorts of things. I was going, well I was dying, you know, these images, like elephants, like trunks of elephants , and high stools hanging down, all these sorts of queer things, you know.

34:00 Anyhow, I don't remember much through the night, it didn't seem to take too long, the night, and she came back and she did, first thing in the morning. I'm lying on my left side again – I don't know why I was lying on my left side, and I'd seen her coming through the doors. Sister Gleeson. Instead of going to the office, they go to the office and sign there first thing. And she come straight to my bed, it was just

lucky that I

34:30 happened to see her, you know. She bent down close. I said, “I’m no worse, I might even be a bit better.” “Oh that’s good.” she says. “We’ll have to get some liquid into you, gotta get some liquid into you. Some brandy or egg flip or something.” she says. Anyway, she left me and brought some brandy and egg flip, or whisky and egg, and I took a bit of it, and I held it down. I held it down.

35:00 That was a relief. I just had enough to hold it down. I don’t remember her coming back to me straight away. And then of course I had to be washed. I don’t know, I certainly never had any washing or bathing the day before, or even the day before that! And of course the little nurse had to come, and I felt sorry, you know, nurse had to sponge me all over. Young nurse, eighteen or nineteen years old,

35:30 washing a veteran. But I couldn’t help it, it just happened. I felt humbled you know. And I think they did too. Anyway, they washed me; they sponged me a few times during the day, to get the temperature back down. And anyhow, when come to lunchtime, there was jelly and custard and a little bit of ice cream,

36:00 “Where did this come from?” I said. “Where did this come from?” ”Oh, sister raided the officer’s mess for ya!” Incredible isn’t it, incredible.

What kind of woman was Sister Gleeson?

She was a bit tallish, but, very efficient. So efficient. Frighteningly efficient. And she’d come there in the morning, she really dressed spick and span,

36:30 and the afternoon when she leaves, there’d be penicillin. She never studied her clothes or herself. It was the patients all the time. I think Australians should be proud of the nursing sisters. There was three of them I knew. Gee, what they’d do for you.

You seem to have an amazing recall of her? How do you think that is?

Well, you know she could have saved my life. Could’ve saved my life.

37:00 In the way she’d done it. Without fear of hurting herself. Anyhow, I improved from then on, and they couldn’t, and the afternoon came through the last blood test was positive. So I had malaria. And everyone was happy, everyone was happy, I was the star of the whole hospital. Nothing was too much trouble, everybody, even the doctors changed their tune.

Why?

37:30 Well, they knew what I had, I wasn’t a malingerer. I was fair dinkum after all.

How did it feel when that guy said to you that you were malingering?

Oh terrible, that was one of the worst parts of it. Because I never, never was in my life. Never a malingerer. And to think they were indicating that I was! I would never forget that. That was one of the hardest parts. Anyway, I don’t know whether the sister rigged it or not, but I got six weeks convalescing, after a fortnight there,

38:00 six weeks to convalesce in Sydney. Wilcott Forbe’s home, Wilcott Forbe’s home at Gordon in Sydney.

Did you get to say goodbye to Sister Gleeson?

No, wait a bit. I left and I thought I’d get to see her, but no, I didn’t. And went to hospital, I was still pretty sick, as a matter of fact the nurse received, the nurse that’d seen me off that night in the ambulance, she made sandwiches for me, she gave me

38:30 a special egg drip and double the amount of brandy into it. “I’m going to see that you get there well.” she says. And I left in the ambulance, and arrived at Gordon in the ambulance, and then I had a special, I had to get a train ticket to, free train travel. And I’m going down to the station, the first day out, Martin Place, I’m going up to get the train ticket,

39:00 and I see this uniform coming down the foot path. Oh I thought, can’t be her, can’t be her. But it is her! And you know, I felt like I couldn’t face, I couldn’t look her in the eye. I got over to the side, I thought she couldn’t see me, the footpath was crowded. I got over the side and I didn’t look and I thought I might miss her, and the next thing, she must have come past, she came up behind me, “What are you doing down here?” That was sister. “What are you doing here?”

39:30 “Are you on leave, you’re not on leave?” “You’re AWL [Absent Without Leave].” “No I’m not.” “You’re too sick to be down here. You were so sick, you shouldn’t be down here, you shouldn’t be here.” And I said, “Well I am, I’ve bought my ticket.” “Oh, you’ll have to look after myself, I’ll have to look after myself.” Anyway, we had a bit of a chat, and she was on, and then I get her side of the story, why she should be there, she was going to some lecture or something or rather. And that was the last time

40:00 I seen her. And when I watched her go, saw her back going down the footpath, I thought, well, Australia should be proud. And I never did see her again. But I wanted to. Of course I never had much time. When I did get some time later on, everything was comfortable, I had a bit of time to spare, and made inquiries everywhere, I couldn’t trace her. Her old unit, couldn’t

40:30 trace her. And she married again so you didn't know what name you're looking for. Lo and behold, her nephew goes out to Cowra and the Secretary of the Association contacts him and he could tell the whole story of Sister Gleeson. Her demise and her whole life history. And so she was buried at North Ryde cemetery in Sydney. So I'd have never been able to speak to her and thank her for what she'd done. Right?

Tape 7

00:42 **What did you want to tell me about Cowra?**

Oh, after I came back from leave, I had another bout of malaria, and more leave, but it wasn't till the end of January that I came back and started

01:00 instructing again. I was sick for that long. They decided to form another battalion in Cowra. I was in the 2nd Australian Army Training Battalion. And they decided to form a 5th one. Grogan, Sergeant Major Grogan, he'd been promoted RSM by then, Regimental Sergeant Major. He said

01:30 "We're forming another battalion." he said, "and I want you to come with me." I thought, "That's all right." Not worried about that. We went over to the other side of the hill, and formed this new battalion. Trained battalion. fifty blokes you've gotta look after. "I'm giving you half one, fifty fellas. And you're in charge of them." "That's all right, where do they come from?" I looked where they came from, the addresses where they come from,

02:00 Sydney, some pretty tough areas in Sydney, these fellas. One of them was twenty years, and he was a draft dodger they reckon and all the rest of it and big fellows. I said to him, "Gee, you're loading, you're giving me my money's worth here!" He said, "I'll help you, they give you any trouble, I'll help you." And I said, "All right." So I got these fellas and I give them a dressing down to start with,

02:30 and one of them, he was a jailbird actually, had been sentenced. And he'd decided he'd leave camp. Anyway, he left and the next morning a recruit said, "Oh, so and so's not here this morning. He's gone." And I said, "Well don't you get that idea in your head." "Why, why?" Well I said, "When he gets down to Sydney, the provos [Provosts – Military Police] will be waiting on the station to collect him." and I said, "in a few days' time he'll be down there in the prison, which is a barbed wire bird cage." we used to

03:00 call it. So he'll be in there. Oh, oh. And that's exactly what happened. So I never had any more. No more decided to leave. And the fellow, he was a merchant marine, a tough fella, real brawn. And I got him; I was in a little cubicle myself in a hut. And I got him, "You come up here beside me in the camp." and he says "Why, why, why?" And I said, "I like a good strong fella,

03:30 and I want you to be marker too. I like strong blokes like you and want you to be marker." and I said, "You like your food, I noticed you like your food." I said. "You'll be nice and handy with the kitchen here, just out on the door and you're on the parade." And he fell, and he thought this was a good idea too. Anyhow I got those fellas straightened out and they were proud of me and I was proud of them. They even had, I even had them stripping guns and at night, I'd requisite guns from the store room and bring them in there and

04:00 I had the training at night. And they were way ahead of the other platoon. And they were proud of themselves and I finished up being proud of them too. And as far as Grogan and the Colonel was concerned, they couldn't believe it. And then of course, when everything's set and you're on top of the world, telegram comes through, back to unit. So I had to leave all that behind me. And that was the best part of it, Cowra had come good at last, and I moved on.

04:30 So then it was back to Bougainville.

Just before that, what do you think were your particular strengths at training? What was something that you were good at?

At training the recruits?

Yeah, what were the qualities that you exhibited?

Well, I think I was off to a good start at being a return soldier. You know, I'd been there, I could tell them. They like to hear these stories of what happened in the war. What New Guinea, was like, you'd never,

05:00 this was the same as the 1st Battalion, the 2nd Battalion. And you could see at lunch breaks, at morning breaks, they'd never seemed to get sick of it. On the boat, and all the questions. And I could answer those questions without hesitation you see? And I could handle it, didn't matter what weapon. I could demonstrate to them, I'd demonstrate to them after tea at night, when most of them were wanting to enjoy themselves, they were still wanting to learn, these fellas were. And I'd demonstrate to them in the hut at night.

05:30 You know, "Do it over and over, c'mon." And they were teaching themselves. I had them teaching, you

know, the ones that could understand it. They were teaching their mates. When you got them rolling, when you got respect, it was really a good feeling. Good to me anyway. Even when I had the notice, Grogan said, “You needn’t do any more.” they were still coming to me after drill: “Oh sir, sir, will you show us this, will you show us that?” Of course of which I did.

06:00 And then I’d call their parents, calling their parents in Sydney when I’m going back. Call on their parents in Sydney and that’s what happened. I had all these invitations from all these people, even when I was convalescing as I said before earlier. All these important people that I met in Sydney, when I was convalescing.

Tell us about your convalescing?

I was convalescing for six weeks at Wilcott Forbe’s

06:30 home at Gordon, north shoreline in Sydney. And we’d get leave, we had free transport. One of the fellas they lived in Mosman, my sister in law, some connection with my sister in law. She told me to ring them, you see? And all the comfort dinners, they took me all of Sunday afternoon, up to Kuringai Chase and the sights of Sydney. Then they wanted me to call again, but

07:00 then there was other people. There was, he was in charge of the propeller division at the DeHavilland aircraft factory and he took me up to see the propellers and all this, and I had to go through two sets of guards to get there. And you see all this, and then the rat trap people, they took me up to the Blue Mountains and stayed at their home for the night, took me to the pictures, took me down to the library, the Harbour Bridge. Oh, look it was a job to keep up, Sydney’s so big you’d think you’d know nobody there

07:30 and strangers would say, come and have lunch with me, you know, at the cafes and things, you know. It was absolutely amazing, absolutely amazing, to be a returned soldier in Sydney in 1944. You couldn’t wish for, but of course then soon we were off, but see there wasn’t many of us around, these blue chevrons, and you know, they could see that I was a bit yellow-looking from the Atebrin. And they were out to help me.

08:00 **How would you describe the atmosphere in Sydney at the time?**

Oh, well to me it seemed to be a normal capital city. Different to Brisbane. So many troops in Brisbane, the Americans, there wasn’t any Americans there, not when I was there. Not many Australians, you’d hardly think there was a war on. And the church hostels at the churches, they used to, I stayed one night there at St Andrews

08:30 hostel, in transit, after I left the convalescent home. I was going back to Cowra. And I stayed there, they waited on you, they looked after you. Oh, it was a home away from home. Amazing.

Well, tell us where you went from there?

Well I had a few days leave on the way from, home leave. And then I, after that, I went directly

09:00 to Bougainville. I went from Cairns, embarked on a Sunderland flying boat, landed at Moresby, Port Moresby. And went from Port Moresby, on a Sunderland flying boat again, back to Bougainville. Over the mountains, we had to go to the back of the plane to lift the nose up to climb over

09:30 the [Owen] Stanleys. Uneventful trip. They were – it was a British crew – the war in Europe had been finished and they’d sent the British Sunderland boat, the flying boat, and crew, they were all English. They were interesting to talk to. The long days, their radar thing was clicking in every island that had come in to radar, they’d pick up the island and all that. It was a good trip, a really good trip.

10:00 Right over the hills and over the seas and then we landed at Torokina at Bougainville.

What would they talk about?

Oh, the war service, the Atlantic, the big patrols in the Atlantic. See, this is what people don’t realise what those English airmen and soldiers really done for the war, in my opinion. I had great respect for them. They’d been in the air that much and that long they were swallowing all the time, when they were speaking to you they’d have to (swallowing action) on account of being

10:30 up in the rare air, you see. That’s what I put it down to. You could see they were affected from flying so much. They were very sincere, very methodical, calculating, didn’t seem to take risks, people had confidence in them, I could have flown with them all day you know, I was very relaxed.

11:00 Great confidence in them.

And you mentioned that you had to go to the back of the plane?

Yeah, down in the, to lift the nose up. You see it couldn’t get enough height, the Sunderland flying boat couldn’t get enough height to fly over the ranges, and so to counter balance the weight, to get the nose of the plane up, so it could get up, so it could climb, we had to go back in the tail. All the mail and all that stuff was thrown in the back, there was heaps of mail, of bags,

11:30 climbed in on the top of that. Then we started to go up and get safe altitude.

Was it kind of dangerous? Take off?

Ah, no, well it took off the water at Port Moresby. You see it was a flying boat, there was no, see, it had to come over the land, over the spine of the Owen Stanleys, went back, went right over it. That was the problem, and once we were over the range, we were all right,

12:00 we came back. We never had seat belts or anything like that. Just sitting loose. Seems a bit dangerous, when you think about it. But I didn't seem to think of the danger.

Did you think of the danger much at all?

I didn't think of it much. Coming home, the first plane ride, that was the biggest fright I had. You know, that was dangerous, the way

12:30 that, you know the Americans, they seemed to be slap happy. They didn't seem to worry about the danger of the planes, the fellas, the mechanics. As soon as we landed at Moresby they'd all run, they were fast and hard, they'd run to do their maintenance on the plane. They didn't seem to be steady and as careful as the Australians were. But they must've done their work satisfactorily, I got there, it was a new plane too.

13:00 **So you arrived in Bougainville? Take us through what happened?**

Well, what happened, Bougainville was very, very different to New Guinea. It was not too far off the end of the war when I got there. Two or three weeks before the atom bomb

13:30 was dropped. And I went most of the way down in a jeep, the roads were just slush and one part was, they had a captured Japanese track vehicle. It was sitting about six trailers behind it. It was too deep. It had travelled through deeper mud than the other vehicles had. And I was on one of those trailers with your rifle in the corner of the trailer and hanging on to the rifle, with the other

14:00 crates of stuff there. So that I wouldn't get tipped off in the mud. So I got to brigade headquarters. I knew one of the fellas at brigade headquarters and I got some of my mail there. Whole lot of mail, some of my mail there. And I went to the dentist for a check up, my teeth were – loose filling or something. And I had that fixed up, and eventually I get down to the battalion headquarters and

14:30 right out to the front line, to the platoons. To my amazement, you'd think you were going to meet the old fellas that you'd left behind, when you went away, and there was so few of them left there, all these new fellas, it was incredible. Like a different world. Sort of living in trenches, in dug outs and any shelter you could sort of build.

15:00 We'd be used to be shelled, just before dark. They'd give us a bit of shell fire. Shells would come in on us, some would drop short, some would just go over us, the dirt would be falling in on us, it was a frightening experience. Like that walking stick there, that's one that just went over the top. And I went over and

15:30 seen where it exploded, what sort of crater it had made. And then after the war had finished, I went back and got that and slowly hammered it in, trimmed it into a walking stick. We were in behind wires and booby traps, guards out every night, all night guard. They were on the Buin Road.

16:00 And the cook house was on the other side. We were on one side of the road; the cook house was on the other side of the road, A Company. And then the first thing, the first light in the morning, stand to, before daylight, just before daylight, then we had to contact the next company, B Company, to see if there was Japs between us, surrounding us. Then another patrol had to go down the Buin Road with mine detectors to see if there's mines or

16:30 mortar bombs under the corduroy pieces of wood they had there. For the jeeps. They'd bring the food and ammunition and stuff up to us. And then it was patrolling outside over the river. But the food was good, compared to New Guinea, the food was good. Because the jeeps could bring in fresh food all the time, they'd be a

17:00 daily supply of fresh food, we'd have fresh meat and some fresh vegetables some times too. That was the best part of it. The danger was more – it was more dangerous than New Guinea – at that stage anyway.

How much more dangerous?

Well, there was shell fire. You see we never had shell fire in New Guinea. I didn't, some of them would've, lighter stuff, but not this heavy shelling.

17:30 And we never had bombing. In Bougainville, they were around us more. You had a pretty good idea in New Guinea where they were, but Bougainville, you sort of didn't know where they'd be. They were, oh, they had signal wires, we used to go out and cut their signal wires.

18:00 In New Guinea, we'd never camouflaged ourselves to any extent when we went out patrol. But Bougainville was very, the camouflage, they were very, very particular about camouflage. You'd go into

the kitchen in the morning, I'll get on to this last patrol I suppose, you'd go into the kitchen, the grease around the cookhouse, all the grease and soot and stuff, you'd rub over your face,

18:30 you see, to darken the face. I know this last patrol the sergeant cook was not satisfied with the job I'd done to my face, so he blackened my face more. And the cooks were very worried about us going out, they'd do everything they could to us, for us. There was shaking hands and we'd never used to do that in New Guinea.

19:00 It was changed. And the goodbyes and we'd go out, well on this occasion, we're to go out and there was going to be an advance across the Mubo River. We're to go out and decide what positions we'd take up. Where we'd dig our trenches and where we'd make a stand after we crossed the river of course. There was twenty-odd in the patrol, lieutenant, come from Tasmania,

19:30 he'd be a good one for this interview actually. Thoroughgood was his name. A good officer. And we had contact B Company across the Mubo River further up when the forward was. And we get to B Company, yep, oh yeah, hello, how are you, where are you going, blah blah, and then two of the fellas gets sick. One of them had a bit of a cold, because no one had to be, everyone had to be, there's no sign of colds, you couldn't have a cough or anything,

20:00 or you'd give your position away. So he went back. The other fellow escorts him back. Anyway, we were down two right from the start. And we crossed, we get across the river and there's more dead Jap bodies, they'd been killed by the bombing, the junior air force had killed those. They hadn't been dead long either and that made some other fellas sick. Things weren't looking good at all. Then we'd come across signal wires, so we knew there would be Japs about,

20:30 I had, that's right, we all had to inspect each other for our gear. I remember, I had two grenades, put them in my belt, a bandolier, fifty .303 bullets, oh I like to have myself well armed. And three magazines for the Owen gun, I had an Owen gun. 3 magazines for that, and something to chew on, to eat,

21:00 we had a few biscuits, and a bit of bully beef. We never had much for dinner. We didn't feel like it either, situations like that, you didn't get an appetite. And I had a machete, to cut the signal wires. The green and red signal wires. And I used to cut the wires, cut bits out of the wires, and throw it away. Then someone said, "I don't know whether we should be cutting the wires yet, we should leave the wire cutting till later on." "Well, it's a bit late now, I've been cutting them."

21:30 And then what happened next? Oh, leading, it's my turn to be leading scout see? Well this was, I'd been transferred from 9th to 10th, from 7th to 10th and I didn't know them, the recruits, well, not very well. Situation like that, it was sort of a new ball game to New Guinea. Righto, sergeant said, "Will you go out and scout?" Well, I couldn't say,

22:00 you know, done enough in New Guinea. I'm not going to let these fellows think I'm afraid, "Yeah, I'll go out scouting." "Go out, leading scout." And I'm out leading scout and I tell you what, I was careful. Somehow, I could smell danger. And especially when there were signal wires, if there had been no signal wire, I mightn't have been so wary, but I couldn't see

22:30 any fresh evidence. I'd done my share of it. Didn't see any. Well, we'll have a little bit of dinner, chew on a biscuit, have a drink of water for dinner. And we had our dinner, and we move on, and we're gonna get these positions, when we make the advance, where are we going to dig the trenches? Where each section will go. And we've got to find out,

23:00 where we are, how far from the river, and scout around, three different groups. Two would go out, have a look around and survey the ground. Then the sergeant and I, we went out, picked out where my section was going. I was Number 1 Section, 7th Platoon, A Company. Where I was going to make my stand, and I picked the best place I thought, where we'd cross the river, where we had the dig ins.

23:30 Because we had to dig in when we advanced, because the Japanese knew exactly where – the exact distance for their shell artillery. High explosives, you know. And I picked all that out and that was, we were pretty confident that we had the best positions under the circumstances. "Righto, we'll head for home. Back across the river. Just below the ford."

24:00 And first of all, there was sand, one side of the river was quite sandy. The Japs had, they put mines, personnel mines in the sand. And the water would come up and go down a bit, the flood rains, and you wouldn't know there was anything there, the sand would be quite smooth, like the floor, so one fellow had to go in front, with the bayonet, put it in sideways to see if it hit the metal, to see if there was any mine there,

24:30 and then his footprints, the fellow behind him would use the same footprints as he did, you see, walk on the same footprints. To know they were safe, to get down to the river. "Righto, sergeant, there's no mines there. They're walking on each other's footsteps to get across." So the first section went across. I was in the second section. And I'm going across, about in the middle of the river,

25:00 and it was fast flowing, and quick sand underneath. And if you stood still for any length of time, the sand would wash out, you see, and you'd sink. The water would be over you before you knew what happened. I was feeling that thirst from no talking and all everything done by signs and I'm lapping my

mouth with a bit of water. Oh, tastes good. I have a bit of water and I just sort of stopped, in the middle of the river. And I looked all around, couldn't see anything, everything looked quite normal.

25:30 Quiet, not a sound. And I'm licking the water. And next thing, a machine gun opened up, I could have put my hand out, you know, just an arm left away, machine gun burst. Splashing all the water. Well, it the biggest fright I had in the water, actually. My hair stood up and the blokes behind me, Ernie Smith, my Bren gunner, he was just behind me with his Bren gun,

26:00 he got such a shock he sort of went back under the water and he'd come up, and they reckon the sergeant was behind him and he come up firing. He was blazing back straight away. I don't know how he'd done that. I took off for the bank and I'm sort of looking back at them and looking at the bank and I sort of missed the track where you get out of the river. I sort of, had gone up a bit I think. And there was a sort of steep edge like that

26:30 there and I couldn't, the water was a couple of feet deep I suppose, and I couldn't get out over the ledges. Anyhow, I threw the bandolier up and I threw the Owen gun up on the bank and I was able to get on the bank. And I'm looking back at the rest coming and machine gun's going and they're firing back and the splashes in the water and the looks on their faces and I thought who's going to be killed,

27:00 who's going to cop it? And we had carrier pigeons, that's right, we took carrier pigeons with us then, we got caught, we could send a message back where we were. And he got such a big fright that he let the cage go, and the carrier pigeons are floating down the river, the two pigeons, floating away. And he's coming hell for leather, and the look on his face. The fellow who had the pigeons. Kroner was his name. Come from West Wyalong, in New

27:30 South Wales. I'll never forget that. And the look on all their faces. Poor buggers. I'd reach the bank and I had a grand stand view of what was happening. Water, machine gun, bullets, water. A picture you couldn't sort of believe, it was actually happening there right in your eyes. Right in front of you. And they'd just missed. I was targeted to start with, and they missed me. Anyhow, I got up the bank to join the section that was already across

28:00 and I had a pretty good idea where these machine guns was coming from, see? My own gun would reach there. And I got up to the top and bushes there, it's funny, bushes would stop nothing really, but you know, you wouldn't be able to see, you see? And I opened up with the Owen gun and then the other section said, "Oh they're too close. They're too far for the Owen guns." And I said, "I don't think so. I done a bit of this in New Guinea." I said,"I can reach them.

28:30 With my sound and direction, I think I can reach them." Anyhow, I let a couple of good bursts go but it didn't, the machine gun still kept going, they were still shooting them and they're still coming across the river. Gee, they should be across, they should be across. They wouldn't have been across because they wouldn't be wasting their ammunition, the Japs. Anyhow, next thing there's a bit of a noise,

29:00 someone yells out, "Over here!" And of course, I thought someone's copped it. Went over there, the lieutenant says, "Have a count, have a count, each section have a count." Who's missing? I was number seven, see I was the first one and I count, oh, "Mine's all here." And we were right in the centre of it. "Mine's all here, mine's all here!" Nobody hit, nobody hurt.

29:30 One of the most extraordinary instances. Of Japanese lack of practice with machine guns. But what, oh I better go on, then, to get out quick, now the shells would be coming, the shells, we'll go. So we just bolted but the shells never came because you know, we thought later, because I'd cut the signal wires. Signal wires are cut; the artillery never had the message

30:00 to shell us. That's what we calculated. Why they never shelled. And we bolted. Hell for leather, hard as we could go. And we're going, we've run out of breath, and we hear another crowd coming. Now, were they Japs? And we all stopped and hid ourselves. And it's B Company. B Company's coming to rescue us. They'd heard the Owen gun fire, saw the close quarters; they were coming to rescue us. They're coming hell for leather too!

30:30 And of course, everything's all right. So both of us, two lots of us, as fast as we could, back to the wire, get behind the wire. Because we were expecting shell fire at any time. Anyway, when we come to the wire, the Salvation Army bloke, no it wasn't Salvation Army, it was a Presbyterian crowd, Comfort Fund. He was at the wire, he put a

31:00 zigzag through the wire. A zed way through the wire. And he was there with a cup of tea and I said, "That's the best cup of tea I ever had." Just incredible. Best cup of tea I ever had. I think that was the talk, they talked about that for days, you think all that shooting, and nobody hurt, the only loss was the cage and the two pigeons. So

31:30 then why would they miss us? I think it was the next day, they got the, we knew where they were. And what had happened. So we go the air force, the New Zealand Air Force, they'd come in and they bombarded them. And then C Company sent a party in to see what damage they'd done, to see if they had been successful. And they found the guns and the Japs were killed and the…

32:00 evidently, they'd taken the cartridges out of the, the metal out of the cartridge case, and put it back, thread the bullet part. Reversed it and the sharp end went back into the cartridge case, and that meant

the blunt end was going out first. So it was, you're losing direction. And then it would go so far and the bullet would start to tumble, and that would be terrible wound, to get hit by a tumbling bullet.

32:30 Would've been a terrible wound. So that would tend to make the bullet go high. So, we were very lucky.

Why would the bullets? Why would it be a terrible wound?

Well because it start to tumble, with the blunt end, where its got a sharp pointed end, it revolves and keeps, a trajectory, a jumper they'd call it, it would go up and over a bit but

33:00 when its got the blunt end, its not going to turn so easy is it? And that's when it starts to tumble. That's what they told us. I'd never actually seen it happen. It makes sense and you see it hit, hits the blunt end or hits side on, or at an angle, it would be worse than if its going straight, with a sharp pointer. So that was the end of that bunker.

33:30 It was built there, right under our noses, and we didn't even know that it was there. We must have been very close to it, and they'd never seen it. They must have been, I'd say they would have been watching us, they'd seen us. Mightn't you know? But it was very close, I could tell by the angle of the bullets, which way they were coming from.

Do you have any theories about luck or faith?

34:00 I ought to, I suppose. Lucky, well to think that, none of us, everyone, we couldn't believe it, when the count was there; we thought someone will have to be missing. The amount of fire, both sides. B Company sent a rescue party so you can imagine, you know, and back at the battalion, they could hear it all going too. The cook house, when we got back to the cook house,

34:30 oh, dear oh dear, they were worried. "Who's missing, who's hurt, who's copped it?" That was the saying, who copped it today? Who's copped it today? That amount of fire and shooting, someone, serious, someone will need treatment. One way or another. Yes that was – I would say that was – that patrol was talked about,

35:00 nearly every reunion. That patrol would be talked about. There was an article written in Smith's Weekly about it. I had one but I can't find it any more, I don't know where it's got to, but there are copies of it about somewhere. About the pigeons and the Mubo River. It wasn't only a day or two after that

35:30 the atom bomb was dropped and we didn't have to make that advance. I was to lead that advance, across the river, Number 7 Section. No, what am I thinking about, Number 1 Section, A Company, 15th Battalion, 29th Brigade. It never happened. Then after that the

36:00 atom bomb was dropped. And we were quite a while there, indecisions, no one seemed to know what to do, there was Japanese behind us and Japanese all over the place. We didn't realise there were so many behind us. And eventually the fellas were sent over to, at the ford, to wait for the Japanese, if they could do, I think we already have that story.

36:30 Then I was told I could be going down, one of the party to go down to the surrender. General Kanda. But I didn't go, one of the other fellas went. I believe he wasn't very happy. Because he was going to

37:00 counter attack after we made our advance. Come along the beaches. There was about seven or eight thousand of us, and there was twenty-three odd thousand Japanese there. They had the numbers, the fellows behind could disrupt the transport system; he could have made it very, very uncomfortable for us. With the numbers. But he didn't get the opportunity.

37:30 The atom bomb stopped that. I'm one of fellas who was glad it was dropped, very glad it was dropped.

How did you feel about the whole Bougainville campaign?

Bougainville? Oh, wasted, wasted. It should never have happened. It was a self contained prisoner of war camp. Self contained prisoner of war camp it was.

38:00 Though they were living very well there. As a matter of fact there was a sweet potato patch right where we were camped. Right on Buin Road. And just across a little running creek, shallow water, we used to wash ourselves in it. And there's the sweet potatoes. Not a weed amongst them. All nice and healthy and built up and potatoes under them. They didn't want to give that stuff away either, they want to rescue their lots of food,

38:30 rockmelons up on the hills. In my opinion it was just a wasted effort. All those lives lost for nought. And then we, there was an earthquake there, that was frightening, as bad as the bullets. The trees were shaking; a lot of the trees had been damaged with shell fire and dangerous. Limbs were falling, and you

39:00 couldn't walk on the ground it was moving like this. You couldn't walk. Some blokes were struck dumb, they couldn't speak. It was fright. And gradually we came back to Torokina. That was the main base of Bougainville. It wasn't long after that then the brigade was disbanded. And I was

39:30 there on Bougainville then. They, then the men with wives, and families and married people, they went back earlier than the single fellows. And I finished up at Rabaul.

I think the tape's just about finished.

Tape 8

00:38 I'll do my best, but where you're coming from in regards to patrol, how they're formed, and just want happens, well, first of all, there has to be a need for it. Why is the patrol going out? And that could be for a number of reasons. It could be,

01:00 well it usually is, fighting patrols, reconnaissance patrols, patrols just going out regularly to make contact with neighbouring companies. Fighting patrol, they'll be pretty heavily armed; they usually don't go for long periods of time. Reconnaissance patrols, well they can go out for three or four

01:30 days, sometimes up to a week. They're looking for any signs of any Japanese activity or whatever. Natives, what's occupied, what food stuffs there if any, how the rivers are, because a lot of the rivers, they're not just as they're drawn on the map when you go and visit them, could be quite different, especially in flood time.

02:00 The reconnaissance patrols, they'll take more food with them, won't be as heavily armed either, and they're usually not expecting to be in danger, although they could be, they've got to be prepared for it, but they're not really expecting it. The fighting patrol, well, you never

02:30 know what's going to happen. You're really, you know, very often, the fighting patrol; they'll be action, shooting like I've just described. And you don't take much food. Instead of food, you'll have ammunition. The men, they're picked by the company commander, or the platoon commander,

03:00 and anyone whose likely to be sick, they judge the people's conditions to date, whether they're fit, they don't have colds or temperature or anything like that. They have a – try to give them a good night's rest the night before which is not always possible. Then the men themselves – if there's – sometimes

03:30 there's differences of opinion living under those circumstances, they'll be a bit of friction like we said earlier, the mates have had a bit of a fall out, well, they tried to avoid that sort of thing, not take the two of them together, because they might start an argument and draw attention. But that rarely ever happened though.

If that sort of situation did come up and people had a fight, did they hold grudges?

04:00 Oh usually, not usually no. That's one thing. If there's a fight, a grudge fight, now this used to happen in the training battalions you see, the young fellas. How good they were. Righto, that would be a night's fun, that was the night, you'd have the ring, it'd be set up and all the crowd would come. The whole crowd, proper boxing, they'd have the gloves on and they laid into it. That used to be good entertainment, those grudge fights. But over there you never had those circumstances, the grudge fights

04:30 at Milne Bay, there were a couple of them. I think it shouldn't have happened, but one fella had teeth knocked out. Bare fists. But it was good entertainment, a crowd around. But as soon as it was finished, shake hands, finished. I'm the best man, that's the end of the story. And they worked quite good afterwards, it's amazing. They were western fellas, they were really tough, the reinforcements we had

05:00 from. I never emphasised that very much. From western Queensland. They were some good men amongst them; I had some of them in my section. They were very good, I admired them, but they couldn't shoot better than me. They thought they could, they were going to, but they couldn't. I held that one. And I got nothing to show for it either. But back to those patrols, no one, very rarely

05:30 you'd find a man who wanted to go patrol. Odd times you would. I had, and it's a bit difficult when a fellow wants to go with you and I had a situation in Milne Bay, I was going out and one of the cooks, he wanted to come with me because he'd heard the stories – Glen takes a patrol out they'll usually find something to eat, you know. And he wanted to come with Glen, I says, "Why do you want to come with me?"

06:00 "Oh, you don't seem to get lost." that sort of thing. And I didn't want to take him because he was in the cook house, wasn't as fit as what the section men were. Anyhow, I spoke to the company commander about it, and he thought I should let him go, you know, I should accept him. I suppose that was his side, it didn't worry him,

06:30 if we had to carry him home or something. But he came, I took him, and I was sort of a little bit concerned. But he stuck to his guns, it was his fault he was there, I didn't favour him at all, he had to do what everyone else done, and he was suffering. He was suffering. But he didn't complain. And he got home all right,

07:00 I think was a two day one. But he didn't want to come any more. I was glad because he wasn't as alert, as good condition as the section, the regular patrol men. Any more on patrols?

How does a patrol move? Like I've read about some arrow head formations

No,

07:30 that's usually when you go into action, the arrow head position. A patrol in single file, you have the scouts, sometimes you have two forward scouts. Then it's usually the section leader, like myself, but I usually had one, I didn't have two, because you get – it makes your rear weak. Then there'd be myself, and I'd have an Owen gun, when

08:00 we got into, I'd given the –snipers rifle wasn't successful in the jungle. I never told you that. On account of the aperture sight, with the steaminess, it used to smear, it wasn't as clear. And when we went into action, I was given an Owen gun in place of a sniper's rifle. Which I liked, I liked the Owen gun. Now getting back to the section, I had the Owen gun and following me with the Owen gun there was the Bren

08:30 gunner. He was usually a good big strong man. And I had a very good one in New Guinea. As a matter of fact, he was wounded with a Japanese grenade; he had all the bakelite into his face. He carried those black marks for the rest of his life. He was one of the best men I ever knew in my life. And he was my Bren gunner.

What made him one of the best?

Well he was big, he was strong, he was brave, everything about the man,

09:00 I never heard him swear. He was single and I don't know how some woman never had him. Oh look, he was good tempered, he was honest, he was clean, he used to, when we used to raise the tents, and I had a system. A story I should have told you about, before the rest of them. He'd be in one corner and another strong bloke in another corner, and this little fellow that had trouble afterwards with his health, he used to be in the Boy Scouts, he could tie the ropes quick,

09:30 everyone had his job. And I'd be in this corner, and the machine gun in that corner of the tent, and we just had our gear down, we had the billy boiling, and others were still trying to put their tents up. We had it organised. Now getting back to the positions in the patrol, the Bren gunner next, and then it didn't matter who sort of came after that but the man with the – if we had a stretcher bearer,

10:00 he'd usually be at the end of the patrol.

Several times you were a forward scout, can you briefly describe the job of the forward scout?

You need good eyes, good ears, and a good heart I think, a good mind. I think to be an efficient

10:30 forward scout you don't want anything wrong with you. You've got to be very observant. I used to always watch for anything broken and I'd never walk, usually in single file, I'd never walk right on the sand track, or the mud track, I liked to walk on the edge of it. And look for the tracks, always liked to read the tracks. My father taught me a little about tracking and I don't know why but

11:00 I found it very, very useful. Even though you won't see a foot mark, you'll see a stick break, you don't know, now what broke that stick? Must have been weight to break that stick, crush the grass, all those little things like that. Bush bent over, any sign of any disturbance whatsoever. And you're listening all the time as well, and you're looking any tree that might be a good tree for someone to hide behind, you give that special attention. If you, imagine see, if someone

11:30 gets someone to go out, a signaller to go out, you don't talk, you get someone to signal, you know each other's signals and you go out and you look behind that and the rest keep down. There was a lot of signal work because you're not able – you don't make a noise, you see.

Can you show me some of the signals?

(Charles shows signals)

12:00 **If there's danger or something, a look on their faces, you don't need anything else. You come across signal wires, they sort of (motions with hands) up and down, you'd point to something and that's where you'd look and see it for yourself. Marvellous how dry your lips would get in those situations,**

12:30 **you'd want to drink more water than what you'd normally would and then you always want to, actually there's times where I'm frightened to drink water, this was when we went over the Mubo, you'd make the noise opening the water bottle with the cork, you'd be frightened you'll make a noise. With the water rattling, just, even little things like that; you've got to think about.**

13:00 **It's very tiring, as I say, your mouth gets dry and you can't, you're afraid you're gonna make a noise, and yet you've got to communicate with the fellas behind you.**

How does constantly being on edge like that effect you physiologically?

I suppose it'd make it tiring. I don't know, we used to change, you wouldn't

13:30 be a scout all day, forward scout all day. I think an hour or two. I like to change them round, we'd take our turn. It depends how dangerous it was, if some bloke was more observant than others and if, you were going through a dangerous, you were expecting to find somebody, well then you wouldn't send a fellow that you thought doesn't see as good as some other one in the section. You'd send the one out

14:00 that was most proficient, in lieu of someone you didn't have your whole confidence in. There's a lot of thinking about it. I used to think and study. I don't know about study. Who's the best man for the job?

You mentioned to Kiernan just at the end of the last tape, about how the Japanese on Bougainville, were self supporting prisoners of war,

14:30 **can you describe any times when you might have felt sorry for the Japanese?**

No. I never felt sorry for them.

What sort of opinion did you have of them?

Oh, well I never had a good opinion of them. The experience of Cowra and you know, the natives in New Guinea, I did admire their

15:00 capacity to fight, as far as soldiers were concerned. They were the tops. If they were killed they'd go to heaven, it was an honour to their family. It was a different view of things that we had. No, I don't know, I used to admire their ability in their gardens, the methodical

15:30 way that they, under the circumstances, all hand work and how the gardens were laid out and how healthy their crops were. And their uniform. That was very skilled. Very skilled. But they weren't good marksman, thank goodness.

How about that time when you found the pictures that you showed me? How did it make you feel looking at someone's family?

16:00 That puts a different aspect on it now really. Now there's a family, pretty much like we would be, the photos on the wall. The kiddies there. But they looked, a bit sad, the women looking so sad, and you know, that made me think, they're families too, they have families too. That did make me see it a bit differently you know, that's a fact. That's a fact.

Did those thoughts stay in your mind?

16:30 Yeah.

What sort of ways would they affect you?

Oh, they're more like us than I thought they were.

Did this make it harder?

No, I don't think so.

What about when you'd see Japanese bodies, all that sort of thing, did you think about it in a different way than previously?

17:00 Possibly may do. I don't know, I possibly may do, after seeing those photos. Because that's apparently – a well to do Japanese family there. And those two fellas they were going to war, we know that. And one of the fellas probably seen me, its very likely that he'd seen me and he set up that ambush, that could be well possible.

17:30 Because it was after, and they were freshly thrown out, that morning. And he was the leader, he was an officer. And they all thrown up together in a panic, to get away, and they got away. And whether or not they got right over those mountains where we went, that was the way they would have had to go, I don't know. May have been lucky. I don't think they went by barge.

18:00 I don't how they could've gone by barge, because we had control of the beach.

Did you ever wonder why the Japanese, just the soldiers, the day to day soldiers that you were meeting in conflict, why they were fighting, or what they were fighting for?

Oh, I dunno. We just regarded them as targets.

18:30 It was just killed or be killed. It was a very serious business, your life was on the line, I'd never had any qualms. I wouldn't, don't know if it would be the same now or not, it was a long time ago, but I don't, well, I never shot any in New Guinea I know that, and I don't think I shot any in Bougainville, if the opportunity was there,

19:00 I wouldn't think twice. Same with the break out in Cowra. If they were taking me I wouldn't have hesitated, would've had no qualms whatsoever. It was him or me. I was going to fight for dear life. You would too.

You mentioned that the unit

19:30 **was disbanded quite soon after the atom bomb fell?**

That's right.

Was that emotional?

Well, it happened too quick to be emotional I think. I thought we would have lasted sooner. It was in a way, there were so many leaving, they were being split up very rapidly, faster than what I thought. No, I wouldn't say it was emotional.

20:00 Everyone, everybody's mind was to get home to Australia. No matter what. That was the object.

So where did you head?

I went to Ribau, they call it Rabaul now. I always seem to call it Ribau, cause that was, we knew it as Ribau. And I went from Bougainville in the [HMAS] Kanimbla.

20:30 You heard of the Kanimbla, no doubt?. And, coming into the harbour at Rabaul, I thought what a place to be, there was the volcanoes blowing out smoke and these islands that had been lifted up in the earthquake. '37 or '36 or sometime in the thirties. And it was growing trees on it, in a short space of time, and we landed there we could see the American bombers had blasted and blasted

21:00 the place. And the smell of the pumice stone all on the water's edge. On the harbour there and the volcanic fumes. I was glad to get out of it. The Rabaul, out on the ridges it was very pretty, looking down over it, lovely scenic area. But I never trusted that volcano. And the Germans they had built a big – they had poincianas

21:30 about two mile – a row of them. And there was mango trees, on there like a cross, a big giant cross, mango trees with a cross. And the Americans used to line up on this line, on the poincianas, that's the story, on their bombing raids. Because the Japanese cut a lot of them down, they nearly all cut down when I was there. I was amazed at the amount of wounded, local people that was there with damaged arms and legs and scars, it was amazing, they must have suffered terribly the natives.

22:00 American bombings. But I wasn't there for long.

What were you there for?

I was guarding the prisoners. They used to get them out of the barracks at 6 o'clock in the morning until 6 o'clock at night. I always had my own gun. I don't know why I had that job, as an NCO,

22:30 there was live ammunition, I never trusted them. I never got close to them.

What were they like?

Oh, very sullen. They hadn't really give in you know. They were sort of wild features about them, like they wasn't properly civilised, that crowd that I had.

Where had they come from?

Well, Japan, I don't know just where in Japan. One of them I could see was different

23:00 to the others. I didn't know he could speak English. They didn't let on, you know, what they knew, what they didn't know. Anyhow, I heard him speak a couple of words of English, somehow or other, I overheard it, and watched my chance, I got to him on the side, sometimes we put some cake out to them, sometimes we were sent cake and the fellas had gone home and the cake still come there. Whether it was mouldy or not, they ate the lot. I think it was one of those sessions.

23:30 I asked him where he comes from see? And, what he was going to do when he went home. "I work for the government tourist bureau in Tokyo." – as clear as that! Took me back a bit. As clear, in perfect English. And there he was amongst all these prisoners! What he was I don't know, he would have had a rank of some

24:00 kind.

And did you have a discussion with him?

He didn't want to talk – he didn't want to talk. That was, they didn't seem to be cooperative in that way. Didn't want to communicate. They just sort of – like they hadn't properly surrendered.

Were you interested in them?

Not really.

24:30 **I'm just interested because you asked him where he worked and that sort of thing.**

Well I could see he was different to the others. After – I was only there two or three weeks, a month or something. And I could see there was something different about him. I worked it in a way, it didn't seem like I was cornering him, trying to be a bit cunning, whether it worked or not, I don't know,

25:00 but I didn't expect that answer. I expected an answer. Well, I couldn't really surprised – but – see he was different, I didn't really know what sort of answer I'd get. I thought it could have been an interesting one. But I didn't think it would be that interesting.

Were all of the guards for the POWs [Prisoners of War],

25:30 **had they all been in New Guinea or in action?**

I would think so. As far as I know, New Guinea or Bougainville. I only knew two. One was the son of the school teacher down there where (UNCLEAR) lived, and the other, the other was the fella in my section that had those problems, after the war.

26:00 He was there. That's the last time I spoke to him. He loved sailing; we went out and had a sail on the harbour. That was the only two that I knew there.

Was it hard for some people, having fought the Japanese for so long and then having to interact with them at times? Even

26:30 **though they were being guarded?**

Well, it would have been for me. I sort of – I've changed a bit now, as you said, those photos, seeing the family there like that, it puts a different aspect on it. What Japan's achieved after the war, its amazing, their capacity to work, you've got admire them.

27:00 Their get up and go, their capacity to work and do things.

And did you find it hard to guard them? A confronting task?

Never found it really hard, but I always glad when the time was – when

27:30 my shift was finished. It was rather boring; it seemed to take a long time because we didn't speak. I was a guard, and they were working.

What were they walking on?

Digging out weeds, cleaning up around the place. Some of them sitting down, some of them standing up. They were sort of taking it easy, really.

28:00 **Would they talk and interact amongst themselves?**

Not a lot. They'd be a bit; they never talked amongst themselves no.

How did their morale seem?

I don't know just how to put that. They were, they seemed to be a bit sullen, they didn't seem to, sometimes I thought, they thought they hadn't really lost the war.

28:30 There was still some fight left in them. I wasn't completely satisfied that they had surrendered, because I think, if they would counter attack in Bougainville, with all those numbers of men, could have been a different story there. Very different story. And we didn't realise that. We were told they had the same number that we had. And we had all the fire power, the mechanic, all the air

29:00 support and all that. They never had that. They never had transport, they never had air support. But they had the numbers. And we could've been over run, I think we could have been over run.

Was Bougainville a hard campaign for you to fight?

Oh yeah, I wasn't there that long really. But worse than New Guinea.

29:30 Even though we never had air raids, we had shelling.

Did you lose many people in Bougainville?

Yes, quite a few yes.

You and Kiernan were talking earlier about, whether that campaign should have happened, and giving your opinion on that, how hard was it to lose men under those circumstances?

Well we didn't really know that,

30:00 at that time. We thought they would collapse there any time; it would be a walk over. But further it went, the more they dug their toes in. The more they counter attacked and infiltrated. It was only afterwards, when the full count was made, how many we'd lost and what had we achieved there. That was, we didn't know, we just did what we

30:30 were told, the best we could.

What's your response to that now?

I think it was a waste of money and I should have never went over there. Nor should the battalion. The Americans just took in, and invaded the place, took an area. And that's all that should have been done. And they went away and the Australians come in,

31:00 they see the Australians sitting in the perimeter like the Americans were, well, they decided we were going to take the island. The Australian Government, they were to blame, I don't know if, General Blamey wanted more medals for more generals, I don't know. But it was pretty – I used to – some of us, you couldn't, there wasn't a need for it. You just got to look at a map.

31:30 All the water around it and the Japanese never had any control of the seas any more, so why?

What's your opinion of General Blamey?

Oh, I don't want give an opinion on him. He wasn't popular, I didn't know the man. I only sided with him once in the whole campaign, and I never sided with MacArthur once. I couldn't.

32:00 **Tell me about when your time in Rabaul ended?**

When it ended I left, that's when I headed for home then. On a liberty ship. I was glad of that, that was near the end of January. It seemed to take a long time to get home, on the liberty ship, it was fairly rough too. The blokes were sick everywhere.

32:30 We never had much to eat. A couple of sausages and a drink of tea a day. It wasn't an easy trip. No sort of toilet facilities at all, we all went down near the bottom – oh it was a stinking mess, worst boat trip I've ever had in my life. Terrible, all the way back to Brisbane.

What was it like arriving in Brisbane?

That was good, coming up the Brisbane River.

33:00 Then getting on the trucks, the big trailers, trucks and people waving. We were home at last, all in one piece. That was the happy part of it, coming home in one piece. All that, and come home in one piece. Some time after I went down to the old family doctor in Beenleigh, and he give me a real good examination. He says, well,

33:30 cause he was my platoon commander, right at the very start of the war. He examined me to go into the army. And he give me this examination, bending over, all of this, well, "Glen." he says, "after all that, you're in good shape. But you've got a little bit of arthritis." And I still got it. "That's all that's wrong with you." Although I did have a little hurt in the back in Caloundra.

34:00 That came back a little bit later on in life. After I got into real hard work again. But it hadn't affected my army career.

Who met you when you came into Brisbane?

Oh, nobody. That was all, all those things, the fanfare, that was all over then. No marches down the street, that was all forgotten about then. The next march was Anzac Day then, we were sick of marching anyway.

34:30 It was get home, and get out. But then I was at the – I went up to Wacol – they wanted recruits for the occupational forces in Japan, they wanted me to go from Bougainville. I wouldn't have interest in that, I'd been in service that long, I was sick of it. I want to get back here. I was in, well, wasn't

35:00 in charge of them, there occupational forces, there was quite a lot of them there. Some of them were coming back in who had dropped out before war finished. And they were coming back in to have another turn. They thought, they'll be no danger, we'll go to Japan in the occupational forces. A good trip! A few of those, couldn't blame them. Couldn't settle down into army life. They were a bit rowdy at times too. Public address,

35:30 I had to give a public address – speak – to address, we had a couple of hundred there on the parade ground. And the officers were still, they were still hadn't arrived, 8 o'clock, what ever the time was, they were supposed to be there. They hadn't arrived, and I got these fellas on my own, and they're starting to misbehave, and I had to lecture to them over a public address.

And how long did you spend working at Wacol?

36:00 Oh, for three months. February, March, half of April

And when were you de-mobbed [demobilised?

That was April 1945, '46 rather.

What was your experience of settling back into civilian life?

Oh that wasn't easy, it wasn't as easy as I thought it was be. I found out when

36:30 I came back and got into managing things for myself. I tried to manage things for myself, there were so

many shortages. You were more or less nobody in the population, you went from royalty in Sydney to forty-six, they're common everywhere, soldiers, returned soldiers. As a matter of fact, in some instances, we were charged full prices and a bit more. You know, you want to buy things.

37:00 Get started. So I got a good builder, to build a home, to build a first home. He was very good, he didn't overcharge. Because I was able to supply the timber, and they had a problem buying timber, so that suited him. I heard people often say you get malaria afterwards, I never got, couple of times I had it

37:30 just a bit of it, bit of a temperature, a bit of a cold. And I thought I was going to get it, but it just passed on. Gradually went completely away. And I had some Atebrin, I bought some Atebrin, just in case, and I was going to drop them myself, I never needed them when I got home. But I wasn't the man I was, when I came home, as when I left. I never regained that vigour.

38:00 **Why do you think that is?**

Oh I don't know, I was getting old. I never sort of regained that. There was a time, when I went away, I would think back, look at it. I could do anything, miss a night's sleep, didn't make any difference. Just sort of kept going. And I still keep going.

38:30 Didn't like, didn't like looking at the girls either.

And did you get married when you got back?

Yeah.

Had you known your wife before?

She used to write to me.

What were those letters like? What as it like receiving them?

Well, like all girls letter are like I suppose. Tell you how they love you. And hope you're coming home soon.

And how did this help you?

39:00 **That's something I missed, marvellous the things you miss out on. I think that the letters, that Mother used to write to me regularly, two of us away, she had two to write to, in different areas. To receive the mail, it was incredible how it would lift you, can't think of the word, make you happy, anyhow,**

39:30 **for once in a while. Some of the fellas who weren't getting mail regularly, you could see, how mail would come in and they never got any, you could see that their spirits were down. It was sad. I don't think people realised. How important it is to write letters to soldiers. I didn't get time to write much back, and the censorship**

40:00 **was so heavy, well, is it? – well, they won't get the news because it would be cut out. You could only say a few things – you were well, blah blah. "Hope to hear from you soon."**

Tape 9

00:41 **If you could talk to us about the mateship at war? In your experience?**

I think the mateship angle was one of the most important things

01:00 after the war, when you returned to civilian life because those mateships were forged under the heat of battle, air raids and group marches and all the hardships of war, together, and you knew everything about it each other. And all the families, there was no secrets, and then when you return to civilian life and you meet up with these fellows in the reunions, especially the reunions,

01:30 you don't realise all the chatter that goes on there. All of those years ago, your memories revive, and some are forgotten, and the other one would remember and you'd bring all these things back together. The old mateship, the Australian mateship, I don't think it happens everywhere, but there's something about that Australian mateship, where they'll risk their lives to go and rescue their mate, it's really amazing, it

02:00 carries through for so long. And I overheard one of the fellows, after we came back, on the Mubo that time, walking past a dug out and they were underneath and they said, "How did your number one go?" "Oh he was good, our leading scout he was, our leading scout, we couldn't leave him, couldn't leave him." Well, what he meant by that, if I had been mortally wounded, those young fellas would have tried to get me out, would've risked their own lives. When you get to that stage,

02:30 that stage is with you forever. Because I'd do the same for them and they'd do for me. And you know

that. It's very deep, especially in Australians.

Was there a particular wound that you feared more than other ones?

Oh yeah, bullet through the stomach. That's when you're out on the front.

03:00 **And why is that?**

I dunno. Well, you're the first, the closest and you think you're going to be knocked off first and they're going to get a good shot at you because you're unaware that they're there.

And what would a wound to the stomach mean?

Slow death, in those circumstances, in the jungle.

What are the strongest memories you have of the war?

03:30 The air raids and Milne Bay, I suppose. The first jungle training, that's memorable. Raid in Townsville, the first raid there, everyone thought was terrible, which was a joke, as far as I was concerned. The plane trips,

04:00 and the march of the Americans, you know, their fortresses and their equipment. How they could move things and how they'd operate. Didn't seem to worry if they lost an aeroplane or any vehicles, Uncle Sam's got plenty more. That was

04:30 – stock required? – Uncle Sam's got plenty more. We were always careful with our equipment; we couldn't afford to waste, to damage our equipment unnecessarily. Oh, there's lots of things I suppose, the boat trip over, and Sydney, I'll never forget Sydney. Just unreal, strangers would treat you the way they did.

05:00 Of course, Sister Gleeson.

How did the whole experience change you?

Made me old before my time, I thought. I might be thinking wrong.

What were some good aspects?

The good aspect, well,

05:30 'six bob a day tourists', I suppose we did see a lot that we wouldn't have seen otherwise. The way a lot of people treated us during the war was very good too. We had, we were respected far more than fellas that never went away, that never wore a uniform.

06:00 That was one thing, you felt more important. There was a proudness about it, I was proud to be an Australian soldier. Pride: very important I think. Invited to people's homes, and the people in Brisbane,

06:30 they've been friends ever since, well, they've died since now, but you sort of had solid friends.

What did you think about the men of eligible age who stayed at home?

Some of them weren't medically fit and some were, like the family farms, they couldn't be done without them,

07:00 the farmer had to produce food to keep the armies going, the people at work, the munitions factory and all that, they had to eat. The Americans, a lot of food produced for the Americans, in Australia and they had a role to play, a very important role to play. I never had any grudge against, most of the ones that I knew that stayed home anyway. They may have been, probably was a few in some places that could

07:30 have been there but weren't there. I wasn't critical of that aspect of it.

What did you think of the physical beauty of the places that you fought in?

I didn't find in Port Moresby, but as far as scenery, beyond the hill behind Port Moresby looking down over the harbour, late afternoon,

08:00 with the sun going down, and the sunset and the colour in the clouds, and the coral in the water, the colour of the coral in the water. It was the prettiest sight that I ever saw in my life. It was fantastic. And some of the coral in New Guinea, even between Salamaua and Lae, the boat, you could see the colour of the coral, fantastic, just nature.

08:30 And the mountains, the Stanley Ranges, flying over there. So many things you know, that were so spectacular that you wouldn't have seen otherwise. May have. But I enjoyed the travelling. Except the first trip to Townsville, in the suburban carriages, I didn't enjoy that.

How did you feel about fighting a war in these beautiful places?

09:00 Oh, we never, when the war was in Milne Bay, that was, the scenery there, the ranges, I hated to see the damage to the environment. In Buna and Lae, those places were flattened, stagnant bomb craters was

there. Of course, that was hard to picture what it was like before the war, but it was devastation.

09:30 And Rabaul, that would have been picturesque. The earthquake, the crater blowing up, that's ruined Rabaul.

How did you feel about the local people there?

10:00 Whereabouts?

In PNG [Papua New Guinea] and then in Bougainville?

How did I find them? What did I think of them, well, I couldn't talk detrimental about them. I felt sorry for them, I had a lot of respect for them, those fellows, those fuzzy wuzzy angels,

10:30 and those fellas there, working in the gangs, carriers, apart from the stretcher bearers. How hard they toiled and for what they got out of it, I think they haven't much due to them really; I would have liked to see them receive more benefit for the job they done. And I think, I go back to the nursing sister and the nurses,

11:00 there's two sets of people that I think didn't get as much recognition as what they should have done. That's the Australian Army Nursing Services and the natives in New Guinea. Well, I don't know about the war, but I didn't see much of them at all. But what I did see, they were so mutilated. An arm lost, the loss of arms and legs and wounds. It must have been horrific, really horrific. I found them, my dealings with them,

11:30 with the pidgin English, and I was looking after work gangs at Milne Bay. They steadily worked, they didn't work very hard, but they were clearing up the coconuts around our camps, steadily going all the time, but they wouldn't work in the rain, because their hair would get wet, they had to keep their hair dry, their woolly hair, they had to keep that dry. I must say that I respected them for what they were,

12:00 they never had the opportunities as what we had, and I would've liked to see, well I haven't been up there to see since, but I would've like to see them and their families receive more than what they have done, more recognition that has been given to them.

One argument I heard mentioned about the Bougainville campaign, said that part of the reason it was put on was to save the native people there,

12:30 **what do you think of that argument?**

I didn't see many native people there to be quite honest. It was a PIB battalion, there was a Papua Infantry Battalion, they were fighting there. They were done amongst the Japanese lines. It was a no man's land like we did. Apart from that I've seen very few natives there in Bougainville; they were very dark skinned,

13:00 the people I did see, people with very, very black skin. As far as the fighting area, I didn't see any villages there. Might have been inland a bit, I was mostly on the coast or down on the Buin Road. I can't really speak on that one, because I never had any contact with them, not like New Guinea, when I was talking to them, mixing with them, controlling them,

13:30 that never happened with Bougainville. I never had a conversation with any of them.

You mentioned cases of heroism, were there any cases of cowardice that you came across?

That's a hard thing to answer. Being frightened, is that cowardice? There was a couple of instances, I suppose, when blokes

14:00 tended to run before they should've done. But I can't honestly say there was an act of true cowardice, that's amazing you ask that because, no, it wouldn't have taken much for some to, if I had run, they would have been gone too, quick. I think the leadership comes in a bit, that's where you've got control yourself to set an example. Colonel Amies said to me, they'll follow

14:30 you, there's a lot in that. Set an example. No – as far as – in my section, there was no, I never knew any to be – run when they shouldn't have – left us in the lurch. They stood to their guns. A lot of those reinforcements in Bougainville I didn't know very well –

15:00 but in New Guinea we were a team and we'd been together for a long while. Even when those bombs were raining down in Milne Bay, everyone stayed; they never bolted, never bolted. If they would've done, if supposing one of them would have broken, he would have had a lash of my tongue, quick and lively, he might have come back.

15:30 And the others would have been on him too; you see there was a team spirit there. One breaks, three or four go against him. He thinks twice.

You might have answered this already, but what kind of beliefs sustained you and the other men in times of danger?

I dunno. How do I answer that?

16:00 Well, I think that the times have changed. I had confidence you know, somehow I had confidence in my ability and confidence in my men. There was a solidarity there between us and when danger comes and we were all working as a team,

16:30 we know we're not going to let each other down. You believe in your fellow men, we're all in this together and we're going to see this through. And you know, the company would have known me, I didn't have an enemy in the whole company.

17:00 I knew that. Very comforting. No, I don't think I did.

I'd better cover some post war stuff, before it's too late. Tell us about what you got into when you came back, work wise?

17:30 Well, the first thing was to get a place to build a house and to get married. I bought her ladyship up here, I don't know whether she liked the place, or whether she didn't really, she didn't tell me. I wasn't really too keen on pioneering up here after all that I'd done. I sort of changed my mind on that. So I had to find another place, buy another place to build and I tried along the highway,

18:00 no one wanted to sell along the Pacific Highway. They were holding their land there, and I wanted to get near the highway, and not be too far from the shops and schools. So the place was not quite so remote. I found out – people I'd known too – the place was vacant, it was up for sale, and I went to the agent to buy it and

18:30 he thought it was ridiculous. I offered a price and he thought it was ridiculous. Then he wrote to the people and they put the price up a little more than I offered them and I couldn't get my hands on it quick enough, and then had to build a house, get a permit, build a house. And a bloke who gave me the permit to build the house, was the company commander at Caloundra, Gordon Barton,

19:00 that was handy, I had no problems there. Built half a house, it was terribly hard to get roofing materials and things like that. Anyhow, I pioneered on, and built it. And of course I had to put fences up and sheds, and got some flowers, house cow and some kids, and I travelled from there to here to work, about four miles, everyday,

19:30 get the farm going and cutting timber. The timber was growing quite well during the war, and that's what I planned on, I made pretty good money. Yes, I think I worked a plan, there was a building boom on which everyone knew was going to happen and all the mills was wanting my timber, and I was pretty successful. But then the things is,

20:00 I never had the stamina; my stamina seemed to be gone. I went to the doctor, and the doctor said, you're working too long of hours. He might have been right, he said my blood count wasn't quite high enough, I was a bit anaemic, he gave me some medicine to get my blood count up and then I wasn't wrong, I was whistling.

20:30 We soldiered on in civilian life and made it.

Tell us about how you got into politics?

I was elected into politics. The point was, we used to be in the Tingalpa Shire here, and in 1949 the government decided they'd amalgamate a lot of the shires.

21:00 This was in Redland Shire here. This was in Albert as well, the boundary was right on my line, the boundary on that side and the house on this side. So that meant we were administrated from Southport, and that was a long way, we were right at the

21:30 end of the shire boundary. It went from Brisbane city right to the NSW border. And of course that's where the money went. Canals, down the southern end. We had two councillors – an old fellow. Oh, he wasn't that old – a well known Brisbane family man; he was living down here on the highway. We had a few councillors and none of them seemed to be working I thought.

22:00 He got in there and he seemed to be socialising and wanted this done, and there's no money to get anything done, and blow me, I'd helped him build a progress hall, I'd done a lot of that and another returned soldier too, we both got into it. Spent a lot of money and a lot of hard work and time, and the people started to say, "Why don't you run for council?" In fact they wanted me go to council as soon as I got home from the war.

22:30 With the change of shire, they wanted me to go. I never had any intentions of going into that sort of thing. Anyway, there was a bit of pushing and shoving and I was nominated. He didn't think he'd be beaten. He thought he was a sure thing. What did he call me, Bodgie! Bodgie was the word in those times. He was a funny… Bodgie!

23:00 The bodgie got the crowd behind me and then he thought he might lose his seat, so he got one of my friends to stand as well. And that was four standing, you see, and that split the vote up. One at Woodridge and one on this side. I thought it might too, I wasn't that confident in the finish, the way they'd set things up. And the fella rang me up, he said he was running, he said he didn't realise or something, but I didn't believe him. But anyway I won quite comfortably, I put him out. God, he was offended too, he never

23:30 got over it. The bodgie beat him, beaten by a bodgie! A big business man from Brisbane. His name was R.J. Hinze, he was the chairman. Do you remember R.J. Hinze? You heard of him? Minister for Local Government, minister for everything. He was chairman of the council. So I went down there fighting fit, demanding that this be done, and that be done. And I was sticking to my guns.

24:00 I had prepared a very good case. He said these roads couldn't be done, end of story, he was going to do this. And I prepared a good case, the reasons why, spoke to the adjacent council and the chairman of finance, after hearing that, he didn't know what to do! I knew, as soon as I spoke to the chairman of finance, I had him, I would have had his vote, Hinze was in trouble.

24:30 And he knew it too, and he was waving his fist up. You know the chairman of the council, a big fellow, he was waving his fist at me, and I thought, "I've got him, I've got him!" I had no reaction to all this and that made him all the worse. He'd done his block [lost his temper] properly, I'd never seen a chairman do this before, chairman of the council doing his block, a new council too. Anyhow, the thing never went to the vote, and he gave me a big lecture, what I should have done, what I shouldn't have done.

25:00 He called me afterwards, oh foul language, all sorts of things, see but that just flowed off, that just made him all the worse, when he couldn't get any reaction from me. They were early days, we had some arguments, Russell, we were in the same age group, he didn't go away. We – always in public – we always respected each other,

25:30 publicly, we got along quite well, really fundamentally, we really were. But we never let our brawls get out into the public. Later on when they formed another shire, Logan came into being. He wanted me to be the mayor. He thought I had the ability to be the mayor. And he stood by me, which was handy,

26:00 then we had a few differences about the way things were going in Logan, I wasn't agreeing with that. And we fell out again, had a few blasts over the phone but I say, it never went public. When it was finished up and I left, the CJC [Criminal Justice Commission] come in on the act, and they wanted to know what was happening, all the crooked deals that were being done. And I had nothing; I was as clean as a whistle.

26:30 The council car and all of this, it all went on tape. And then when they finished up, I was clean, I wouldn't be anything else see? The council was, it was a disappointment in a way, a different kettle of fish to the Fire Board. I was representing the council on the Fire Board, as a Fire Board member. And I finished up the chairman there,

27:00 and it was so rewarding, it was to me, because I understood why, see the bushfires, and I had the cooperation of the board, every board member, we worked as a team, like in the section. I got them all on side, and we worked as a team and we hammered the government, and I was going on deputations to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Emergency Services, and we were

27:30 getting the money in. And these fire stations were going up everywhere, over ten stations over the period of twelve years. A fellow rang me up this morning, we had the phone off the hook, and he rang me at lunch time again, one of the members, hadn't spoken to him for years. He's what we done, it was the best board, we never should have done away with fire boards and I fully agree with him. Different organisations that you're in where you really feel like you're happy with what you've done, and that's with you for all your life.

28:00 Then there was the Committee of Direction [a marketing organization for fruit and vegetables], I was in that for 18 years too. That was the biggest organisation in the southern hemisphere, of its kind you know. For the fruit and vegetables and the, branches in all the eastern states. We were a big show, I was on the Advisory Committee for Gatton College, as a representative of the committee of directors. Oh, I got around, I was very busy, very busy, I think I should have been home with the family

28:30 more. And I was visiting the other capital cities again, seen the old places where I was during the war.

What was it like to be mayor?

Well, there was good and bad there too. A lot of social events. Things that people wanted you to attend and you couldn't. And the ones that you didn't have time to see and they thought, well, why'd you go there, why didn't you come to us. There's a time when

29:00 I said to Hinzey – he was the Minister for Local Government, we knew each other so well – and I says, "We want eleven seats." and we had ten. And I was having a casting vote, and politics came into it and I never wanted politics ever into it. I treated everybody the same. ten votes, five each way, and I'd have to give the casting vote. When you give the casting vote you've got to, you've got to take the blame,

29:30 because you can't win.

Did you have an allegiance?

You mean?

With a political party?

No, I never, people always claimed that I did, but I didn't. I wasn't a member of any political party. I was a member of the National Party to begin with, but the politics, I never allowed that to mix with the council. In these days, people tended to criticise the National Party,

30:00 but in those days, the National Party was a good team of men. And I was proud to belong to them. Because they were sensible, they worked hard, they done their job and as far as I was aware, they were incorruptible. Even with Joh Bjelke-Petersen [Queensland Premier] there, when I was Mayor of Logan City, I could ring Joh Bjelke-Petersen at his special red phone, and no one else could answer that phone but Joh at a certain time. Now I could ring that phone, and he would say "This is Joh", we knew each other. He knew what I was saying was truthful,

30:30 and I knew what he was saying was truthful. And I had a very good relationship there and never, at any time, did he suggest that I do deals with anybody, or anything that wasn't fair and square. And it amazes me to think, the man, what he'd done for Queensland, the way they treated him with this court case, the CJC, there's something wrong. Not that he didn't do anything wrong, he made

31:00 a few decisions that wasn't really good, everyone does. I did too. As far as saying what he'd done, a lot of those things, as far as my experience with him, he never wasn't right.

What policies or achievements were you happy with?

One of the achievements I think that wasn't generally realised, was the parks and the

31:30 open spaces that I was responsible for. In Logan City, and that was when I was still on Albert that was happening. I could see houses, houses – where are the schools? – where are the shops? where are the churches? – where are the infrastructure for people to have enjoyment. Parks and things, they weren't thinking about it. That was one of the reasons why I went in there too, I fought for that, and some of these big areas, Underwood Park and these big areas, I was behind that, Springwood Park, the housing department

32:00 wanted to develop it, it was me and old Joh that blocked that. That's a park and that will be a park forever up there now. It could have been all houses, all that picturesque hill side, would have been all houses now. I stopped that, with old Joh to block in cabinet. Through the minister, Joh's the only one that can do it, and he went and seen Joh like I asked him. We were talking just like we're talking here and that's been held for the public forever.

32:30 Then there was the hundred and fifty acres over here and all these quite big area of land everywhere, Venman Park down there. I'd done a lot there behind the scenes to secure those parks for the public for all time. Hopefully.

What lessons did you learn from the war that helped you in politics?

Oh, I found it vastly different. I think it may have been the other way around.

33:00 The solidarity in the war, with your fellow men in uniform, that didn't exist when you got into politics of the council, I don't really say I was into politics that much. Operating in the council, they'd change their mind from one day to the next. Even before a meeting, you'd have a meeting before, and we'll decide on this you see? Don't get involved in questions or debate,

33:30 we'll just push this through. And then someone asks a question and then someone gets up to answer it and before you know where you are, you're sitting in the chair and you can't stop them from speaking. And then one has to reply, and before you know where you are, there's a bit of an argument going on. And you have a problem getting the motion past. But there was a lot of plusses in the council. The conferences, and

34:00 going up to Cairns, and I think this is where the army came in handy. I wasn't afraid to get up and speak, I'd be a bit nervous sometimes, but addressing a crowd of 600 delegates at Cairns, and you're wondering how you're coming across, because you're representing the council, you're putting this motion up. The applause afterwards, that's what counted. And I think if I hadn't had that army experience to give me the guts or the

34:30 will power, or whatever, to get up and face them and talk to them no matter what. And that's what I believe, it didn't matter, no matter that's how I stood. I didn't shuffle about, you know, I thought I was right, I would stand by it, even if I made some enemies. And that's where my army training, you didn't get your response, its lack of training you see, they never had the experience.

35:00 **Overall, how do you feel about your war experience?**

How do I feel about it? I'm proud; I've got to say I'm proud of what I achieved. I'm glad I enlisted,

35:30 the friends I've made, the public, especially in recent times, there's a big swing back, like what we're doing here now. It pleases me no end although I don't love being interviewed but I think I try to speak it as it happened. The best way I can, well this wouldn't have happened if I hadn't been, joined the army, played my role, defended Australia.

36:00 A wonderful country it is. I'm getting a bit of an old crock now, but the respect I have, it surprises me. It

doesn’t seem to matter where I go, people seem to know me. Talking to fellas the other day he says, “Gee, everyone seems to know you, I was down at Nerang

36:30 the other day, talking to a fella – you know Glen Shailer? Yeah, I know, out Boonah way, yeah I know’. Of course I represented so many committees when I was on the council, Beaudesert, the fire brigade and I had a very close relationship to the neighbouring mayors, when I was Mayor of Logan. A lot more so than people generally realise.

37:00 I had a very hostile press, as a matter of fact I finished up, that I wouldn’t interview with them any more. And that was sad really, they wouldn’t print, they didn’t print what was correct, the rubbish you know. The television, that was edited, there was one good interview, he’s a member of parliament now. He was the best interviewer I had.

37:30 **Who was that?**

Well I don’t know, this was going on here, he’s still a very active fellow, and I might see him on Wednesday. He was only a young man too. And he came into the office one day, I could see he was disgusted, and he didn’t call me Mr Mayor, he said, “Glen.” and I’m not that much older, I’m not surprised to admit too.

38:00 “Whatever do you think, and where you’ve been, and what you’d done, and what ever do you think of this mob?” And it was so true. What did I think of them? After, what I’d achieved in life.

Which mob?

It was the men I was working with. The council.

38:30 It was hard, if the truth would have been open, it was all right, because generally I kept the finances right, I worked very hard, I didn’t do anything dishonest, went to conferences, had a lot of people, the disappointment that it was five each way.

39:00 That made it very, very difficult, at times.

Do you have any final words that you’d like to say?

Final words in regards to my life? Well, I’m proud of what I’ve achieved; I’m living happily although I’m not as

39:30 young as I used to be, not as agile as I used to be, if I only could be as fit as I was in New Guinea, North Queensland. I'd be very happy, but that’s life, you’ve got to live with it, and accept those things. I hope that I’ll be able to please people when they come to interview me, because this won’t be the last interview I’ll have, I don’t think,

40:00 and I hope this turns out successful for you, and Veterans’ Affairs will be able to make some use of it, with the rising generations. My grandfather used to say, “The rising generations will be able to hear something, and read something, and see what life’s about.” And thank you very much for your interview. You haven’t tired me right out. All those drinks of water.

INTERVIEW ENDS