Australians at War Film Archive

Jeffery Pooler (Pudden) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 **Can you start by telling us where you were born?**

I was born in Brunswick, West Brunswick in Melbourne. I was born on the 12th of December 1923. Apparently

01:00 I caused great consternation in the family, I was born in front bedroom, I was born six weeks premature. I weighed three and a half pounds, breech birth, and my father wasn't a happy man, but anyway we overcome that and, then I went to kindergarten, we moved from Brunswick to Moonee Ponds, from Moonee Ponds to Flemington and then we came back to Brunswick again and I went to school at Brunswick State School.

01:30 Then I went down to the Brunswick Technical School for a year, I hated school I couldn't wait to get out of it. I finished up getting a job when I was 13 years and 10 months and I was a messenger boy, cleaner of windows cleaning, sweeping floors and doing all the odd jobs around the place. When I was 18, on my 18th birthday I got a letter from the government

02:00 saying, `You will report to the Percy Street Drill Hall,' and I did and I signed a paper and I was in the army. Then I worked, we worked our way up from Seymour to north Queensland and then we were asked to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. My father being in the First World War wouldn't allow it, so I signed my friend's paper and he signed mine.

02:30 So we became AIF I guess. Then they sent us away to New Guinea and we took part in the Wau-Salamaua campaign, the Salamaua side of it ran for 77 days and not one of us were out of the front line. Then we were sent back to, I was evacuated sick, it was a lot of things, back to Moresby then having got over that

03:00 we went the Ramu Valley and we went on from the Ramu Valley to Bogadjim then Madang. They sent us home on leave after 18 months. Then we had three months in Australia, four months in Australia and then they sent us over to Bougainville. We fought our way down to south Bougainville until they dropped the atomic bomb, and it was all over.

03:30 I didn't come home until March '46 and the army decided to discharge me in August '46. Then it was back to work and I stayed with my job for a few years, then I decided to better myself, and I got a job with a wholesale fabric company become a director, general manager-director and then

04:00 I was sent, I applied to go to Brisbane to start the Brisbane, to keep the Brisbane branch running properly. Having done that I remarried, my first wife died and I remarried and my second wife was in the tapestry industry. We went to live in Sydney. We were just on two years but I realised that Sydney was not my scene so we came back to Brisbane. Then I went into the lighting business and I managed a

04:30 lighting firm until 1984 when my second breakdown and the doctor at Greenslopes said, `You'll never work again, go home.' So that's where I've stayed. Then my wife died August 2001 and I've been on my own with Sam ever since and that's about the overview of my life.

05:00 **And just briefly, your roles in the service?**

I was a signal man in infantry battalion, which means you're in the front line the whole time and that's what I did, kept the communications going, directing fire and all that sort of thing like they do and getting shot and shelled and bombed. It was a scary experience but it's all over and today

05:30 every day of my life I am still at the war, just keeps going on and on and on, I can't get rid of it. But anyway we did our bit for King and country in those days, fought under the British flag type of thing. I think we did something great and we stopped the enemy from coming to Australia and that was the whole object of the thing.

Now we'll go into great detail,

06:00 **your birth was interesting: you said you were born premature?**

Yes, all my boys have been born premature, my sister was premature, it runs in the family and I was born in the front bedroom of our home in Fourth Avenue, Brunswick and apparently father looked at me and thought I looked like a drowned rat. I was only a little bloke, but anyway

06:30 we managed that all right and I became just a kid in the street, in those days you had nothing like television or motor cars and I remember the first time I rode in a motor car I thought I was king for the day. And we used to play with the neighbours and all the kids in the street, you made your own fun in those days, nothing was, I think we had a radio, which was quite a miracle

07:00 and the first radio we had was run off a battery, it was a car battery and then was made an electric radio. Schooling I didn't like, I don't know what it was, I wasn't happy at school but I put up with it. I didn't go very far. I got as far as the technical school and did a year and then I decided I'd do a couple of nights, a year in carpentry, night school and that stood me in good stead through the years.

07:30 You know everything I've done I've built myself, not only to save money but in those early days money was very tight and you lived from week to week. As a kid I guess I had a lot of fun, we used to play football, cricket and we used to play paper chase and we used to go down the Mary [Maribyrnong River] Creek

08:00 and we'd have a kerosene tin and build a fire, cook yabbies and eat yabbies. And we used to raid fruit trees, we did all the things kids did in those days, I mean we had nothing, we used to get 3 pennies a week or 2 ½ cents a week and we used to go down to the local shop and buy threepence out of we, he, used to call his `halfpenny box' which was half a cent

08:30 and we used to share them with the Brown girls because their father was suffering with, he was in a mental home suffering from the First World War, he had a piece of steel in his head, shrapnel. So we used to share our lollies with them and occasionally we were taken to town, once a year was a great treat to go to town on the tram. Go up Bourke Street to the Myer Emporium and go through there and think everything

09:00 was beautiful and then we'd finish up in Coles Cafeteria and that was a day out and that was a big day out and that was the sort of thing that we had. But everyone was, helped one another, they didn't like today nobody seems to care much but in those days if a person was down on their luck they probably gave them a loaf of bread or a tin of jam something like that and

09:30 every time I came home from school there seemed to be a bloke tidying up the yard and knocking on the doors, `Any work, missus?' and she'd say, `Yes but I can't pay but I'll feed you,' and they always got a cup of tea, a boiled egg and a slice of bread. Butter we always had butter I remember that. But the depression days I remember going to a friend's place and they had one loaf of bread, one tin of jam and black tea and that was their dinner for

10:00 the night. They couldn't afford milk, sugar, butter or anything else, we all had two slices of bread and that was dinner. And that's how it was. You had people on the street they used to line up outside shops looking for work, and they'd come out grab a bloke and give him two hours work. They couldn't even afford the tram to get to work, they had to walk and they might have to walk three or four miles,

10:30 but that was, I say again, that was like it was, and we all stuck together and we got through it. I don't know whether people know this but Australia was the worst hit in the world and it ran longer here than anywhere else and I think we were still, what's the word, getting over the Depression when the war started. I remember very distinctly the night that Sir Rob or

11:00 Robert Menzies then, that we were at war with Germany and mother cried and my father looked, and I said to myself, `Oh well, it won't effect me, I'm too young,' I was nearly 16, 15 years and 9 months old. I thought `Oh well, it won't affect me,' little did I know that I was going to spend five years in the army, they allowed me Christmas 1941 at home, but I didn't see a Christmas home again until

11:30 1946, but everybody, I suppose, they all did that.

When you were a child, what was the area you grew up in like?

Well it was a, Brunswick was a working man's suburbs and all the houses were timber

12:00 and everybody seems to keep their grass neat and tidy and we lived in an area of five avenues, First, Second and Third,Fourth and Fifth, we lived in Fourth Avenue. The whole place was well looked after I must admit, the streets were always clean, we had lovely white footpaths. I remember that as a kid and every Christmas every kid in the

12:30 street every kid in the whole block went out with their toy, little things, and you don't see that any more. You don't see the Christmas because they're all inside pushing buttons, but in those days if you got a bike you were absolute king to get a bike, anybody with a bike they had rich parents and kids tried to bluff their way, `I've got this, I've got that', when they didn't. And

13:00 when I was seven years of age I was standing on the footpath and the lady come around the corner and

up on the footpath and knocked me over and broke my thigh, so I spent a month in hospital with that, in those days they didn't put plaster on until it was set, nowdays they put plaster on straight away so I did I missed six months of schooling and I went back and they put me in what they used to call the `opportunity grade' back to the fourth grade after that.

13:30 The area, it was quite nice, neat area I must admit and it was in the five streets and the five avenues there were four motor cars, that's all and. My next door neighbour had a 1929 Buick and it was the most beautiful car I had ever ridden in it had velvet seats, would you believe? Then in 1935 he swapped it and bought a Pontiac and I thought it was a load of tin I thought,

14:00 then my neighbour across the road he had a little Standard utility, `cause he used to make cheap furniture and the guy in Fifth Avenue had a super-charged Auburn and everybody would just sit there and look at the beautiful motor car and I've seen a couple since, but the area

14:30 yes I'm, it's a, quite a nice area and I enjoyed my childhood. And we used to of course we used to be members of the church and we used to go every Sunday because if you didn't go Sunday you couldn't play cricket, with the church team so Sunday nights, we played cricket, and, I say, football and I was a mad Carlton

15:00 barracker in those day. I couldn't keep wins in those days you had your team and my mother used to put the, cut the CFC [Carlton Football Club] out of white and sew it and I had my favourite player's number on the back and I rushed out the back and was kicking goals left right and centre but you didn't play with an ordinary football. They couldn't afford that. They so we used to get the Sun

15:30 now it's the Sun Herald and we'd roll it up and tie it, used to get a round thing about that round, that long and that was the football. We had a cricket bat or if you didn't you made one out of a piece of paling, we played lamppost cricket and I'll always remember over the fence was out for six or in for none. And we used to play hide and seek and there was not one kid that

16:00 was off the rails they were always good kids and running around having a ball. That's about the childhood I guess.

What about some of the positives that you can talk about the Depression?

Well the positive is it made you work harder. You had to work to get anything, nobody gave you a job and when you went to work at the job and it steeled

16:30 you for later life, I would say, because people now talk about working a 35 or 36 hour week. I've never worked a 40 hour week in my life when I first started work it was a 48 hour week, holidays were one week a year, then they made it two weeks a year

17:00 but you didn't get paid for one of them and it made you have strength in yourself. You look after other people it made you care for people as I said before everybody stuck together as best they could and I would say that that's the positives that I got out of the Depression, as I said before you haven't lived until you lived in the Depression and it makes you

17:30 a better person for when things get better

What about the sense of community?

Yes, everybody was, nobody would be left without food, although in our area. I'm sure that it was all over Australia and nobody would starve and people, the community people would help one another, that's about all

18:00 I would say about it.

And you mentioned you hated school, tell us why?

Because it interrupted with my playtime and the teachers were, well they never explained anything, they used to write it on the board, you had to work it out for yourself. Nowadays they explain what's it all about and so you had to do it yourself more than anything else and I never cottoned on to homework I still don't know what homework

18:30 was all about. And I didn't like, I just didn't like, school, period.

Did you learn anything?

Yeah, arithmetic, spelling, but I found that when I was on my own, that I, at tech [technical] school at night time, I learned more then that I did at school right through. But it wasn't as intense, I don't think, as it was today .

19:00 The teachers controlled, there was 48 in my class from the first grade to the eighth grade and now they're talking about only 23 in the class, teachers used to manage with 48 and as a matter of fact I dug out a couple of school photos the other day which I had right back from 1930, 32, 33 and there's 48 of us lined up looking like little scarecrows

19:30 but, no, it, I just didn't like school, that's about the thing of it. Not a school person.

Was it a co-ed [co-educational] school?

Yeah, yeah we used to call them `girls and boys' in those days. It was, I suppose there was 24 boys and 24 girls in the class. All from different backgrounds

20:00 all living through the Depression. You knew your parents couldn't give you anything, `cause they had nothing to give you, my father was earning 10 dollars a week and then in a certain point in the Depression they cut it down to 3 ah 6 dollars a week which was 3 pound and he had to pay a pound off the house and we had to live off 4 dollars, mind you milk was threepence a pint and everything was

20:30 in retrospect, was the same as it is today and people talk today of spending 400,000 dollars on a house and things like that. All probably my father's house cost about 4,000 dollars but in pro rata of what it is today. So, people spending the money it's the

21:00 same as then, threepence was like a dollar today, 10 shillings in those days is like 50 dollars today , you get 50 dollars you spend it, it's gone before you know it. Well that was the same in those days.

And what about your parents? What was your father like?

Well, he was a typical Pommy bastard, with all due respects. He never he came out in the,

21:30 before the First World War, his was the last boat to arrive in Australia and he went to a place in East Gippsland and he met his friend there and his friend got a white feather in an envelope [a symbol of cowardice] - and in those days they used to do that sort of thing - so they went to war. Anyway my father saw his friend get blown to pieces so that's why he wouldn't sign any papers for me.

22:00 He was a typical Pom that's what you could say, stuck up, he thought he was the best thing since sliced bread. He was a caring, they were caring but I always said when I have children they are going to be my friends, I'm not going to be their father, and that's how it's been. If my son says, `Have you heard this joke Dad?' and I say, `Would you like a beer, loved one?' My father? Jokes were taboo and you shouldn't drink and you shouldn't

22:30 and smoke (he smoked like a chimney) but he looked after his family but he wasn't the loving father like I try to be today. I used to beg him to take me to football and he'd say, `I don't like football.' `Cricket, take me to the cricket?' `No I don't like cricket,' so my friend and I used to go off by ourselves. But I had

23:00 the great delight of seeing Don Bradman score four centuries. And ah, in those days people went to sport to watch sport not wave stupid fingers around up and down and paint their faces, they went to see the game and I went to quite a lot of football matches and if I didn't go, go on my own, neighbours took me but dad wasn't interested.

23:30 **Do you remember who was your favourite football star?**

In those days there was a footballer for Carlton, Keith um, Frank Gill was fullback and then there was Hayden Bunton for Fitzroy and `Up There' Cazaly for South Melbourne, Bob Pratt,

24:00 Todd, Ron Todd, oh I can name a thousand. My favourite, oh I think Keith Shea, he played for Carlton, he was probably the favourite. I think his number was seven from memory and of course cricket, Don Bradman was the hero naturally

24:30 then I said you went to see cricket not like they do today. And there was no nastiness everybody was friendly and happy and it probably cost threepence to get in the ground, be a shilling and Don Bradman when he lived in Adelaide, he worked, go to work at 6 o'clock shut his office at 10 go and play cricket and come back after 6 o'clock and work till 10 at night and he got

25:00 10 shillings or one dollar to play that game. One dollar. But he was, everybody was, I say was a lot more friendly than they are today. I walk into a supermarket, locally I don't go much but up the local shops and you can see the young people, `Oh, look at that silly old bastard,'

25:30 and they won't move, I've got to move, well in our early days as kids we were told to respect your elders and if a funeral went by you had to stand to attention, you know, be solemn. Well that's all gone, perhaps it's better that it has gone, I don't know, but I think there's more freedom of speech, there's more freedom of activities today and I think they learn a lot more than

26:00 we ever did. But um, they, I think, they've lost that esprit de corps that was esprit de corps your love of human people, that's what I think is the basics.

What about your mother? What was she like?

Mum was a probably the most loving caring person in the world

26:30 but Mum would always be there for you, because Dad was always shift working and Mum was always there and there was always a meal on the table and she was the one who looked after you and that sort of thing. She was a lovely person and I had a sister and she's still alive, she lives in Canberra, we speak on the phone every couple of days, we used to write letters but know the phone is so cheap

27:00 we ring each other up and so there was a caring family. But Fred never lost his Pomminess, father Fred never lost his Pomminess, he was a pompous old goat and if I called him `Sir,' he thought that was the end of the earth: `I like you

27:30 calling me Sir, hah, hah oh yeah'. If one of my blokes called me `Sir' I'd say, `What's the problem? This must be a joke is it?' and, no. it's I suppose it was like growing up anywhere in the world, it's certainly taught you a lot, it taught you about living, it taught you about think of your fellow man, it taught you to be a man more than it is today.

28:00 You never think of stealing anything, I don't think I've ever stolen anything in my life. Raided a few fruit orchards, a few fruit trees, but as far as stealing, shoplifting, that sort of thing, I suppose kids did it, but we were taught to respect everybody and respect your elders and that sort of thing.

What kind of work did you father do?

He was in, when he come out from England

28:30 when he come out to the war he was a printer and my mother said, `Fred you look too pale. I think you should get an outside job.' Started laying tram tracks for the Melbourne Metropolitan Tramways Board and became a conductor then he became a driver then he became an inspector and he got a green uniform with a peak cap and he thought

29:00 he was king of the world and he lost all his friends through it, he didn't care about anybody, just his green uniform and he loved his shift work and he was mad on shift work, and that's why we moved nearer his work. Anyway Mum died quite young, well 1950 I think Mum was 55, she had a thing called bronchiactus which is a lump on the lung

29:30 the lung and the lump usually goes through the whole lung. And Dad died in 1977 down at Merimbula and the funeral we held at Canberra and then there's just my sister and I left.

30:00 **Did your father's Pomminess, was he hassled or were there jokes told about him?**

No, they just didn't like him because, well in early days he used to have two very good friends, they were army, one was Australian Army, one was South African Army and Dad was in the Australian Army and they used to have a lot of fun together in the early days.

30:30 Every New Year's Eve, down to one of his friend's places and the kids would stay overnight and they go home a little bit tipsy. They enjoyed themselves, but when he got the uniform he dropped all his friends, and that was, to my thinking, a shame because they were very nice friends but he didn't seem to want to know anything about them after that. Because he was above them I guess,

31:00 he thought he was above everybody and he was better than other people, that's what he thought, typical Pomminess, this will probably go down badly. But his ideals were good because when Mum died he went to live with my sister in Canberra, poor Joyce, and he became the verger at the All Saints Church in Canberra and if you know anything about the All Saints Church it was made out of the

31:30 Rookwood Cemetery rail station in Sydney. The builder and his son went down demolished the whole railway station, numbered the sandstone and they built the Ainsley, the church, Ainsley Church of England and he used to play the organ every day for the visitors and used to give a talk and play the organ.

32:00 So he did the right thing that way I guess, but um he just wasn't the father that I expected, but anyway that was a long time ago and I don't hold any grudges.

Did he ever talk about World War I?

Very rarely, and I asked him, when I was going in the army.

32:30 I said, `Well, what do I do?' and he said, `You'll find out,' I said, `Well, can't you give me any idea of how to use a rifle and all this?' He said, `You'll find out,' and he wouldn't tell me a thing. Very rarely talked, I guess when he got with his mates in the early days he did and ah, that's the worst thing, I've been told by a psychiatrist that the worst thing you can do is bottle up your war experience, you should tell it

33:00 `cause it gets it out of your system. If you bottle it up - I've seen guys bottle it up - and they go a bit bananas and he should have talked about it, talked about it to me and explained what you should do and what you shouldn't do, but all I got was `You'll find out.' And I found out. My….

33:30 just a brief outline of the army, I loved it until they started shooting at you then it wasn't very nice, but the whole concept was discipline, which is lacking today, I read in an article and I wrote to the local paper about discipline where those troops in Iraq refused to have the [medical] shots. Well if you refused anything in our army, in my day you were marched up to the commanding officer and

34:00 if you refused again you ended up in Bendigo for 28 days of pure hell and I've never been there, but anybody that has, never goes back , that teaches them a lesson. If you are in action and you are told to move and you don't move, you get charged with desertion. That's two years in the stockade and a

dishonourable discharge.

What did they do at Bendigo?

34:30 Well it was a prison and when you got to the gate I'm told this, the captain says, `OK fellows, have a smoke,' all lit up had a smoke, `Righto that's the last,' so and so there and they had to take everything out of their pockets and give it to the bloke and everything was at the double from then on in, and you'd be taken to the and the sergeant would say, `Dig a hole.'

35:00 `What size?' `Three by six or three by three,' and you say, `Well righto, what do I do now?' and he'd say, `Fill it in,' and you'd fill it in, and then they had you doubling around the playground and everything was at the double, you ran everywhere. One of the blokes he committed quite a stupid thing, he wrote and posted to his mother when we were at Casino all the, there were troops, that were their units, and they grabbed it and he

35:30 ended up in Bendigo and he would have been about 13 stone and when he come back he wouldn't have weighed 10 and he said, `I'll never ever do the wrong thing again as long as I live.' And that was discipline.

What had he done?

Well every letter you sent was censored, and he went and posted it in an ordinary civilian post box and told his mother this battalion was here and that battalion was there and

36:00 well, it could have fallen into enemy hands, so he was taught a lesson.

Tell us where you were when you heard the announcement of war?

Well I was sitting in the lounge room, in those days it was called The Lux Play an hour radio play

36:30 and Terry Deith was the announcer and said, `Oh I stop this play to have a special announcement from the Prime Minister Mr Robert Menzies,' and he [Menzies] said, `It's my solemn duty to declare, to inform you, that we are now in a state of war with Germany,' and that was it, but then of course everybody was running around enlisting, and of course I'm

37:00 still a kid so, what we did then when the Japanese came into the war, most of the time, was putting up blackouts in people's homes. Everybody had to have blackout and everybody was, they were digging slit trenches in schools and that sort of thing then the that's the I was still playing cricket and enjoying myself as much as I could, and then the day came and there it was

37:30 **What did you think of the announcement of war?**

Well I just said it won't affect me `cause I didn't know much about it in those days, all you got was the radio and the newspaper, it's nothing like today when you see everything, so I didn't think about it until it started to get serious and then when they bombed Pearl Harbor, of course, it was sheeted home that we would be next

38:00 and which we nearly were and but you don't think, I didn't think a great deal about it, you followed the troops where they were in the Western Desert and Greece and Crete and things like that and England getting bombed, you followed all that, but you don't see it, like today you see it on every television, every channel has got

38:30 a war if there's such a war and Iraq and bombs and you only saw what you read and the old saying, `a picture's worth a thousand words,' then when it all got there and, boom you're in the army and that was it. It was training and they were teaching us old fashioned methods instead of new methods.

Tape 2

00:36 **Can you tell me about the first job you had when you left school?**

The first job I had when I left school was with a firm, a big drapery furnishing shop, they sold furniture, and I was in the furnishings. I wasn't allowed to answer the telephone right up to the day I joined the army,

01:00 my job was to sweep the floors, take all the covers off the fabrics, sweep, wash the glass windows, polish the brass and clean the tiles, and do errands on the pushbike. I went down with three parcels and I would have to carry the parcels on the tram, I was given sixpence or 5 cents, threepence each way on the tram, if I lost threepence I had to walk home but I didn't.

01:30 When come cheque time, instead of spending a penny on the cheque on the envelope, I had to take the cheques into town and drop them off to all the warehouses. Then I got a little bit further on and I was in the what they called the `fixing department' and we went out and hung curtains and blinds and tracks and I wasn't allowed to drive, I wasn't allowed to answer the phone, as I said before.

02:00 **Why was that?**

Because young people weren't allowed the answer the phone in those days. Then when the boss said, `I want you to do this,' you said, `Yes, sir,' and you did it, nothing like today. I remember coming back after the war and he said something to me and I said, `I'm going home now.' `You've changed since the war,' I said, `For the better, thank you.'

02:30 But I left that job, they were good to me during the war they supplemented my army pay and they put so much a week into a bank for me, which was their way of helping with the soldier from the store, it was a family concern. I went back there for a few years and then I said to myself, ` I've got to better myself,' so I wrote after a job, was

03:00 a wholesale furnishing and there the whole damn thing started and I spent the next 20 years with them and I started out as manager in the manufacturing division, then I became an associate director and then they wanted somebody to go to Queensland to take over the Brisbane branch which was going downhill so I said I would do that,

03:30 and the boss said to me, `You always talked about Queensland, wanting to go there,' I said, `When do I leave? Today?' He said, `In a couple of weeks.' So I moved up here with the family. As my son said it was the greatest thing I ever did to move from cold old Melbourne to sunny Queensland.

In your first job, how much money were you earning?

I got first year say $1.70 a week

04:00 then it went to one pound two which was $2.20. By the time I joined the army I was getting about $4.70 something like that I think

And what did you do with this money?

I gave it to my parents. All I got was the first couple of years I got 3 shillings or

04:30 30 cents a week I had to buy what I wanted as a kid, not that you wanted a great deal, there was nothing to buy, kids didn't smoke, kids didn't drink. You went to the pictures and it was, 12 cents to go to the pictures.

What was the sense of responsibility you felt towards your parents?

05:00 Oh, in those days we felt a great responsibility to our parents because they brought us up all through those bad years and we always had a great responsibility to our parents and a lot of people did too I guess. It was just the way it was in those days, today you hear of kids running off, 16 year olds leaving home and sleeping in streets.

05:30 Why leave home when you've got a lovely warm bed and three meals a day? Everybody had a responsibility with your parents I think that's stood me in good stead ever since.

During the time working there, what did you notice after the war began?

06:00 Rationing started. I think coupons came in just as I was going to war but petrol rationing started. Everything was rationed or, in those early days and people had an awareness that something bad was going to happen so they had to band together.

06:30 **And did the war affect the company that you worked for?**

No, because they weren't doing such things war work. There was a lot of when we switched over, they switched over the making mosquito nets from curtains and fabrics, a lot of firms switched over to war production. My sister used to work at the same firm, and she left and went to work at the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories

07:00 Probably putting penicillin in little vials, she went there to do war work. A lot of women left their jobs and went to do war work. I suppose they just used young people. Fill up the vacancies.

07:30 **What did you do on your off time on the weekends?**

Cricket, football, played, went on walks, just did what normal teenagers, we weren't teenagers in those days. We were the, you did exactly what you were told, there's none of this today,

08:00 I feel its better today, but if I was to go back in my lifetime and say depression and war not withstanding, I lived in the best part of the 20th century. There was a different feeling, everyone was happy with what they had, they bore the problems, they got together.

08:30 **Did you used to chase any girls?**

I wasn't interested in girls, I made up for it, we used to have with the Sunday school, we had a big youth following, playing postman's knock

What's that?

Well there'd be a post office with a chair behind the curtain, and you'd spin the knife,

09:00 then you got to kiss the girl, and that was most um, I was very happy with that sort of thing, but I never had a girlfriend as such. I was too busy playing sports and being with my mates to have a girlfriend. When I think of all those lost opportunities. The other thing in those days, if I had of got a girl pregnant my father ,

09:30 absolutely he would have killed me.

Did he say that to you?

No, but I knew it.

Did anyone ever talk to you about that sort of thing?

No, no you learnt from your mates and when I first heard when I was 11 years old how I was conceived I nearly killed the kid. I thought,

10:00 "My parents don't do that, how awful!" I remember a girl, I used to ride my bike to work, and her name was Muriel Taggart and she used to live near Downes Rope Factory, she unfortunately at the age of 16 got pregnant and she used to, of course everybody said, `Oh terrible.' and they had a little church homes for the girls to go when they got pregnant, in those days,

10:30 they have the children now and they were hidden away, sent on a holiday for nine months, and I used to wave to Muriel, `Hello, Muriel,' `Hello Jeff,' I don't know what happened to her. It was taboo, it went on but it was taboo. I didn't indulge so I never had any thought of that until after the war.

11:00 Then I got home on my first big leave from New Guinea then I got involved with ladies, unfortunately I got involved with ones who were married. I got two wonderful boys out of it.

Tell me about when you were called up?

I came home from work on the 12th of December a letter from the government stating that, `You will report to the Percy Street

11:30 Drill Hall,' which was in Brunswick, it's owned now by an Italian soccer club. And I had to go there on the 18th of December, that's when the area doctor, Dr Wilson he did an examination to see if you were fit for the army.

What sort of examination?

`Can you see that chart over there?

12:00 Name the first two letters.' `A, W, X, Y.' `Right,' then put a stethoscope to your chest, and said, `Yep, that's ok,' then he grabbed hold of your testicles and said, `Cough, you're fit.'

Why did he do that?

Well that was one of the don't know what it was for, probably to see if you had a hernia I guess, that was my introduction to the army.

12:30 Then a bloke said, pulled out this paper and said, `I want you all to sign that, you are now in the army for the duration and 12 months thereafter.' Anyway they let us have the Christmas at home and on the 21st of January I got a notice, you report to Percy Street Drill Hall and they put us in the train

13:00 and they sent us up to a place called Seymour in Victoria, a big army camp.

When did they give you your uniform?

About a week to get uniforms, all they had was old stuff from years gone by because everything was in a state of flux, there was nothing prepared and I remember driving in

13:30 from Seymour Station in the trucks and all the old soldiers, they'd probably been there for months, `You'll be sorry,' that's what we got greeted with.

What was your reaction to hearing that?

What are we in for now? Anyway next thing we had we were given a palliasse which was a long length of hessian, sewn up, they had

14:00 bales of straw and we filled them up with straw. A bloke said, `Don't put too much in,' another bloke said, `Put as much as you can in it, you'll need it.' Then we were put in six to a tent and that's the first day. And I'll never forget the first meal, camp pie, it was a horrible tinned meat, cheap, cheap as chips,

14:30 we had camp pie, a salad and the sweets were fruit cake with custard. I'll never forget the first meal, ever.

In a good way or a bad way?

Oh, it wasn't too bad, none of us had ever had, see the big thing in those days was steak and eggs, every café had steak and eggs, every café was a Greek café and everything was steak and eggs, they never had what we have today. My mother used to cook roasts and all that sort of thing

15:00 and her special was velvet pudding which was lovely.

What's that?

I don't know. Like a creamy mixture. We used to like our velvet pudding and my mother used to say, `The meal's on the table, if you want it, you eat it, if you don't, you starve.' And we always liked - my sister and I - always liked our sweets and we always ate our meal and we always got vegetables and we had to eat the lot.

15:30 Then we started army training and the sergeant got six of us together and said, `First lesson is to put up a tent. There is the tent, the ridge pole, uprights.' and we struggled for an hour and got nowhere. And he said, `Now I'll show you how to do it,' and he showed us how to do it and was easy when he showed us the right way.

What were you doing wrong?

16:00 We were trying to get the upright and hold onto it throw the tent over, and he said, `This is how you do it, you put the tent over the ridge pole first, then you put the uprights in, one bloke there, one bloke there, they hold the tent, put the uprights in then start pegging the tent. Simple as that.'

Was the tent roomy?

It was about as big as

16:30 from here to there and there was two palliasses one, two, three, four, five six. They're very warm, you batten down the front and back they became warm with six blokes.

What's a palliasse like to sleep on?

Very comfortable compared to what I slept on when I was in New Guinea and

17:00 then we had to do marching and slope arms and order arms and stand at ease and all this sort of thing and after three weeks of being told how to become a soldier, then finally getting a uniform, they sent us home on a five-day leave

What was your uniform like?

We had what they called `giggle suits' which was

17:30 khaki trousers, khaki shirt and a stupid looking giggle hats, they used to call the `giggle hats'.

What does a giggle hat look like?

It was just a cloth hat with a wide brim around it, we used to call them giggle hats, I suppose they were part of the army structure, they had two sizes, too large and too small. Finally we all got sorted out and

18:00 we spent the first three weeks marching up and down and reverse about turns, and forming platoons and forming lines and then they gave us a questionnaire to fill in. `What would we like to be in the army?' Of course I wanted to be in transport. Anybody who wanted to be in transport was sent to the infantry, it was a complete mix up.

18:30 Anyway they sent us home on leave and we came back and they told us we were going to 58th Battalion, who were in Camp 28 at Seymour , and we were lined up by warrant officer, I'll never forget him, his name was Keith Anderson and he said, `Now in the army there is a system:

19:00 you buck the system you're in trouble, you go along with it, you're all right,' so from that day on he got called `Buck Anderson,' don't buck the system.. We went to what they call `bull ring training,' you go around a big paddock and this crowd would teach you how to load a rifle, this crowd teach you fixed bayonets, and throw a grenade and on and on.

19:30 Then we had a obstacle course which you've seen, they train the troops, you climb under barbed wire and jump logs and under logs and this particular day one of our lieutenants who I've known for years, and was Lieutenant Griff in those days.

20:00 The commander of our squad was Captain Cuthbertson and Ted Griff was a gung ho [enthusiastic] soldier and he won the CBE [Commander of the British Empire] and [Mention in] Military Dispatches and finished up a full colonel before he died many years ago. Anyway he's got us running up and down in

20:30 February its about 100 in the shade, which is 30 [actually 38o C] today, and he's got us running up and down, then Col Cuthbertson come out watching and Griff said, `Righto once more,' and Captain Cuthbertson said, `Lieutenant Griff,' he said, `we are trying to train those men

21:00 not bloody well kill them.' `Oh!' he said, got he message and we were able to go off for showers and back to our tents. We spent a month doing all that and learning how to do things. One particular incident I remember.

21:30 Every Thursday morning they call make a mend or you darned socks or stitched up and you rolled up one side of the tent and let the air blow, then roll up the other side of the tent. Our dear friend Anderson did an inspection, he lined us all up and said,

22:00 `Well, you're a pack of bastards and your tents look like brothels. Don't know what you lived in,' and one of our blokes Ray Darragh marched out and stood in front of Anderson and said, `Sir I can assure you that my mother and father were married and I'm sure all these troops, their mother and father were married.

22:30 I don't like the fact your calling us "bastards," also we lived in a very nice home and I'm sure other people, we didn't live in brothels', and he said `I'd like an apology for the 200 troops.' I'll never forget his [Anderson's] face, he went purple and he apologised but a

23:00 a week later he got us on a technicality, and he gave us an hour's running around on the double with full pack and rifle.

What it unusual that he apologised?

Very much so but he knew he had to do something because he had called us illegitimate children. He had to apologise.

Did the other guys give the guy who said it a pat on the back?

Oh yes he was a star, then

23:30 we used to go out and when you go on route marches, I was always last in the line, oh and I couldn't get the gist of it, I was always about 100 yards behind the troops, I soon got used to it, but they were thinking of transferring me out to another unit which didn't do route marches but they didn't. After that they said, `Well you've become part of the battalion

24:00 and what do you want to do?' There was the sig [signals] platoon, mortar platoon, pioneer platoon, machine gun platoon, and transport platoon, and of course one of my friends said to me, `Signals would be good. Let's join the signals.'

Why did he think it would be good?

24:30 I don't know really, I think he said you've got less chance of being killed I think.

What did you know about the signal platoon?

Nothing, Captain Gwynne was our signals officer and I went to him, he said, `Why do you want to be in signals?' I said, `I think I'd be good at it,' he said, `All right,' so I became a signal man.

25:00 Then we trained learning Morse code and laying cables, radios, all that sort of thing.

How did they teach you these things?

We were only the young kids, there were older blokes in the signals and they taught us what they knew about it. And we used to take out, they used to take a little phone called the Don 5, we used to walk out rolling out signals and put earth wires in the ground

25:30 and speak back to headquarters and things like that. Then we learned how to put cables up the air and in the ground, all the knots you used to have special knots and things.

How did they teach you Morse code?

They just sat there and gave you A, B is this, and A is that, and they kept on sending it to you and

26:00 eventually you got it.

How fluent did you become?

Well, I could take 30 words a minute, but I could that only briefly but 25 was, I could take 25 a minute

Was that a good speed?

Yeah, but not in the navy they had to take 40 words a minute but 25 was, nobody else could get up to 25, I just clicked

26:30 so then we went home on leave again and we used to do exercises all around rolling out cables, they used to call them Lucas lamps, a signalling lamp and you used to flick the trigger, and it'd go flick, flick in Morse code, then we had semaphore, that was A that was B, that was C, that was D, that was E

27:00 that was F and that was G.

What about when you got further?

Well you use both hands then, and you could send Morse code by the flag itself and you'd go one, two , three and a long dash and then we had heliographs which were used in the desert in the First World War and that was like a mirror that used to reflect the sun

27:30 and you'd on and off, but that went out of date and we took the Lucas lamps they call them `lamp signalling daylight short range' but in the jungle because it was jungle and out first raid they were a great flop in the jungle, they were useless. Then we had walkie talkies and they were useless in the jungle.

Why was that?

28:00 The density of the jungle. They weren't like they are today just starting off carrying a battery walkie talkie with you. Then we moved from Seymour to Albury camp right on the Hume River.

How did they move you?

We walked, marched all the way from Seymour to Albury.

How far is that?

60 miles

How long did that take?

28:30 What we do? Probably 20 mile a day, it probably took three or four days and we camped on the paddocks in the night and the cooks would go up and prepare the meals for us and…

What would you sleep in?

On the ground, that was when you learnt how the war was won. They taught you all that sort of thing

29:00 **Did you appreciate this at the time?**

Well, put it this way, it was what you were told you had to do, so you did it. Didn't buck the system, you went along with it. Then we camped on the Murray River for a month or two and most of the camp went down with pneumonia, or influenza.

29:30 **Why was that?**

It was freezing cold on the Murray River every morning the mist used to come off the Murray and it was freezing cold.

And what sort of today when you were camped there?

Same thing, training, we used to go out on patrols, and bivouacs, that sort of thing

How do you set up a bivouac?

Well bivouac is when you go out on patrol and you bivouac at the scene where you are and you might go out for three or four days and

30:00 they used to call them`bivouacs'. When we were at Albury or Hume, the Americans arrived in Melbourne, and they cut our rations in half because the Americans had to have their steak and eggs in the morning, boy, so they cut our rations in half because we just, Australia fed the Americans and therefore they didn't have to pay

30:30 like Britain had to pay American so many million of pounds for the war they brought all the war, we cut ours out by feeding the Americans. So we used to go into Albury a couple of times a week and go to a restaurant, café sorry, and have steak and eggs to supplement our diet.

What was the feeling towards the Americans?

Well you can imagine, `bloody Yanks' and all this sort of thing.

31:00 **Was there much of a feeling that the Yanks were needed?**

Well they didn't in those days but they, we soon got to realise that we needed the Yanks badly. Without the Americans we'd not have got anywhere near winning the war, that's my humble opinion, but I'm just an ordinary soldier so I didn't know so much about the running of things. Then we were put on the train and sent to

31:30 Casino and that was Tweed Valley and that's God's own country. Oh it's beautiful, then I got interested in girls and I met a girl in Casino.

How did you meet her?

They used to have church afternoon teas and suppers, so I met her and you wouldn't believe her name was Gloria Drinkwater.

32:00 Wondered if I would have married her if we'd been a Pooler Drinkwater, I laughed about that. We corresponded for some time but her brother was caught in Changi in Malaya and he died and she just dropped off the scene.

What would you do together?

I only really met her at the end of our stay in Casino so I didn't have a chance to get, to but we agreed to write

32:30 when we met on leave from New Guinea, we met but she'd gone onto different things. I met her once about 20 odd years ago; I don't think her husband was very impressed; I was invited to their place for a few drinks one night. I tracked her down because I used to do business in Casino

33:00 **What sort of other things would you do in Casino?**

When you were on leave, every night we'd go to the movies and the Commercial Hotel we used to, you could have a hot bath for sixpence and they used to do a five course meal, I think is was 2 shillings for the meal.

What's in a five course meal?

Well you'd get the entrée, the main meal, oh four course, sweets and biscuits and cheese and

33:30 a bottle of English lager was 1 and 7 pence which was about 17 cents so we used to go that, and go to the pictures and do that sort of thing.

34:00 But most of our time was taken up by route marching and training and go and try to get a visual link and a phone link between Grafton and Casino and Grafton was about 60 mile away. We never linked it up but

34:30 we tried. Get on the hills and the heliographs, and the next 20 or 30 miles would be telephone and there'd be radio and that sort of thing, we never quite made the distance. But that was most of our training in Casino, then they shifted us up to Caboolture.

How did the people in the towns accept you as soldiers?

Brilliant, they were wonderful, the further north you got the friendlier they became

35:00 they were wonderful to us in Casino. There was a lot of troops, that was what was called the Brisbane Line, that's where the Australian government that they would all retreat to the Brisbane Line through Casino, up Lismore, Kyogle and up to Brisbane

35:30 so we were part of the famous Brisbane Line and there was about three or four brigades on that line. Then they moved us up to Caboolture where we, the camp flooded so they moved us out of Caboolture.

What happened when the camp flooded?

They just shut the camp down and move us out.

Was there lots of rain?

Oh yeah, lots of rain, we'd never seen rain like it, It was November-ish, the monsoonal season started

36:00 it was a flat area. Yeah, we used to pinch pineapples, the farmer came and said, `Now instead of pinching pineapples I'm going to sell you a case,' they were five cents each the pineapples. So we had pineapples, then they decided in Caboolture that they'd play silly buggers, we'd sleep during the day and exercise at night

36:30 and that was to get you used to night exercise, but that fell through because most of the blokes slept day and night.

What were the night exercises?

We used to go out and they'd give you a compass and say you had a compass bearing of the camp was say 10 degrees north and then you'd march down for about three or four miles

37:00 and you had to follow the compass home and every ten steps you took one step to the left because your right hand would get you that way and you'd come out right slap bang on the camp. We learned compass training and still learned how of, old fashioned ways of training, and then after that they sent up to Noosa, Cooroy, the mountains of Cooroy

37:30 and I didn't like that camp much, it rained most of the time and it was wet and slushy and then we learned how to, we lived in two man tents, which we used during the war, the battle scenes and then they decided, then I got dysentery and I spent a couple of weeks at Caloundra in the rest camp

38:00 **How did you get dysentery?**

Eating some food that was infected I guess, fly blown or something.

What was the rest camp like?

Beautiful, it was right on the beach there, it was about November, December and it was very nice. Then we had a week's training behind bren gun carriers which is like a small tank

38:30 you used to carry machine guns. Why they did was because we were going to New Guinea which we didn't know about that, and then we came back and they sent us on leave to Melbourne I think I got 12 days, and then back to camp, back to Cooroy, and they trucked us down to Brisbane in March, no February '43, and we got on a coastal steamer

39:00 called the SS Taroona and the only thing about the Taroona was it used to roll but I was fortunate I never got sea sick.

Just before you left Australia what was the general atmosphere like especially around Brisbane?

Oh it was… Brisbane was so crowded with troops, we weren't allowed into Brisbane because there were too many troops, but we snuck in a couple of times, I got seven days defaulters at the barracks

39:30 for being AWOL [Absent With Out Leave] and I think everybody in the camp went AWOL to Brisbane.

What sort of things would you get up to in Brisbane?

Mostly looking at city going into the canteen having a couple of beers, then you'd hitch a ride home, no we used to catch the, they used to call it the `Rattler,'

40:00 Brisbane country train station, Roma Street Station and we used to get the train at 10 to 12 to Caboolture and we'd get back to camp about 2 or 3 in the morning, and we got caught once.

Tape 3

00:35 **What happened next?**

We got on the Taroona and it was quite a pleasant journey all the way to Port Moresby except we were up off the tip of Cape York and all of a sudden - we were escorted by a corvette - it peeled off and was firing madly at this object in the water.

01:00 The ship we were on they probably had a 4 pounder gun and it was away and I thought oh a submarine or something. One of the blokes said, `I think we've been hit,' and we all rushed up on deck and the corvette they'd seen a floating object in the water but it wasn't a submarine. Then we sailed into Port Moresby into the harbour and I'll never forget it, and this bloke said to me, `Look at those bloody hills,' little did we know that

01:30 they were little mole hills compared to what we'd climb over and then they took us around to a place called Shrapnel Valley which was about 3 mile from Murray Barracks which was the main barracks. Then we settled into our tents and pitched our tents, and then they, the Japanese used to bomb at night and all the anti-aircraft guns

02:00 bang, bang, bang, bang, and they reckon the law of averages was that they'd hit one night. I don't think they ever hit one but they kept them up a bit high. And we when the ack-ack [anti aircraft fire] burst all the shrapnel would fall down on the tents and they called it Shrapnel Valley, but I guess they called all of Port Moresby Shrapnel Valley. Then one day I was on sig duty I got a ring from headquarters and he said

02:30 `Yellow warning,' and I said, `What's that?' I'm damned if I know, but it's a yellow warning, so I rang headquarters and said, It's a yellow warning' and said `What do I do?' He said, `You ring the gong slowly,' gong, gong, gong, heads come out of tents and blokes were like `What's wrong?' `Yellow warning, we're going to get an air raid I think." Anyway we got the all clear, and then we got the yellow warning again and then we got the red warning, and I rang the CO [Commanding Officer] and `What do we now?' he said, `Ring the bell like mad as you

03:00 can and jump in a trench!' You could hear them, it they call it `the hundred bomber raid,' a hundred bombers come over and bomb Moresby and we were sitting on a hill about three or four mile out. And we see everything and we just stood there watching the bombs falling and I think there was one of our brigade blokes got killed, he was loading petrol and they blew the petrol dump up and

03:30 I think that was one of the casualties, anyway then they wheeled away and started bombing the ships, then they wheeled off over Moresby and they used to go through the gap in the Kokoda Track, go through the big gap in the ranges, and the Americans were waiting for them on the other side. They got stuck into them with American fighter planes

04:00 and then at Moresby all we did then was training, jungle training now. And there was a big mountain called Hombrum Bluff, big mountain, and we went up there and we did jungle training and you'd be walking down the track and they'd have one of the things we did. They'd have a guy, they'd have real bullets, and you'd have a guy and he'd pull a Jap out, a

04:30 placard of a Jap, out of a tree, and they'd fire at that and that was training for quickness and to be able to get your bullets out in time.

How would he pull it out?

He'd have a big rope and he'd pull the placard of a Japanese with a machine gun, a painting of course.

What did it look like?

Just like a Jap, and then we had grenade throwing and things like that

05:00 and then they flew us to Wau.

Just before we go on, what were your early impressions of Port Moresby?

Well I've seen it in 1980, its still a dirty horrible old town. And it was a dirty town, but then it was wartime and the road that used to go from

05:30 the docks to Murray Barracks was the road in Australia, the trucks were going up and down all day long taking supplies and, and ah we used to go into town, the Burns Philp company built a big warehouse, it was a reception area where we'd go in and they'd turn on a decent meal for us.

06:00 Alcohol was banned in New Guinea 'cause of a certain incident that happened a long time ago. Apparently there was an air raid one night and all the gunners were full, so they cut out drinking and that remained right through until we left New Guinea. It was, if you wanted a bottle of scotch it was five quid a bottle and if you

06:30 wanted beer I think it was five shillings a bottle, but I never bothered, it didn't worry me so much in those days. And then we fiddled around and we had, when you got to Wau airstrip you had 20 minutes to unload the plane `cause that's all the fuel the fighters had above the airstrip

07:00 so they loaded us into DC-3s but to get practice - we used to - they drew a DC-3, the right size and you all formed up and you jumped out of the plane, unloaded and rushed off. We had a bloke, we used to call him Happy Danks, and Happy was the opposite. We had an inspection by the area commander, general… I don't know what his name,

07:30 and he said, `What are you doing son?' `I'm unloading stores, sir. I've only got twenty minutes,' and he got to Happy Danks and he said, `What are you doing son?' and he said, `To tell you the truth, Sir, buggered if I know.' and he got a weeks default, made him run up the hill every night at 5 o'clock because he said that stupid thing. Then they finally loaded us

08:00 on planes and they were DC-3s which are probably the safest aeroplane ever built. `They used to call them `goony birds' DC-3, the Yanks called them `goony birds' and they had to fly through the gap. And in every, there was 10 on each side, we sat on canvas seats and in the window there was a hole with a plug in it

08:30 and if you got attacked by Japanese fighters you pulled the plug out, stuck your rifle through and go bang, bang. Fortunately we didn't get attacked, but it was a frightening experience because up above you were the mountain tops and you fly in the valleys, and I'm sure the Yanks did it on purpose, fly straight to the mountain, we go `Oh we're going to hit,' and he'd turn just in time and you could see all the trees. And we landed at Wau and

09:00 they put us on trucks and they sent us up to Dumpu which was just north of Bulolo where the start of the Double Mountain trail was.

What did the air raid feel like?

Oh well, scary. It was all scary and I'll be honest

09:30 everybody was scared but you got used to it, we used to get raided probably every night for quite some time and we got used to the raids, and when you saw where they were going you knew you were safe because if they were coming straight at you, you would run into a slit trench, but most of the time when the night air raids we'd just put our heads out of the tent and see where they were going and just go back to bed sort of thing.

10:00 One incident happened before we went, I got tinea on the feet, a fortnight in the regimental outpost and they used to treat it with a thing called microsol which was 99 percent methylated sprits and 1 percent microsol and they used to put it on and it used to burn like mad and the RAP[Regimental Aid Post] was Wally Gorman he used to blow on your feet.

10:30 Anyway we were on the plane going, we got to Wau and we got to Dumpu and it was hot and, stinking hot, and that's when I got dysentery again, I ate a pawpaw which was fly blown, I don't want that to

ever happen again.

What was that like?

Oh, you take a dose of salts and that supposedly clears you out, it's a terrible disease

11:00 but you get over it. And they rushed me off to the 15th Brigade Ambulance then down to the 2nd Clearing Station, the next thing would be flown to Moresby to Australian GeneralHospital but I recovered, they never had penicillin as such, it was just starting, they used to feed you a white mixture to bind you up then a dose of salts to unbind you and

11:30 I finished up I had a week at Crystal Creek in the rest camp. Anyway I got back to battalion and it was time to move over the mountain. Now, I don't know if you've heard of Double Mountain Trail but it was an old gold mining trail, which stretched from the Wau valley to Salamaua. The start

12:00 there was 700 steps straight up the cliff, you started about 2 in the afternoon and you got to the first base camp, then you stayed overnight, then the second haul was up to Double Mountain and you stopped at Missim, I never made it past Double Mountain, having dysentery. I was a week

12:30 behind the battalion because of what I had and, up there was freezing cold, it was mud up to your ankles, your knees, it was climb, climb, climb, and you looked down and a bloke would say, `There goes the track over there, that'll only take about 20 minutes,' three hours later you got to that part of the track and you just pulled yourself up through mud and slush and the air was rarefied,

13:00 the mountain went up to 10,000 feet, about 3,500 meters then it went down 700 feet then it went up again to the top and I spent that night on Double Mountain then the next day I got as far as Missim, then the country started to get out into scrub and a bit of grassy plains,

13:30 then I finally got, finished up at battalion, then, `For Christ's sake, get off that bloody track,' and I jumped into where we were camped, and Mr Nippon [Japanese] saw me and greeted us with a few shells and he had two guns apart from all the smaller 75s and all the mountain guns he had two

14:00 155 shell cannons and if you are ever on the receiving end of a 155 mm shell I tell you it scares the living daylights out of you. So then he used to every morning, every night, and every afternoon not every night, he never fired at night because he had the guns in a big cave and they used to wheel the guns out and we used to call then Salamaua Sal and Keyla Kitty because Keyla was a mountain

14:30 and Salamaua was Salamaua. Anyway, then the time came when I had to go out to the company so I went out to C Company with a guy called Bert Arnie, who's now long gone, and we crossed a bridge called Kunda Bridge which

15:00 features in that Damien Parer shot of those two on the Golden Stairs [over 2000 steps cut into the Kokoda Track from Uberi to summit] being led. He was blinded, being led back. It was under observation and as soon as we got back about 100 yards they knew exactly where we were so they decided to give us a couple of shells and jumped into the slit trench I said to Keith, `My God! This is going to be good if this happens.' So anyway we got up to

15:30 C Company and then was patrolling and fixing lines and then we started attacking Old Vickers position and we tried about three or four times but nothing happened.

Can I take you back to go into more detail about the track, describe what those vertical steps were really like.

16:00 Well its like climbing a step ladder of 700 rungs, one of our guys, he got about half way and he couldn't go any further so he had to come down, and he was crying. Major Ralph was his name, but he was crying `cause he couldn't make the mountain but he was older than us young blokes but it was slog, slog, slog and you had to pull yourself up by roots and

16:30 in the jungle the trees, everything, goes towards the sun and you've got great big roots which would be underground normally of all the trees and you could hardly breathe and it was freezing cold up at 10,000 foot off the ground or 3,500 meters and it was slog, slog, slog, mush, mush, mush all the time.

17:00 You had your pack on your back and your rifle in your hand, your pack would feel like a ton weight, you'd carry your rifle and sling it over your shoulder and you wished to hell you never had the damn thing. But we got over it.

What did you have in your packs?

We had pair of socks, your dixies, square metal dixies for eating,

17:30 you had a blanket, you had a ground sheet, and any change of clothing and we only had the one pair of boots. That weighed I suppose between 50 and 60 pounds, quite a weight to cart around on your back. Most of us made it over.

How many people would go on this trek?

18:00 Well the battalion would have been about 700 - that was the strength of the battalion, finally when we finished Salamaua, 250 blokes were standing. The rest were either killed, wounded or evacuated with some illness of some sort. By the time we got up it was all slush then was worse than what it had ever been.

18:30 We made it.

Describe that slush and mud for us.

Well if you dug a foot hole and filled it up with water and threw earth into it, it would be mud and you'd step into it and it would be about up to here on your leggings and the leggings would fill up with mud and your boots would fill up with mud and you'd take it all out as best you can and keep on going.

19:00 And then you'd put your foot down there'd be nothing to stand on, your foot'd slide down a hole and you'd pull your foot out and curse, naturally, plodding on, that's what we had to do.

What was it like environmentally around you?

It was just pure jungle you could hardly see, you couldn't see 10 feet either way. It was just jungle and you just kept on going up and up and up

19:30 and the down was as bad as the up. To explain it, now what's 29 miles in kilometres? 50, well to cover 50 kilometres as the crow flies it took five days to give you some idea of going up and down mountains. And each staging camp we had, they fed us, then the next morning you got breakfast. There was no such thing

20:00 as hot water so to bath you had to jump in an icy creek.

Describe those staging camps for us?

Well they had tents but the actual beds were built off the ground and made out of timber logs, boughs and you laid on those, and they gave you three or four blankets `cause it was freezing cold

20:30 and the blokes who run them they had to put their whole time there, so it must have been pretty hard for them, so that's what I call the staging camps and there was one, two, three, four of those then you went down into the valley and crossed the Francisco River and you're there.

What about the pathway what was that like?

21:00 **What was that like?**

It was so narrow sometimes, just enough for one person to walk upon. It was full of roots, mud and slush and just kept on pushing to find a root and fall and slip, and I've heard that many swear words going down. Going down was just a slippery slide really, then they gave us a little tin of heat

21:30 like a vaseline type thing and you'd get water and you'd put two tea tablets when the water boiled which took about half an hour then you'd have tea, a cup of tea which was pannikin of tea which was dreadful but that was the only thing they knew. So that was the track and it was called the Double Mountain Trail, the Kokoda Track is

22:00 its' not the Kokoda Trail; it's the Kokoda Track. I wrote an article in one of the magazines about it but this was a trail and it just meandered all about the place. The gold prospectors used it coming from Salamaua. Looking for gold they came down into the Wau Valley there was a lot of gold in the Wau Valley in the river. Then we

22:30 got there and it was hands on all the time.

Could you get lost?

Lot of blokes had. One patrol went out and they got ambushed and it took them seven days to get back to camp. A lot of guys got lost, if you went off the track you got lost, you didn't know were you were.

How would you survive that?

23:00 Well you used a what we called `field operation rations' which were only to be used in an emergency, a concentrated fruit concentrated, like fruit packed into a concentration in a little tin and there was biscuits and things like that and they would live off that or they would starve.

23:30 Now when I'm talking about food, breakfast used to be two army biscuits in your dixie with water and powdered milk, you stirred that, you broke the biscuits and that was a hard job believe me and that become a porridge. For lunch you used to get field operation ration which had little packets of things

24:00 to eat and they were the Australian ones, which were absolutely dreadful. Then of a night time, the cooks couldn't cook during the day because the smoke would bring shells from the Japanese, so you, they used to cook and we used to have cooked, we used to call it `rat shit and carrot stew' like dehydrated meat. It was hot, they'd make that stew and bring it up to the front lines

24:30 in pot boxes and we'd get a dixie full of stew. Now when I was at Salamaua for three months I lost 3 ½

stone which is 12.5 kilos I think, because other people might have lost the same, but that's when I later on I had malaria and tropical ulcers and things like that. So then all we had to do was patrol

25:00 attack and all that sort of thing. And having taken Old Vickers position - that was taken 28th of July 1943 - I moved back to headquarters and that was a case of going out and repairing lines that had been cut and laying new lines keeping communications going , and then we pushed on to Sandy Creek,

25:30 which is just outside Salamaua. One of the incidents that happened which I'll never forget as long as I live. Our mortars and machine guns were on a little plateau about half the size of this house, and the Japs, you could see them. They were looking down at us, blokes were going, `G'day mate? How you going? You stupid dickhead, One day we'll get you.'

26:00 I was up a bit further forward and my CO then said to me, said, `Why don't you go down to the little village for a couple of days, it'll do you good.' Then the Japs decided they would shell it and they plastered the whole place with 155 mm shells and oh my God, and they blew the village to pieces and we had to circumnavigate the village,

26:30 we had to go through a little valley so the Japs wouldn't see us. And I said, `If you never been on the end of a 155 millimetre shell you haven't lived,' Its like an express train rushing at you and then the thing explodes, trees shake and ground shakes and you shake.

Describe the sounds for us?

Have you ever hear an express steam train going at

27:00 100 mile an hour? That's exactly what it like and the noise is about 100 big fire crackers going off, bang and everything shakes, then the shrapnel starts splintering all over the place and this particular day I thought, `Oh,' and everybody started jumping off the plateau and down below and I got up started to run and

27:30 I'm sure the shell brushed me ear as it went past and I threw myself on the ground, and they thought I'd been killed and I jumped up jumped into the, down below the plateau, into the village. It was called Bugit village. To Bugit village and we had to give that village up and get back to where C Company was again.

28:00 Then we attacked and took Old Vickers, then we left there, and went back to battalion headquarters and one day there was, the wharf labourers went on strike so we couldn't get ammunition and couldn't get cables for signal, so we had to go out and salvage. Any ammunition you saw you'd pick up

28:30 take it back to battalion headquarters. We had to roll in all our signal lines `cause we didn't have any.

What did you think of this strike?

Finally the army went in with fixed bayonets and went up the spout and said, `You'll go back to work today,' they went to work that day, they weren't very happy.

During the shelling what would you think about?

29:00 The next one's for me, the next one's got my number on it, but thankfully I didn't get a number on any shell. But you were scared, plain straight out scared, and anybody that said they weren't scared is a liar, it's as simple as that, you were scared and all sorts of things were running through your head. One other incident was up at north of the village. One day

29:30 they, without telling us, that they decided to test a new Australian dive bomber, Vultee Vengeance I think, I could be wrong, we didn't know what it was and it tipped over and came straight for us where Bert and I were in the trench and I shook his hand and I said, `Well Bert, nice knowing you. We're going to get killed now,' and it zoomed off and never dropped a bomb. But the like those Stukas the Germans had, the shriekers were coming down,

30:00 coming straight for us, but that was just an aside incident.

What would you see when you were shelled?

Well you had your head down and you looked up and the whole of the trees were shaking and dirt was falling everywhere where they hit the ground, but the worst was the tree burst where they hit the trees and the shrapnel would come up from about 30 foot and spread out all over

30:30 and a lot of blokes got wounded through tree bursts.

You mentioned earlier you were in Shrapnel Valley?

Nobody got hit by shrapnel. Oh they probably did, but it was spent and then when we attacked Old Vickers we

31:00 used to call in the air force, mostly American Air Force, they used to come in at tree top level. They were very game people and first of all they'd open up with all the machine guns and we'd get all the spent cartridges, go right through. A lot of blokes got hit with spent cartridges and then they'd wheel

off and come back and drop bombs, but the Japs were so far down.

31:30 You hear them digging at night, yakking away and digging at night.

What was it like, knowing they were so close?

Well it was a scary feeling naturally, because we were told never get captured and don't take prisoners unless we desperately need one `cause if you got captured it was immediately off with the head, they didn't muck around, they'd just cut your head off, so we tried not to get captured

32:00 but there was a lot of the camaraderie between the blokes, it was fantastic. Every bloke would help you if you were getting a bit shaky. A bloke would walk up and say, `Slow down mate,' you'd say the same thing to try to help you over. And this went on for 77 days and we went I think the battalion holds some sort of record: it was the longest in actual contact with the enemy

32:30 in the south west Pacific area . Seventy-seven days and not one relief. That was the war and you had to fight it.

You mentioned before you could see the Japanese. What was that like?

Just I suppose you got very rude and call them what you think, they could see you and I suppose they grinned back and go like that.

33:00 And then they used to have a Woodpecker, a Juki machine gun, it used to have a steel belt of the band of bullets, it used to fire about .5. They used to go over your head and it went over and went crack, crack, and you used to hear boom, boom, boom, not like a Bren gun which was three times the speed and we called them `woodpeckers,'

33:30 just like a woodpecker going in the tree. The bloke that used to fire this , I don't know how many there were, he could never get the elevation down low enough and they used to go over your head, so he just couldn't get the elevation down low enough. Otherwise he would have caused a lot of problems. Then there was the mountain gun, little weenie gun like that and we used to call it the `whizbanger,' it'd go bang-whiz-bang, a lot of casualties through the whizbanger.

34:00 That was more over in the flat more than where we were. And we captured one mountain gun and we turned it on the enemy and we had a forward observation office from the artillery and that used to fire from a place called Tambu Bay Range and the Japs didn't like the 25 pounders at all and if

34:30 we'd have had those first we wouldn't have been there as long as we were.

Could you ever hear them calling out to you?

What they used to do was tap into your phone lines and they tried to imitate an Australian voice which we knew straight away who it was and when we were out at C Company instead of being called C Company its was called LERA and the little the phone would, bzzz, you'd pick it up

35:00 and the bloke would say, `Lera,' and you'd say, `Get fucked.' Then you'd ring up battalion headquarters and say, `There's a Jap on the line somewhere,' and then of course they'd cut it and wait in ambush till you went out and fixed it and you always went out with a patrol of riflemen. Then we went out to a place called Sandy Creek and we

35:30 were in ambush one day and we had a colonel, I shouldn't mention his name, he's long gone, they used to call him the `mad major,' Georgie Warfewas his name, he was a brilliant soldier, fearless, and we were in ambush and these six Japs started coming down the track and I said to my mate, `Japs!' and he said, `Tell Wharfie,'

36:00 as we used to call him. Wharfie, well before I got there, with his pistol going bang, bang, bang, missing them all, so I opened up and we got three of them from memory and then Wharfie said, `Chase the bastards, chase 'em,' so we chased them back to positions and then we got copped and Georgie and I were behind a tree and he was digging deeper than I was.

36:30 But then I saw this little Japanese, they used to dig these little round holes and put logs around them and I jumped in that. It was that far from the top and this Jap took the top right off the hole. If only he'd gone down about another 2 or 3 inches he would have taken me with it. They stopped firing and we got back to our lines again. That was just a small incident.

37:00 **I'm curious about the Japanese getting on the phone line, can you tell us more about what they would say?**

They'd couldn't speak enough English but they used to say, `Is that Lera?' and you'd say, `Yes' and then wake up who it was and then hang up. They were always up to every trick in the trade to try and get you. They'd often imitate the wounded

37:30 and of course you would never go out at night unless it was a special patrol, never go out at night, and never fire at night. You'd throw grenades.

Why?

Because they could see your position and anybody that moved after dark got shot.

You said they imitated the wounded. What do you mean?

Well they'd listen and a

38:00 bloke would say, `Oh, hit in the leg,' and a Jap would be over here and he'd say, `Oh, I got hit in the leg,' trying to lure you out. They did it more with the Yanks more than they did with us, try to lure you out and as soon as you got around the corner, bang, you were gone too. But not much of that happened.

What was their accent like?

Oh well like Japanese, ah so and vely nice thank you, you know Japanese, Chinese accent, but they had English-speaking Japanese naturally, but we didn't get much of that. But it was… and we had no atrocities committed against any of our dead or wounded, I must admit. When I say dead or wounded, the atrocities that they created in all the other parts of their battles were

38:30 too horrendous to talk about. If you ever want to read a book on the Japanese or the Germans you get Lord Russell's and its called The Knights of Bushido and they had a little, they lived in squares and that was their whole life was regimented when they got out of the square like in the army, then they went berserk and they killed people like a gang of fascists, but we never had that.

Tape 4

00:38 What you did there would be a forward scout on patrol and the, about six blokes, the section was ten men. At the end of Salamaua we were down to three men per section that's how bad it was, and the sig would be second last in line and

01:00 if you – sometimes - if you pulled the wire and you wound it round the spool you could tell how many yards it was, and you could say the ambush will be about 50 yards up the track, or you'd just stumble on it and of course the Japs would fire and you'd jump out the way and beat them off and repair the line.

01:30 **How do you jump out of the way or beat them off?**

You return the fire and they, usually there was two or three Japs just doing it for nuisance sake. Now if it was cut during the night you never went out to fix it during the night.

How would the patrol move?

02:00 The forward scout would be looking back and forth ahead and you could, a lot of times you could sense where the enemy would be.

How would you sense that?

Inbuilt I suppose. You get used to it, you know who's around the corner and they would, you got to pick spots, the sort of know the spots they'd pick, they just didn't

02:30 be out in the open. They were behind trees naturally or dug holes and the forward scout would get the idea. And often they'd let the forward scout go through and then they'd open up on the patrol.

Did you lose many men on patrols?

Oh yes, most of the action at Salamaua was patrolling and little skirmishes there was only one big

03:00 when we took Old Vickers, mostly patrols and skirmishes and things like that. A lot of time you'd never even see the enemy: they just fired and we fired back.

If someone was killed on a patrol what was the routine after that?

Well if anybody got killed we had two meat tickets [identity tags] we used to call them, and they'd take one and put one in the bloke's mouth and

03:30 put on the map where he was, then, after we cleared the position, the pioneers would go in and dig the grave and that was all co-related to battalion headquarters and given to the War Graves Commission after the battle and they'd go out and dig up the remains and put them in that cemetery I showed you before. That was the procedure and you got used… you didn't

04:00 get used to it. But some said, `Oh, Harry got it this morning.' The stock answer was `Poor bastard.' That's was the stock answer you couldn't let it dwell, it would dwell later. Years go by but you just have to get on with what you are doing.

What about the first time that it happened?

I don't know if I can remember the first time it happened, it just happened, you didn't dwell on it

04:30 so if you did. We had a guy that was shot in both legs and he was left, through no fault of his own for seven days, and he was in a slit trench and he went through the bombing and the strafing and what have you, we finally, the blokes, got him out and blowflies had deposited maggots and that saved his legs. They'd eat away all the bad flesh. And

05:00 when it rained he used to drink the water and he had his field operation rations he lived for five or seven days, I'm not sure, memories getting a bit blurred on some of those things.

What was the process when someone was injured on patrol?

Well, the point was that either somebody would be there to help him back or you would stay there until you got the stretcher bearers up and

05:30 they'd load him up on the stretcher and take him back down to camp. As I said: everybody looked after one another, one of those things, life, in those days, you just went along with it, nothing you could do. But naturally the blokes in sections and platoons they got shot at more than I did

06:00 but I got shot at enough, so it was enough for me. But they were the cutting edge and we walked about in say a patrol of ten well we were ninth in the patrol and that helped you quite a bit. Very interesting experience, but I wouldn't wish it on anybody, at all, but I think today, `Surely to God we don't have to have anymore wars. Can't we sort it out

06:30 without going to war?' I think if everybody spoke English there'd be no wars because you'd yell out, `You stupid so-and-so stop firing at me, for God's sake.' And yet when you go back to the American Civil War: look what they did there, shot their own fathers and sons and families. It makes no difference.

07:00 War is only greed, power and greed and nowadays it seems to be religion more than anything else, which is a shame. But still I'll never change the world, so….

Did you have to shoot people?

My job wasn't to shoot people, I tried but missed I think. My job was to make sure that people shot at people, I was in there directing fire.

How did you direct fire?

07:30 Well the phone would ring, pick up the phone, they wanted a burst of fire over there or they wanted it here or there and then you'd go on mortar shoots, out directing mortar shoots. They would send out an observation sergeant and you'd go with him and he'd say, `Mortars on map reference so and so,' and you'd send them information

08:00 back and they would start mortaring the position just ahead of you and you hoped one wouldn't drop short on you. Quite a few used to drop short. I've done an artillery shoot.

What's that?

When the forward officer needs information sent back to the battery and he says, `Fire one for effect,' and they fire one and he says, `Up three degrees or down three degrees or right.' I've done one of those

08:30 so it was all in together, each person had their own job to do. So that was what it amounted to.

How responsible did you feel in your position?

Well my responsibility was to everything where it should be, I did the best I could with whatever I had. I offered a few suggestions, and I was told, `What the hell would you know about it?' so from then on

09:00 I just did what I was told: `You're going out with this patrol and you're doing this, you're doing that.' And I said, `Yes Sir, no Sir, three bags full.'

What sort of suggestions did you offer?

I did once say that the slit trenches, the sleeping bays, were the wrong way around and they should have been heads facing the enemy, and I said so. And I was told, `What do you know about it?' And another we were trying to attack a position and I said,

09:30 `Why don't we go around this way?' `What would you know about it?' So no more: I'll just do my job to the best of my ability.

Amongst the group of your particular mates if someone was killed would you talk about them?

You try to get it out of your mind. I remember one day - I don't know why this happened to me - but four blokes came up to me and

10:00 said, `I'm going to get knocked tomorrow,' and I said, `Oh rubbish,' and the four of them did. They were in a line and a Jap opened up a machine gun and got the lot of them.

Did they say that all together?

No. One at a time. I never knew what it was all about, I often talk about it to different doctors and they

said they can't even see the link.

How did they say it?

10:30 They just said, `I won't be here tomorrow, mate,' and I said, `Don't be ridiculous. You'll be here tomorrow.' And he said, `No, I think I'm going to get knocked tomorrow,' and they did and they were all young blokes my age, which was 19 years of age and they were all in a line, patrolling in a line. They missed this Jap with a machine gun, and they got the four of them and the lieutenant, five of them all went down in one hit. And the lieutenant,

11:00 he had grenades on his belt and one of the grenades went off and that didn't help much either.

How close were you to them?

I was back about 50 yards I suppose, it depends what you had to do, sometimes you had to be halfway there, sometimes you had to be 20 foot back, whatever the

11:30 platoon commander said. `I want you here to cover this section or that section, I want you to organise stretcher bearers,' and that sort of thing.

What runs through your mind when you see four or five men die in front of you?

Well I didn't actually see them. You say, `Oh Jesus, why did that happen, why, why?' and I don't think you could say what happens at that time but you think about it and you talk to your mates about it.

12:00 **What kind of things do you talk to your mates about?**

Say, `What about Jack or Harry or Bill?' The poor bastards they got it, and there's nothing much you can do about it, but it does… I went back to Lae, I went back to visit and I went through the cemetery and the crosses had been replaced with little plaques in the ground, and I went round every one, and picked out all in the battalion that got killed and I took photos.

12:30 Unfortunately the photographs never came out, but that was cemetery at Lae is absolutely, if you can call a cemetery beautiful, beautiful and the natives look after it, or the Papua New Guineans - I can't call them natives - Papua New Guineans looking after them beautifully. And of course Lae being a very wet place, the grass is lush and it's all cut and all the little things, I don't know about now, that was over 20 years ago.

13:00 So all in all, it's awe inspiring when you see it all. Anyway we got to Sandy Creek.

Just another quick question: in these intense situations, are there premonitions? Or extra sense sort of things?

13:30 Yeah, other guys had premonitions. They knew they were going to get killed and, yeah a lot of guys had premonitions. My premonition, when I left home, my mother said, `Where are you going?' and I said, `I haven't got the slightest idea,' but I said, `Don't worry. I'll be back.' And the second time I went away Mum said she was worried, and I said, `Don't worry, Mum. I'll be back.'

14:00 Now, I don't know why, but I knew I was going to come home.

Did you hold that thought?

Yeah. I was always going to get through the whole war without being killed. Now I don't know why I thought that, I'm sure.

Any sort of superstitions or lucky charms amongst the guys?

Oh yeah. We used to have our steel shaving mirrors and they used to wear them in the left pocket

14:30 in case they got hit near the heart or something like that. I suppose blokes carried lucky charms but I'm not a great believer in lucky charms, my belief was I'm going to get through this.

Where do you think that belief came from?

I don't know, a lot of things I think, and I don't know where they come from, but by God they are nearly always true, but um…

What about faith?

15:00 Faith, oh yes, faith in your friends and battalion, faith in your mates, and faith in yourself. That's it, I think, I had the faith to get through it all.

How do you maintain faith in yourself?

Well you do what at the time you do, what you think is best. Somebody asked me once, `How many times did you nearly get killed?' and I said, `Every day,' and he said, `What do you mean "every day,"' and I said, `Say the shell was

15:30 coming over. If you didn't get into the slit trench in time you'd probably get killed. Say you were walking

down the track and you got fired on, now if you'd have gone left you got killed, if you'd gone right you didn't get killed type of thing. And so,' and I said, `it was there every day.' Death was tugging at your elbow every day sort of thing. You never knew when they were going to shell or grenade or open up or anything like that,

16:00 you never knew whether one of your own planes was going to drop a bomb on you, never knew whether artillery was going to have a drop short and you might have got killed like that. But everybody who went into action knew they weren't going to get killed but they did, a lot got killed. But some blokes had premonitions, yeah.

How does seeing death around you change your opinion of death?

Seeing death you change your opinion of death?

16:30 Look I think with death you have to accept it. Now my mother, my father, my first wife, my granddaughter, army buddies, my own wife twice, have died and I got over it because I accept it and you have to accept it. Death is like being born, it's something you can't stop and death is something you can't stop and

17:00 what you do is live your life in between the best way you can. And my philosophy in life is - Mary could never understand it my wife - I live today. Tomorrow I don't worry about, tomorrow I have no idea of what's going to happen, and yesterday is gone, I have memories, yes I have lovely memories

17:30 and some hard ones. But you've got to accept, in life, you're dealt a hand of cards. It's how you play the cards is how life is for you. Now, Mary used to worry about every morning, `What's wrong now, oh its going to be a terrible day tomorrow.' Wait until tomorrow, and if the sun rises clear and beautiful or

18:00 it rises through clouds there's nothing you can do about it. And that's what I've been all my life, you can't do anything about what goes on. So you accept what you're given, you accept the hand you've been dealt, and like people say, `Why doesn't God do this, and why didn't God do that?' and I say, well, `In my humble opinion we created God.' And I believe in God.

18:30 I'm not mad on religion but I do believe in God, and I think there is a purpose in life, but, um, you accept what you have been given. Now I'll never be a madly rich man. I'm at the situation that I'd never have to bother about another cent

19:00 I get a very nice government pension and I'm very happy for it and I've got money and now I've got everything I want, I don't want for a single thing, but people can worry themselves sick about money. Its not money, it's the love of money, well `cause I'm one of those stupid idiots that give it away. I like to see other people happy, the same as me. We were talking about

19:30 how did it affect me? `Well I see death as something that's going to happen anyway and I always believe there's something better than this, there has to be, better than what the world does to us, I think there is a hereafter and I always think that.

In your life you have seen death in war and in peace.

20:00 **Does it affect you differently in a violent situation such as war?**

Well, I suppose you mourn for your mates but, bing, its all over Red Rover as they say, but with death in lifetime the person lingers then dies and that affects you but

20:30 I got over all the deaths pretty well, because I accept that it's a fact of life, like everything. Life is a beautiful thing but we humans are stuffing it up very quickly, aren't we? If you're nice to people I think they are nice back to you. Have a situation where there's death in the family? Well, you handle it the best way you can but you must

21:00 accept it, you mustn't use it as, be feared of it, its going to happen.

During the war did you ever see people who couldn't accept it?

Some blokes went what they call `troppo,' went off their skulls, they all went stupid.

What would they do?

Well we had one bloke he just got out of this little two-man tent and ran screaming into the jungle and somebody tackled him and brought him back to his tent. You're not

21:30 supposed to give them a shot of morphine `cause it could make them worse. I think they used to give them a couple of sleeping pills I suppose. Oh a lot of blokes gone troppo. We had a little bloke with us he - one bloke saw him - and he had a pay book and we used to have an AB-83 which was your record book and he had `em and he was lighting a match.

22:00 And he said, `What's wrong with you?' and he said, `I don't like the army any more,' and so they took him back and they put him in with one of our corporals, Joey Parker. And there was this terrible scream during the night and we thought, `Oh no, the Japs are here!' But this bloke he set off with a machete, and he'd flipped, they found out later on that he had cerebral malaria. He just flipped and a lot

22:30 of blokes flipped, it's the continually day-to-day in enclosed areas, the jungle gets you, you're in a slit trench sleeping bay and its all-engulfing. As a matter of fact a friend of mine, when he came home he couldn't face being home because everything was such wide and he got agoraphobia I think, and the doctor said, `It's because you've been cooped up for so many years in

23:00 tents, army barracks, in jungles, and slit trenches,' and he said, `Now you can't face the wide open spaces' Now for years since I had my first breakdown in '64 and had another one in '84 I couldn't go in a supermarket. The noise, I still can't stand noise today, I can listen to music blaring but when everybody's talking and yakking, I start to get upset.

Why?

23:30 I don't know, no idea.

If you did start to feel you were going a bit troppo, was there anyone you could talk to?

Yeah we had two padres and we always had the philosophers in the battalion, the blokes that knew everything, you know, and they'd give words of advice, the older guys would give words of advice.

What kind of advice?

`Slow down, don't go out today, stay here do this and do that.' Corporals that was their job and sergeants

24:00 and then when you went out, well you had a different slant on life.

In what way?

Well I suppose you calm down. Today they give you a pill for it, you calm down. Now like I'm not allowed to watch, you know September the 11th, that terrible thing in New York. Well I watched that all day and the next day I couldn't walk,

24:30 I couldn't move past from that chair over there.

Why not?

No idea, so anyway I got over it a couple of days later, and then when the Bali bombing happened the same happened so I said to my psychiatrist in Greenslopes, `What happened?' He said, `Well you're seeing' - now I can watch a movie no worries, but you're seeing the real thing -

25:00 and he said, `You're seeing September 11th and the Bali bombing, but your brain is back at the war and it sees it being attacked again so it shuts your body down. And you just can hardly lift your arms you can hardly walk and it shuts your body down so you won't do any damage to the body.' So I thought, `Oh well I know what it's all about,' so I don't watch all those bombings and things on television today, well I'm not allowed

25:30 to put it that way, and he said, `No, you're not to watch it any more.' But I spent, after September 11th, I spent three days at that table. I hardly moved at all. I played patience, I did crosswords, I couldn't walk, I was just, my whole body was shut down and…

Were you conscious that you were thinking about the war?

No, I just saw this, as a matter of fact, September the 11th I think. I cried all day

26:00 cause it brought back memories, but the brain is being attacked, it in turn attacked me. I'd never heard of these things before but my psychiatrist he's the second one is absolutely fantastic, he just tells you what you go through your mind

26:30 see the mind remembers everything from the day you were born, in your subconscious and every now and again a little bit comes out. Get a little bit upset and you grin and bear it but that's,

What kind of memories are brought back?

27:00 Well lets say, in the winter time when, I don't do much gardening now, I'm not fit enough to garden I've got a young lad who comes and does all the gardening and that I try to keep busy all the time, and I just put the spade in the ground and I'm back in New Guinea, I turn over the earth and it smells the same, things like that. Or I might shut my eyes and I can tell you exactly where a tree was that we dug a slit trench under I can see the

27:30 village I can see Sandy Creek I can see everything, from day one and it just keeps coming back.

When you see these things what feelings are associated with them?

I myself don't have feelings, but the brain has feelings, and it might tell you to slow down or don't do this or don't do that then you might have a couple of strong drinks and feel a bit better.

28:00 Of course you don't feel better at all, but you think you do. So, I was in the psychiatrist's office and he had a young budding psychiatrist, or trainee. `Did you have flash backs?' and Perc [psychiatrist] said to

him, `No, Jeff's got a moving camera that goes day and night, all continuing.'

28:30 Don't ask me why, perhaps my memory picks a lot quicker than others. I can remember things when I was three years of age, moving down to Moonee Ponds and moving to Flemington, as I said before, the young girl Gloria Gerard broke my little trike and I was most upset.

Is this a blessing or a curse, a memory like that?

29:00 I think it's a blessing because if you don't remember it can all come back at once and hit you, that'd be terrible `cause that's when you see blokes that go, they finish up in, we call them `funny farms,' they end up in mental institutions. Because they can't cope with the ordinary. It's, um… Mary would say to me, `Oh terrible, terrible, you're seeing a psychiatrist,' and I said, `Well, if you

29:30 break your leg who are you going to see? An orthopaedic specialist. If you have trouble with your mind you go and see a psychiatrist. What's the difference?' I can't see it, but a lot of people its like, I remember when I first , well the second time, when I used to go to the shopping centre and they'd say `You retired?' `Yes.' `What from?' `Oh well, I've got memories of the war and it's caught up with me and I see a psychiatrist.' And, `Oh.' And I said I spent time in Greenslopes in the psychiatric ward,

30:00 quite a lot of time, but I'm over it now and not ever going back there again. That's what I said in 1964 but still they've got the right mixture, not that I take too many tablets but I've got the right mixture. I know where I'm going and where I'm from.. But first off you don't even know what's what. I spent three years and I couldn't walk out that door.

30:30 Second time I had a break down it was a visual steel door there and I had to be taken out. After a while I went back in one day to Greenslopes and they changed medication and I came home and I said, `I'm going shopping today,' and I went to the shopping centre and I saw a tapestry and I said, `I can do that,' and that's how the whole damn [tapestry] thing started. Then I've done, given that many tapestries away

31:00 but I've shown them in the Royal Show, the Queensland Ex-servicemen's Literary Guild and the local show, the Logan Show, and so far I've had 21 prizes, eleven firsts. So I'm happy with that. I don't do it any more, I don't show them anymore because it's too hard for me to get there and I don't like involving family, I don't like going to the show and all that noise. It just about drives me crazy and I suffer the next day from it.

31:30 **You were saying that you almost have camera in your head. Are there fond memories among your war memories?**

Both fond memories and bad memories, but it's all memories. I can just about tell you from the day I joined the army everything every day that happened, just about.

What are some of the fond memories?

Well, New Years Eve 1943 we

32:00 were up at a place call Koitaki which is outside of Moresby and we were waiting to come home but they sent us up the Ramu Valley and all our - this is only a silly thing - we used to get Red Cross parcels and two of the older blokes, they made up a jungle juice. So New Years Eve we all got stuck into the jungle juice. I had two mugs and passed out on the bed, and

32:30 I can remember blokes chasing each other through tents and things like that. They were fond memories and going into new towns, they were fond memories, people doing you nice turns, they were fond memories, seeing all new things, flying in an aeroplane for the first time, those sort of nice memories.

33:00 **Are you able to look back at people who've died in a fond way?**

Yes, fond way, you never forget them, they are always there. My best mate he lasted six hours. He got killed on the sixth hour of the first day. But anyway he got killed and there's nothing I can do about it.

33:30 I'm not cynical but you've got to steel yourself that this is not going to happen to you and if it does happen, we all can't go to war and not get killed or wounded. The only thing I got was a flick of shrapnel on my head there, and I didn't even know about it until I said, `Oh blood,' flicked as it went past.

You mentioned a couple of times the older blokes. What was your age like in relation to other blokes?

34:00 Well I was when I first went in the army, I was 18. 18 and six days of age and these blokes would be 22 23, 24 and they were the old blokes; we were called `the boys' and they were called `the old blokes'.

What was it like being younger?

That was at the time that was what happened, you knew you weren't going to get promoted as quickly as the older blokes because the

34:30 older blokes got the promotions, where you just got the come up as the kid sort of thing.

Was there a difference in the way . . .

No, they were good to us and taught us and helped us. Of course when we were out on exercise in Australia and we got near a pub the older blokes were shickered [drunk]. And us younger blokes were, some of them did. But I wasn't, I

35:00 didn't actually start drinking until I came home on leave and we all used to get into the pubs and enjoy ourselves because we knew we were going back again. Special pub where our platoon used to meet, the City Club in Collins Street in Melbourne, its long gone now, we used to go down the stairs to the saloon bar, that was a funny turn , things that used to happen there.

35:30 **Can you tell me about any mentors or role models?**

Oh yeah, there was Jack Grimes. He finished up being a corporal, he was a nice bloke. I've known him for many, many years after the war, he lived not far away in Melbourne, he died last year.

36:00 Jack Grimes and Joey Parker and Sid Smith, Russ Costello, should I say this is [Howard government minister from 1996] Peter Costello's father.

So these guys who were mentors or role models. In what sort of ways did they . . . ?

Well they, you might say, I remember one day we were being shelled and

36:30 Jack Grimes got hit behind the knee and I'll never forget his screams, ever, and Joey Parker said, `Better stay put today, I don't want you to go on patrols today, just stay in camp,' because one of our blokes got done. And things like that or they'd say, `Oh, young bloke, how're yer going?' and all this sort of thing

37:00 as best they could. They weren't psychiatrists or that sort of jazz, but just them being older and you looked at them as, as you say, role models, you just looked at them and thought, `Well, he's an older bloke, he knows more than I do,' that sort of thing. That's what I think but you just looked up to them because when I was a kid it was always Respect your Elders

37:30 to the elders you know, so its very funny. Russ Costello, he's Peter Costello's father, he was in our platoon, he's a minister now like his youngest son [Tim Costello], he was always offering pearls of wisdom and trying to get us to be good little boys, stop us swearing and all this sort of thing, but he was a very nice

38:00 person, very nice. That was the older image and then of course you had the blokes that were older than that again, probably sergeants and lieutenants and they gave advice and help and that sort of thing. Of course you had the rat bags as usual but most of them were all right. Somebody said did I see The Band of Brothers on television. I think I saw some of it; well we were a band of brothers the whole lot of us.

38:30 They used to work as a team; everybody had a job to do and everybody… That's my thoughts anyway, whether they are right or wrong I don't know. Oh no, as I said before, the army was a wonderful experience for me: the only thing was when they started shooting at you. But it was a wonderful experience

39:00 and the army makes you or breaks you it really does, it makes you a man or it breaks you, or you can't cop it and you do all sorts of stupid things, but it makes men out of boys. Well the services, but there was more, where an aeroplane flew with ten blokes on it, a ship went with 50 or 100 blokes they all had to

39:30 do together, and the army or the battalion of 700 blokes were sort of one big family. We had the misfits and the idiots, we'll always have those, but basically we were all the same, had a job to do and did it.

Tape 5

00:37 **Can I ask you about the leadership of the battalion?**

When we first started we had older guys, guys that had been in the CMF [Citizens Military Forces] for a some time and they didn't really have anything much to with warfare as such

01:00 and the A Company commander got killed. B Company commander, I don't know, he disappeared. And C Company commander he was given a bowler hat [see explanation at Timestamp:05:05:00:00 below], and D Company commander he came down with malaria, and the CO went down with malaria, so it was a whole new ball game and the lieutenants took over from captains took over from majors and

01:30 the whole new young image in the battalion. These guys should never have been sent away in the first place because they didn't, and the captain in charge of C Company when I was there with him, he used to say to me, he had his little slit trench there and mine was there, and he'd say, `Another two of my boys got killed today.'

02:00 I used to say to him, `It's not your fault. That's the way the bikkie breaks.' We didn't know those things in those days, that's the way it goes, but it got to him in the finish and they gave him the Royal Order of the Boot [slang: discharge] I think, I'm not sure. He just couldn't go on with it. But the whole battalion structure of officers changed and then when our dear

02:30 new CO George Warfe came on, he spurred a whole new esprit de corps in the battalion. Sure he did and we said, `We're going to show this so and so what to do,' and we did. So we went along with what he did and I'm sure it made the difference to the battalion, he was Major George Warfe. He finished up Lieutenant Colonel George Warfe

03:00 and he won the DSO [Companion of the Distinguished Service Order] the MC [Military Cross] and the MID [Mentioned in Dispatches], pretty highly decorated person.

What were his good qualities?

You will do it or else: that was his good qualities, and `or else' could mean you got kicked out to the back. Or he led by example, he was not afraid to run out in front with his other troops,

03:30 but he led by example and he said, `You'll do it or else,' I can say that again, and if they failed to take a hill or something he'd say, `Well, go back tomorrow and take it.' We latched on to that and that's what we did and I'm sure that he made a hell of a difference to the battalion because all people in all walks of life looked to the leader.

04:00 Now, you take political leaders in Australia, Bob Menzies and [Prime Minister John] Curtin , [Prime Minister] Bob Hawke, a few poor ones, but you look up to a person and you follow what his ideals are, and we looked up to George Warfe and said, `Son of a bitch, what we can do?' We did that I think we did that, and our next commander we got was

04:30 in the Bougainville campaign which we'll talk about later, but he was the same.

How important was for the men to see a leader who would go into action?

Very important. You had to have somebody that led by example, not to have somebody who led behind the lines or lot of them who sat behind the lines and said, `Send a thousand blokes over here and ten thousand over there.' These blokes would foolishly lead their troops in close there with them and do the best they could and

05:00 that's what I think. I think George Warfe put the spirit into the battalion it never had and from then on we never looked back.

You mentioned one got `the bowler hat.' What do you mean?

The bowler hat means he was not discharged but sent back

05:30 behind the lines and he probably finished up in charge of the postal unit, which we needed, don't get me wrong, all these things were needed to keep… because to keep one soldier in the field there were seven behind him, there was the ambulance, the stretcher bearers, but right through the whole thing, there was ordinance

06:00 and people that issued food, there was a catering corps, and Australian Army Service Corps, they were all there to keep one, it needed seven troops behind to keep one person in the front line.

How did you feel about those other six guys? Being in the front line?

Well we needed the guys to give us ammunition, we needed the guys to give us food, we needed guys to

06:30 cook for us, we needed guys to look after us when we got sick. So it was a case of needing, everybody had a job to do in the army, that's the part I'm trying to say. Everybody had a job to do, it doesn't matter if you never left Australia, or you went overseas, everybody had a job to do.

Did you ever feel that they had it easier?

07:00 Well they did but then I was unlucky because I wasn't one of them. I was in the front line but when the war's all over you feel proud to be in the front line. But everybody has a job to do, I keep on repeating myself. Without - as Napoleon said, an army marches on its stomach which is exactly right - without food you can't walk, without ammunition you can't

07:30 shoot, without medical supplies people die, it's things like that. Everybody's got a job to do.

Where there times when a lack of food or supplies would affect your performance?

Oh yeah, I think I said that before when we were pushing down towards Sandy Creek

08:00 we run out of supplies and we had to go and scrounge in the field what we had left behind, had to scrounge all that and bring it back, otherwise we couldn't have gone forward. The object of war is to go forward. As General Patton in the American Third Army said, `Don't ever talk about retreating, we are going forward all the time.' And the attacking force loss less than the

08:30 defending force, always.

Can you tell us about Sandy Creek?

Sandy Creek. I was there and our sergeant, Freddy Craig said to me, `I want you to go to A Company.' By this time I was a skeleton, you can still see the scar: I had an ulcer on that foot, that leg, that hand and

09:00 tropical ulcers eat right down to the bone.

What are they like?

They are like a big brown sore. You can see the bone, they keep on eating away. Like the soldiers that got caught by the Japanese in Malaya, they all got tropical ulcers, they'd have big scars on the leg about that big. Anyway I went to A Company and I was there three or four days and I started

09:30 to get this cough and the company aid post bloke, John Hall, he said to me, `What's wrong?' and I said, `I can't stop coughing,' and he said, `No, you've pneumonial malaria,' so he said, `I think we should send you back,' so he put a little note in my uniform, another one, so I worked my way down to the regimental aid post

10:00 and I'm walking along the track oblivious to everything - I was that sick I could hardly scratch myself - and a bloke stopped me and he said, `Where are you going?' and I said, `Regimental aid post,' and he said, `It's that way. If you go around that corner and you'll get your head blown off.' Got to the right place and Stan Goeby who was our sergeant at regimental aid post said, `Oh, do you think you could walk back to the track to the 2/2nd [Battalion]

10:30 clearing station, the casualty clearing station, and I said, `Oh, I think so.' So they took my rifle off me and my pack and he said, `OK, off you go.' Well it took me two hours I think, three hours to do about half a mile or a mile and I was just delirious, I didn't know what was going on. I got there and I was standing there, like. This

11:00 bloke came out and he said, `Who's next?' and I think a bloke said, `He is.' They took me in and I don't remember a thing for about three or four days and then after a week, they decided they would send a parcel of us back to Dobodura which was outside Gona on the northern side of New Guinea. So, ah,

11:30 we walked over a mountain and down to a place called Tambu Bay where we were vetted by the doctor and he said, "Oh you're too sick to travel." and I'm saying "I'll travel doctor anywhere to get out of it." so he put us on took us on a barge and down to a place called Moro Bay then they took us to Morobe , then they took us down to Gona, then went up to Dobodura,

12:00 which was the 2/ 11th Field Hospital AGH [Australian General Hospital] and I laid in bed and the orderly come around and said, `Go in there,' and there were hot showers and that was the first one I'd had in three or four months, and the orderly come out and they bandaged my leg and foot, arm.

12:30 I'm sitting there all bandaged like I was a hero. The next day the doctor come around and he said, `I think we'll send you back to Port Moresby,' and I cried, I really did, but it was too much. So, and he said, `How much did you weigh before you come here?' and I said, `About 11 ½ stone,' and he said, `Good God, you only weigh

13:00 8 ½ stone now.' So, and he said, `We are going to send you back to Moresby, going to fatten you up,' so he sent me back to the 2/2nd AGH in Moresby and then I went up to the convalescent camp at Koitaki [Lookout] and I was there for a month and they kept on pouring this milk and powdered milk and water but they were trying to fatten me up but I never put that 3 ½ stone on back until

13:30 I was, until 1972. I got the malarial treatment, in those days it was take quinine and then you take this paludrine [anti-malarial] drink half way through, and then I returned to the battalion we went up to Koitaki for a rest and recreation waiting for when we went home and then we were told on New Year's Day we were going back up to

14:00 Ramu Valley we were not very happy at all.

Can I ask you about Koitaki and the convalescence camp? What was that like?

Well they call it a rest camp and all you did was see the doctor twice a day and the nurses dressed the wounds and you integrated with all the other people there.

14:30 No the convalescent camp was to help you recover, they had movies on, we used to call them `outdoor' movies on the big screen, and you saw the doctor every day and the nurses come around and dressed your wounds, in my case tropical ulcers

15:00 and then you are recovering from malaria, which is not a very nice thing to get. And then after a month there I think they sent me back to battalion, which was formed back again at Moresby.

How did tropical diseases affect your battalion ?

I think that, now at Salamaua we had 80 killed and

15:30 120 wounded, and I think when the battalion went into action there were 700 of us and 250 were left at the end of the campaign, so out of the 80 and 120 there was 300 who were evacuated with tropical diseases such as malaria and tropical ulcers and general fatigue

16:00 and battle fatigue I guess.

What would you talk about at Koitaki with the others?

Well it was a rest camp and it's just like when you are in hospital where you go to convalescence, something like that and they looked after you and tried to get you better and try to forget, like the bloke who had a bullet in his leg and he'd go there and they'd dress the wound and after he was finished with

16:30 hospital and they'd dress the wound and they'd try and get you back to your normal state again.

What kind of discussions would you have with the men there?

Just normal things you talked about, birds and what you were going to do when you got home, that sort of thing, no, we tried to get away from what we called `war-ies,' and not tell war stories, and they had movies and things like that

17:00 just to get you back from the traumas of battle through hospital to convalescent camp and back to your battalion, just to try to get you on your way.

What was it like, the absence of women?

We loved Betty Grable [Hollywood actress], she was the pin up girl, and blokes talked of their

17:30 wives and what they would do when they got home, knock on the door and rush through the door and all this sort of thing. Most of the blokes that I knew, so many didn't have girlfriends because they were too young to have started that sort of thing, unlike today. I was born too early I guess. Today everybody is in a relationship and this and that, you had to be married of course before all those things started.

18:00 **You thought you were going home, tell us about that?**

Minister for Defence Mr Ford, said that any troops in New Guinea that had action would only be there for six months and then they would be sent home on leave, but unfortunately that was his words and we were up at Koitaki and

18:30 we were on the Laloki River and it was lovely we used to swim in the river. We always had one person on guard with a rifle to shoot crocodiles when they came down the stream sort of thing , and we got this terrible news on New Year's Day that we would be going back up to the Ramu Valley to the Finisterre Ranges which we thought we…

19:00 **What was your feeling?**

Most upset, believe me, everybody was upset but we were told and in those days when you were told you did it and no questions asked, so off we went to the Ramu Valley and we landed at a place called Dumpu and then we started from there and we went across the Finisterre Ranges

19:30 to the Kavanas River then onto Bogadjim and onto Madang. Stayed in Madang for a couple of, three months I suppose before we were sent home in August of 1944.

And what kind of action did you see in this time?

Well this time was mostly patrols. It wasn't a big action for us because we were what they called

20:00 `reserve battalion' but we covered about 50 miles of territory and this time we only had six killed and five wounded so wasn't much of an action, but it was hands on because you never knew what was around the next corner. So we laid out on this Kavanas patrol with 50 miles of cable and was

20:30 still in touch with battalion headquarters and we had cooks and native carriers. There must have been about 200 of us, or 100 I suppose, but we went out for about a month, then my mate and I were relieved and we came back to battalion headquarters at Kankiryo Saddle which is part of Finisterre Ranges

21:00 and then I got a lucky break, my mate and I got a lucky break we were sent back to 15th Brigade signals to help them, that gave us about two months of no bombing or anything like that and then we met up again with the battalion at the Sio Plantation at Madang and by that time the war had moved quite a way along and we were reserve and we

21:30 stayed there until August '44 then they sent us home on leave.

Tell us about the patrols what were they like?

You just went on patrol I mean if you patrol 50 miles you are a long way out and as I said we, the cooks and we, had native carriers and they would carry supplies and we would be searching for Japanese. They were probably watching us and moving back and moving back and moving back.

22:00 **How would you search?**

Well you just followed tracks or follow the river and you'd know that the Japanese would be close to the river and you just kept on going and hopefully they weren't going to fire on you but they did. But the patrol I went on we never got fired on once, sort of lucky break.

How would you move?

In single file and you

22:30 had the scout and everybody would take their turn being a scout and us sigs went along rolling up cable and bringing along the rear. Reels were big, they used to be big steel reels like that and we just kept on rolling out the cable. We were always in touch with battalion headquarters. By that time they'd given away the 108 wireless sets and we got 208 wireless sets, which were much better to keep in touch with battalion headquarters.

23:00 **How would they work?**

Well you just punch in the battalion code and then you either had a microphone or Morse code and you just sent off your message to the battalion who would receive it and they would send back `Do this or do that or… Then with the 15th Brigade they had number 11s and 107s to send, they could send Morse code

23:30 right around the world. They were brilliant sets and you just wait till a certain time and a bloke would come in and send his message and you'd send a reply back and take the message and give it to the runner who'd take it up to brigade headquarters and they would send back what they wanted to talk about and say, `Do this,' or `Move there or move somewhere else or…'

What kind of messages?

24:00 `Enemy sighted at such and such a position, what will we do?' Brigadier would look at it and he'd say, `I want a platoon to go to battalion, to go that way and somebody else to go this way' and he would send out his messages and it was keeping the whole battalion in touch, the whole brigade in touch. Now there was one night when I was on switchboard duty

24:30 we had 30 lines and the brigadier issued a message `I want this to go to 30 different commands,' and you had to ring up all 30 commands and get them on line and the brigadier would speak and God help you if you missed one and he'd say and - Brigadier Hammer, we used to call him `Tack' Hammer, he was probably the best brigadier in the Australian Army, he finished Major General Hammer - and he

25:00 would, say, `This is the message for the battle,' message for the day, this is what I want you to do and everybody would get the same message and they'd go and do it.

What was particularly good about Hammer?

He was a colonel in the Middle East and he came back to Australia and he took over the whole 15th Brigade and he turned it into one of the best brigades in the whole Australian Army.

25:30 His leadership, forcefulness and wanting to get the job done and he wouldn't take it but if anybody was not right he would get rid of them, `This is not right, this is what I want, and this is what you'll do or else.'

What about his tactics?

Very good, yes he knew exactly what was going on, he knew everything. No, he was a brilliant man.

What was his manner like?

26:00 Very aloof but when he told his colonels what to do they jumped and the colonels told the majors and the majors told the captains and the captains told the lieutenants and the lieutenants told the sergeants and the sergeant told the corporals and the corporals told the privates and that's what you are going to do today. He was just a good tactical commander like Montgomery or Patton, he knew what was going on,

26:30 he made the 15th Brigade into on the best brigades in the Australian Army.

When a signal was down how would you know where it was down?

Down, oh well you never got through, you ring up the battalion and you'd hear nothing so you knew that the line had been cut or if you were on

27:00 radio or wireless if you didn't get a reply you knew that the signals weren't strong enough so you change the set around. You might have gone up a hill or go around the corner or some other place and you might have got through.

How would you find where it was cut exactly?

Well you had to walk along the line. I remember when we get to Bougainville, I'll tell you about that, it was a strange thing, but one where I was able to help a patrol.

27:30 You knew it was cut because you didn't get anywhere so you just went out and found where it was cut.

And how would you repair it?

Well with cables of same diameter you used a reef knot `cause you know it won't slip. Then you put tape around it. Now if you had one cable or you had a cable going into a cable like that

28:00 or you had a thin cable going to a thick cable you use an Indian sheet knot and you wound it round and pulled it so it wouldn't slip and bound it up with insulation tape. Yeah.

You were telling us before you were going back to Australia. Tell us about that?

Before we were, this is a funny story, before we left Madang

28:30 I was sent down to a signal school at Sogeri which is not far from Koitaki and I had to go from the Sio Plantation down to Madang, this is quite funny, the Jap didn't think it was funny to get down to the wharf called the Fairmile you had to board a Fairmile launch which is a 50-foot wooden boat and they were very fast

29:00 and you had to make your own way down to get on the boat. We had a guy who was special services and he had a Jap prisoner about 4 foot 6 and he had a special machine gun which he'd captured from the Jap and the machine gun which the Japanese had, it was like a Bren gun with a Lewis round top on it -

29:30 no, the magazine on top of the Lewis. We were going around we had to get away early because the commander of the Fairmile was worried that the Jap Zeros used to come in a strafe all the boats that were going out of Madang, so we were walking down and we passed all the wharf labourers, all the dock construction operating companies

30:00 and, `Why don't you kill the bastard?' and he said, `Why don't you go and get one of your own?' which made it very happy, so we got on the Fairmile and away it went. And we got to Sadau and I was watching the naval bloke signal the camp at Sadau and it said, `One Japanese prisoner, one sergeant and 17 other ranks, which was us.

30:30 But they picked it up as `One sergeant, 17 Japanese prisoners and one other rank.' Well they put us in little lighters, we went to the shore and I've never seen a look on a Japanese There was a company of men fixed [bayonets attached] rifles and the sergeants and lieutenants and majors and colonels and this poor little Jap, I could see the look on his face, `Oh I'm going to be

31:00 killed!' and the mistake was found out it was only one Japanese and they though it was 17. I'll never forget the look on that little Jap's face, I don't know what he is doing now, he's probably gone to heaven or…

What did you think of the Japanese yourself? Did you have empathy for the people you were fighting?

No.

31:30 **Did you come face to face with any Japanese ?**

Yep.

Describe that for us?

Well, you probably won't edit this: all Japanese should be shot at birth, all Japanese even today. The things they did was unbelievable and I have no thoughts or I couldn't care less if all the Japanese islands sunk in the ocean. That's my humble opinion,

32:00 I'm wrong, I know I'm wrong but I'm not a Christian, but I believe in Christianity and I believe in God but I think what the Japanese did in the Second World War, I think they should never had been allowed to survive and people say to me, `They dropped the atomic bomb.' Yeah, that's saved me, I'd be dead if they hadn't dropped the atomic bomb and it saved two million allied casualties,

32:30 wiped out 500,000 Japs I don't know, but it saved two million American and English and Australian lives, allied lives, so my thoughts of Japanese are not very good.

What kind of things did you see to make you feel this way?

Well I… it was respect that they treated us like soldiers, but what they did to civilians was unbelievable and to

33:00 the Australian captives on Malaya and Sandakan and places like that. At the war's end at the Sandakan prison camp the commandant cut off 400 Australian heads after the war finished. He knew the war had finished, but he didn't want to be caught with the damning evidence. They hung him.

33:30 **What had you noticed how the Japanese people had treated the local people that you just mentioned?**

They killed priests, nuns

34:00 they lined up at Gona, they lined up a whole 50 people and they hung them over the end of the yard rail on a boat and cut them free and the last one, they left till last, was a little boy of 12, the last of the family, they let him watch, and they used Australian soldiers as bayonet practice, live bayonet practice they

34:30 actually threw kerosene on two blokes that were wounded and they burnt them. They actually ate human Australian bodies and they killed, in Nanking, 350,000 Chinese just to teach them a lesson.

Did you see them killing native people?

35:00 No, that was when I say they smartened up. I think they got the message that we were awake to what they were doing and I said before, you never got captured and you never took prisoners unless you were ordered to, because if you got captured you knew you were going to lose your head; it's as simple as that. They are barbarians but it's the bushido [Samurai warrior code]. They think nothing of death, they think it's great to die, to have your head cut off.

35:30 **What's it like fighting an enemy like this?**

Well they were considered the most brutal enemy in the whole of the world, Russians, Germans, whatever, they were considered the greatest fighting force and the most brutal enemy. They killed anybody; if you were laying in a hospital bed they would come in and shoot you and so

36:00 we were told when we left for overseas not to let them take Australia under any circumstances because they would kill your mother and father, and rape your daughters and rape your sisters and all this sort of thing, and that's the way it was and that's what we went to war thinking about. Those things. Not that, we didn't strike anything like that because we had been warned not to get captured.

36:30 Better to die than be captured, better to be killed than have your head cut off I guess.

How were you told this before you left?

Well we had a captain come to us. He was in special services and he'd been in Japan before the war as an exchange army officer and he told us what they did and how they treated their own and

37:00 how fanatical they were and they were fanatical. And they have their banzai charges and they'd rush into bullets which we wouldn't have done, they rushed into murderous machine-gun fire, screaming `Banzai banzai, emperor, emperor,' all that sort of thing, fanatical, fanatical people.

37:30 **Did you see any examples of where they were running to their death?**

Yeah, they'd be screaming `Banzai, banzai' and charging and our Vickers gunners were just mowing them down like they were going out of fashion, and mortars and all that sort of jazz and

38:00 well that was their code, the bushido code was what they lived on. We wouldn't have done that, we used to take our time before rushing madly into bullets and guns and things like that.

What other stuff were you told before you left about the Japanese?

They had pebble-eyed glasses, they couldn't shoot anything, they were so stupid,

38:30 no, it was a piece of cake, they couldn't see, they couldn't shoot and they were stupid, and how wrong they were. They were the most formidable army in the world. Look at all the territory they took, because we weren't prepared.

And what image did you leave of them?

39:00 Well we were better than they were, put it that way, because the Australians were the first to stop the Japanese at Milne Bay, then we stopped them at Salamaua and we stopped them at Kokoda and the Australians were first to stop the Japanese, not that we were any better than anybody else but it happened that way because they had stretched their supply lines too far and as I told you

39:30 and as Napoleon said, an army marches on its stomach. With no food, no ammunition, no medical supplies you can't go any further.

Tape 6

00:38 Now we leave the Sio Plantation and we get to Madang and the boat's standing off shore and I think is was the SS Duntroon from memory and finally we got aboard and we sailed our way back to Australia

01:00 and we landed at Townsville at about 7 o'clock at night.

What was it like to see Australian land?

There was the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] handing out a packet of PK [chewing gum] and envelopes, writing pads and a pencil and we went to the staging camp and then we had almost a week on the train

01:30 coming from Townsville. Those days the troop trains were set off on a side line when main trains came past, oh, it might have three or four days of pure agony and we got out Royal Park [Melbourne] and we were home on leave.

What was pure agony?

Sitting on the train for three or four days at a time and you never had sleeping quarters, sleep

02:00 on the floor or the back of the train or the back of the seat and things like that. See people in those days on the trains a carriage had a toilet and I'd seen blokes asleep in the toilet.

Were there only troops on the train?

Yeah, the whole battalion was on the train and we probably had a train to ourselves and then we got back to Melbourne and the leave started and of course the first thing we all did was to agree to meet

02:30 at the City Club Hotel downstairs at the saloon bar and we used to get pie eyed [drunk], eat a meal and go home, stagger home.

What was it like to see your family?

Very good, the first night course my brother in law - he was in the first battle with us - he was home and married to my sister and there was Fred, my father and he smoked and Scott smoked and of course

03:00 cigarettes were very scarce in Melbourne and I opened a pack and put a pile of cigarettes like that and of course they jumped on those like it was going out of fashion, we used to go out every day and meet the blokes and have a few drinks, and what have you.

Was it strange to be with the members of the battalion in a peaceful situation?

No, it was good because we got together and sort of helped each other.

03:30 **Helped each other in what of way?**

Well, camaraderie and having a drink and `Good on ya, mate' and `Good on ya, Bill' and all this sort of thing.

Did you talk about the war?

Oh naturally, yeah all the time I suppose, remember this happened and that happened and Joe did this and Joe did that and Bill got killed and Harry got wounded and that sort of jazz.

Was it hard to be in a peaceful situation?

04:00 No, we enjoyed it I suppose we were half sloshed most of the time so we enjoyed it. I thoroughly enjoyed that leave. And then after the leave they whipped us out to Watsonia Camp and then we had to smarten up and get back to the war footing and march through Melbourne, which was very good.

04:30 **Can you tell about the places you used to go in Melbourne?**

I told you about the City Club Hotel, and then there was a place called The Dug Out which was under the Melbourne Parliament House, city, Melbourne City Council, and they used to turn on a mixed grill which was steak chops and eggs. In Melbourne, in Australia

05:00 it was always steak and eggs then you go back to the pub and have a couple of drinks then you'd go off to the pictures and something like that.

Were there lots of girls around?

Yeah, I had five in Melbourne, nothing sexual, just girls.

How do you handle five girls?

Well, one at a time

05:30 **Did they know about each other?**

No, no, just situations I got into

How did the girls respond to a man in uniform?

Oh they loved it, anybody in uniform was hunkey dory or mickey dory [attractive] or you'd give them a little colour patch or a little badge and they'd wear it and they'd meet you and you'd take them to the movies and…

06:00 But I made the wrong choice, but still that was long ago. But the girls were important, the ladies were very important, barmaids would strike up a friendship and you knew them by their first name and you'd walk in and she'd pour it, put it down in front of you and things like that.

What was it like seeing women after so long?

06:30 Well beautiful I guess, it was nice to see Australian women as they were, because 18 months in New Guinea there was no native women. They were sent off to an island off Port Moresby except when they were in tribal villages. They did all the work the native

07:00 the Papua New Guinean would walk behind his wife and she would carry it all a baby on one breast and all their personal belongings around her head and in a net and he just walked along with his spear. So you girls are lucky today I hope. There the woman was like Islamic women, they're just dirt and the Papua New Guinean woman was just there for one thing, to bear children,

07:30 simple as that. So, no, it was good to go out and go to dances and enjoy the different people and different girls and that sort of thing.

And what was your impression of the atmosphere back home?

All behind us, everybody was behind us, everybody was glad to see Australian troops, English troops,

08:00 whatever was here, and the American troops of course got the best deal, they had the money.

What did you think about American troops on that leave time?

By that time in Melbourne they had all gone north there wasn't too many around but up north we used to think, `Oh bragging Yanks,' sort of thing, but as I said before without the Yanks we wouldn't have won the war, its as simple as that

08:30 and today no America, no free world, that's my opinion right or wrong I don't know.

I'm still interested in the five girls

Well let me see can I, I can't think of their names now. I just took a girl out, it wasn't sexual like today, I missed out, it should have been today, and you'd just take a girl out to the pictures or a dance or have a meal

09:00 then you drift off to some other relationship and then another one, same thing: movies or pictures or lunch or dinner things like that, but yeah.

How did you schedule it? Did you see them more than once?

09:30 Well I was in Melbourne for a month so it sort of drifted through the month.

And what was the expectations or parameters on a relationship then, did a girl expect that you were going to write or…?

Well some thought you were going to write, some move onto the next person, like ladies are.

10:00 I wrote to a few but it all sort of disappeared after a while, they got married and they left you, like I had a lass Jeanie she used to write from Melbourne, and I thought `Oh I'd like to see her on leave,' and I got a letter, what do you call it? A `Dear John' letter [informing that a relationship is over]. `I'm getting married next week,' so that finished that one, Jeannie Gross was her name.

10:30 We met at Sunday school before the war and she wrote to me during the war. Disappeared.

Did you see her on leave?

No, because by that time she was married, you don't interfere with married ladies I hope, wait till you get older. No, it was all a lot of blokes got married and went back to war and

11:00 a lot of guys picked up girlfriends like I did and thought all your Christmases had come at once. As it turned out it wasn't that way.

And did you spend a lot of time with your family on that leave?

No, I stayed with them every night but I was gone by 10 in the morning and I think I spent most of my leave with mates in pubs somewhere in Melbourne.

11:30 **You mentioned that you hadn't drunk very much before then.**

I think before then all I'd had was a couple of beers at Casino, some jungle juice in New Guinea and I got home with the big time boys and they were all on the grog and that's, when I say I started, that's when I started enjoying men's company and drink because I was older then

12:00 a full 19 and a half. I got home and big deal and I had my 20th birthday, oh I must have been 20, so I had my 21st birthday in a place called Mapee in north Queensland when I got stinking drunk. Well they got me, well nobody gets you drunk

12:30 my 21st birthday was in a place called Mapee in 1944. But we had the leave and we they put us on a train and sent us back to the northern tablelands and then…

Just a few more questions about Melbourne, would you wear your uniform?

Yes, every day

What was the general attitude of people in the streets to you?

13:00 They loved you, they were like `Oh where were in New Guinea you? My son, he's in New Guinea.' And I said, `Well there's about 30, 40, 50 thousand troops in New Guinea , where was he?' `I don't know but you'd know him for sure.' They were very good to us the Melbourne people, the Sydney people, the Brisbane people, Adelaide people, they were very good to us troops.

13:30 **How did this make you feel?**

Great, you can walk down the street and everybody would say, `G'day digger. How ya going?' and this sort of thing, and no we were accepted very well. Australian troops were accepted very well in every state in Australia I'm sure.

Did you talk to your dad about the war?

No he wasn't interested, still wasn't interested.

Would you have liked to?

14:00 Yeah of course. I would like comparing notes what did you do here and what did you do there and that sort of thing, no he wasn't interested.

Did you try?

Yeah, just wasn't interested and I left it at that. I remember one night I got home and it's the first time in my life I'd ever had gin slings and then the beer came on and I got very, very inebriated

14:30 on alcohol and I got home and my father says, `What's wrong with him?' and my sister said, `I know' and she grabbed me and we went to the pictures and I sat (snoring) throughout the whole of the movie. Got home and she said, `You've been on the grog haven't you?' I said, `Yes Joyce.' She said, `Don't worry, my husband's the same, so don't worry.' So I got back and the next morning I went up to, but Dad wasn't interested in anything I had to do,

15:00 couldn't care less.

What about your sister's husband? What was your relationship like with him?

Oh good, he was, matter of fact when he went to the Middle East - he was three years older - in the Middle East and I was standing at a track at Salamaua and he come over the hill and I said, `What are you doing here?' and he said, `What are you doing here?' and I said, `I'm fighting a war I think. What made you come here?'

15:30 He'd swapped battalions and ended up in an independent company, commandos. `What on earth did you do that for?' `Oh I couldn't stand the artillery,' so that's how we met again, and we were great mates, great guy, unfortunately he died in 1990, 69 he was, war service war corps.

16:00 **And this victory march. Can you tell me about that?**

Well we were camped at Watsonia and we trained for the march, well trained we marched all our life but we had to have our uniforms absolutely spot on and everybody was ironing uniforms and polishing shoes until they

16:30 gleamed and we had to have our equipment pouches and belts shining and gleaming and we formed up on Princes Bridge in Melbourne which is on the corner of Flinders Street and Swanson Street, Princes Bridge goes over the Yarra [River]. We formed up over there and fixed bayonets and we marched through the Melbourne streets and people were screaming and yelling and it was

17:00 brilliant yeah, the first time I marched in Melbourne, I've marched on many Anzac Days, the first time we marched as a battalion and everybody was spot on and marching down the streets.

What was the date?

That would be September or October 1943

17:30 and then we marched back to Flinders Street Railway Station which, incidentally people don't know that per head of capita it's the busiest station in the world, Flinders Street Station and we marched and told to sheath our bayonets and walked straight down to the railway station and back to Watsonia that night

18:00 to north Queensland again.

Sorry, the march was in 43?

Be October ’43.

What was it celebrating?

Oh just leave that’s all. The two brigades the 15th and the 14th Brigades were home and they gave us a march and we all divisions marched through Melbourne or Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane or

18:30 just that we were home and it was a war- bond raising episode people are throwing money like that, cause war bonds were a big thing, you gave money and you got war bonds and you redeemed then after the war and you probably made 5 percent or 2 percent or 1 percent, I don’t know. The public were marvellous in Australia, I’d say the same in England and America

19:00 they had war bonds and the bonds matured say in ten years time well they used that money in the meantime and ah,

What did this do to your morale?

Oh yeah it great, lifted us again, what are we going to do now, we are going away again I guess, but the morale was fantastic

Did you think about going away again a lot?

Well you knew you had to

19:30 you sort of didn't worry about it, it was I guess it was like you had a job to do and you did the job, you had to go away again and you didn’t want to but you had to.

Did anyone just disappear?

Yeah we had one, an Aboriginal he just said one day, we were up in the Atherton Tablelands and he said, `I’ll see you later,’ and

20:00 just walked out in the distance and never saw him again.

Had he been in conflict with you?

No this was his first time but he went walkabout was like they do in their tribes which is what they do in their tribes they go walkabouts never saw him again, not sure what happened to him, but if he did that desertion but I guess he took off his uniform and threw it in the mud and

20:30 whatever they do and kept on walking.

And did anyone who’d been in New Guinea?

No if you did you were charged with desertion, first of all you went AWOL and you got picked up provos [provosts, military police] picked you up or somebody dobbed you in, you came back and you got

21:00 a weeks confined to barracks and docked a weeks wages or something like that. If you did it three times you went to Bendigo, and if you went to Bendigo you never went back again, if you deserted, one bloke deserted and he just walked down the track and finished up in Port Moresby and he finished up with two years in the stockade as they used to call it and he got a dishonourable discharge

21:30 and so, no that was the only one I can think of that actually walked away, you had to be desperate to do that. What he should have been done was get taken to a psychiatric hospital and assessed as being in the funny farm, bit troppo.

Were there many Aboriginal guys in the force?

No we had one

22:00 in our battalion but they were in some battalions. Now there was one Aboriginal and he finished up captain, have you ever heard of Captain [Reg] Saunders? He was an Aboriginal he worked his way up through the ranks and also in Korea. Very few, Torres Islanders they were used

22:30 and in New Guinea they used to have the PIB, the Papuan Infantry Battalion, they were very good because they’d, if you were out on patrol with them, they’d say, `Stop. Japan man just around the corner’ and they could smell them they were very good and we had those quite a bit, they’d be forward scouts they be with a battalion

23:00 but as far as the Aboriginal was concerned no it didn’t concern him so much, I think possibly if the government of Australia would have handled it better they could have called up anybody in Australia. Now in Vietnam there was a lot of Aboriginals used in Vietnam because they were recognised as Australians, but in those days they weren’t recognised as Australian, I don’t know the full story but

23:30 very rare that an Aboriginal would be called up into the army but we only I can remember only one.

Did you dream about the war when you were home on leave?

Yep, I had this continual dream and it was about the time when my

24:00 buddy woke me up and said, `Quick jump in the trench,' I was dreaming about two Japs coming through the tent and I swung to kill them and I missed him and he put me in the trench and the Japanese opened fire and took the top off our tent and he said, `What's wrong with you?' and I said, `I was dreaming,' and I had dreamt the whole thing and I had that dream for about five years after the war

24:30 I used to dream that every second night

What were the feeling associated with the dream?

I used to wake up shaking and carrying on but it went away like most things went away but a lot of things stick

Did many of the other blokes dream about the war?

Yeah, yeah, one of our blokes Ron Holland was his name he said, `I have this dream. I have nightmares every

25:00 night' and I say, `Why don't you go to Veteran Affairs[Department of Veterans' Affairs]?' and `Oh who are they?' This was only going back about five or six years ago and I said, ` Here, ring up Veterans' Affairs and get yourself into Greenslopes.' He did and he saw a psychiatrist and overnight he was fixed, just told him why he was dreaming and what was going on and he said, `Oh she helped me tremendously,'

25:30 so there is help there if you want it but a lot of guys, they shut themselves off and that's what's wrong with a lot of Vietnam guys. Believe me they're very nice people, very nice guys and their trouble was when they come home from Vietnam but they tend to their own and they don't talk about it and that's why they get the problems they get the whole idea is with your problems is to talk about them like I'm doing today

26:00 what's the normal thing and you can't help it, its one of those things that you went through and you got to bear it, so that's it.

So you were at Atherton, what were you doing there?

Training. We were always training that was always to keep the troops occupied there's nothing worse than

26:30 troops that are sitting in tents and not doing anything, you've got to keep them occupied otherwise they go bananas. We volunteered about a dozen of us for an advance column to go to Bougainville but they said no, they were going to send the whole 15th Brigade and the 3rd Division and two other brigades

27:00 went to Bougainville the 15th Brigade was given the edge again as usual and we took over American camps. They were terrible places. Oh god they just junk thrown everywhere and our CO, Colonel Bill Mayberry, he was in the Middle East and he took over our battalion and he was a gentleman, an absolute gentlemen and he was a good soldier.

27:30 **So what sort of training were they putting you through at Atherton?**

Oh, the same thing: patrols and bivouacs and marches and this sort of thing just to keep the troops happy and occupied ,an idle troop is not happy; an active troop is happy whilst somebody is telling you what to do, you go along with it but as soon as you fall

28:00 into lethargy and just so oh everybody starts talking about `Oh this bloke he's a rat bag,' so they keep you occupied that's the whole thing in the army keep them occupied. And…

Was there more specific jungle training?

Well we knew about jungle training and an ex battle in Bougainville was jungle but we fought down the road called the Buin Road which the whole thing was

28:30 different to what we'd been used to but anyway we got there.

How did you get there? From?

By train all the way from Melbourne up to Atherton and went on too, then they off loaded us at a place called Red Hill and they took us up to away. Have you been up the scenic railway up to Atherton?

29:00 Well it's a trip of the century now, but to us is was rather lovely and we went up in this little train and up to Atherton to a place called Mapee where we spent I suppose October November and…

And you had your 21st birthday there?

Yeah at Mapee, don't talk about that, absolutely sozzled, and

Did they give you presents?

29:30 No they used to truck in an 18 gallon keg [of beer] from Atherton from Cairns and a bloke would stand there all day hosing it to make it cool and then we had, ever heard of a Lady Blamey? Well remember the old tall bottles of beer? Well, what you did was you filled them with sand to a certain point and

30:00 then you tied a piece of string dipped in kerosene in it and you lit the kerosene and you dipped it in water and it broke off then you dipped it in the sand and with all the sand and you had a Lady Blamey invented by [General Sir] Thomas Blamey's wife so we had that

30:30 you go in towards when we were there in 1944, you go in and there would be pickle bottles they would fill up with beer, three pickle bottles and half bombed, any way Lady Blamey in the Western Desert invented Lady Blamey glasses and it was a tall bottle of beer you put sand up to about that far from the neck and you put a piece of string around it kerosene or petrol and you lit the

31:00 and it would snap the glass but it wouldn't snap below the [sandline] and you'd push in the water and you had a glass like that and you rubbed it around with sandpaper and you had a Lady Blamey and you filled that with beer and that was about three glasses of beer and you used to drink that. Well they got me well and truly sloshed

31:30 that night and I just had to stand there and they, mind you it was sixpence for, 5 cents a glass and they just kept filling it up, and that was my 21st birthday.

Was it a memorable one?

Yes, I remember I was talking about Les Fuller, we played follow the leader and netball, throw the quoit over the ring and the court was filled

32:00 with sandy sort of thing be and Les being an Aboriginal and jumped over the net court and of course I followed and went straight through it and fell on my back and I woke up in the morning and there's my Lady Blamey there full of sand. How it didn't break and cut my backside I don't know. But that was that and my 21st birthday and so then they decided we were going to go away again, that was on the 12th of December and on the

32:30 25th we were on a boat going to Bougainville.

What did you think when they said you were going away?

The same as before. We don't have to but we don't want to but we have to.

Was there a difference between knowing you were going to be going to actually getting that definite?

No, I think that we knew we were going away we didn't care much

33:00 by that time we didn't care, we'd grown up, when I say we were grown up, we were soldiers, we knew we had to do something, which was a waste as it turned out a waste of time but we got on the boat when we went across the Tasman Sea and ended up in Bougainville at Torokina Bay in Bougainville.

Was this different to your first trip to Port Moresby?

33:30 Well there was no Japanese submarines around then, which were not known [at the time] but from Cape York to Tasmania 61 ships, Australian ships were sunk by Japanese submarines but that's true so we went there and there was no hassle. The Japanese aircraft were gone, was just a stupid war

34:00 which was of no consequence whatsoever.

Did you know that at the time?

No we didn't know that at the time, we were just following orders. Anyway we got to Bougainville and it was a completely different war there was stores there was stores you could go into the American canteen you could buy big cigars we were issued with two bottles of beer a week you could buy as much beer as you wanted to

34:30 **What was the American canteen like?**

They used to call it `the PX' you could buy anything

What kind of anything?

Well chocolates, biscuits, grog, cigars cigarettes - Lucky Strikes, Camels, Winstons- you could buy anything you liked. That's how the Americans were: PX stores. We had a canteen

35:00 which used to have certain things in it but nothing like the American PX stores. So went then, we took over a Yank camp, this is an interesting article, took over a Yank camp and had to clean it up and I was cleaning this box away and there's these six vials of yellow red liquid.

35:30 I said `What's that?' so I called out our lieutenant, Eric Zerna. `What are these?' `Don't touch them, I'll rush up to brigade,' so and he rushed back, `Don't touch them whatever you do, poison gas,' and they had them just in case the Japanese used gas they had those. Well the Japanese used gas in Malaya but it

was useless in the jungle

36:00 didn't get past the trees, so I did something there.

You mentioned the camps were such a mess, why?

Where we cleaned everything they just discarded it, like today if your television goes on the blink you buy a new one you don't get it fixed your car breaks down you buy a new one in America, that was the same then , they had

36:30 the most wonderful replacements. What's the word if anything went wrong? They fixed it like that they didn't fix it, they replaced it and I remember in Sedau I watched this American aeroplane develop a fire and they pushed it out and I said to the guy, `What are you going to do, repair it?' and he said, `No just wheel it down and

37:00 chuck it in the ocean,' whereas we would have spent hours repairing sort of thing.

Which method do you think is better?

Replacement, I think replacement now. Where can you go today and get a toaster repaired? You can't. Where can you get an iron repaired, I remember I used to repair my iron in years gone by and toasters but you can't now

37:30 because they are all made as soon as they go flat you get another one, and I think that keeps the industry going, the repairman out of a job. But they were like that, the Yanks if anything broke down they'd replace it. So anyway we got there and I remember this Yank says, `Where are you guys going?' and I said, `We're going to push down.' The Yanks had a, they took Bougainville

38:00 and they pushed out to a three mile radius and they said there is no good going any further, we'll let the Japs starve and the Japs used to come in and raid their - they had an agreement sort of thing - raid their stores. They used to sit out watching the Japs in the trees in the American movies and `What are you doing guys?' `Well we're going to push the Japanese down the track,' and he said, `God boy, you're bloody stupid. Why don't you just sit there and let the bastards starve?'

38:30 `cause that [push] cost us another 50 blokes killed.

Do you think that you should have just sat and let them starve?

That's right, take Buna, Gona and Sanananda, just let `em starve. In the Kokoda, Buna, Gona and Sananada we lost

39:00 more casualties than the whole of the Americans in Guadalcanal . We should have let them starve, but the powers that be wanted a victory to we gave them a victory I guess, so the

Tape 7

00:36 **At Bougainville: take us through what happened from arrival.**

Well we went into, we took over two American camps and we turned them into, we had streets and a canteen and

01:00 we had the whole place gleaming and the day come when they said, `Well we are moving down south, to going into battle again and we went down to a place called Motupena Point, first of all we trained on landing ships and we were going to go down take Motupena Point by sea, thank god that didn't work because the landing ships went all over the place so they decided to truck us down to Motupena Point

01:30 then we walked down or marched down or, to our first battle which was the Hari River I think and then we first contacted, but this was a different war this was fought down a road so our supplies come behind us supplies and it was the first time we ever slept on stretchers, had a two-man

02:00 tent and two stretchers side by side about that far off the ground but it was comfort. We kept on pushing down and then got to the Hari River and circled the Hari River to a place called the Mayberry's track and that went down to the Aitara track.

02:30 We pushed on down the Buin Road and there was a patrol and the Aitara track to see if there was any Japanese there and I was on that patrol and we got down to the ocean and a New Zealand Corsair aeroplane was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed into the ocean in front of us, so I got on my

03:00 208 and sent a message to battalion , `New Zealand aeroplane craft crashed' and the message I got back was `Wait until the pilot picked up' and about two hours went by and a New Zealand destroyer went by and from Torokina Bay down to Aitara track where it hit the ocean and they picked him up

03:30 so we were ordered to go on patrol, so we went on patrol and that stage we were trying out pigeons as,

to launch information and I had two pigeons in a box and of course the pigeon were going coo coo and every night they'd say, `I'll have that pigeon for breakfast this morning. Cut the bloody thing's throat,'

04:00 anyway so I said to the lieutenant, and he said, `I'll send a message,' and you had to walk 50 yards away from camp and send a pigeon off to make sure the Japs didn't know where you were and this lieutenant normally he had a thought which was very good:

04:30 he stopped on the side of the track and about 500 yards into the jungle and the native bearers with us or the Papua New Guineans they cut a shelter for us and they made these bamboo shelters with big banana leaves over the top so we were out of the rain. Anyway this particular night I had to go to the toilet so I got up and

05:00 pulled down one of the uprights and the whole thing collapsed and I wasn't very popular. Anyway we finished the patrol and on our way back we were ambushed, way back to the Buin Road we were ambushed and one of our blokes got wounded by grenade fire and we beat the Japs off and got back to camp and then we kept on pushing down the Buin Road.

05:30 One of the funny incidents. They decided we would be in reserve for a while so we're digging in our positions on the side of the Buin Road and we had a Mr Warburton who was a Salvation Army little coffee bloke and he'd come up with hot coffee. Must admit it was terrible coffee but it was hot and we loved it and he pulled up and we were digging so we left our weapons beside

06:00 our pits and went up to have the coffee and we filled our pannikins with hot coffee. I don't know how he kept it hot but it was hot and just then a Japanese patrol came around the corner and opened up on us and we rushed back to our weapon pitch and on the way I felt this terrible stinging pain in my back and I thought, `Oh my God I'm wounded, any blood?' and it wasn't blood it was coffee,

06:30 the bloke behind me dumped his coffee on my back and I'll tell you what I was the laughing stock of platoon for about two weeks, `Did you hear about the bloke who got wounded with coffee?' and I thought I'd got done. But we kept on pushing down the Buin Road then in July it rained and I you've never

07:00 seen rain like it, streams were like rivers and the rivers were like oceans, and so our Colonel Bill Mayberry said, `I want only holding patrols, not fighting patrols from now on,' and we just sat still and waited and waited and one of the incidents before we waited. We took a place called the Mobiai River and I was with B Company

07:30 at the time and one our tanks got - we had tanks then by the way at that time - we didn't have tanks, they were going down the road and one got hit by a 155 millimetre gun at blank range and it killed the gunner and the driver and we couldn't get to the tank because it was under cover from the Japanese, and for five nights and five days it smelled and every night at 5 o'clock it came up the river and if you have ever smelt a dead body it

08:00 is the most terrible thing in the world, this sweet sickly smell and we couldn't do anything about the two blokes and finally we took the river crossing and we were able to get in and pull the two blokes out. And two of their friends, two of the tank blokes came and got some sig wire and looped it around them and pulled them out.

08:30 The smell was, I've never smelt a smell like it in my life dead bodies in an iron tank with the heat, you can imagine the heat and they buried the poor buggers beside the track.

Can you describe it for us?

Well it's a smell you never, I don't know if you have ever smelt anybody that's dead, it's like

09:00 I suppose when an animal dies the smell is unreal when I, a human being dies they smell worse than anything in this world and this smell used to come up every afternoon from the river about 5 o'clock you feel like throwing up but you didn't and they finally got rid of them

09:30 there and buried them. Then the rain came, but there was one incident, the Japs started shelling B Company and I was with them about 7 o'clock in the morning and they shelled us at lunchtime that day and they just kept pouring the shells in and shells in, and we were in little slit trenches and just boom, shake of the tree and I

10:00 remember my commanding officer, Col Cuthbertson, actually who was one of two MIDs, he was a wonderful bloke, the shelling stopped and he'd put his head up and say, `How you going Jeff?' Back it would go again, and they kept it up for three hours anyway the last shell that came over was a dud. Everything was quite and to have quietness was unbelievable and he put his head

10:30 and I put my head up and he said, `That's just taken ten years off my life,' and guess what he died of, ten years short of what he should have done, he had a brain tumour which wasn't his fault, wasn't the Japs' fault but it took ten years off his life. And I'll never forget that terrible day when they really hammered us for the whole morning, shell after shell after

11:00 shell, and we couldn't do anything about it because the artillery fired back but the Japs were fanatical

by that time, they were fanatical. Anyway it rained and our colonel said, `No more fighting patrols, just holding patrols,' and then the war ended and we heard rumours about the atomic bomb and Hiroshima and the atomic bomb

11:30 in Nagasaki and we didn't believe it. And I remember Reg Johnson, who was a little bit of a churchy person, he rung me up and said, `Jeff the war's over,' and I believed him, and for the first time I believed him, the war was over. And there the whole damn thing finished and there we were, down and what took us five months to gain, we went back to Torokina

12:00 in a day in trucks and it took us five months to take.

What about the fighting there? What was it like compared to New Guinea?

Well it was wasn't as, we were fighting down a road, in one incidence we crossed a river and we were going down the track and we had three tanks and artilleries were firing and the New Zealand air force were brilliant.

12:30 do you know what a Corsair is, its got a bent wing and they used to come down the track and they'd wind the bomb down and the bomb would go and the whole, brrrr , and the ground would be shuddering and the pushing down and Japs had opened up and you jumped into the side of the road and boom, boom, boom

13:00 and ah, I lost my train of thought. It was down a road actually, and we finally got passed the Mobiai River and we got to a situation where we had one Jap in a foxhole with a machine gun and slowed down the whole column and

13:30 the tank pulled round and Lieutenant Davey, and he directed the tank fire and said, `Hit that tree, the bottom of that tree,' and we moved up on this side and this poor bloke, one of our blokes got three bullets right there like a little ring through his heart, and this lieutenant he

14:00 won the Military Cross and he said, `Oh that's the neatest thing I've ever seen, three like that.' So pushed on and we took the Mobiai and we moved down to the river which was down a bit more going into before the war ended and so we finished the war sitting on our bums waiting for the rain to stop and the rain stopped, and they dropped the atomic bomb and I said to a bloke,

14:30 `What's the atomic bomb? They split the atom.' And I said, `What's the atom?' and he said, `Oh, you can't see it,' and I said, `If you can't see it, how do they split it, idiot?' But then the whole war was finished.

How was the bomb described to you?

As a devastating bomb that destroyed a city, one bomb destroyed a city where it would take a thousand aircraft dropping

15:00 a ton of bombs, it was as bad as a thousand bombs being dropped on a city, a thousand one-ton bombs, at least that, probably five times as much as that.

How did you receive this?

Thank Christ it is was all over, that's all we said, thank Christ it all over, we're going home, I guess, took me another oh,

15:30 August, it wasn't until March next year I left Bougainville to go home but it was over, the actual thought that it was all over was unreal, I'm still alive, its all over, there's no more fighting to do, it's all over, giving of your all, there's no more jumping in slit trenches, there's no more,

16:00 you know, dying, there's no more people going to get killed. Anyway it's no more, it's all over.

Could you believe it?

Not for a while, no I couldn't believe it for a while, it was just sort of a memory, but then after the war we went back to Bougainville, Torokina and our colonel was a very nice gentleman he gave us a fortnight

16:30 and we had , each bloke had 35 bottles of beer, so for a fortnight we drank ourselves stupid, then he said, `That's it, back to normal,' then they broke the battalion up and I went to a vehicle park and finished the rest of my day on vehicle park which was shifting trucks and jeeps all over the place. But it was like

17:00 this is it, its all over thank god for that, I'm still alive, and I pity all the blokes that weren't alive and I've got a little plaque on the Freedom Wall in Brisbane and it says, `To those who paid the supreme sacrifice, I salute you.'

Did you have any ceremonies?

17:30 Yeah we had a big parade with the general in charge of the Bougainville area. He spoke to us and we had a, this will amaze you, at the end of the war we had a non-denominational service to bless those

that had died and guess what? There was 36 of us turned up out of the whole battalion.

18:00 I was most upset about that, I thought they should have ordered battalion to be present but only 36 turned up at that particular and blessing of those that were dead, and our battalion we had 150 killed and 350 wounded which was enough, thank you very much, plus all those who had malaria and dengue fever and hookworm and all that sort of jazz.

18:30 **So tell us about how the patrols were set up in Bougainville. Were they different?**

No much the same as New Guinea, but we used to go down the track beside the road, you didn't go on the road but the main push was each

19:00 side of the road on the track beside the road and you would go down flushing out the enemy and there was one incident I remember. We went out on this patrol and the radio malfunctioned and the lieutenant in charge of patrol said to me, `Get in touch with battalion headquarters.' and I said, `The line's been cut,' and he said, `Oh, how far away?' and I said, `When we get a bit closer, I'll find out.'

19:30 So I wound the reel and I said, `It would be 250 yards up the track,' and sure enough there was the ambush but we were so long coming home they had given up and gone away. I was right with the 250 yards, but instead of being on your own out in the scrub with anything we had this

20:00 supply coming behind us all the time and we had jeeps with trailers on bringing up supplies while we were there.

What about your role? How did that change?

That role was the same as always with B Company and I was out bending sig lines that were cut by shelling there was a lot of shelling in Bougainville, a lot of shelling but by that time I was used to it so it didn't worry me as much as it did in New Guinea but

20:30 terrible lot of shelling, they had hundreds of thousands of shells when they finally got to the, when they were finally surrounded, shell everything that had come past. My job was then, on patrols in frontal attacks or as repairing sig lines that were smashed by,

21:00 and you go out and say, `I hope you can fix the lines,' and you'd have to plug in and say, `Is that B Company?' `Yes.' `Well you got a line, you can have a line,' and any second from there a shell could come in, and you'd jump into a slit trench or, they had the Buin Road was cut and

21:30 it was, you could jump into the water trenches whether it was dry or full of water you didn't care less, the shell would go pakow and shrapnel would fly everywhere.

What are water trenches?

The road got a camber and at each side they dug a trench so that the water would fall

22:00 off the road and into the trench.

Did you come across many dead Japanese?

Well in Bougainville, I remember when we took over the navy position there was about five dead Japs in trenches but they were just like, dead. Yeah, I saw a few dead Japs.

22:30 **What did you think when you saw them?**

There's only one good Jap, a dead Jap, and that saved one of us getting killed I guess. Kill them first.

How did you feel fighting the Japanese as they would retreat?

We're winning; my battalion never ever retreated once,

23:00 never retreated once in the whole [thing], there were three battles and when they were retreating we said another few of the bastards are dead, we don't care, you didn't care. You had a job to do and you did it.

How does this make you feel as a battalion member?

Good,

23:30 we had esprit de corps and the battalion was a very proud battalion and they did the job they had to do and did it well. That's how I felt and the battalion felt the same thing. And it's been going ever since and we, it was formed in the First World War, went

24:00 through between the First World War and the Second World War, and in the Second World War we were in action for our first action, it was 1943 and we went from 1945 it's a very proud battalion very esprit de corps.

In New Guinea or Bougainville how were your relations with the local people?

24:30 Oh yeah, good, they were very good with us and we were very good with them and they did what we asked them to do and they carried supplies and they were very good, I couldn't complain, `Yes master, no master,' and if you gave them a cigarette you could get the world done, and we used to give them what was called boong twists, it

25:00 was a black twist of tobacco and the local newspaper they loved that and they used to roll the tobacco in and smoke their boong twist paper and you gave them a cigarette they thought it was, and a razor blade they thought that was fantastic and they used to dry shave and the scrape the razor blade down their chin. And if they got an

25:30 injection and it didn't hurt, they weren't happy, It had to hurt to make them happy, injection, they were very good to us I must admit, very good.

Did you ever meet the women?

No, the women were taboo, off limits, and most of the women were sent off on this island just on the island outside Moresby. There was a very funny story: an American pilot, it's not true,

26:00 got shot down and he landed by parachute on this island and when they picked him up they said, `How did you go?' and he said, `Oh fantastic! I got raped three times before I got to the launch to take me off.' That's a joke, of course. But if there was a Papua New Guinea woman it was off limits as far as we were concerned,

26:30 there was no way in the world we would touch any women.

How would you communicate?

Well we learnt pidgin English and you talk them in pidgin English as best we could and we got on well, no worries.

How did you communicate with the local people?

We learned pidgin English as best we could, they knew what we wanted, they

27:00 brought in supplies on a, we used to call it the `boong line,' they were marvellous when anybody was wounded and they had to take them back over five days of that double mountain trail and they had eight Papuan New Guineans or we used to call them `boongs,' they'd cart them away, bullet through his leg, a bullet through his arm or…

27:30 they were fantastic.

Do you remember any pidgin?

`What name belonga you?' and they'd say, `My name is Mini masta,' and I'd say. `I'm not your masta, what name belongun you, what way you coming from?' and all this sort of thing. No, I've forgotten most of it,

28:00 it was quite simple language to learn and I guess we learnt a lot of it in those days. But you could, and a lot of them spoke English as a matter of fact. We were sitting on a track outside Salamaua one day and Father English was beside me and he said, `Here comes a native, I'll speak to him,' and he said, `Good morning, Harold.how are you?' `Very good thank you, Father,'

28:30 and I looked and he said, `Where have you been training?' and he said, `I've been such and such church at Yuna and I'm now here and I'm going to such and such church at such and such.' And he spoke beautiful English, and Father looked at me and said, `Well, they're not all dumb you know, they all know what they're talking about?' But most of them understood pidgin and we understood pidgin English.

Tell us the story of when you returned

29:00 **talked to a man.**

Oh when I went back to New Guinea , of yes when, this was in 1980 I went back on business and we landed in Moresby up to the Buna Cemetery and saw the list of mates and things like that and next morning I flew to Nadzab, there's no aeroplane

29:30 because Lae air strip is uphill and of course you got landing gear now and they fall over so I caught the bus to Nadzab and I thought, `Oh well, having done my business…' I thought I would go and look a the town, everybody was lovely and `Hello masta, how are you?' and this sort of thing. So went on to the Lae peninsula and down on the

30:00 about 5 miles away was Salamaua and beside me was a native New Guinean and his little son, and I said to the Papua New Guinean, and I was told to speak pidgin, `Excuse me, you know which way belongun Salamaua,' he said,

30:30 `Excuse me sir, see that smoke just behind? That is Salamaua.' And of course what did I do, I did the stupid thing and `What name belongun, son,' and he said his name is `Max, sir.', He knew better English than I did. But most of them were, and they chew betel nuts and spit out you know

31:00 about betel nuts it's like intoxication and I've been out with them on patrols and they sit there and they eat the betel nut and they pick a little leaf out of the ground and they eat that and them they eat pure lime and the whole thing and they spit and where they spit it stays red for forever and

31:30 they all get happy and oh, they're singing and carrying on like when we have a few beers I suppose and, but all their teeth are stained with red and their lips all red. So that's the culture so we cant' do much about it.

And what names would have for the local people?

Well to us they were `boongs' but now they're Papuan New Guineas, and that the way it goes

32:00 **On the end of the war, there were some final battle orders that you...**

Oh, the Japanese battle orders, yeah well they allowed us to get to a certain river then they were going to have a banzai charge and we thought there was about 7000 Japanese we were pushing back but in fact there was not 7000 it was 25000.

32:30 We were going out as C company, flank company and we would have been wiped out in a couple of hours flat and then they were going to retreat to a certain line and kill every Australian on the island and then kill them all themselves, but fortunately it rained and rained for

33:00 about six weeks, I mean you have never seen rain like it . And they dropped the atomic bomb and the war was over.

How did you get access to this final order?

I was talking to a guy and he said, `Have you got the final order of the battle of the end of Bougainville?' and I said, `No', and he said,` I'll send it to you.' So he quite frankly there was a lot of people who had been very

33:30 helpful as far as I'm concerned getting my war file together which I'll pass on to my son. Yeah, some bloke said, `Have you got the final battle order?' as it was known, so somebody's got them.

And tell us what happened next from Torokina?

Well, then I went in to vehicle and we got home on

34:00 the SS Duntroon or [HMAS] Kanimbla, I'm not sure, and we landed in Sydney and I was with the vehicle park and we wound the Sydney side of the vehicle park and we went down to Melbourne and we wound up the Melbourne side of the vehicle park and I went to 13th vehicle park at Fisherman's Bend which was a bloody place I hated it. And

34:30 one day they said, `You are due for discharge.' So I got discharged.

Tell us about that boat trip back from Torokina?

Well, the boat trip back from Torokina, I tell you it was very good because they had New Zealand Pale Ale on the ship and if you were smart enough you could get two bottles and they used to issue it out every afternoon about 4 o'clock and you jump in the first queue

35:00 and you come back and go in the second queue, and we were supposed to go on a march through New Zealand but they didn't do it, it was just a, then we went to, landed at Sydney, went out to the army barracks in the south of Sydney and we stayed there for

35:30 a month or two and went back to Melbourne, to Broadmeadows and we finished up at Broadmeadows the day came and they said, `Well, you're due for discharge,' so I got discharged.

Tell us about coming into Sydney? What was that like?

The most fantastic thing I have ever seen in my life, the ship turned right from New Guinea and the heads of Sydney were covered in mist and then the mist cleared

36:00 and it was the most fantastic thing I have ever seen in my life, we sailed right under the Harbour Bridge and we docked at one of the piers, it was a wonderful sight, I believe it's the most wonderful harbour in the world and I agree on that.

36:30 **And what was the feeling like walking down the plank back onto land?**

We are home at last, we're home in Australia, got out we got there, we were home and hosed, and I spent he next two or three months, that was March, March till August in different camps in New South Wales and Victoria and then I was discharged.

37:00 **What about the very next day after you got back in to Sydney?**

We just finished up at, I can't remember the name, we finished up down there and we all went to Sydney and celebrated got elephants-trunk pissed out of our brains and we all celebrated we were back in

37:30 Australia, everybody had a good time.

And so what did you move on to from here?

Then I went back to my old job and I took that for few years then I went onto bigger and better things, I think I told you I went to a fabric company and I became a manager of branches and things like that

38:00 That lasted for about 20 odd years and I went to Sydney and saw Sydney, wasn't my cup of tea, so I came back to Brisbane with my second wife Mary and got a job and I went into the lighting business

Tape 8

00:36 **Tell me about the interaction you were having with the New Zealanders?**

Well, it little known that people start talking about Anzacs, now the Anzacs were only together on Gallipoli which meant the `Australian and New Zealand Army Corps' and that meant they were

01:00 under the one control, the one control, they were all together, that was the only time that Anzacs were integrated and you talk about Anzacs in France and there's no such thing, there was only in Gallipoli. Now when we were at Bougainville the Australian New Zealand

01:30 Air Force were under our command so in actual fact that's the only time there was Anzacs and they flew Corsairs, the gull winged aeroplane, very successful, and we used to use them moving down the Buin Road. They'd come in and bomb before us, and yeah they were great guys they really were, and

02:00 very happy to have them with us and, there was one incident when one of the New Zealand planes strafed our positions, killed one of our blokes, about wounded about five and the wing commander came out and said he was terribly sorry and he showed the map and that position was exactly the same as the Japs' position and one bloke got it wrong so we forgave them for that sort of thing.

02:30 But no we were very, very pleased to be in under the wing - not under the wing - but knowing that the New Zealand air force was with us all the way and that was the only time we had New Zealand troops, the air force services, no, they were great guys.

Was your relationship with them different to the Americans?

03:00 No. We were happy with the Americans and they had done their bit and they were moving on and the New Zealanders they were doing their bit right to end of the war, they did a wonderful job with we used them all the time for bomb covering and when we were moving into a new position their bombs were falling ahead of us

03:30 you would see the Corsairs coming in and they used to wind the bomb down before they dropped it so it would miss the propeller and down would go the bomb and the whole countryside would erupt with bomb noise and with the trees shaking and what have, and we always knew they were there and quite often would knock out a Japanese artillery piece which was very happy for us because we

04:00 were on the end of it, no they were very good blokes, I couldn't complain about the New Zealanders in any way shape or form. Good blokes and I've been to New Zealand twice and I've got New Zealand friends and they are lovely people. No matter what the Australians say they are lovely people and we should have a better understanding with them in my opinion, I don't know whether it's right or wrong, but I love New Zealanders.

04:30 I wouldn't mind going back there but I'm too old, I've been there twice on business, and once on pleasure.

You mentioned that retrospectively you think that Bougainville wasn't a good idea?

It was a waste of time. Bougainville Borneo, Wewak, Aitape,

05:00 was purely - and New Britain - was only to get Tom Blamey his field marshallship.

When did you come to this realisation?

It was a waste of time, all we had to do was, MacArthur said to Blamey, `We don't need the Australians anymore. Just have a rest.' But Tom decided we were going to go and said we were going to go and take all these territories and it was a waste of time

05:30 and it cost 1500 Australian lives. On Bougainville they lost 500, there was 500 killed on the Aitape/Wewak campaign and that was 1000 there was 500 other guys killed at Borneo and so it was just a waste of time.

How much harder is to think that all those men were killed?

Well there was no need for it

06:00 there was no need for it and its hard to swallow but that's what the government said, you'll do this and you'll do that and we did it. If things were different today, as they were in our days, an order was given and you obeyed the order otherwise you were given a…

06:30 you were a deserter or you disobeyed an order so you went to Bendigo. Today the whole structure of the army, air force and navy has changed, they have a say in what they are doing, whereas we were told this is what you are doing, that's about all I can think of In other word you obeyed orders and people must remember that in the army,

07:00 the air force and the navy that discipline kept them together, without discipline there was nothing It was a rag-tag mob sort of thing, now if you were on a ship, a navy ship asked to shell this or do that and you didn't, well the whole ship fell in disrepair, like in an aeroplane, if there are ten guys in an aeroplane and the tail gunner didn't shoot his gun, and this gunner didn't shoot his gun,

07:30 well then the whole thing collapsed and the plane got shot down. They rely on every gun in the aircraft, same as in the army and they rely on every person to do their job and I think I've said it about a hundred times, the job and you're told to do, you do, and if you don't, you are only betraying your mates and betraying the army and the whole thing.

08:00 Is this is what you do and we did that to the best of our ability and I think we did a good job, I hope we did, we saved Australia from, and I remember about five years ago and I don't go to town to march on Anzac Day, I got to Sunnybank RSL [Returned and Services League] and we were standing there and they got a very good youth turn up

08:30 young children and the guy that was running the, we have the march a small march and then we have the ceremony and the kids from the bands they play and this sort of thing and we have the Blue Nurses, and St Johns Ambulance and Charlie, and he said,

09:00 `To all the young people, its lovely to see you here,' and he said, `Have a look at all the men and women who have medals on their chests,' and he said, `Without those, your life wouldn't be like it is today,' he said, `You'd be under strict curfew and you'd be eating dried fish and rice, that's it, and

09:30 if Japan had taken this country over, we wouldn't be like we are today,' and I think Australia is the most wonderful country in the world but unfortunately things that are going on here I don't like, I think the younger people have got to take over and do more than what they are doing now and people like yourselves who are doing what you are doing and it's marvellous to go into

10:00 posterity and we are going to go into it and somebody is going to say, `I remember that bloke, he was my great grandfather, he was a good bloke. And this is what I think is marvellous and we should have done it after First World War, the Boer War or Korean War or Vietnam War, but this is down and it will always be there. Was somebody to be able to push in?

10:30 I want to know what Jeff Pool is doing; he's dead now he's been dead for fifty years. I'll see what he did and that's why I thank you very much for doing what you did.

Can you tell me about the first time you marched on Anzac Day?

The first time I marched on Anzac Day was 1947,

11:00 and I marched down with the battalion and people were cheering and they thought it was fantastic, everybody lined the streets and it was great.

How did you feel?

Proud. I've even led an Anzac Day march one time in Melbourne and led our battalion down there to the shrine and finished up at the shrine, no it's a proud day.

11:30 **What runs through your head as you march?**

Are we worth it, do they really want us to march, they must because they are cheering and clapping and yelling out, `Good on ya, digger!' and we are going OK, and nice to see you and thanks for coming out, and that's what Anzac Day was all about, it's not beer and skittles like

12:00 people say, I think its purely remembering of your friends, and I hope that the public that clap and cheer remember you also but I think its more remembrance and people say oh, its beer and skittles well your mate would say, `Go and have a bloody good day mate, get a few beers into you,

12:30 doesn't matter about me I'm dead,' but they want you to mates want me to enjoy myself, those that are long gone, and there's a lot that have died between then and now and I think I'm going to be one the oldest ones left.

One an occasion such as Anzac Day, what do you think about the mates that never came home?

13:00 They are marching with you in spirit only, if they are there, they are there, you never forget

13:30 you never forget those that were there, and all you hope is that you can carry the tradition on, you know, that's it.

14:00 I think I've done enough. Tradition. Esprit de corps, and your friends I guess that's about what it is, because in the war you'd do anything for your friend, your mate and it carries on right through your life,

14:30 yeah that's about what I think.

What was it like to come home?

Well it was a relief

15:00 to be back in civilian life again without people telling you what to do, you went back to work and you were told what to do and as far as I'm concerned then I started telling people what to do and now I'm in a situation where I don't care what people what me want to do and I don't push it anyway whatsoever, I'm just happy to go along with what I got.

15:30 **When you first went back to work, what did the guys ask you about the war?**

`What was it like?' and `What did you do?' like I'm telling you, much the same but there wasn't a great deal of talk about what you did or what you didn't do, but you see things had changed completely from when I went away. The boss was the big ruling power now the workers were starting to get back to

16:00 go forward to the natural things, which we did then they bought in the 40 hour week and you got 10 pound a week which was not bad, and they bought in the 40 hour week and it was different from what it was and the bosses didn't weald the big whip, the workers starting to show their faces and show their willingness to work but they wanted to do it

16:30 better than what they had before and the whole thing changed immensely. It was good. Then I finished up I think I was getting 14 pound which was 28 dollars a week and I changed jobs and I got 36 dollars and 90 cents a week plus

17:00 and then I got a car allowance and got commissions. I was on clover absolutely, so I was on clover and I was never so well off in my life I think and matter of fact I had a trip to New Zealand on the company and I bought an 80 pound suit which I

17:30 got married in, when I got remarried and I gave it to my father now 80 pound then, was 160 dollars that's like a 1,000 dollars today and there is no way in the world I would buy a suit for a 1000 dollars I was able to then, then we had the 1960s recession and things got a bit tough and then we went on and we I think Australia has never looked back since.

18:00 **Can you talk about when you had your first breakdown?**

That's interesting. I'm glad you talked about that. I was walking down Russell Street in Melbourne and I was walking into a tunnel and I couldn't hear anything and I thought

18:30 and around the corner came one of my reps, Ian Blake, and he said, `How are you?' and I said, `I feel dreadful, take me to the pub and buy me a brandy,' I had a couple of brandies and then I got started, got these terrible feelings that I was fenced in and I used to count things, I used to count steps, I'd count the number of rails in a fence and I couldn't walk up hills, I was aha, aha, aha

19:00 and they put me Heidelberg did the most terrible test. They don't do it now of course, bilateral carotid angiogram where they pump dye into your brain and it's like somebody pouring hot molten lead over your head, they don't do it now because 1 in 20 die from it. Cat scans now,

19:30 MRIs and MRAs [magnetic imaging technology].

Who took you to hospital?

I went myself, the doctor said, `You better go to hospital.' I couldn't lift my left leg and I couldn't lift my left arm it was all here in the head so anyway they said…

At this time had you been having dreams or thinking about the war?

No, it was just I couldn't

20:00 seem to focus myself into anything at all, just going, and I was working like, I was running, the faster I ran, the worse I got, the faster I ran, I would run, up the stairs, run to the car, and I got to the stage where I was just history. So they said, they sent me home, and said I had an anxiety state

20:30 due to war service, now they call it PTSD, post traumatic stress disorder

What was your reaction to hear that your problem that was caused by the war?

I just accepted it I guess, that's the way the bikkie breaks sort of thing, and I went on with it and not

having an understanding wife in those

21:00 days I just had to pull myself out of it, so I pulled myself out of it. That's the way it's got to be. I have to beat it.

How did you beat it?

I very strong. I'm having nothing to do with any more of that crap, I'm going to win

Did you talk to anyone at that stage?

No, I just did it in my own head, and 20 years later the same thing happened.

Tell me about that.

Well I was sitting

21:30 at that chair and I had a friend he was sitting there and I said I can see two windows and I said I can see two windows, next thing I sat on that chair over there and the ambulance came and took me away. I was incoherent and I didn't know what was going on

What triggered that?

22:00 The war. It was called PTSD anxiety state and I just got to the point of no return so they put me in Greenslopes for two weeks and sent me home with a pack of pills and said you'll get over it and I took a week off and Monday morning I said, Mary said, `Time to get up go to work.' and I said, `All the walls were closing in on me,' and I was just sitting there in a gown

22:30 so she called up my eldest son and he took me to Greenslopes into emergency and I was like this and they put me in, and they thought I had a heart attack, dye into my arms, and the doctor said, `No, you haven't had a heart attack. You've had another reaction for your anxiety state,' so he put me in hospital for a week and

23:00 then the doctor came around and said `What's the problem?' and I told him and he said, `All right,' he said, `I'll send you to see a psychiatrist, You won't work again, don't think about going back to work because the thought of work is too much and your brain can't take it.' So that was it. I finished up a retiree in 1984. And I fought back from that and I've been going ever since.

23:30 **When was the first time that you really spoke to someone about your experience in the war?**

Well I suppose it was '84 when I spoke to a psychiatrist and they started sorting out the problems

24:00 and but it wasn't until '87 I suppose until I really got the right answers to all my problems and the psychiatrist talked to me and it wasn't until '87, '88; '90-ish that I met this new psychiatrist and he put it all into perspective.

24:30 He said, `Well, this is the problem so and so and it's all the memories coming back to your brain to haunt you,' and he put me on the right track and I've never been in hospital since and I'm not going back again. Oh, I've been in hospital. I damaged my leg and my knees so I have to go into hospital for five days on a drip, and it was five days,

25:00 five star hotel thank you very much, I just back and they rushed in and meals and all that sort of jazz and but apart from that I haven't been back with mental problems. OK, I fight it now, I shouldn't fight it, you should let it all wash through you if something is going to happen and I know it's going to happen. I just say right, let it go and don't try and fight. The problem is when you fight it,

25:30 it beats you in the end, you don't fight it, you accept it, as I say to the blokes in Greenslopes, you are fighting it accept what you've got go along with it and you are much better off and here I am 79 years and 8 months and I'll be 80 in December and I'm happy with what I've got if that's the way life worked out for me.

26:00 I've done my best and I think that's the best. I can't say any more than that. I've just done my best and fought a war and been through a depression, been through two marriages, got three lovely boys out of it and grandchildren, and I'm happy with, that's what life, I've said before, I've played my cards right.

26:30 I can't complain in any way shape or form, well I can complain, but you can't complain but that's what life dishes out for you and you young people get older you will realise the same thing, you take what life gives you, it's like when you're born you're given a block of stone

27:00 and a chisel and a hammer and it depends what you make out of it, you can make a stepping stone, or a stumbling block. That's what life is about accepting what you got.

What are the main lessons that the war taught you?

The main lessons the war taught me is the fact is that I went through it, it helped me tremendously in my lifestyle

27:30 I was lucky to be alive.

How did it help you in your lifestyle?

It taught me there was better things than whingeing about, better things than being upset about the world, there are better things that you did, what you had to do, war taught you the sad side of life and you got from the sad side of life to the better side of life and it taught

28:00 you to be a better person I think. As sad as you may be because of your mates and those that got killed and dwell on it you got to go on with what's ahead of you and you live each day as it comes along but I've tried and my thoughts in life is no matter – win, lose or draw - it doesn't

28:30 matter as long as you try. If you try then you got a much better outlook on life and I've got a good outlook on life. How's that? Well, that's my thoughts.