Australians at War Film Archive

John Dynes (Phil) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:43 **I was wondering if you could start for us this morning by telling me about your childhood, and where you were born and grew up?**

I was born in South Australia, of all places, on the Murray River, a little place called Lyrup.

01:00 That's were I spent my early days, I was born at Loxton, on the Murray. It was Depression days. We were in the middle of the Depression, my folk were itinerant workers about the Murray. So we just migrated around the little town of Lyrup,

01:30 getting work wherever work was available. So I grew up there, went to school at Lyrup, until perhaps I was 10 years old. I hadn't finished my primary schooling, my father had at this stage had run out of work around Lyrup and he'd gone north to work on the transcontinental railway, so we didn't see much of him in those days.

02:00 My mother battled on, with myself and twin sisters. That was the very early days. From there I got bundled off to relatives in Melbourne, in the end of 1934 school year. I went over there and stayed with an

02:30 uncle and aunt, my father's brother and his wife, in the suburbs of Melbourne. We went to school; come half of that year, July I suppose, my mother and two sisters came over and we rented a house in Blackburn in Melbourne, and I was almost ready to go to high school at Box Hill. So I went to

03:00 Box Hill High School for 2 years, and things hadn't got too much better, my father still away on the transcontinental railway line, so it was decided I better get a job, and at 14 I left school and got a job with the PMG [Post Master General's Department], the telegram boy in Richmond in Melbourne. After,

03:30 my father finished his, the company that he was working for, finished their contract on the railway line, and they were a Sydney company and came back to Sydney, and they got contract sewering various towns in New South Wales. My father decided to stay with the company and he came over and

04:00 they were sewering Cooma I think, and Mittagong, and eventually, Penrith. But at the Penrith stage, it was decided that work was now permanent in New South Wales, and we as a family, my mother and 2 sisters, we would move over and we came to Penrith.

04:30 We rented a house there, and that became a permanent livelihood for us at Penrith. I got transferred across from Richmond post office in Melbourne to Penrith post office and I had a job there as a postman. So I was a post man in Penrith and the war had of course started in 1939,

05:00 whilst I was at high school in Melbourne and we moved to Penrith, I think towards the end of 1940. I had a couple of years there as a postman and in 1943, I applied to join the air force as I had been a member of the air

05:30 training corps and travelled to Parramatta to attend parades or whatever they had and instruction. I was training to become a navigator at the time, and however, call up time came, and I went into the air force. Now, things changed at this time, I was a member of the ATC,

06:00 the Air Training Corps, and I went to a weekend camp with the ATC. and it was at that stage that I lost the sight of my right eye; whilst I was at this training camp. Well, as a result of that, I went into Concord Hospital for 5 months, had various operations or one thing or another on my eye.

06:30 When I came out, nothing had been done about my enlistment and I finally got approval from the air force to join up as a non-combatant, I suppose you'd say. I wasn't eligible for air crew, so my hopes of being a navigator

07:00 were dashed at that point. However the air force took me on, I enlisted, and went to Tocumwal, and did

my initial training and was posted to Adelaide for a trainee recorders course.

What I might do if that's okay Phil, is just stop you before we go into everything to do with the war,

07:30 **and just go back and ask you a few questions about some of the things you've already mentioned. You mentioned you were working at the post office. With telegrams I think. I wonder if you can tell me what you were having to do?**

Well, when I was with the post office, I should've mentioned earlier, in order to get promotion

08:00 and one thing or another, it was to your advantage to learn Morse code. So I was very keen to learn Morse code at the time, and I became quite proficient at it, even before I went into the air force, with the idea in mind that I would become a postal clerk, and

08:30 do telegraphy for telegrams, as they used to be in those days. So I learnt Morse code, and of course when I went into the air force, so I was pretty proficient with Morse code, and I suppose I'll jump a little bit, I came back to the post office

09:00 after my air force days and I was no longer allowed to become a post man in Penrith, which was my job before I left. As they said the fact that I'd lost one eye and I would be riding a push bike around the town delivering letters, not only would a be a nuisance to myself

09:30 and I might be to other people, so they wouldn't allow me to be a postman any more. So I had to find other employment in the post office of which there was none at Penrith. So in those after war years I had to travel in to the GPO [General Post Office] in Sydney and do some very mundane tasks.

10:00 Like in those days it was tuppence to use the public telephone. 2 pennies and you put those in the telephone and they fell down into the box inside, and overnight in Sydney fellows went around in vans and cleared the public phones and brought in

10:30 the pennies and when I went into work in the morning, I worked in the cashiers branch and there was a table there about 12 foot long, and about 4 feet wide, and stacked 2 feet high with pennies! Just pennies! And my job was to count them out into 24,

11:00 lots of 24 and wrap them in paper so they went to the bank. And were cashed for 2 shilling pieces. And I might add that I used to have to wheelbarrow these bundles of pennies, under a tunnel which went under Pitt Street, from the post office to the Commonwealth Bank.

11:30 Virtually wheelbarrowed loads of pennies went across there everyday, after I counted them. And I didn't like this very much at all, it had no future to me, all the result of losing the sight of one eye. However, not to be daunted, I didn't have much

12:00 in the education line because I'd left school at 2nd year high school. So that first year I was counting pennies at the GPO, I went to night school and learnt for the intermediate certificate. At the end of 1946,

12:30 which was that year I started in Sydney, I was fortunate enough to gain the intermediate certificate and that opened up vast vistas to me because the Commonwealth Reconstruction Scheme was going in those days and I became eligible to do the leaving certificate, because I

13:00 held the intermediate. So I applied to do the leaving certificate, which if I was successful with it and I could matriculate, I could get into all sorts of professional jobs. So in 1947 I did full time school again, after my air force service

13:30 and did the leaving certificate at Granville Technical College and at the end of 1947 I had matriculated and was able to apply for a job that struck my heart strings a bit, and that was surveying. I might

14:00 tell you more about that after I get into my air force time because that's where my heart was twisted so that I had an inkling to do surveying. But perhaps you may,

We might talk about that a bit later maybe

Well, we get on to when I'm at Leyburn at Queensland.

14:30 **I wonder Phil if I can take you back to working in the post office originally and I wonder the delivering the telegrams, the sort of messages you were having to give to people?**

Ah, you've touched on a very interesting point there because as you will recall the war started in 1939 and our soldiers had all gone overseas and

15:00 we were starting to get casualties, and one of my jobs, in those days, particularly at Richmond when I was a telegram boy, was to deliver to families the unfortunate news that their father or somebody, next of kin to somebody in that household, that they had been

15:30 killed, or they were been reported missing or that they'd even been injured and were casualties. So I

had to deliver those and that was before the days where the government introduced a system whereby the post office would take the telegram to

16:00 the particular minister of religion, that the person who was injured or had died, belonged to. Because that information came on the telegram so that we in the post office could then take it to the appropriate person and they then would knock

16:30 on the door and perform that awkward task that otherwise the poor telegram boy would have to do. And we had some rather awful experiences with mothers and wives of people who were killed. And we had to perhaps to stay there half an hour or so and try to comfort them, whereas later on

17:00 it became the job of the minister to deliver these telegrams. And that I suppose was the most significant thing about delivering telegrams that I had to endure.

You were a teenager at that time

I was virtually a school boy, because I'd left school at second year,

17:30 and that's when I became a telegram boy, so yes.

I was just going to ask, what could you do when you were delivering some of these quite traumatic messages?

Well, as I said, there was always a delicate situation when the woman opened the telegram, because there were no men about much. They were all at the war.

18:00 And she got the awful news that she'd lost somebody and then it was up to us to placate her or go and get a neighbour and bring the neighbour in, so we could get on with our job. But, as I say, the bringing in of the minister of religion in

18:30 to that, a later stage, because of all the grief that people had been enduring, beforehand, the government thought that it was time to bring in a bit of sympathy in the delivery of telegrams.

It's a pretty large responsibility put on your shoulders

19:00 **as just the delivery boy.**

Well, this was the way of things in those days and that's how it went. And as I say, they overcame it by the minister of religion doing the job for us, which we, as kids, appreciated.

19:30 **I wonder at your reaction when you heard that the war had been declared? Being at school boy age, I just wonder how you'd thought of it?**

I can remember the morning that war was declared and I was about to go to school, the news came through early in the morning. And I set out on my push bike to ride to high school, and I know we had to go up quite a

20:00 steep hill just before the school and there was 3 or 4 of us, young fellows and we used to walk up this hill and push our bikes. And I know we were discussing the war which had been declared that morning, and I don't know but I can remember walking up this hill, and talking about the war that had started and trying to imagine

20:30 what might be the future for us school kids, going to war. It hadn't dawned on me at this stage that I would be participating in the same war, but like you said, they were my first reactions, war being declared.

What did you know about World War 1, or maybe people who'd served in it?

21:00 Very little, very little. I hadn't done much reading as a school boy; we knew the war was on, we knew the word ANZAC [Australia and New Zealand Army Corps]; we all knew about Gallipoli and France, but any more than that, we didn't know. Except that I had uncles who went to this war, my father didn't go because he was just too young,

21:30 but I lost two uncles at the war, but they were uncles I didn't know. They lived in Melbourne and we lived in South Australia but other than that, I suppose, we knew very little about World War 1, it seemed ages and ages ago. When we were young.

22:00 **I wonder if the telegrams you were delivering changed your opinion of the war, or maybe shaped it in a way, hearing of casualties in such a horrible way?**

I don't know whether I can answer that truthfully, whether it did or it didn't because

22:30 it was part of your job and you went about it as best you could. I suppose it did have, well it did make us think a bit, because I can remember delivering a telegram to a person

23:00 who was involved in the prisoner of war outbreak at Cowra. Now that happened while I was a telegram boy and that made me think, because it was in our own country, and I started to think of all sorts of

things that might happen,

23:30 even closer to home because this was at Cowra. I knew in a certain round about way, this family, because the girl, one of the daughters of this family, worked in a shop where I got my lunch; I used to get sandwiches

24:00 and she served at the shop. So I knew the Monday girl, her name was Monday. For that reason, that made me think pretty hard about war. No, other than that, I can't say that I got any preconceived ideas

24:30 that war was such a terrible thing. It just seemed to be part of our lives in those days. We were just so young. However, it caught up with me and I had to join up.

I wonder before you joined up, what fears did you have about Australia being invaded, especially when the Japanese came into the war?

25:00 Well, I suppose as a young fella, 18 I'd be when I joined up and those preceding years that I was at school and working as a post man, it didn't mean a great deal. We were young

25:30 and youth probably, adventurous and it didn't really get through to us that war was anything else than something that happened. And get on with it. But no, I don't think it influenced me in any way.

26:00 As it was to do later on, when I got totally involved.

Well I wonder Phil, what was it about the air force that attracted you?

The fact that I was in the air training corps, and hell bent on being

26:30 a navigator. Why I wanted to be a navigator, I don't really know. But that was my ambition and I was actually doing a course while I was in the air training corps to help me become a navigator when I got into the air force as I hoped. However, that was

27:00 not to be.

Can you tell me about what the Air Training Corps did, and what you did in it?

Well, it was something we went to, mostly one night a week. I think there were occasions where we went two nights a week. We did drill and marching

27:30 and all the things that young fellas do. Learning to become soldiers. But we did a certain amount of, I suppose you'd say school type thing, with mathematics, and particular jobs relating to the air force. Because it was air force oriented. We went from Penrith

28:00 down to Parramatta, and spent the evening down there, doing whatever we were to do, and it went fairly quickly for me, because I was only in it for 12 months, maybe 18 months before I joined up. But unfortunately I had the misfortune of lose my eye at this stage

28:30 and that cut short a lot of my Air Training Corps days because I was five months in Concord Hospital.

Can you tell me Phil about the accident where you lost your eye?

Yes, we were camped in a training camp, finally a weekend. We'd gone away on a bus and we went up there

29:00 and there were, I think it was at Cattai Creek. And there were other Air Training Corps units from various parts around Sydney that we didn't know, but we were there with many others and I suppose there were 100 or more there, I don't know.

29:30 I got allocated the job of, of cutting wood when we got there because we had to get a night meal, and the cook house needed wood. And I don't know, there must have been air force cooks there, I don't remember how just what the set up was for cooking, but I was allocated the job of cutting wood

30:00 and whilst I was cutting wood, other people were cutting wood next to me and unfortunately I copped a piece of their wood right in the eye, in the right eye, broke my nose and knocked my right eye out and hurt my left eye a bit. I was in a bad way and finished up in an ambulance and

30:30 went to Concord Hospital. But as I said I spent 5 months there and had probably half a dozen operations. However I got out, one eyed, and joined the air force.

I wonder during that time, from that time you were hit in the eye, did you know straight away that you'd lost the use of your right eye?

31:00 Well, yes, because I had, I was in hospital I think, I went in on the 31st of January, I think it was some time about, well into March, that I got the bandages off my both eyes. So I'd been blind for a period of some months in both eyes, and at that stage I thought I was going to be blind for the rest of my time.

31:30 And that wasn't a very good outlook to have, and eventually they only kept the one eye plastered up

with bandages and I was able to see fairly well out of my left eye. So the fears of being blind had allayed themselves a little bit at that stage.

32:00 Now, I might add that I had a traumatic experience after the war, when I was working at the GPO, counting pennies. And it use to bore me something, I couldn't stick it and I used to sneak out of work

32:30 and go down downstairs in the GPO and out into the street and walk a block, round the block, to try and break the monotony of having to stay at a desk or at a table and count pennies. And this particular day I went out into Martin Place,

33:00 I went to the George Street end, and in those days, traffic was in Martin Place and there was a police man on duty at the intersection of George Street and Martin Place and I thought he was just getting to the stage that he was going to change the direction of the traffic and I thought I'll cross over here and I rushed

33:30 from up on the steps, the landing at the GPO down on to the foot path, and across where the policeman was directing traffic and he was about to change. Well, in my rush to get down the steps and over the, cross George Street, I had the

34:00 misfortune to run into a lady with a, carrying a baby in her arms, right on the foot path. And I spilled her and the baby, because they were on my blind side, and the police man saw every bit of what happened.

34:30 And he gave away his traffic duties and came over and gave me a real tongue lashing in front of everybody. And here was this poor lady with holes in her stockings and the baby crying and dear, I felt a goose there

35:00 that morning, I can tell you. He took me off to the police station, he took particulars. Sent the lady and the baby up to Sydney Hospital in an ambulance and I wasn't supposed to be away from penny counting and by the time I got back from the police station and went in and reported

35:30 what had happened, things weren't really good. It really made me think and from that time on, I've been very, very, cognisant of the fact that I've got a blind side and its made me aware of that no end, particularly driving and I'll never forget that morning,

36:00 when I knocked that lady over. And unfortunately, well, fortunately the lady wasn't hurt and the baby wasn't hurt but it cost me a week's wages and new stockings and shawls and things for the baby. It rang home to me that I had to be careful for the rest of my life.

36:30 So that's one of the things that having one eye brought home to me.

In the beginning when you first got out of Concord having lost the use of your right eye, I wonder how you learnt to adjust?

Well, I suppose

37:00 experience is a great teacher, unless you can go through and have this sort of experience you don't learn. It's something you adapt to, for a long while I couldn't focus properly particularly, depth, coming up a kerb. How high really was the kerb, to

37:30 get my foot on top of it? It was judging heights that were hardest to do, and all sorts of things like that. Somebody would hand you anything, a pen, a bunch of keys, a cup of tea and you would have to lunge forward in a nice sort of a fashion,

38:00 to feel what they were handing you, particularly a cup of tea, and you had to hit the saucer first with your hand, and then grab a hold of it before they let go. Otherwise there'd be a mishap. It was adjusting to those sorts of things that took quite some time. I eventually overcame all these things,

38:30 and you know, after you'd lost an eye for 12 months, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, and now, 60 years, you sort of, you're aware of these things and can accommodate them.

When you realised you had lost part of your eyesight, what your fears

39:00 **were about not being able to get into the air force?**

Well, I had fears that I wouldn't get in but also, I was getting letters from, not so much the air force, but from the army because there was compulsory training in those days. At the age of 18, you were expected to join up,

39:30 and I was getting letters from the army that you're past your 18th birthday and you haven't done anything about enlisting. And I had visits to my house, even while I was in hospital, by the military police, looking for me, because I hadn't enlisted. I know my father wrote

40:00 letters and told them of the situation but this was going on while I was still incapacitated to a certain extent, and when I finally got out and discharged from the hospital, I had to do something about it. And

I went to the local drill hall, and said, you know, I told them

40:30 the story, I haven't been down to do anything, because I hadn't been able to. But I did want to go into the air force. So they told me to go, I think to Woolloomooloo in Sydney, which was the chief enrolment place for the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] and see what they had to say there, and if not, come back and see the army and they'd accept

41:00 me in the army for some sort of duties. So I went to Woolloomooloo and they agreed to take me on in a ground staff activity and so I enlisted. And went away to Tocumwal to do my initial training.

Tape 2

00:33 **We're going into enlistment Phil. Can you tell me about when you enlisted in the air force?**

Yes, I enlisted and did my initial training down at Tocumwal, and then went to Adelaide, Number 4 School of Technical Training, to do a recorder's course.

01:00 Why they picked a recorder for me, I do not know. Because they knew all about my capabilities with Morse code and this recording business, somewhere or other I must have indicated that I was hell bent on being navigator because this, to be become a recorder, you finished up

01:30 in a fighter control unit, recording the position of planes. And you plotted out on maps or whatever the position of fighter aircraft. Anyhow, I did the course, I don't know why, I did that and I got through the course all right,

02:00 in Adelaide, in recording and next thing I had was a posting to signal school. They decided to put me to a telegraphists course at signal school at Point Cook in Melbourne.

02:30 Which took probably a few months. At that stage I could handle telegraphy and Morse code, it was second nature. However I skipped through that course pretty easily and we came out and somehow or other, I don't know

03:00 exactly how, but I went for an interview down there, and they said, something about, "You handled that very well, the telegraphy doesn't seem to worry you." I said, "No, it doesn't worry me." I said, "It's only the one eye and I'd liked to have down navigation but couldn't and they said, "Well, we're pretty short

03:30 of what they called SIGINT. S-I-G-I-N-T. And this was short for signals intelligence. They said, "We're going to put you through a SIGINT course while you're down there." So the next thing I knew, I was in

04:00 what was known as cipher, which is codes. And they put me through this cipher course at Point Cook in the air force, where we learnt all sorts of codes. And I was there for some months doing that. Handled that pretty well, and was

04:30 posted to, of all places, headquarters eastern area, which was in Sydney. And I thought, this was all right, I'll go home, sounds pretty good to me. So we went, and that was out on the Sydney Harbour, they had a beautiful place out there, what is now Woollahra, council headquarters. We had the pool and council chambers,

05:00 it was all taken over by the air force as headquarters for eastern area. And I worked there, I didn't really work there, I just went there every day, I didn't have anything much to do. And I thought, "This will do me." Anyhow, it turned out, you're only here,

05:30 while we're assessing you, and you're awaiting posting. Up came a posting and I went to Lowood in Queensland, which was an operational station at the time. The 32 squadron were there and 14 operation base units and they had aircraft, Beauforts, and they

06:00 did escort duty for all the shipping up and down the coast. And Lowood had an area, oh I don't know, from Rockhampton down to Coffs Harbour somewhere, and they patrolled all shipping that went up and down the coast. And I was in the operations section in Lowood, and

06:30 we used to get information about what ships would be travelling where every day. And rough position of where they'd be, and the aircraft from Lowood would have to go out and shadow them and their course, up and down the coast, because of the likelihood of submarines, of enemy shipping or whatever, and so I was

07:00 there for some months at Lowood, decoding these signals that came in about the shipping. Out of the blue came another posting and this was an unusual one, I was posted to RAAF command, which didn't mean anything to me.

07:30 I knew it existed, and the headquarters were in Brisbane. So came time to go and I went to Brisbane, to RAAF command. And I reported there, to somewhere or other, and they gave me barracks and a bed

08:00 at Victoria Park in Brisbane, and told me to be ready after breakfast the next morning, to wait in the car park or somewhere or other and pick up a truck that was going to take me to where I was going to work. And so next day, I did all this,

08:30 and a whole lot of other people were there waiting and we all jumped in on this truck and away we went to Ascot Racecourse in Brisbane. And we all got out there and we went round to an address which was just a house, 21 Henry Street, Ascot. And anyhow

09:00 when I got in there, there were guards on the gate and guards everywhere and they said, "Oh , you're up here, to do a further Morse code thing, at this house." It was called 'Nirambla', 21 Henry Street, Ascot. And it was

09:30 a big two-storey place. And on the first floor balcony, where we went, was a whole set up of, well, it was an instructional place and we had to report there everyday and learn Japanese Morse code. Which was called 'kana'. And I suppose I was there

10:00 for a month, learning Japanese Morse code. And Japanese Morse code was pretty, we have 26 letters in our alphabet but in Japanese Morse code there are 71. 71 signals, different Morse signals that you had to learn

10:30 to fully understand Japanese Morse. So eventually this all came to an end, and I became fairly proficient in Japanese Morse. It isn't that there's 71 letters in the Japanese alphabet,

11:00 it's the fact that there are only 19 of the letters in our English alphabet, that the Japanese used. But there were oodles of their Morse code, you sent a different, we would

11:30 write 'C H' as sending 'C' and then 'H', but they would do 'CH', or 'sH' or whatever it is, they became a different letter and you had to learn all these various combination of letters that made up Japanese Morse. Well I finally did that, and

12:00 this place that I went to was known as Central Bureau. And it was MacArthur's headquarters virtually, in the south west pacific area, although we didn't know a great deal about it then. But down on Ascot Racecourse, there was another section called ATIS.

12:30 And this was the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section. And because of my Morse code background and because I'd done a code course while I was still at Point Cook, and now I had learnt Japanese Morse, they said you're the bloke we want down at ATIS.

13:00 Because we intercept all the Japanese Morse over radio that's going on for army, navy, ships, air force, everything, it's all taken down by people that know Japanese Morse, like you've learnt. And of course the Japanese were as cunning as we are, and they used

13:30 codes as well. So this Japanese Morse that we were intercepting was Japanese code. And because there's 71 letters in their alphabet, and the Japanese used shorthand, a type of shorthand, to write their Morse down…

14:00 In our ordinary Australian Morse you write a capital letter, an A comes through, you do an A, and B comes through, you do a B. But in this Japanese stuff they do a shorthand and you can imagine what their shorthand's like , if you know what Japanese writing's like. Well,

14:30 it comes through in this shorthand writing, in 4 or 5 letter groups. And this is code. Well, because they send it so quickly, and there's all these letters and you got to write it down in shorthand, our interceptors,

15:00 who were from all the services, there were army fellows, and navy, very few navy fellows, and air force fellows that were busy, 24 hours a day, in Brisbane, taking down this Japanese Morse. And I went down to ATIS,

15:30 as I told you, down on the racecourse, where they had a set up down there the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section. Where all these signals came and they were deciphered down there to try and get into our language, what the Japs were talking

16:00 about in their Morse code. Well the people that did that were mainly Yanks. It was a Yank set up. There might have been, I think there were three air force fellas there, me and two others, and some WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Army Service] girls, and a lot of American service women and

16:30 it was their job to decipher these messages. And what they couldn't decipher they put aside into a pigeon hole and there was myself, and these other two air force telegraphers, who had done Japanese Morse code,

17:00 they came to us, where they were having trouble with deciphering them. Because we knew the Japanese Morse and we could say, "Oh, that letter there looks like a SH or a CH, or a TZ," which was another one they used. Whatever,

17:30 and we could say, “Whoever took that down, that mightn’t be that, that might be FE or some other thing,” see? And we used to try and look for any combination of Japanese Morse that would make sense for the interpreters and the interpreters were pretty well all Yanks

18:00 but a lot of them were of Japanese origin. People that lived away, and there were a lot of Japanese there, but they were American citizens and they joined the American service army or air force or whatever and they were mainly the people

18:30 that did the interpreting of these Japanese signals and it was only those that were giving trouble that they couldn’t decode that they sent to us, for us to work out other combinations of letters that might be. And so I worked with ATIS for some, quite a long time, and we

19:00 had quite a bit of success in trying to decode these Japanese messages. And every, twice a day, from ATIS, they issued a long, because all these signals were coming in, these Japanese signals, twice a day they issued

19:30 in Anglicised form, all these messages, that the Japs had been sending. Whether it was ships at sea or where they were or positions of something, air craft leaving somewhere and flying to somewhere, or messages from Japan to Japanese units about they’re sending something, or whatever it might be that the Japs

20:00 used for their war effort. These messages were being intercepted in Australia and they used to publish a bulletin, twice daily, of every one of these messages. And these used to go to, the Yanks first, but they went to military people, intelligence agents, so we had a pretty fair idea

20:30 of what the Japs were up to and where they were doing it. And twice a day, this bulletin went out, of everything we were able to decipher at ATIS. And, it’s since come out, over the years, that we, the ATIS people and Central Bureau, might

21:00 have shortened the war by as much as 2 years because we were au fait with what the Japs were up to because by and large, we’d been able to intercept their messages. However,

I wonder just on that point Phil, at the time that you were doing the work, did it feel like it was something very important?

21:30 I suppose it did but there was so much of it that we really didn’t get time to think about it, there was so much work piled up there that had to be done and you got in and did it. And it was new, it was something different, and of course we were sworn to secrecy, and we used to have to go to lectures

22:00 once a week or something to, you know, the importance of secrecy. We mustn’t divulge anything we’d seen or what have you. But, yes, I suppose it was, it was different, and there weren’t too many of us doing it; you were a pretty,

22:30 privileged few, that were in a position to do all this sort of work. And anyhow, I won’t say it was mundane, we did get sick of it, but we did it, and then out of the blue, I got summoned into

23:00 Brisbane, on the, I think it was the 7th Floor of the AMP [Australian Mutual Provident Society] building. And I went in there, thought what on earth is all this about, and they went in there, and MacArthur wasn’t there, but it was his headquarters. Pretty heavy,

23:30 you know, bristled with rank, and I was a mere corporal in the air force. Anyhow I went in there and they said, “Somebody over there wants to see you,” or whatever is was. However I went and I was interviewed and they wanted to know all this work I was doing, and

24:00 one thing and another. They said, “I want you go down to Melbourne, to RAAF headquarters.” And I said, “Oh yes,” and they gave me a travel warrant, and what have you, so down to RAAF headquarters I went, to Melbourne, after a lot of troop trains

24:30 and what have you and I went to RAAF headquarters, and I waited there and they didn’t seem to know who I was or what I was doing there and then finally somebody came out and said, “Are you Dynes?” And I said, “Yes.” He said, “We’d been waiting on you,” and that’s lunch time now, and they said, “Oh you’re supposed to be down

25:00 in Toorak Road, South Yarra somewhere, at 10 o’clock this morning.” About lunch time, and they told me where to go and hunted me off down there. Anyhow I walked about a mile down to this place and it was another big old house. Most unobtrusive place, but a guard on the gate, and I thought, this must be it.

25:30 So I went in there and I got another interview. They said, I went and saw some joker eventually and he had a lot of papers on his desk and he said, “You’re Dynes are you?” And I said, “Yes.” He said, “You haven’t got any glasses on!”

26:00 And I said, “No sir, I haven’t.” He was an army bloke. And he said, and he had a photograph of me there and he said “You’ve got glasses on here. Don’t you wear glasses?” and I said, “Yes sir, I do, I have to

wear glasses to read," and to do something or other. Anyhow he said, "Oh."

26:30 He quizzed me about how I'd lost my eye and whether it was worrying me and you know, and I said, "No, it doesn't worry me unduly." He said, "Well, you know you won't be able to go overseas

27:00 without the sight of that other eye." He said, "You won't be able to leave Australia." And I said, "No sir, that's right, that's unfortunate, but that's how it is." He said, "Does that worry you?" And I said, "Oh, not unduly." He said, "Would you like to get into a job, that you know, was important,

27:30 and might save other people's lives?" And he said, "And you wouldn't have to go overseas, you could do it in Australia. You'd get a lot of satisfaction out of this job." And I said, "Well, I don't know." Anyhow, he said, "Wait out in the corridor." And I waited and eventually they called me in again and

28:00 I had another train ticket, back to Queensland! Go and report at this address at a place called Clifton, I'd never heard of. A train ticket to Clifton. Anyway, away I went and it turns out I'd been interviewed at the headquarters of SRD, which was Services

28:30 Reconnaissance Department, and they were the people that ran Z Special unit. And I reported up to Queensland and went out and it was an air force station when I finally got there. But it was mainly army fellows. And I thought, "This is a funny-looking joint," but they had

29:00 aeroplanes and I got out there. They said, "This is where you've got to work and you'll be dealing with people behind the lines at Borneo and wherever else up north and they'll be communicating with you,

29:30 with various codes, and you'll have to work this end of it, and we'll keep a track on what they're doing." Well, it turns out that these Z people were operating behind the lines and relaying the information back to

30:00 their headquarters of enemy positions and whatever the enemy was up to. And they were sending messages back via Darwin to Leyburn, was where this camp was. And this airport, there was an airport out there that had, well

30:30 eventually they had nine Liberator bombers. And these Liberator bombers were especially fitted out to drop parachutists in behind the lines and drop them ammunition, medical supplies, radio, whatever they needed, and we had to

31:00 keep track of where these people were, up in Borneo, or New Guinea, or wherever. And I was on the Australian end of all this stuff. And they had various sorts of code that we issued them before they went in, and

31:30 none of these two codes were alike. They were all different. Everybody had a different code. And I had to issue each one as they went north, before they went on the plane to be dropped in, with what we called, a one time pad. Why it was

32:00 called that, I don't know. Mainly it was because you used it once and that was the end of it. Anyhow, I had to familiarise myself with all these various one time pads and the codes that that particular pad used and I had to be able to recognise their

32:30 signals when they came back. And who it was, so I knew what code they were using and then I had to encipher all that and put it into plain language so it went to our headquarters. So that was my introduction to Z Special Unit. And I was on the Australian end of all these operatives that

33:00 were operating behind the lines. And their information, finally came back, not all their information, because they had headquarters in Morotai and other places up there where there were other fellas like me doing the same thing, I suppose. But these were the ones that came back to Leyburn, which was

33:30 where para-wings headquarters were. And para-wing was the people that controlled all these parachutists that we dropped in. So I became ensconced up in Leyburn in Queensland, out on the Darling Downs,

34:00 which was the jumping off point for all these people that we'd drop in behind the lines and they all had to be briefed and the air crews had to be briefed as to where we would drop them and that becomes another side of

34:30 the work that went on from Leyburn, because these planes had a particular job to do too. They had specially trained air crews that were able to fly into all sorts of inaccessible places in the valleys and jungles of

35:00 those islands in the north. And they had to do a lot of training in low flying and to drop the parachutists; they were dropped out of what in the normal Liberator was the camera hatch, and it was modified to

35:30 take a 'chute', we called it. Which was virtually a kid's slippery dip. And this was fitted up inside the plane and these parachutists would, we only dropped four out of each aircraft at a time, and those four

would actually all be on the slippery dip, one

36:00 behind the other. And it was about 6 foot long I suppose. And they would all be hooked to a static line, their parachute would be, so when the plane was dropping them, the pilot would negotiate, the navigator would have found the drop, DZ,

36:30 which stands for 'dropping zone', which was the point on the ground where they had to land and he would identify that and the pilot would then take the plane around to where it was a suitable point to release these people. And then the bomber aimer, who normally let the bombs go in a bomber aircraft, he would finally control when they had to

37:00 leave the aircraft and he would push a button which would show a light above these men on the slippery dip, it would change from red to green, and they would have no control, they would go because they would, they were in a harness thing which was released

37:30 when the bomb aimer pushed his button and away they went and their parachute was hooked to a static line, up above their heads, so that when they went out the hole in the bottom of the aircraft, this cord that was attached to the static line would open their parachute and out they would go, one at a time. The first green light would

38:00 release the first bloke, the second bloke would slide down and his harness would be caught up and he'd be at the bottom and the green light would come on and out would go the second bloke and so it would happen for the 4 men to be out because they had to be out within hopefully a time of six seconds. They would all have to be out of the aircraft

38:30 because the aircraft was then flying at almost stalling speed which is 135 miles an hour, and that, if it got any lower than that, the speed of the aircraft, the motor's would stall. So the pilot had to keep the plane flying at what we called stalling speed, while they

39:00 dropped these four men out, if there were four, there might have only been one or two, but up to four as a maximum. Because at 135 miles an hour, if you leave that dropping time over six seconds, when they got out and the

39:30 wind got in their parachutes or whatever, they would not all fall within a group, down at the dropping zone, which was probably about 800 feet below. And they mightn't be able to find themselves when they get down, if they don't

40:00 fall in a specified dropping zone and they get caught up in the jungle. So all these things became…they were the contingencies of flying and dropping parachutists, that was all part of the job. Not my part of the job, my part was only mixed up with signals,

40:30 and codes and that sort of thing that came back from them later. But we had…the whole set up of Leyburn was governed by how well we could drop these fellows in, to get them safely on the ground, because they were dropping into enemy territory. And so

41:00 there were problems. Having dropped these people in.

Tape 3

00:44 **Tell me about the Typex machine you were using at the cipher school.**

I haven't mentioned that word, Typex at all. And you've

01:00 come up with it. Yes, I know all about Typex machines. I was wondering how you know. Yes, I learned a Typex machine when I did that cipher course at signal school. Do you want me to describe a Typex machine?

01:30 A Typex machine is a glorified teletype or typewriter I suppose. With a typewriter we have one piece of paper comes out with a message on. In a Typex machine we have two. One side, on the left hand side, comes

02:00 out the enciphered group, the Typex message, which is the encoded message. On the right hand side comes out the plain language tape, which is actually what you typed in, the message that was sent in plain language. Out of the left hand side it's enciphered

02:30 into code. Yes, we were taught those at Point Cook in Melbourne. At most places subsequent to me joining…I haven't mentioned the number of our flight; our unit at Leyburn was called 200 Flight. It was the name of the

03:00 transport section of Z. It was 200 Special Duties Flight. When I got there, there was no Typex machines because we had no electricity at the particular camp we were in at Leyburn.

03:30 We had generators that gave us an auxiliary power system. These wouldn't run a Typex machine. So all the cipher we did at Leyburn was with other forms of cipher and code. You asked about Typex

04:00 machines. Yes, I used those particularly at Central Bureau when I was there with ATIS. I made mention that twice a day a bulletin went out of all the intercept business that we had managed to

04:30 intercept from Japanese signal stations. That all went out on Typex machine after we enciphered it and got what information we could out of it. Then that information was distributed to all sorts of headquarters, army, navy,

05:00 air force, throughout Australia and the islands. That was all done by Typex machine. The final result of that was all sent out on Typex machine. In other words it was enciphered into five letter groups

05:30 of code. On the Typex machine.

You mentioned you were working on a Japanese code called 'Kana'.

Kana, yes. I learned it.

06:00 **Did anybody manage to crack the code?**

We did. We were cracking it every day. There were some, my particular job in that was where they didn't crack readily the Kana code, it was put in a pigeonhole and that's where we took over to try and find out

06:30 what had gone wrong or why we couldn't crack it. I suppose 50% of those codes that wouldn't crack, that went into the pigeonhole, we probably had a 50% success with, I think they called us, we were

07:00 crypto-analysis people that were able to finally break these codes. I suppose we had a 50% success rate in those that wouldn't crack readily. We looked at them, poured over them for some time and tried to break them. Eventually we got some sense.

07:30 We may not get the whole message. It might be a bit garbled to start with. We might get half a message before it finally went wrong and we didn't get the end part of it. We might get half a message. But it was all information that was useful to those people that were involved wherever

08:00 the action was. Yes, Kana was broken.

Can you describe the office and a typical day?

08:30 Yes. I can recall while I was at Central Bureau, at ATIS, a particular message that came through and we had intercepted

09:00 a message from, I'm trying to place where, somewhere out in the Pacific. I think it might have been Guam or one of those places that hadn't been captured back by the Americans at the time and the Japanese were occupying it. There was a message sent from out there somewhere and it was going to Japanese headquarters at

09:30 Rabaul. We intercepted it and when we deciphered it, it was to say that Admiral Yamamoto, who was a particular admiral in the Japanese navy, that he would be flying on an

10:00 aircraft from somewhere, I think it was Guam or somewhere out there, some Japanese headquarters, and he was flying to Rabaul and that he would be departing at such and such a time by an aircraft bound for Rabaul. This was just about the time of the Coral

10:30 Sea Battle. He was one of the Japanese admirals. That message came through and we were able to send that message on back to our headquarters or wherever our operations were

11:00 in the islands so that Allied planes could be in the air at the time Yamamoto was flying towards Rabaul. I know that a message came through to say that Yamamoto's aircraft had been shot down by

11:30 some US fighters somewhere. I don't know where, I think they might have come from Bougainville or Guadalcanal or somewhere up there. Yamamoto was killed in that plane crash. His plane was shot down. I can remember that as a distinctive feature

12:00 of the work that was done by Central Bureau and the interception of Japanese messages. None other comes to mind except talk; since

12:30 the war we have talked about various things that Z was involved with, but it was before my actual time. When the Rimau group, they were trying to be a second string to the Jaywick episode

13:00 where those Jaywick people went up on the Krait and paddled canoes into Singapore harbour in September 1943 and sank something like 40,000 ton of Japanese shipping in Singapore harbour. About 12 months after that in '44 there was an expedition

13:30 of probably twice the size of Jaywick called Rimau in which a British major, Lyon, first name Ivor? Anyhow Lyon.

14:00 He headed that group that tried to emulate Jaywick's expedition to Singapore harbour and I think it came to grief and most of them were beheaded. They were caught by the Japanese on islands within Singapore harbour and

14:30 there was a bit of a mix-up because the particular procedure that was to be carried out to try and rescue them if anything went wrong failed and the Yanks didn't turn up with their submarine on time at a preselected situation

15:00 in time. I can remember also one of my colleagues at Central Bureau talking about where they intercepted a message to say that Ivan, Ivan? Lyon had, a British

15:30 officer had been captured. While nobody knew about Operation Rimau, they were very intrigued with the fact that the Japanese had mentioned his name and from that they were able to then find out that the Operation Rimau

16:00 had, or some information about what happened to the people. Ultimately they found that most of them had been beheaded. But the Japanese happened to mention this British officer's name in some signal they were sending back to Japan or somewhere. I remember them talking about that.

16:30 Not in my time, but earlier.

I'd like to get more detail about ATIS. Who was your boss at ATIS?

The ATIS boss, he was American.

17:00 I think that the real boss was a Colonel Ind, I-N-D, but at the racecourse at Ascot there were several American officers involved in the ATIS section. They were pretty high ranking and

17:30 they were colonels. One in particular was an American woman. What do they call the women? They has a women's thing. There was a very high ranking woman and she

18:00 seemed to be in charge of the particular hut that I used to go to at the racecourse to do my work. WAAAFs or something. I don't know. I forget what they called the women. Her rank was,

18:30 well I'm not sure. It was quite, she seemed to be in charge of our hut. The funny part about ATIS was that everybody that worked in the blooming hut, they all had rank. They were well ranked people. We few Australians that worked there, we were

19:00 very lowly ranked compared to the Americans. I think the lowest rank in there would be a technical sergeant or something of that nature, everybody had rank. I know we Australians had next to nothing, but we seemed to be doing just as important work as what the Americans were doing.

19:30 **In your time off did you get a chance to mix with the officers? How did they treat you?**

I often wondered about that. At the ATIS section that

20:00 we Australians went to, it was very, if I might say cosy, on duty. Working with them, they were all first names, but once you got outside you had to be

20:30 throwing salutes and all that sort of thing and be pretty aware of who you were mixing with and who you spoke to even, because outside rank meant quite a deal. Once you were inside it didn't seem to matter very much although we, as Australians, were sort of separate and we didn't

21:00 mix that well with the American groups that we were working with. That was seen to be quite noticeable. I always remember it was Christmas and we went to a party

21:30 somewhere in Brisbane on the Brisbane River. It was in a magnificent old home somewhere on the Brisbane River. Why they were there I don't know. We were invited along because the Yanks were having their Christmas Yuletide at this place and there was all the festivities about the place. I went along.

22:00 I always remember this WAAAF, or woman, at that party. She seemed to be a lot, I thought she was a lot older than I was because I was only a lad. We

22:30 were, as things went, the party got on into the night, and I know we were drinking Pimms because there wasn't much beer around. There was a shortage of beer in all the pubs and everything and I know we were drinking Pimms something or other with orange juice.

23:00 She was handling it pretty well, this sergeant woman, who to me seemed to be about 40, but probably wasn't. She was probably only 30. I wasn't handling it too well. I was having a bit of trouble with it and I thought, "Gee, I'd like to go and have a lie down somewhere." I'd been

23:30 fairly well into it. I don't know whether I got away from her or what, but she got me cornered. She was all on for whatever I was capable of. She got me outside into the garden and

24:00 I've been accosted a few times in my life, but I was, yeah, I'll never forget that woman. She thought I was capable of better than I could produce. That was that Christmas party at this house in Brisbane. That's

24:30 another matter.

What were the WAAAFs doing in the ATIS office?

The WAAAFs were mainly doing such things as typing and office.

25:00 They were doing that sort of work as far as I could see. We were very insular in what we did. We had our own jobs to do and that's all we did. I think I can remember the two WAAAFs that were in the hut, they were preparing, I think, the twice a day bulletin that went out

25:30 about all the happenings that we'd been able to intercept. I think they were preparing those bulletins cos they seemed to be flat out on typewriters most of the time.

26:00 I only went to this hut on probably half a dozen times in the course of the day because I used to go back up to 21 Henry Street, Ascot because I had to, what they called

26:30 'safe handbags'. I used to have to despatch a safe handbag to the Philippines to a wireless unit up there that was known as 5 Wireless Unit. They had Kana operators operating in the Philippines monitoring Japanese stuff up there. I had to send,

27:00 well, they sent safe handbags down to us from 5 Wireless Unit and they were sealed. I don't think they had a padlock on with a key, but they were certainly sealed up. I had to prepare a return safe handbag and send it back to the Philippines and I think I did that twice

27:30 a day. I had to go back up to Henry Street, Ascot, and gather the stuff up that had to go in the safe handbag to the 5 Wireless Unit in the Philippines. That went by aircraft of some sort every day. The rest of the time I spent down at the hut at the racecourse

28:00 trying to crack these messages that wouldn't encipher.

Trying to crack a code would create an atmosphere of high pressure.

Yes. It didn't so much with me

28:30 because I didn't see the final result of the message I was dealing with. It was in code and I would try and fathom out different groups of letters that might crack. Then

29:00 we couldn't make any sense of it because it had to go to the interpreters. They translated it into…it made Japanese sense then. They got the Japanese content and then they translated that into English. What we were getting was just the Japanese

29:30 jargon of what the message was supposed to contain. We didn't really make any sense out of it. But we just tried to pull the Japanese message into Japanese that somebody else could interpret. So whilst

30:00 we couldn't discern anything from it, it was just a message; and we couldn't interpret it, it went to the interpreters for that part.

Were you motivated to learn Japanese?

No.

30:30 We had it drilled into us that we weren't to disclose, discuss, talk about anything we did. Everything was so secret and security was so high on the work we were doing that we must never divulge it. That went

31:00 for everything we did, whether it was whatever. When I got into Z the same thing applied. You do not discuss anything that went on during your service life. For that reason I don't think I ever had any

31:30 inkling. In fact I think it might have been the opposite. After the war I wouldn't buy anything Japanese. I wouldn't be interested in a Japanese car. This was, I don't know

32:00 whether it was just a…well, it might have been something that was implanted there in the subconscious that I didn't want anything to do with anything Japanese.

32:30 That held with me for a long time. Admittedly I drive a Honda now, it's the first Japanese car I've ever had. Prior to that I always drove Rovers. It had to be British or very British or I wouldn't be involved with it. No, I had no inkling to learn Japanese.

33:00 I will say that I probably never hated the Japanese as such with a hatred, but I was never inclined to anything that was Japanese.

33:30 That was against my grain. I know this sort of thing, this attitude, was held by people who were prisoners of the Japanese during the war, that they were very anti-Japanese, but I wasn't, but I knew all that

34:00 they did. I had pretty first hand knowledge of it.

Working on a code in a different language would have been frustrating. How did you know when you got it right?

You didn't. At the

34:30 time, you didn't know. You didn't know that you'd cracked it. Our job was that those codes that they were having trouble with. They probably had a red circle around areas in the code that was there that were suspect.

35:00 We would go to that particular message they were having trouble with and we would then look at it and those areas that were outlined in red we would make suggestions that this could have been

35:30 received as, and we would note some alternatives that it could be. That it might be this, or it might be that or it might be something else. Each one of these, because the particular person that took it down wouldn't maybe have heard the signal correctly, the Morse, and they

36:00 might have interpreted it as being such, but we would look at it and say, "Well, now that could have been this or that or that." We would give them an alternative to those areas where they couldn't. That would go back into the system and be looked at by those people that understood the Japanese.

36:30 We were only trying to find an alternative to the Japanese code that they'd copied down. That was our particular job. Then they would look at that and it might crack and it mightn't. Fifty per cent of those we did play with eventually were cracked.

37:00 But we, personally, didn't know whether or not we cracked it or what it all meant. It was just as foreign to us as it was when we picked the thing up in the first place.

What clues were you looking for?

We were looking for alternatives

37:30 to the Kana alphabet because it was all in Kana code and we were looking to search for if they've taken it down as being so, so, so and so letters of Kana. We would look at that and say, "Well,

38:00 the particular telegraphist heard it as this, but maybe it was that." We would give some alternative groups of letters that he could have, cos he would be guessing a lot of the time as to what he heard. Depending upon the state of the reception

38:30 of the radio that he was tuned in on and all those sorts of things, he would tend to, to put it mildly, make mistakes in writing down what the message really was. We had to try and find an alternative to what he had written. Obviously what he had written wasn't working.

39:00 They weren't able to crack the code. They knew the codes. So that was our particular job, but we didn't know what it meant. We had no idea.

How much was your work 'guess work'? What system could you use?

It could

39:30 have been and it probably was. We were only suggesting remedies to what was written down. Now, we would select alternatives to what we thought it might be. Because of the particular configuration of

40:00 dots and dashes, we would look at what was written down and we would interpret that. We would write it down in Kana in dot dash form and say, "Well, if I interpreted those three dot dashes," or whatever it is "and the next three, it would mean something different." We would,

40:30 from interpreting the Kana Morse code, suggest certain other things. Sometimes we were right. Sometimes they never cracked them.

That would have been frustrating.

Well, yes. It's a long while ago.

41:00 We just went to work and did what we could and went home and went to sleep and that was the day's work.

Tape 4

00:38 **When you joined ATIS, it was getting towards the latter stages of the war. What did you know about what was going on in the war at that point?**

Like everything else I suppose we didn't place any particular

01:00 emphasis on the fact that it was getting towards the end of the war because we weren't aware of that, nobody was. The war was ploughing on at a fair rate. It wasn't till the atomic bomb that it really closed things off. A week before that nobody knew any different.

01:30 Yes, it was getting towards the end of the war, but we weren't aware of that. The war was still progressing at a steady rate. In 1945 when it was decided that Z better have

02:00 its own transport arrangements, when they came to discover they could drop paratroopers from Liberator aircraft, which were pretty long range, that 200 Flight was formed. It didn't form until February

02:30 1945. It was a new thing at that point. The end of the war wasn't envisaged. So we got underway pretty smartly. Our unit was formed I think on the 15th of February and on the 25th of March

03:00 our first plane was away in operational form. It went on it's first operation in March. That was only 3 weeks from when the unit was formed. I was one of the first to go to 200 Flight on its formation. Z

03:30 was at Leyburn before I was. I didn't get there I think until 16th of February, I think it was. No, not right. It was formed on the 15th, I was a week getting there.

04:00 Let's start at the beginning. Para-wing had established themselves there on the pretext that 200 Flight would establish at Leyburn and become permanent. There had been an intimation that the 200 Flight

04:30 RAAF unit would form at Maryborough because Fraser Island off Maryborough was the main training ground for Z. They'd anticipated that 200 Flight would form at Maryborough. However it meant that other units had to be pushed out of Maryborough

05:00 so a new unit at Leyburn was formed. Leyburn strip had been in operation for some 12 months; I suppose as it was part of the original Brisbane Line that was established about early 1944.

05:30 Came February '45, 200 Flight was formed at Leyburn and their first operation got underway in the March. Our first commanding officer was Squadron Leader Pockley, a great air force fame in Bomber Command and Coastal Command in Britain where he

06:00 was part of number 10 Squadron RAAF, which had formed in Britain with Sunderland flying boats. He made a name for himself winning a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] in seeking out submarines in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic around Britain. He came back to Australia,

06:30 did a conversion course to Liberators and was our first commanding officer. He led the first mission that left Leyburn on March 25th '45. Unfortunately his plane never returned. It was

07:00 our first mission and the CO [Commanding Officer] was our first casualty. His plane is believed to have gone into the South China Sea and has never been found since. Never been heard of. He lost his crew and a couple of very high ranking British

07:30 army people, Major Everard Ellis who was an SOE [Special Operations Executive] man, that was Special Office Exploration? No, not 'Exploration', 'Expedition'. He was an SOE man and he'd come out to learn the art of

08:00 parachute dropping in jungle warfare as opposed to what it was in France and Greece and wherever else they used it. So he was killed on Pockley's first plane. They flew their mission, actually dropped their Z personnel, four personnel dropped out of Pockley's plane and they landed

08:30 in central Borneo. His plane then proceeded to go back to the Philippines which was their point of embarkation. There were two aircraft. Our second in command, Flight Lieutenant Frank Ball, was captain of the other aircraft. The two of them dropped their personnel in central Borneo

09:00 and left for Mindanao Island in the Philippines, which was their home base at the time. They turned for home, departed each other in cloud and only one aircraft landed at Mindanao, the other never reached there and believed that they, or that Pockley got up to his old tricks of looking

09:30 for submarines, duck shooting we called it. Apparently he got too close to a Japanese ship and they probably shot him down. We never heard of Pockley again, or his crew. So Frank Ball became temporary commander of 200 Flight. They'd

10:00 accomplished their first mission, which was dropping eight personnel in central Borneo, four from each

plane. There was a two day search put in, looking for Pockley, couldn't find him, and they came back to Leyburn in Queensland. Our second

10:30 mission was the insertion of further personnel into the same dropping zone as Pockley dropped his first men. The codename for that expedition was Semut One,

11:00 'semut' meaning 'ant' in Malay language, which was the current language in Borneo at the time. The support men going in with Z were another eight and they were dropped in in April, a further

11:30 two planes took them to Borneo. They were also based there. Their last base was at Mindanao in the Philippines and we were operating from there in those early days. They were dropped in, another eight personnel, to

12:00 Semut One. Some changes took place in Morotai and the Halmaheras had been recaptured by the Americans and the aerodrome had been repaired at Morotai. It became an Allied base, so our further operations

12:30 to the north were then carried out form Morotai. A second expedition in Borneo, codenamed Agas, meaning 'sandfly' in Malay, and there were four Agas

13:00 missions. Agas 1, 2, 3 and 4. They took place in north Borneo, not in central Borneo. Again, personnel were dropped in in north Borneo. The prime reason for their dropping was that the Allies became

13:30 aware that the Japanese had British and Australian prisoners at Sandakan. There was a move afoot to investigate as best we could by dropping in paratroopers what the condition of the men in Sandakan camp was. Sandakan camp

14:00 was in British North Borneo. As it happens, the Japanese had decided that the Allies were making an offensive in Borneo and Sandakan was on the east coast of Borneo. They decided that they would

14:30 get the prisoners of war, Australians and Britons, away from a likely landing spot, which was Sandakan, so they instigated the death marches as we know them today, from Sandakan into the interior of Borneo at a place called

15:00 Ranau, that's where they set off to march to. They were being marched from Sandakan in groups of about 50 or 60 and that was taking place unbeknownst to us as we were dropping the

15:30 Agas parties into north Borneo; that were going down to investigate where these prisoners of war were.

Was the main role of the paratroopers? To collect intelligence?

Yes. Intelligence of any sort on troop movements, numbers of

16:00 Japanese at various points along the coast. Japan had more or less taken Borneo over as it was a rich oil producing country. They'd taken over the oil wells and established themselves in all the main coastal areas. They hadn't bothered to go into the interior

16:30 very much. The only reason they were using the interior of Borneo was to make the locals—the Bornians, the tribes in central Borneo—submit their rice paddies and they had to grow rice to keep

17:00 the Japanese fed where they had camps around the coastal areas. So the only reason they went inland was to commandeer supplies of rice. So that's the strategy of Z, to drop into central Borneo to

17:30 win over the tribesmen, the Dyaks and so forth, and arm them to the point where they could fight the Japanese from the interior out towards and drive them into the sea as you might say from their establishments around the coastline.

18:00 So that was the theory behind it all. In the meantime the intelligence collecting was to ascertain to the best of our ability what the conditions of these prisoners of war were. There were something like 4,000 of them in early 1945.

18:30 The war was going on at a fairly hefty pace during those months. We lost three of our aircraft by the 21st of May. We lost three liberators, full crew and army men aboard

19:00 them. There was Pockley that went into the South China Sea. There was Flying Officer Clarke, he was shot down over Timor. And Flight Lieutenant Emmet who was unfortunate enough to crash his plane on a mountain top by

19:30 hitting a wing on a tree and his plane burst into flames and they lost full crew and army men in British North Borneo on one of these drops where they were going to investigate the prisoners of war. So that was three of our original six planes down by the 21st of May. We only formed on the 25th of February.

20:00 So our unit was pretty well depleted come middle May. Now, we only had three aircraft to keep those personnel that we've dropped into Borneo, we had to keep them supplied with food and ammunition in

this

20:30 sorry state of affairs, with only three aircraft. But we had an aircraft allocated to us for the loss of Pockley and it came in early May and then two came in June to replace, we lost Clarke and Emmet, one on the

21:00 17th of May in Timor and the other on the 21st of May in north Borneo. So at that stage we had our original six aircraft back, but the crews weren't really trained that replaced those three crews that were lost. They had to

21:30 undergo training at Leyburn and we weren't in a position to really get operational until some time in July. We also got an additional two aircraft and two crews with those planes in July.

22:00 Now, it's July and the war ends in August. We're only a month from the end of the war and we're really just getting on our feet as a unit because of our losses. The Allied Intelligence Bureau were planning

22:30 all sorts of missions that we should carry out because they wanted to insert more troops behind enemy lines because at that stage the atomic bombs hadn't been thought of, although they were only a month away. Not much information had been found on the ground

23:00 regarding prisoners of war. We knew they were marching the prisoners from Sandakan inland because our men had got into Sandakan and the Japanese had burnt the old prisoner of war camp at Sandakan

23:30 down and got everybody out. They were all somewhere along the track in the jungle. We kept flying missions of supply these

24:00 parties that we'd dropped. There were probably eight or nine parties that we'd dropped into Borneo. We'd dropped some into New Britain near Rabaul where there were coast watchers in there watching shipping and we had to keep them supplied. And in

24:30 Timor itself, where we lost one aircraft. We were busy supplying these parties I dare say when war came to an end. One of our main missions though, that I've overlooked, was that the invasion of

25:00 Labuan took place in June 1945. There was an Allied invasion there by the 7th division at Tarakan in, no Balikpapan was next on the 1st of July and then Tarakan in early August. They were all

25:30 landings performed by the 7th division of the Australian forces, the Australian Army, and we had to support them and supply them with information on the Japanese defences prior to those invasions. So we were kept pretty busy in 200 Flight trying to keep up with all the activities

26:00 that was going on. Then after peace was declared, the Japanese in those islands didn't, or wouldn't, accept the fact that their emperor had declared peace and

26:30 had given in, and they'd signed various war treaties, even one in Borneo, but the Japanese didn't seem to want to believe that the war was over. They had no communication with Japan or wherever. They kept fighting, which means that our Z personnel had to keep them in check

27:00 and keep fighting after the war had ended. So that was additional work that had to be carried on. I suppose it was getting onto September, October before they'd really rounded up the last of the Japanese troops in Borneo and got through to them that the war

27:30 was all over and they had to capitulate and give in. Then there were all these various Z people around all the jungles in Borneo that hadn't made their way to the coast. They all had to be kept in touch with because most of those parties had radio and they kept

28:00 in touch with us at Leyburn or Morotai or wherever. We got code messages from those parties on the ground. We sort of knew where they were, but we had to keep them in ammunition and food. So we had work going on well after the war ended until we'd got all these people out.

28:30 War ended on the 15th of August and we didn't start to wind down at Leyburn until well into November.

I'll take you back to the start of your time with the Z unit.

29:00 **You told us this morning that you weren't given much information. What did you expect to be doing when you joined Z unit?**

Well, I did go before a panel and was indoctrinated to a certain extent about what the

29:30 eventual hazards were with me joining the unit and I had to volunteer to go there, which I did. But yes, I think we knew the sort of work that we were going to be doing and we accepted that and got on with it.

30:00 I haven't hit your punch line yet.

What did you know about the Z Special unit before you joined?

I knew nothing about it before I went to them except they were carrying out clandestine operations against the Japanese and expect

30:30 anything, although at that stage I wasn't to leave Australia because of my eye, but I did go on a trip to Morotai, but it wasn't till after the war that I flew up with one group that went up there and came back. I was only up there for 18 days I think and came back on another aircraft that was returning.

31:00 Yes, I knew very well the things that were going on. I knew that we'd had prisoners of war taken. We'd had casualties and we'd had this and that, because I was the one that got the messages. I personally knew, and I had to relay these messages as they came in. I deciphered them; they had to go to me,

31:30 headquarters, at Leyburn. So I was in a position where I knew what was happening. I was aware of the consequences of war and what was going on. I was aware of all that. I don't know that it had any immediate effect on me. It probably did after the war was over.

32:00 Everything settled down. We weren't allowed to discuss anything with anybody. In fact we were told that we weren't even to discuss what went on even with our families when we got back after the war because everything was hush hush for years after the war. It wasn't till about 1980

32:30 that they lifted the embargo on the happenings of 200 Flight, Central Bureau and Z Special and whatever else.

33:00 **Working with that kind of secrecy must have been a trial. How did you cope with that and who could you talk to?**

Well, you talk to the rest of the people on the unit. Although I, in the position I was in, wasn't supposed to divulge

33:30 anything I knew. What went on in my tent was my business and that was as far as it went. I wasn't expected to discuss it with anyone. I attended the briefings at the various aircraft when they went north insomuch as what arrangements we'd have made for them when they got there

34:00 regarding accommodation and where they would get food and we had to work all those things out before they left to go north on these trips. I was busy. I had plenty to do in keeping up with the rate of the happenings on the unit. I don't know

34:30 that I had too much time to cogitate on the developments. I certainly, I don't think I let it worry me really.

What did you tell your family?

Nothing. We weren't

35:00 to discuss anything. It wasn't until I suppose 20 years after he war that we even got together as a group and started reunions and got together ourselves and talked about it and got it out of our system. Would be 20 years after

35:30 it was all over. Everybody just went about their life and business and didn't divulge anything. I know after the war I got immediately involved in trying to study, trying to learn things, trying to educate myself from being a postman. I

36:00 eventually matriculated and became a surveyor. From then on I was totally involved with surveying. You forgot the war years and everything that went with it. Surveying became my life. I was still with the Commonwealth.

36:30 I stayed with the Commonwealth after the war, transferred over to a different department. I was PMG and then I became Department of the Interior and surveyed for the Commonwealth and we looked after Defence, PMG, Civil Aviation, you name it, we did all their surveying.

37:00 I started at the ground floor in 1952 when I got through. I finished up chief surveyor in NSW when I retired in 1984. For some years, 77 and 78 I was president of the Institution of Surveyors. So I had a lot to

37:30 take my mind off the war, I suppose, in that respect. I've had a pretty full life and I've enjoyed it. Wartime has only come to the fore in the last 20 years when I've been involved with the executive of Z

38:00 Force. I've been in their association. In those early years we forgot it.

Can you tell me when you first got posted to Leyburn and Flight 200 was formed, who were the personnel that were in the unit?

38:30 Basically the unit consisted of aircrew. The crews that manned these Liberators that we flew. There were 11 men to a crew when it was operational. I suppose there were at our

39:00 best period we had nine aircraft. No, seven aircraft was the most we had at any time. That was 77

aircrew plus there were additional stand by crews that had to be there in case of illness or mishap or what have you. So there were lieutenants, say 100 aircrew on the unit, and

39:30 I think about 250 ground staff personnel. That was the total of our unit. Why am I talking about that?

I asked you about personnel in the unit when you first joined.

Yes.

40:00 Well, there were that many people there, but even then we weren't supposed to talk to anybody. That group over there weren't to know what we were doing and we weren't to know what they were doing. We weren't allowed off the camp area. There was a little town of Leyburn that had a pub and a shop and a

40:30 sawmill. But it was out of bounds. We were totally withdrawn from taking any part in any community activity in the area. We just lived in the camp. The camp was in a forest so that it wasn't seen. Our camp was totally

41:00 hidden from roads. The army personnel that came there to be trained in paratroop dropping and those that we dropped north, they weren't at our camp, they were housed in an old farmhouse about 3½ kilometres away from our camp. Everything was

41:30 totally isolated so you couldn't talk to anybody and divulge anything that might get out as to what we were doing.

Tape 5

00:32 **You're just going to continue?**

Yes. Regarding the secrecy and what went on at the unit. In 1987 when we were deciding to put a memorial in at Leyburn in memory of those people we lost, we went back up there,

01:00 a group of us from 200, and made ourselves known to the town after 40 years or whatever it was. The local progress association and historical society were so wrapped in the fact that some of these men that were there years ago

01:30 during the war had come back and started to take an interest in their town. Particularly when we said we'd put a memorial in and Townsville went along with it. We were out with a group of these townsfolk. We were walking through the bush where the old camp was.

02:00 We found remnants of bits of concrete slab and things where the old mess was and there were signs of activity 40 years ago. Some of them, there was all this barbed wire that the trees had grown through, it went through the trees. The trees were

02:30 grown 40 years since and the barbed wire went into the trees. It was all rusted away. But there was signs of a barbed wire enclosure. This was the enclosure around the transport section where all the vehicles were. They had to keep that locked up because there were vehicle parts and petrol and whatever might get pinched. So we had a compound around it.

03:00 We're going through the bush and one of the locals says, "You know, we often come through here. We find these old signs and this barbed wire intrigues me. It

03:30 must have been interesting during the war when you brought all those Japanese prisoners back and you kept them here inside this barbed wire compound." I said, "Oh gee, where did you get that from?" He said, "All the old timers around here all know about these Japanese prisoners you Z blokes brought back from the islands."

04:00 All it was, was the barbed wire compound around the transport section. He thought we had Japanese prisoners there during the war. So that's how secret it was and they were locals and that's what they thought.

What would the people of Leyburn ask you if you got in there on leave? Did they ask you what was going on out there?

Stories could

04:30 be spread. Not the truth. They'd be pretty careless with the truth I think. That was a classic question where a local had said, "Gee, all those prisoners you fellows brought back."

Given your work was secretive, what would you tell people that you did

05:00 **when you were on leave?**

I don’t know what we’d tell them really. You just tell them, “We’re in camp up so and so and we go north. We go up to the islands and we do this and that.” I don’t think we really divulged what we were doing. We’d have some

05:30 story, talking piece, as you can imagine. We’d say, “We do this,” or, “We do that,” without being very exact about what we were telling them.

Did you have a standard story you would tell people?

There would have been, yes.

Given the information you were hearing in

06:00 **both units, were there times when you’d hear people talking in the street or at social gatherings about what was going on in the war and you knew it was absolute rubbish, but you couldn’t say anything?**

Yes, that could well be. Yes. It probably did happen.

06:30 I don’t know. During the war days, if you did get back to Sydney or the city, Brisbane or somewhere, posted up on all the walls there’d be posters that reminded you that “Beware of what you say. Walls have ears” or something.

07:00 There were just commonplace posters you might see in the street. Or other words “Don’t talk, there could be enemy about”; this was just commonplace. I think we were cooped up and what have you there. I can remember

07:30 there was a brickworks in Toowoomba. Our aircrew were pretty responsible and we had officers that flew the planes. They were all commissioned officers. Probably had seen war service overseas in

08:00 the Middle East or Britain. But somewhere, despite all the discipline, there’s a little bit of larrikinism that displays itself from time to time. I know that I’ve heard it

08:30 discussed in the camp that when they come back to Leyburn they fly pretty low over Toowoomba. Toowoomba was a pretty fair sized town even then. There was a brickworks. The brickworks had a very high chimney. One of the things that each crew

09:00 participated in when they came back from up north was to see how close they could go to the top of the brickworks’ chimney. This is pretty daredevil I suppose. It’s scary stuff to the locals. Those planes were big, they were huge. Four engine planes those Liberators. One of our skippers

09:30 actually dislodged the top layer of bricks from, or half the top layer, from the chimney of the brickworks. So that’s how close he went. That would have been done with some of the undercarriage. It was commonplace to hear each crew discussing how close they could go

10:00 to the chimney. It did happen in the end, but that was the end of that. They thought next time might be a bit more dangerous.

What fears were there of

10:30 **double agents and infiltrators that you see in films?**

I think the attitude of the community, world at large, was different in those war times.

11:00 There weren’t these films about that you’re speaking of. They’re something that’s only happened in recent times. No, I don’t think there was any instances that come to my mind of that sort of thinking.

11:30 No, I can’t think. You’ll have to ask me something else.

Was it conceivable that an Australian might work for the Japanese?

12:00 There was Radio Tokyo that were broadcasting to radio stations so that the Australian public could hear. Tokyo Rose used to come on from time to time. It was a woman. She used to

12:30 say, perhaps over the breakfast period of Australian radio, no television mind you, but in radio, and there were times when Tokyo Rose would actually say things over the radio that were pretty scary to the Australian public.

13:00 Things that we might have thought about, but didn’t think would ever happen. She would say, “Did you know so and so?” Used to scare the Australian public a little bit. There was that sort of thing went on. I can recall Tokyo Rose, and it was, I don’t know whether it was actually foreign

13:30 or infiltrators here trying to be funny or what, but Tokyo Rose was a commonplace name on radio.

What things would you hear on Tokyo Rose that might frighten you?

None that I can remember. I know for a fact that

14:00 some of the things that went on in our show, I'd better pull up here. This might be at large at some stage and I

14:30 was going to say the Japanese did some horrible things that we hear about. But by the same token a lot of things we did were probably comparable with anything that the Japanese did. They're things that we people in Z know that happened. But war is war and yeah.

15:00 Both sides are to blame.

At the time how did it make you feel hearing of atrocities by the Allies?

It sort of balanced out I suppose. You said, "If it's good for the goose, it's good for the gander."

15:30 That would be about it. But war's war and I don't want to see another.

Can you tell me, without names, what things you might have heard of?

16:00 I know there were atrocities the Japanese committed and a lot of them were against Z people. There were beheadings, all that sort of thing.

16:30 But it wasn't, either, uncommon in Borneo to see a Japanese head on a pole. Stuck up somewhere on the side of a jungle track. It happened.

17:00 **How did you hear those sorts of things?**

You accept it.

How did you hear

17:30 **about the Japanese heads on the poles?**

Well, you see it, you don't hear about it.

18:00 Yeah. It's a long while ago, dear.

Can you take me through the process of being woken up in the middle of the night to go and decipher messages?

18:30 **What would you do?**

I've done that. There was a 24 hour watch went on in the signal section with the radio people and Morse code people. Anything came through that was urgent or operational or top secret or anything,

19:00 they'd have to come and wake me, which means I was down in a tent, way down there somewhere. I'd have to go up and get to work. Get my books out and decipher it and deliver the message. Regardless of what time of night. I can remember when we first got news of

19:30 Pockley going in. It was in the middle of the night. It was early hours of the morning when they came and woke me to go down and see what this top secret message was all about. It was a message about Pockley being overdue. That he hadn't arrived in the Philippines when he should have. That he was considered overdue because the amount of

20:00 petrol he could carry on his plane would have expired. So he's overdue, something's happened because he's run out of petrol; if he's still flying. That message came through in the early hours of the morning and I had to take it down to the adjutant and wake him and give him the news. Those things

20:30 occurred, yes. You just got about your job. That was it.

I wonder, at 2 o'clock in the morning

And at 2 o'clock in the morning, you won't believe this, but where we were camped at Leyburn in Queensland there was no electricity on. We had no electricity. We had a generator that

21:00 kept the lamps. We had wire strung between trees and this sort of thing and lights, but there were no lights in any of the tents. There was lights in the mess and around the tents and outside lights. But they went out at 10 o'clock. It was hurricane lamp after that. They come down and got me

21:30 with hurricane lamps. I had a pressure lamp in my tent for if I had to work late at night or whatever. I had a pump up kerosene thing and used a pressure lamp. They were the situations we worked under.

How long would it be from the time you were woken up till the time

22:00 **you'd start working on deciphering?**

As long as it took me to walk up to the tent, which might be five minutes. You wonder, "Why am I

getting a top secret message at this time in the morning? Something's gone wrong." So you're into it. "What's gone wrong?" There was one of our aircraft was overdue.

22:30 **How well does the brain function having just been woken up?**

It works. It works. You know that people depend on you, so it just works. I don't know why.

23:00 In a sense war was just another workplace situation. There was a job to be done and you did it.

There was great pressure on your for accuracy. How much did you worry about that?

23:30 I don't know that you worried about it, but you try to perform and you did the best you could. You were expected to perform and you did perform. That was the way I looked at it. I was probably a one off sort of fellow. People depended

24:00 on you, so you carried on. I'm pleased I did.

With the secrecy and isolation, was there anybody who wouldn't take the pressure?

There were.

24:30 Yes. There were. We had to get rid of several people that I can recall from the unit because they couldn't take it. It became too much for them. I can remember that. I can remember

25:00 a particular case, I think I mentioned it in my book, where aircraft were down on the strip loaded ready to go in some early godforsaken hour of the morning and super numeric pilot, there was a super numeric pilot in each group who

25:30 didn't actually fly with the crew, but they were there as a standby pilot if somebody got crook. They were going down to sleep in the aircraft overnight because it was laden with explosives and whatever else, ammunition, but it did have a load of

26:00 Dutch silver guilders. There was a lot of money. These were, we had to trade on the natives in Borneo and we had to have something we could really trade with. Early days we traded with bits and pieces and silk

26:30 from parachutes and clothes and this sort of thing, fish hooks and all sorts of things like this used to be able to induce the natives to do things for you if you had some sort of a something you could hold in front of them. After a while that dropped off and they wanted something better. In the end we had plane loads of these Dutch guilders that

27:00 we used to take up and induce the natives to help us by rewarding them with this coin. There's planes down there this night and there used to be a guard on a picket duty around the aircraft. This jeep went down this

27:30 night with these fellows in that were supposed to go down and sleep in the planes. One in each plane. They went down in a jeep. Also the guards had been told that nobody went near those aircraft unless they had the password. It was part of the security. Well, they were asked to halt on the way down

28:00 driving. Apparently didn't hear or something. And the guard put a round into them and it went through the bloke's knee on that side and out through there and into the other bloke and they got shot. Now, that guard that fired that, he was

28:30 immediately placed on some sort of arrest, but he carried out his duty. He was told that nobody went near those planes unless they had the password. These people were asked to stop and didn't stop. Now, that fellow was in a little compound we had there. If anybody went AWOL [AWL – Absent Without Leave] or

29:00 what have you, they'd do a few days in the brig. This bloke, they kept him there. I suppose he'd been there three weeks or more. They hadn't done anything with him. The whole atmosphere played on you that much that while they were making their minds up what they were going to do with him,

29:30 whether they were going to let him off or have a little bit of a talk with him and, "Don't do it again," or something, in the meantime he, they used to take him up to meals, up to the mess, and you used to wash your plates out afterwards in a 44-gallon drum of hot water or something. He was there and there was an

30:00 axe there in a wood heap that they built the fires up under these things and he just chopped his fingers off with the axe. Well, they rushed him off to a hospital and what have you. He was discharged and they had to discharge that poor fellow, he was the guard and doing his duty,

30:30 and he finished up in a mental home. Now, all because of pressures that got to him. What do you do? It can get to you.

31:00 **Did the pressure start to get to you at any time?**

I think I've been lucky. I've been lucky and towards the end of it all I'd had enough interest or studies or things

31:30 that I've had to do since the war. I suppose it would have got to me early after the war. It nearly got to me when I was counting pennies in the GPO. I reckoned I'd just about come to the end of the tether. But no, it didn't

32:00 get to me. But there were plenty who did.

You were telling me about the pressure that you were under working with the Z unit. Some of the messages you were hearing would have been quite traumatic,

32:30 **of units in trouble. Was there any way you could get that out of your system after having deciphered something horrible?**

I think you probably dwelled on it for a short time. But only a short time. I don't ever

33:00 remember losing sleep over it. Nothing worried me to that extent that I would have lost sleep over it, but yes, I would ponder over those things. I think we were trained, I can remember in my early days with Z being trained

33:30 to withstand things and to psychological aspects of things. In other words I can remember going to lectures for instruction

34:00 where we were told we had to lie still. We were on the ground. And don't move. And there'd be a bloke walking around and he'd be watching for somebody to move and you'd get a bayonet in the ribs or something or other and either you learned to put up with and

34:30 particularly in the summertime if there were flies about, you weren't allowed even to shoo a fly away. You had to learn to withstand. This was in case you were in the jungle somewhere and you weren't to move or you'd disclose your position to the enemy. You used to have to lie still. I remember that quite well. You used to have

35:00 to learn to withstand pain. You used to be sitting on a chair under a tree with a jam tin up above your head with a hole in it and water dripping through it.

35:30 You used to have to sit there under that drip and not move until the jam tin emptied. I tell you that might seem funny, but it takes a bit of willpower and that sort of thing to do these things. These were in case you got caught or captured or whatever it was and to be able to

36:00 withstand some form of torture without disclosing information. So you were taught, you were lectured on things on how to dismiss things from your mind. We used to do a sort of funny yoga or Chinese or something,

36:30 whatever you call it, whereby you could get total relaxation of mind. All these things we were taught. Whether we did them properly or we took them in, I don't know, but these were all things that were part of our training. You say to me, "Did these things worry me?"

37:00 I suppose the answer I've gotta give you is we were trained not to worry. I don't know.

Did you worry for the operatives in the field?

37:30 Yes, but only to that point. I think you were concerned. I don't know that you treated it as offhand as, "Well, that's their business, they've gotta get out of it," or whether you just dismissed it that way or not, or whether you did really worry.

38:00 I don't know. I can't say that these things, I was never so disturbed about anything that I got upset. I don't think I ever had to, we never had

38:30 counselling in our days, but they probably have it now. We just had to overcome these things ourselves. I had no periods after the war where I needed any psychiatric help or

39:00 I don't ever recall any such. I've just lived a normal life. I've witnessed a lot of things, I've seen a lot of things I suppose, but I'm still going.

39:30 **Z unit was about clandestine warfare. How much did people outside know about Z Force?**

They didn't, dear. Nobody knew. It was just, well, it was going on, but nobody knew.

40:00 We didn't say. I suppose it's as simple as that.

Given it was that secret and important, was it a hard secret to keep?

No. Nerves of steel I suppose you say.

40:30 I don’t know. It never disturbed me. I never worried that much, I don’t know whether I didn’t worry or I did worry. It didn’t affect me, put it that way.

Tape 6

00:35 **There was a staff of approximately 350 in your unit. How many other signallers were there stationed at Leyburn?**

I suppose the WT section, the Wireless Telegraphy section, there would be

01:00 a fourth of a shift. I suppose there were 20 signallers for incoming traffic. At one stage I had an assistant for a short time, but the majority of the time I did the sole code work on the unit.

01:30 I had two fellows sent out to me that had come back from the islands. I don’t know why they sent them out to Leyburn, but they did. They only lasted a very short time and they couldn’t hack it. So they went back to wherever they came from. Other than that I was the sole

02:00 operations that went on there. They never offered me any other help. I carried on.

Tell me what equipment you were using.

In the WT section they had I think three

02:30 TR8s. ATR8 transceivers. They transmit and receive. In the cipher section I had a small safe in the corner of the tent that I locked my books in and that was all I had. And a pressure lamp if I had

03:00 to work at night. So it was as primitive as that.

On occasions where you had to research, what could you do in terms of gathering information for your job?

I don’t think I’d be in a position to do any research. That was the last thing they’d be

03:30 expecting me to do. It’d be research. I was supposed to know my job. I was supposed to be well trained and they’d chosen me to fulfil this particular job and probably my previous history from where I’d been working at ATIS and the like stood me in pretty good stead to carry on out there.

04:00 **Describe how the chain of command at Leyburn went. Who would you be reporting to?**

I was responsible to the signals officer. There was a fellow called a signals officer and he was in charge of all signals, which included me and the 20 odd WT operators.

04:30 And there were maybe half a dozen WMMs, Wireless Maintenance Mechanics. They were the people that looked after the radio and the sets. We had a mobile thing too that had

05:00 to go down to the strip when the aircraft left. There had to be ground to air talk for takeoff. Same as they have air traffic controllers. Well, we had air to ground. It lasted, I suppose they were 100 mile away and the thing’d

05:30 cut out then. You wouldn’t be able to get any more, but all that equipment in the van, they looked after that. So in all maybe 30 personnel. They were under the signals officer. He was Flying Officer

06:00 Robertson.

Would you receive briefing?

No, but I attended all the briefings. The intelligence, there was such a bloke as an intelligence officer who I

06:30 was also responsible to. He took charge of the briefing sessions of the crews before they went away. I just went along as an assistant because he’d want various information and details of what we’d arranged at some place at Darwin or somewhere where they had to go overnight. He’d want to know

07:00 that I’d arranged so many meals, accommodation for so many and this sort of thing. I sort of off sided to the intelligence officer at the briefings.

It sounds like you weren’t only doing signal work.

No. I filled a fair few jobs.

07:30 Yeah. Man Friday the station.

What kind of condition was the airstrip in?

Good for the period, the time we were there. It was in pretty good nick. It was a fully tarred runway then. It isn't now, but it was

08:00 then. It had a lot of deficiencies of course. We had no hard standing areas for the aircraft, they just had to sit out on the ground. In wet weather they went down in the mud a bit. Or failing that, we let them stand on a bit of taxi way or

08:30 part of the runway. Yes, we never had any pavement failures during the 12 months we were there. It saw us out. We had 8 aircraft.

Given you were operating at a high level

09:00 **of intelligence gathering, did the unit at Leyburn ever feel you might have been a target for the Japanese?**

Well, yes. That could have been well in the cards. It would have been today, in today's world, with espionage as it is.

09:30 They'd have targeted us with their terrorism or whatever. But no, it didn't happen then. I think that was part of the strategy behind why we were so far down hidden away, behind, away from the frontline. We were down in Australia in the Darling Downs. I suppose they

10:00 considered that sufficient security.

You mentioned being in Queensland you were aware of the Brisbane Line. What

10:30 **was the general mood in Queensland?**

During the war you mean?

Yes.

Hard to gage. Yes, the Brisbane Line was a thing that was talked about and it was a series of airstrips going from Brisbane, Amberley, Lowood,

11:00 Oakey, Leyburn, Jondaryan, Cecil Plains, and I'm out as far as Roma now. And it was a series of airstrips that they built in a

11:30 strategic plan that they had of saving Australia. They would let the Japs come down and our last line of resistance would be the Brisbane line. That was where we would defend the country. But it never came to that. This is pretty drastic stuff, because that means Townsville's gone,

12:00 and Townsville was a big military town and even back in the war days there were strong air defences there. But no, they settled for the Brisbane Line. I don't think we considered ourselves any strategic part

12:30 of any plan that might come about where we'd have to defend, but we just carried on there.

Did the Leyburn airstrip have any defences?

None. None at all. Except the guard I spoke to you about that shot the blokes that didn't pull up. No, there were no defences there

13:00 at all. No armament of any sort.

What would you

13:30 **do to stave off the boredom?**

Yes, you'd draw a Tommy gun out of the armoury and you'd go out down the river or on some of the dams and go duck shooting. That was something I did fairly often. That was my form of recreation. A little bit of duck shooting.

14:00 What else? No, I can only think of duck shooting at Leyburn. We didn't have much

14:30 in the form of recreation. There were no WAAAF on the station. We weren't allowed into town. Town wasn't allowed onto the unit. We couldn't even go to the pub. There was a pub in town. So we got leave and they provided us

15:00 with a truck that took us to the rail head at Clifton and onto the train. It was either Brisbane or Toowoomba or Sydney or somewhere. Made the most of your 14 days' leave or whatever you had. I suppose it was isolated. It was isolated in the fact that we had no power.

15:30 As a result we had no hot water. We had to shower in cold showers in winter and summer. We had nothing. It was really living the hard way out there and intense.

16:00 **When you were at Leyburn, were you able to mark the passing or**

16:30 **the deaths of the pilots and troopers?**

Yes. We lived for the present I think, and today was

17:00 today and tomorrow was tomorrow. If it ever came. We didn't really know those people very well. We never knew, like I told you we had probably 9 aircrews. It'd be lucky that

17:30 those aircrew even knew the crew of that plane over there. The only place they'd meet if they pulled in at Darwin or Morotai or somewhere. Nobody knew anything about anybody. Everybody just lived their own little life and that's how it was. Most aircrews never knew each other till after

18:00 the war. They never saw each other.

Given the need for that way of operating, it would have been difficult for the unit to bond as a team.

Yes. I think the unit was a series

18:30 of many teams and each of those teams bonded together within themselves. That was the way we performed. I know from talking with various crew members now, after it's all over, they never really knew each other.

19:00 Yet they were the crew of another plane.

At the time, did you know where all the aircrew came from?

Yes, each crew certainly knew where everybody came from. That'd be as far as it went.

19:30 I had occasion, well, I met most crews I suppose. I attended most briefings. I suppose there might have been one crew that went away that I didn't go to their briefing, but I had most to do

20:00 with the skipper and the navigator. The rest of the crews, the gunners and all the various others of the 11, they never came to a briefing. They were just part of the crew and they were out there in their tents or wherever. Mainly it was the top three personnel that came to the briefing. The skipper, the navigator and maybe

20:30 the bomb aimer. That's be the crew. Maybe the second pilot would come along, but that's all you'd meet. The others you'd never know.

The skippers and navigators would have been sourced from experienced

21:00 **units?**

That was the theory, yes. They'd all had experience somewhere else and they all had a pretty hefty lot of flying hours to their name and their logbook before they got picked to come to 200 Flight. They had done plenty of flying, not

21:30 necessarily fighting flying, or in other words operational flying, because we had the last two replacements we got for two that previously crashed, we got replacement crews. Both those skippers were skippers of transport aircraft. All they did was run transport

22:00 aircraft from Australia to the islands or wherever, but had a lot of flying to their credit. Probably up around 2,000 hours in their logbooks. So they were all experienced flyers. They were chosen.

22:30 **With the paratroopers that were going to be dropped, would they attend those briefings as well?**

Perhaps the leader would. He would mostly come along, but they generally had their own little…

23:00 after the crew were briefed, the military crew would then have a session with the aircraft people and I wouldn't attend that. I had nothing to do with military briefings as to what they were going to do on the ground when they got up there or any of that. That never concerned me. I didn't go to any of that.

23:30 They had their own program and they had to discuss with the skipper of the aircraft arrangements as to when they would drop, if they would drop, or what conditions would apply or what weather conditions would they declare it a 'no drop', in other words, some missions were aborted

24:00 because the leader, the head man of the paratroopers may determine that the wind was too strong to jump out and they'd put a drop off. The pilot wouldn't declare that, but the bloke that had to drop, he would, whilst he couldn't control the

24:30 whereabouts of the plane or anything, he did have a say in whether or not they would drop out. That was his prerogative.

At the time were you aware of where the main movement orders were coming from for the unit as a whole?

Yes. Most of

25:00 the requests that we got, for transport or bring people or take people or whatever it might be, came from advanced headquarters Z, which was somewhere on the islands. Wherever, somewhere nearest to wherever the particular activity was going to take place. They would make the request.

25:30 **What do you think was the key to the success of the special unit?**

I suppose I'd have to say one, the security we've been talking about. That might have been the number one

26:00 key to our success. It might have been the security. Number two would probably be training of the aircrews. They were highly trained in their particular work that they had to carry out. That would be part of the success of the unit I think too.

26:30 **Was the unit given much praise from those in command for your work at the time?**

I don't know about at the time, but

27:00 yes, periods later on when the occasion arose, yes, and we were grouped together somewhere, yes, we would get recognition from some of the higher ups for the work we carried out,

27:30 but I wouldn't say we got a lot of that and we didn't get a pat on the back immediately after something was accomplished, but somewhere along the track I think it didn't go unnoticed. We did get a certain amount of credit for what we did.

28:00 **Was there any extra pay for working in the special unit?**

No. We got no extra. I think the operatives, those that were actually dropped in behind the

28:30 lines and spent X number of days there, I think after the war they did get some recompense salary wise or pay wise or something for the work they'd done. But our aircrews and our ground crews in the air force, we got nothing extra

29:00 for any of that, no.

I've heard that sometimes the discipline can go a bit haywire, how did the base keep

29:30 **up a sense of discipline?**

I think perhaps the lack of any disciplinary action, or in other words at Leyburn we had…

30:00 in an air force camp there's a fellow called a WOD, he's the Warrant Office Disciplinary. He's the bloke that looks after the discipline of the unit. We never had one. At Leyburn you might say we had no discipline. We never went on parade, we might have had

30:30 somebody come to talk to us or a medical officer'd come around and wanted to give everybody a needle for tetanus or something. We might have to parade, it'd be something special that would be ordered and notice would be given and, "There'll be a parade next Thursday morning," or whatever it is, "and everybody'll get a needle." But other than

31:00 those sorts of things, we had no discipline. I think that was the secret that got us through. The lack of discipline. Nobody took offence at anything much and went along with it. No, there was no discipline. There was a notice-

31:30 board at the orderly room. Anybody that was wanted for anything, or anybody that had to go and do a particular job or anything, it went up on the noticeboard. Some saw it and somebody told them. I think it was the lack of discipline that let us achieve as much as we did. Sounds

32:00 silly, but it worked.

Explain why you think the lack of discipline was the key.

Can I explain it? No. I don't think I can. I'm thinking of

32:30 things that happened on the unit. We used to get a visiting mobile picture show that used to come around. We used to have like this thing behind me hung up with poles on the parade ground. They would be, they might stay two or three days and we might have

33:00 two or three pictures, one each night. They were the only time the parade ground was used. I'm sure that the fact that we weren't encumbered by rules and regulations that made the

33:30 unit such the place it was. It was a good unit to belong to. If I'd had a late night working till midnight or something or other with my signals, and I didn't want to get up the next morning, I didn't get up. The only reason I'd get up was if I had to go to breakfast.

34:00 Other than that I'd give breakfast a miss and get up for dinner. Provided somebody hadn't come looking for me to get me out of bed to do something else. It was that sort of discipline. I was my own boss and I did what had to be done. We worked that way, and worked well.

34:30 **It sounds like flexibility and understanding were more important.**

In other words with the fellows that worked down the strip on the aircraft, they knew damn well that the truck left at half past 8 or something, after breakfast, and if they didn't get on the truck they'd have to walk down. That was 2½ to 3 miles.

35:00 So you got up and got the truck. There was no discipline. They just wanted to go to work I think. I wasn't mixed up with it. I was sort of an entity on my own and I didn't have to participate in these other things, but yes, everything went very smoothly I thought.

Were there ever inspections of the base?

35:30 There may have been, but I don't think so. Not that I can remember.

Were there any high ranking visits?

There were.

36:00 There were high ranking visits from time to time, but I don't think they became involved with the personnel generally. They were there for a purpose. They were coming there to see the army officers or headquarter staff of the air force or whatever it might be. But they wouldn't be concerning

36:30 themselves with the behaviour of the troops I don't think. They might be coming there to look at the hygiene or these other incidental things that do crop up, but that's about it.

37:00 **Did you see newsreels and how did you keep abreast with what was going on in the world and the war?**

Yes, we might have seen Movie Time News along with the picture because it would be topical at the time I guess and would be shown. But how did we keep abreast of things?

37:30 A truck went to Toowoomba about three times a week and brought out provisions. They would bring out a heap of newspapers I suppose. They'd be put in the recreational hut and anybody who wanted to read on, read one. That was about our extent of outside

38:00 news. There was also those lucky enough to have a battery wireless. They'd get something. That was it.

What about mail from home?

Yes, we had a regular… we had a post office on the unit, which was a plywood shed

38:30 and a postal orderly who looked after things. He went in with the ration truck to Toowoomba three times a week and brought our mail out. He sorted it and officers' mail went over to the officers' mess and our mail went into boxes A, B, C, D outside the post office.

39:00 But we had a good mail service. Our address was 'So and so, Group 394' or something or other, 'Clifton'. Clifton was

39:30 the address of the mail head. That's where our mail went to and that's where the ration truck picked it up at Clifton. Group 370 I think it was, Clifton.

40:00 **Given your top secret work, what was the general camaraderie in the unit like?**

I guess it was like anywhere else, but mateship was pretty strong

40:30 and I think this is where it develops in these isolated places. Yes. Even to this day our mateship, where it's existed, is still very strong even 50 years on.

41:00 I guess camaraderie within the camp happened along the same lines.

Tape 7

00:38 **How important were the natives the Z Force were encountering in either helping or hindering what Z Force were trying to do?**

The natives played a very, very important part in the activities of Z. Particularly in Borneo where those

01:00 native tribesmen were armed and trained in jungle guerrilla warfare. Mind you, they knew a lot about it themselves because a lot of them, despite the fact that they were armed by the Australian Z people, they still carried their blowpipes

01:30 which was native to them, and they were very, very capable of picking off Japs, particularly where they were walking single file along a jungle path and they're ambushed to one side. They could pick off the last Jap in the line without

02:00 the rest of the party even knowing. Because they got them with the dart out of the blowpipe and they'd just drop. Being on the end of the line, the rest of the mob didn't know they'd fallen by the wayside. So yes, the natives were armed and lived with the Z operatives and one man might have up to

02:30 seven or eight natives in his group that he would train. They would work with him against the Japanese. This was well known. We had a plane load of Dutch guilders and at the end of the war those natives that were,

03:00 had earned payment for deeds well done were given these silver Dutch guilders. That was their payment for their efforts in helping the Australians. There would have been in total hundreds

03:30 of these natives that came to the party and undertook arms and training. They were with most of the Z operatives in Borneo. Most of them were Ibans, Iban tribe, I-B-A-N, or Kelabits.

04:00 They were traditionally headhunters prior to the war. So whilst the war still continued they continued to be head hunters. Many of them were responsible for Japanese heads I might say,

04:30 although I shouldn't say, I will say.

How much control would the operative have over the natives?

A fair amount, but

05:00 they did get out of control I think.

05:30 Whilst they were fairly well disciplined, the natives, there were times when they did their own thing because the occasion did arise when certain of the natives did show panic in a situation that got a bit,

06:00 finally got out of hand and the natives sometimes would go bush. They would take off in the jungle if the going got a bit hot. By in large they were controllable and did their job fairly well, but they were not much good

06:30 in a real stoush because despite all their training, they weren't that crash hot with a gun. They didn't shoot particularly well. While they might have been good with the blowpipe they weren't particularly good with a gun. Whilst they let off a lot of bullets, they didn't get a lot of result.

07:00 **How much responsibility did the operatives have for the behaviour of the natives under their control?**

They had sole control. In other words, they were responsible for their own natives' behaviour or whatever they did they were responsible. They were to

07:30 train the natives and if a native got out of hand they were held responsible. I don't think that happened very often. No, the natives were very good. They were very,

08:00 well, willing I suppose is the word, to do their best in most cases, except when the going got real tough and they took bush.

The head you saw on the pole, what were the implications for the Australian operatives that may have been

08:30 **leading those natives?**

Whilst I mentioned the head on the pole, it was left on the side of a jungle trail on a pole. Now, obviously it came from a Jap, but whether the operative that was in charge of those natives

09:00 knew about it or not, I don't know, but yes, it was on a pole and it was evident that something had gone wrong somewhere. Yes, a head on a pole. I can't add much more than that. This

09:30 behaviour, if we can call it that, happened, and I suppose it was instinct for the natives. I don't know that I can add anything further to that. These things happened.

10:00 **Did you hear about anything that may have been done by Australians rather than natives? Z Force or other wise.**

No, I can't say I know of anything being committed by an Australian operative

10:30 even in Z, but yes, I am aware that the natives in battle did use their parangs and liked to take home a head. I visited long houses in Borneo and

11:00 whilst the heads aren't recognisable as Japanese, they're certainly skulls. They're still hanging in the verandas of the long house even today in Borneo. There's a status symbol attached to having a head hanging on your veranda.

11:30 Other than that I don't know.

Do you want to talk, without naming anybody, about the court-martial that resulted from one of those?

No. I don't want to talk about it, but I know there was in fact a court-martial.

12:00 It was after the war had ceased that the court-martial took place, but I don't know any more than that.

Did Z Force encounter unfriendly natives?

Yes, there

12:30 would be occasions when the natives were pro Japanese. They were on, particularly around the foreshore areas of Borneo. The natives were on the side of the Japanese, they had to be to safeguard their own existence. Particularly in those areas where it was hard to recruit natives to

13:00 go on the side of the Allies. It was mainly the inland tribesmen that the Allies were able to train and make use of. There were plenty of native peoples around the edges of the shoreline that paid

13:30 tribute to the Japanese because they were under their thumb.

What did you hear or understand about how much harder that made Z Force's work?

I'm not in a position to say whether it made it any harder or it didn't. The Z operatives

14:00 were always..., it was our policy that they be dropped inland and that they actually only had dealings with those inland tribesmen. Those tribesmen hadn't had a lot to do with the Japanese because there were very few Japanese ventured

14:30 into the interior. When they did it was only to confiscate rice crops or food stuffs that the Japanese used to feed their own troops. So they didn't have too much time for the Japanese. He was their enemy. So the Australian, when he came in and made his presence known

15:00 was a friend rather than an enemy. And so they enlisted the help of the tribesmen inland.

You often read that a lot of the campaigns later in the war in the Pacific had a sense

15:30 **of futility because the Japanese were often already beaten. Was there a sense of that with Z Force? Maybe there were times lives were lost when they at times didn't need to be?**

It's hard for me to comment on that.

16:00 I wasn't personally involved with natives in any of those lands and no, I'm not in a position to gauge a feeling one way or the other.

16:30 No. I'll bow out of that question because I don't know.

You hear people say, "What was the point of Tarakan?" I wonder if it was the same with Z Force.

17:00 No, I don't think so. I think whatever Z did was done with a purpose and accomplished.

During and after the war, how hard was it for Z Force to get the recognition

17:30 **it deserved, given it was secret?**

The recognition it deserves. Well, it was slow in forthcoming. I won't say that Z has been denied the recognition it deserves, but

18:00 it was a long while after the conflict had ended that Z started to get the recognition for the deeds they accomplished during the war. Yes, it's forthcoming now, but it was a long time. Many books and even

18:30 videos now disclose some of the deeds that were done by Z, but only a long while after the event. It was nearly 1982 I think when they lifted

19:00 the security ban on records of Z's activities.

Did the secrecy surrounding it affect how you thought about your contribution to the war, not having the recognition maybe that other forces

19:30 **got?**

Hard to give a definite answer. I'm thinking of Vietnam and Korea and the lack of recognition

20:00 that was given to those servicemen for their efforts overseas. I guess to some extent Z was in the same boat for a long, long time, but eventually, as has happened with the Vietnam situation, they are now getting their due

20:30 recognition. Z, I hope, is now renowned for the works they did, and I'm sure they are.

When did you hear the war was over?

21:00 I recall that news came around the camp at Leyburn that the war in the Pacific had ended because we were given

21:30 leave that day and it was announced that trucks would be leaving to take us into Toowoomba to attend some gathering in the streets that the Toowoomba Council were putting on, and that there would be a march of ex servicemen through the streets and that

22:00 we would be feted in some way by maybe free beers and tea that night, or something. There was some attraction. However, a lot of us went into Toowoomba and we did partake of those activities in the main street. Yes, there was, I remember, there were lots of girls

22:30 and lots of activity all day long in the streets of Toowoomba. That was my recollection of the end of the war. Can't think of anything else.

What was your reaction?

23:00 "We're all going home. Whether it be tomorrow, I don't know, but we'll all be going home." I suppose that was the reaction of all of us, yes.

Did you have plans for the future at that stage?

Yes, I did.

23:30 When the war had ended, not long, but there was a party of surveyors were working towards our camp doing some surveys of the road from Toowoomba through to I think Goondiwindi.

24:00 This fellow had the contract of doing part of that work anyhow, and he was gradually getting closer. Every time we went to town or went to Toowoomba he was getting closer to the camp. He was making fair progress, probably half a mile or a mile a day. One day

24:30 I was so interested that I got them to drop me off and I said, "You pick me up on the way back. I'll go over and talk to these fellows." I spent the day with this surveyor and I was so impressed that back in those days, 1945, the bloke that led this party, I thought, "He's a thorough gentleman." He

25:00 had leather leggings on and he wore a collar and tie and his men called him "Sir." "Will I do this, sir?" and "Will I do that, sir?" I thought, "I didn't think this sort of thing went on." He had a little calculating machine and he was sketching field notes in the book and looking through this

25:30 magnificent little instrument he had called a theodolite. After talking with him for quite some time he explained to me what he was doing and how a plan would be drawn of this road and it would define the road's boundaries and the boundaries of the properties adjoining it, all the way through. So I thought, "Gee, this

26:00 fellow, he's pretty brainy this fellow, and he's well respected. I think I like the work he's doing and it's a bit like navigation," what I wanted to do in my earlier days. As he got closer to the camp I invited him to come and share some of the activities we had at the camp because there was an old vacant shed not far from where my

26:30 tent was and I said, "This would be the place, why don't you go and use it? We've got showers. They're only cold water, but they're good showers. There's a light on in there until 10 o'clock at night." He said, "I've got to do a lot of night calculations." So he eventually came and stayed with us. I spent a lot of time

27:00 down with him until he got beyond our camp where it became too far to come back. They were camping. So I suppose for a period of some weeks I had the company of this surveyor fellow. I became very intrigued with his work and what he was doing and I thought, "I think that's what

27:30 I want to do. It's a good outdoor job, he's got a motorcar, he's got men working for him, he's got all these tools and blokes chopping down trees," and I thought, "That's what I want." So after the war when I'd finally got my leaving certificate I applied to become a surveyor. I went to Sydney University

for some time, until I finally

28:00 became a surveyor. That's what started me off in a lifetime career.

When you first left Leyburn and the air force, what did you miss about service life?

I suppose

28:30 we did miss a certain section of the camaraderie we were used to having. It was nice to be home. I don't know, I went back to a rather boring job and I didn't exactly appreciate my

29:00 work, but I suppose there were things we missed. The fact that we were being clothed, uniforms were down at the clothing store, all you had to have was a good excuse for why you wanted something new. It was a case of coupons and

29:30 going to buy a suit and paying for it at the store. So I guess it did have it's advantages being in the services. When you wanted to see a doctor you went down to the sick quarters. Now you had to go to the doctor and then put your hand in the pocket. So I suppose there were

30:00 certain things that appealed, but I think they were pretty short-lived. We were glad to be home again and part of the community.

How did being in service during the war change or develop you? You went in as quite a young man.

30:30 I'd have to say it did. Prior to enlistment I was a telegram boy and then a postman at Penrith and that looked like my future. When I came out from 2½ years' service in the war I had other ideas and they were much brighter and

31:00 bigger than staying in the post office for the rest of my life and I pursued them and I think it was a wise decision. So I did benefit in my life from being in the services.

31:30 **Having been in the service from such a young age, how did you think you were contributing to helping the war effort at the time?**

32:00 I don't know that I placed any importance on my own personal contribution. It just looked the same as anybody else's. We all had a part to play and I thought I played mine. I can't

32:30 say that there was any impressionable point about it that sticks to my mind at the moment. We'd won the war and I thought, "Yes, we'd done a good job but I don't know whether I played any part in it," but there it was,

33:00 we'd won.

Reflecting back over your service, is there a moment that stands out as the proudest time?

There must be.

33:30 It's difficult to pinpoint it. Yes, I felt very proud when I was called up for an interview during the services,

34:00 my service career, and I was called in to MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane and I went up to that famous room of his on the 7th floor or wherever it was in the AMP building, and they interviewed me to do a particular job, which they didn't elucidate too well. I didn't know what it was going to happen to me, except that it seemed to be very

34:30 important and I was the man they needed. I sort of felt proud when I came out of there, but all that meant was that they wanted me for the particular job I carried out in Z. I did feel proud then. I thought, "Well, not too many get called in here."

35:00 **How did you feel it was shown that your work was appreciated?**

All I can say; was it? I did my best.

35:30 It was all over before I knew too much about it. It only lasted for less than 12 months, the real part with Z, I suppose I was proud of it. Yes. I'm proud of it now that I'm a member of Z Force Association

36:00 and mix with a lot of great men. Nothing makes me more proud than attending reunions and luncheons and one thing and another with those old comrades. They're falling by the wayside now. We're getting fewer in numbers.

36:30 **It must be a special feeling being part of a group that is or was such an elite force.**

Yes. Like I've said several times, I was proud to be part of it.

37:00 **Is there anything that you want to say that you haven't? Anything we haven't covered?**

No, I want to compliment you on what you have done. Me, being chosen to give my impressions of what I did during the war,

37:30 I'm proud of that too mind you, and I want to thank you for the job you've done and for DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] for putting such a thing together as this, whatever its official name is, Australians At War or something and I commend them for it because I think these sorts of things are due to be

38:00 recorded somewhere along the line for future generations. However, only my point of view.

Why is it important to remember the things you've told us today?

Because when we're gone, they're forgotten; whether we're not going to make another

38:30 Gallipoli thing and they won't be remembered, they'll be forgotten. I'd like to think that they were remembered. Thank you again.

Are there any lessons you'd like future generations to take away from your experience and the experience of Z Force in the war?

39:00 Well, if they wish to believe me, they can. I've done the best I can to relate the part I played. Insignificant I thought it was, but apparently it has some significance and that may go on record.

39:30 I hope people enjoy the thought that their forebears fought the good fight for them. I hope that's, we haven't got long to live, I guess, and my history will be forgotten when I go other than

40:00 what you've done to preserve some of it today.

Thank you for today.

And I thank you both, Isabel and Kathy [interviewers].