Australians at War Film Archive

Maurice Anderson (Maurie) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 **Where were you born?**

In Melbourne, here, yes on the 11th of November believe it or not 1936, yeah.

So everyone had a moment's silence for your birthday?

Well, yeah they've regretted it ever since. Yes, no it's a day I can't forget, because it's Remembrance Day.

What part of Melbourne were you born, or grew up?

01:00 In Prahran, yeah.

And early schooling days?

My earliest recollection I think, my Dad had a home in Newport. I think I went to the Newport State School. Well they didn't have kinder and those sort of thing those days, you just start off in the bubs as they call it at the school.

Were any of your family

01:30 **in active service in the Second World War?**

Oh, yes, yeah I've got a brother, an older brother and he's seven years older than me. He's still alive, going very well, he did a very brave thing I thought, he went and joined the merchant navy as a radio operator. He was always keen on that side of things. And I thought he was brave, he just wasn't a good swimmer. I thought, "Well merchant ships are pretty much a target for a lot of things", in fact

02:00 later on we'll talk about recollection merchant ships around the Australian coast here.

How old were you when the war was declared?

I was twelve, going on thirteen. I think it was the 3rd of September 1939, we formally went to war, by proclamation, and two months later I turned thirteen.

02:30 **What did you imagine the war meant?**

I think Australia had seen the war coming, there's no doubt, it wasn't a surprise. Hitler had been, you know, rampaging around Europe, and that was full of, always on the radio, we didn't have television in those days. Radio news, everybody listened to the seven o'clock news on the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] to get the world events, and occasionally if you went to the pictures, there'd be a Cinesound or a

03:00 "March of Time" Program from America, showing the events in Europe as they were unfolding, and everybody were saying, "Well, eventually there's going to be a war". We know all about the appeasement of 1938 over at Czechoslovakia where the Prime Minister of England said he'd have peace in our time, but that was a piece of paper that they tore up in twelve months, invaded Poland, and the war was on. Everybody

03:30 anticipated it.

What did your parents make of the situation?

They weren't too happy about it, you see, my mother was English. She'd lost her first husband in the First World War. She married my father in England at the end of the Second World War. And he'd been overseas since 1914. So, you know,

04:00 there was a little bit of apprehension. Here we were twenty years after the end of one war, and we're off again into another one. And it didn't go down well. There was a lot of stunned silence in the community

at large I think.

So you would have been just on enlistment age when the war finished?

Yeah, yeah well the war finished very suddenly of course. They had a system with the army,

04:30 particularly with the Australian Imperial Forces, 2nd AIF, if you'd served five years, including two years overseas, you had points up and you were discharged. You'd done your bit. In addition of course, food production was pretty critical. So anybody that had farming experience would have been discharged from the army. And there was still this requirement to send forces forward, so they were recruiting right up to the

05:00 end of the war, and in fact after the end of the war. I can deal with that later on when we'll talk specifically about Japan.

How did you spent the war years then? You would have been in high school, I suppose?

I was just finishing state school in the eighth grade. In those days you went up to the eighth grade and then went off to either high school or work. And I went off then for two years at high school. And whilst I was

05:30 there of course, you would have seen some of the older buys didn't turn up, they'd gone and enlisted. Except we're now talking coming up to 1941, and 41, the end of '41 Japan came into the war and things started to look a bit grim.

Did you know much about the Japanese?

Very little. Anybody in Australia who had any detailed knowledge about the Japanese would have been a rarity. We

06:00 didn't have, apart from trade, selling wool and buying brummy toys and that sort of thing from them, and selling them scrap iron, we didn't have much contact with Japan at all.

So in the years between high school and joining up, how did you spend your time?

Well, by the time I'd decided that I'd had enough school, I'd just turned fifteen,

06:30 because I mentioned the Japanese were in the war, and things were starting to look a bit grim, so there was all sorts of changes took place in Australia. There was a thing called Manpowers brought in. People were depending on their skills or attributes were put to certain jobs. And I was in the unallotted stage, so off I went, I think I worked for the Wool Australian, no the Victorian

07:00 Wool Commission. That was just an organiser junior clerk, very junior in the place, running messages, mailing things and doing all sorts of odd jobs. But a lot of women came into the work force then, that just didn't exist before. And in fact it was really amazing, you had women driving steam trains that's a fact. Women driving trains, women driving in heavy industry, women working in furnaces and foundries

07:30 and all sorts of places. The employment of women was on a scale here that I don't think anybody had every envisaged, but it, to their credit it was amazing the way a lot of them adapted. And they certainly kept the home fires burning. We also had a thing called the Land Army. A lot of girls went into that just to work on the farms, because there was a shortage of farm labour.

Did you get Manpowered at any stage?

08:00 Yeah. When I was about sixteen, my brother didn't finish his training as a radio operator, and he went off very quickly, perhaps into a ship in Western Australia, away he went. Now everybody had an identity card with date of birth and all that kind of thing on it. I got hold of my brother's and I sort of changed things around a little bit. Yeah, and I went up and tried to enlist.

08:30 Well, I got caught. And because I had tampered with the ID [identification] card and I was hauled into the court in Balaclava, I think it was St Kilda Petty Sessions or something, and I remember that I was fined five pounds and sixpence in costs. And the next thing I know I got a letter from Manpower you know, "You are now going to work for so and so".

So you have been in the docks?

Well, yeah, it was a formal thing, you just appeared, yeah,

09:00 "You're so and so, nod your head, right, out". No lawyers or anything. It wasn't a great drama or anything, it was all over in ten to fifteen minutes. Anyway, I was again redirected through the Manpower, back into the wool trade, because that's where I'd been trained. I was then put in

09:30 as a junior clerk I think in the storage section or something like that. And I served up my time there. Also round about that time, at sixteen, the air force was very short of personnel, and they started a thing called the Air Training Corps. I think it still runs today, or they call them Air Cadets, I'm not sure. They started one in Brighton, I lived in Elsternwick at the time

10:00 there's one start up in Brighton, so down we trotted to, to there, and I signed up for the Air Training

Corps. And we used to trot up Saturday afternoons and do our drill, just lectures and what not. But we all had to do a medical. And strangely enough, when I fronted up for the medical, they found out that I'm what they call "colour defective", some people call it "colour blind", you just don't discern certain colours when they're all mixed

10:30 together. And that put me out of flying. So I thought, "Ah well, I'll just sweat it out until my number comes up and I go into the army".

So you were pretty keen by the sounds of it.

Well everybody was. Everybody was. I mean I was a fairly young school pupil for my age, you know, for what I was doing, most were a year older than me. And I was seeing people going off all the time, and fellows

11:00 I'd been to school with were into the services. And this was an incentive, I suppose, everybody else wanted to be in it the same as, even people I knew part time. I worked part time at one stage when I was at school at the local market, delivering groceries for a greengrocer that had a little store there, my job was, not a green grocer a grocer, was to help him weigh

11:30 up things and that sort of thing. In those days there was no packaged butter, you made everything up with butter patch, a great block of it, and weighed up all the sugar. Everything was weighed up. And that was part of my job. And then hop on the bike with a box balanced on the handle bars and take Mrs Jones' order down to such and such an address. And that went on, and that's when I came into contact with the rationing side of things, because about 1942 on, rationing was introduced.

12:00 Not severe. Not as straight as it was in say England I suppose it was, but we did have rations. And I think the reason for the rationing, not only did our army sort of expand dramatically with the flux of the Nation, not National Services it was called then, Universal Trainees, and they were brought in as conscripts. We had an expansion in our army, our services

12:30 The Americans had come out here. And we were providing food for them as well. So there was a need to have some sort of rationing. Now from memory, and I'm cracking a bit here, but I know that tea was rationed, coffee was rationed, although there weren't too many people drank coffee in those days. Butter was rationed, bacon was rationed, eggs were rationed, and how did I know that eggs were rationed?

13:00 A friend of mine, he had a big pigeon lock, and every now and then his mum would give me a dozen pigeon eggs to take home, so that Mum could make a sponge or something.

How big is a pigeon egg?

Oh, about the half the size of an ordinary or bantam egg. Not very big, but still, they were used for cooking. And in fact his people I know, used to collect a lot of them and send them up to the local cake shop.

We're probably wasting a huge resource these

13:30 **days with all our museum pigeons.**

We used to get what was called a squab and that was a nice plump young pigeon to eat. And it's beautiful I can guarantee you that. Pigeons, nothing wrong with pigeons, absolutely beautiful.

A bit greasy to pluck on though?

No, no, they were easy, they're very easy to clean and prepare. You'd get a thing about that size and that's enough to get a taste of a meal out of it.

14:00 Of course rabbiting was still on. Anybody that could get out to go rabbiting did so, and rabbit was a pretty popular sort of meal in those days. Right from the Depression years.

How far out from the suburbs would you need to go to go rabbiting?

Well, let's say, I was living in Elsternwick here, which was about six or seven miles from the centre of the city. It those days, if I could peddle my bike one hour

14:30 and I'd be out in the rabbiting country all around what is now the south eastern suburbs. No trouble. And it wasn't hard to borrow a P Rifle, as we called it, a 22, the ammunition was hard to come by.

What ammo did you use for a P Rifle?

22s, little 22s.

Enough to take somebody out if you were not careful?

Oh, you had to be careful with them. Mainly they were single shots, and there were no repeaters or

15:00 anything people hadn't repeater weapons. In fact I think repeater weapons might have been banned then. We were all lectured on how to handle these things safely, and make sure that we didn't shoot

ourselves in the foot. All those things were supplements in addition to that of course, people were growing their own vegetables. Tried to get as much as they could.

It's a bit sad that councils won't let you keep chucks anymore.

Well, I

15:30 think so. I think so too. Anybody that had a bit of spare room in the back yard could knock up a pen no trouble. You only needed about half a dozen to keep the family virtually going in eggs for the week. Meats were again, they were very strictly rationed. If you got friendly with the butcher, which we were because I was, where I worked in the market was a butcher, and we bought all of our

16:00 meats and things from him. And they were still producing their own sausages, God knows what they out in them. I mean anything that was dropped in the saw dust might have ended up in the sausage, but you didn't worry about that. Bread and all those things, every now and then you'd be able to buy from him half a dozen sausages. All those things was a way of eating what was available and we weren't badly

16:30 off I don't think. Clothing was rationed too. Obviously material was wanted for uniforms, all material, particularly wool, so you had a book of coupons, and if you wanted a suit you might have to save up for eighteen months to two years to get enough coupons to go and even think about buying a suit.

Do you remember the Austerity Suit?

Yeah, they were brought in, they were cut a bit short

17:00 across the back, "Bum freezers" I think they call them. There was no great style in them, but that was about all that was available.

I understand that Robert Menzies abhorred the idea of the "Austerity Suits".

Yeah well, that was brought in by a fellow named J.J. Desmond. Jack Desmond. He was a minister and responsible for the Austerity Suits.

The minister against fashion?

Well, they even had shirts with this no tail to the shirts,

17:30 they were just tucked into the top of the trousers and that was it, so to save cotton. 'Cause all the cotton was imported see, we didn't have cotton growing in those days, not in Australia. Clothing was rationed, but still people got by, it was amazing. You don't see it these days, but people would get around with a pullover and a big patch on there, people got hold of leather and made leather patches for elbows that had worn through on jackets and sweaters

18:00 and all sorts of things.

How long had Manpower keep you tied down to a job?

Well, they kept me there until enlistment in November 1944. And the boss that I was working for at the Wool Commission, he said to me, he said, "Look, if you want to, I'll put in a claim to have you retained". I said, "No, that's not what I want, I want to go into the services".

18:30 So I got a release as they call it. He signed a release form and I had to take that up when I went to enlist.

So your boss thought there was a chance that you might not like to go overseas and fight.

Oh yeah, I think all bosses offered that option because if he lost me, he had to try and get somebody else from somewhere to take on the job.

19:00 As it worked out, I duly went down, a bit of opposition from my father. He didn't like the idea of me going into the AIF. But it was simple, I think I said to him I think I said to him on the day, "Look if you don't sign the papers, you know what I'll do don't you? I'll go and sign them myself". So he finally gave in and off I went.

At that stage, eighteen was old enough to sign yourself, was it?

Oh yes, the navy would take you in at seventeen and

19:30 a half, if you wanted to join the navy. Eighteen to join the army or the air force.

I think a few years earlier it had been twenty-one years old.

Well they were the Universal Trainees. You had to be twenty one to be called up in those days. In fact my brother was scooped in initially at the start of the war and they started that he was in the army and he came out of the army to do this radio operator course because they were desperate for people for the merchant navy.

20:00 **So you finally got in?**

Yup. What a shock to the system.

Was it?

Oh, no. No.

Where did they send you for training?

I started out at Cowra in New South Wales.

Before or after the restraint?

We got there a bit after. They broke out on the 5th of August ‘44, and we got there November ‘44. Most of them had been moved.

20:30 Something moving?

Still talking about the Cowra Breakout?

Yes, very much so. Everybody was still on alerts around there. We had what would it be? Just before Christmas, about a week before Christmas, there was another fire up in the, in the

21:00 Japanese compound and what was left of them up there. One of the huts, whether they fired it up, or whether it caught fire nobody seemed to know, but anyway, because the blaze was on, we were hauled out in the middle of the night. We’d just been issued with a rifle about two days before. Didn’t know which end you’d point it. Given a bayonet and shown how you put it on the end and told to go over the road and stand around the hospital, they had a big hospital there, a camp hospital that was all illuminated. And we had to

21:30 stand virtually about every two or three yards round the yard of the hospital. And stay there until dawn. Until they sorted out what was going on up the Japanese camp. But that was a false alarm. Then the fire was real, but nothing eventuated at the scale that they’d had at the Break Out. That was the biggest mass break out in history anywhere in the world

22:00 **How long were you in training before the war ended?**

I’d say, we went up to Cowra in November and came down after four months we were given a week’s leave, came back to Melbourne. We didn’t go back to Cowra, because the unit I was moving over to for training had been relocated

22:30 to Bathurst in New South Wales. So we went up to Bathurst and joined the infantry training unit up there after about two, two and a half months I was then posted to Singleton in New South Wales. And these were what they called holding battalions because they were full of trips going one way or the other. The young fellows coming up had to stay in the holding battalion

23:00 until one month before they were nineteen. Then they could go and do jungle training and be shot off to the islands as reinforcements.

Interesting that you were trained in New South Wales and not Victoria.

Well Victoria at that stage I think had the Armoured Division back over there. That was a fairly big organisation. They would have probably taken up most of the training facilities. Places like Mt Martha, which is just down the road here, had a big military camp there

23:30 that was being trained, used for training signallers. So it was a matter of facilities I think. Plenty of facilities in New South Wales, big, big camps. Ingleburn, Singleton, the air force had big stations in Tamworth, Dubbo, Tocumwal, Wagga, all around that area. The navy of course, they had their own places all around the coast

24:00 but, no it was a steady movement forward actually.

So you must have ended up in Singleton around about the middle of ‘45?

Yeah, yeah, be about April, May ‘45, yes.

And what sort of training did they put you through there?

It was rather interesting because we all anticipated

24:30 that we would be going to the islands as reinforcements for units. But some of the training we were doing, we used to talk about this, they had an old township, and we’d march out here. And we’d spend a couple of days doing what they call street and village fighting. Learning how to break through walls, blow through walls, how to work your way around houses and what not. That’s funny, there are not many houses like these

25:00 up in the islands. What’s going on? And then we did training at tents at one stage. I’d dig trenches and you’d be in these trenches and the tanks would come up from behind, and everybody had to lay down, the tanks would rumble over the top and keep going. And it was all live firing. Live ammunition all the way. And we were all a bit puzzled about this. But later on I found that

25:30 there was a plan for the invasion of Japan. And that was to start in November of 1945. Operation Olympic. Now, the Australians were to take part in the second phase of that which would have been about January or February of '46 in the actual invasion of Japan itself. And I think we were being trained up for operations

26:00 in Japan. That's the only conclusion I can come to.

Unless they were going to send you over to Germany, but there was no need for that.

That was over. That was over in 1945, May '45. No that's the conclusion I've sort of come to having thought about it.

So I'm presuming all this was cut a bit short for you?

Well, everything was cut short when they dropped that bomb.

26:30 The war stopped like that over night. Bang. The bomb went down, and four or five days later they agreed to a peace.

Where were you when that happened?

I was at Singleton. I'd just come back to the unit, that's right. I'd been on a training exercise. I'd had a fall off the back of a truck. The truck was there, it was raining like hell and we were trying to unload the meals in big steel hot boxes. And they were put down and I

27:00 had to get up and get a bag of mail or something and I slipped on the tail gate and fell and landed on a hot-box right across my back. And that put me into camp hospital. They couldn't do the sort of treatment that was wanted there, heat treatment and physio and that sort of thing. So they sent me down to Concord in Sydney, I served three weeks there getting massage and what not. Then I went out to

27:30 Ingleburn on what they call a convalescent depot. And that was a misnomer. To prove you were fit to get out of the convalescent depot you had to survive a twenty mile route march. Everybody saddled up and away you went. The food was crook; everything was crook about the convalescent depot. Everybody was trying like hell to get out of the place. And eventually we managed it. I remember my mate, he'd been in having stomach trouble, and he and I met

28:00 up there at the con [convalescent] depot, and he'd just got through the twenty miler to get out of the place and get back to our unit. So back we went to Singleton. And the war finished just like that. Bang. Next thing we knew.

Did the men celebrate?

Not really. Not really. Everybody was glad it was over. There wasn't much to celebrate with. We had a wet canteen. You could go down there and have a

28:30 mug of warm beer. Take an enamel pannikin down and drink warm beer, it wasn't my caper at that stage, I didn't drink. And you didn't get paid a great deal. You could only splurge once a fortnight.

How would you describe the atmosphere then of VJ [Victory over Japan] Day in Sydney?

Well there were, you know we had parades in the local town and those sort of things. Part of the celebration, I suppose

29:00 Yeah, everybody was I suppose glad the war was over. I mean anybody that's not glad the war is over there's something wrong with them. They need to be head shrinked.

True, but here you were, having done nearly eight months of training and no war to go to.

Well, you felt a bit frustrated I suppose. But I don't recall that I was at all enthusiastic about service life as far as you could be. Then we were from there of course we were given not a bad job, we were

29:30 posted up to Newcastle. There were a couple of forts up at Newcastle, one was Fort Wallace, that was on the North side of the Hunter River. We were put into there. And each day they'd take us out around the cliffs and the hills, sand dunes. And what they'd done there, they'd built concrete pill boxes and put a lot of barbed wire along the beach just in case there was any landing. And our job was to pull it

30:00 all down. So we spent a couple of days, we worked our way right up to what's now called Port Stevens the holiday resort. It was then known as just Nelson's Bay to us. We went out to a camp right out at the point, at a place called Tomaree. Tomaree is now an asylum for the criminally insane, I'm not sure that we weren't the first inmates.

30:30 We had a little bit of a time there, and then back to our unit and posted back down to Melbourne for redeployment tin Victoria.

Were they going to demob [demobilise] you?

No you see, the way that the army worked the discharge system, and it was a fairly equal system. It'd

depend on how many months you had been in the service, how many

31:00 months you'd been overseas, that sort of thing. You got so many points for each month and an extra point for overseas service etc. If you were a married man with family, you had extra points again. And you were discharged according to your points coming up. Now we would have been well down the scale of points. There wasn't much hope, it looked as if though we were being shuffled around everywhere that they wanted a bit of labour, and in fact that's what happened here when I got to Melbourne, I was put at Royal Park in what they called

31:30 a works company, And every day we'd send truckloads down to the wharfs, unloading cargo, and cause being soldiers at six bob a day we got the dirty jobs, down in what they called the coal works, actually shovelling coal all day getting it out of ships and onto conveyer belts and carted away. I was still there of course when they called for the volunteers to go to Japan in January of 46.

32:00 **Now was that something that you looked upon as a bit of an escape from the drudgery?**

Yeah, well you know here was a chance to do what you'd been trained to do. Fair dinkum, well we called it, fair dinkum soldiering, not the Labour Corps.

Well it's a tricky situation if you'd joined up because you wanted to fight the war and the war had finished and you're stuck.

Yeah, well that's something that you've got no control over. Now the army's a pretty good system I suppose. Once you signed the

32:30 piece of paper and you're in, you go where you're told and you do what you're told.

Like marriage?

Well if you died of course you could dig into all sorts of trouble.

When and how did you get to Japan?

This is starts off the story of the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force]. From the divisions that were in the islands, that was the 7th Division at Balikpapan, the 9th Division

33:00 at Tarakan and the 3rd, 5th and 11th Division in Bougainville and the 6th Division, they called for volunteers to go to Japan for the occupation force. They were to be the initial people. Now, they were all concentrated at the island of Morotai. And they trained pretty hard, but time dragged on and it looked like they weren't going to be moved so they had a little thing called a Jack-Up. The troupes actually

33:30 paraded themselves without their officers, and demanded that either they're sent to Japan, or be sent home for discharge. The army doesn't like to talk about that, but it took place, it happened. What had happened of course, they then had to give those that were there the option of either, train of thought.

The Jack-Up?

Yeah, well they'd had the Jack-Up and then they decided they'd give them the option then of saying well, "Do you

34:00 still wish to go to Japan or do you want to go home?" And quite a lot nominated to come home. You couldn't blame them. They were being messed about. Now that left a hell of a shortfall with the numbers that they wanted to go to Japan, it was a fairly big organisation they were sending up. So the next thing, on the notice board of every unit in Australia, came a notice, "Volunteer for Service in Japan". Two years, yeah this'll do

34:30 me. Still young enough to get around and enjoy it. I'll see somewhere and I'll still be doing more realistic soldiering that I'm doing now. So I put my name down and very short space of time I was paraded at the orderly room, "Go home and get you kit, come back here". We marched out to the trains at depot at Royal Park, onto a train and back up to dear old Bathurst. Now that was a joy

35:00 to be on hold because they'd closed the Bathurst camp down. The huts were still there, but nothing else was. There was no cooks, no cook houses no. We actually pulled stoves off the trucks in their crates, kicked the timber off and used the timber to fire up the stoves underneath the bore water and try and get a meal or a cup of tea. But we survived. There were fellows walking around with bayonets sticking rabbits out of borrows.

35:30 I remember one poor farmer he had a nice crop of watermelon, and they disappeared overnight. The troops were that darn hungry, it wasn't anything done. Anyway gradually they got order out of chaos and we were completely refitted. We saw gear we never saw before in our lives in the army. I remember everybody was issued with a beautiful pair of leather gauntlet gloves that came right back there, it was oh heavens. What are these

36:00 for? Anyway they gave it to us. More uniforms that we ever had.

What's a gauntlet glove made out of?

Leather, complete leather. Actually the dispatch rider used to use it on the bicycle, that sort of thing.

But we found out they were useful, particularly when it became cold in Japan.

How long did you spend at Bathurst?

We arrived there in late January early Feb, I think

36:30 and I was on a ship to Japan the first week of , second week of March. Second week of March, so it was fairly quick, just marched us one day out of the camp on the trucks. Train went straight through into Sydney, pulled up on the wharf and there was a troop ship. And you got off, you lined up and they gave you a number to put in the front of your hat, and you marched

37:00 up on the gangplank onto the troop ship, and as soon as everybody was onboard away she went. Rather adventurous trip to Japan. It was supposed to be twelve days, it took one month, because as we headed north from Sydney, we got up to Finschhafen, Langemak Bay. I think we took on water or something there or dropped cargo off, anyway we were heading north and a

37:30 typhoon was rampaging round the Pacific. It had hit Hawaii and caused massive damage. It was the same typhoon that featured in that film with Captain Queeg, trying to figure the name of the film [The Caine Mutiny]. Anyway this typhoon kept on moving and of course because that was moving, we were moving too

38:00 We'd go out to the east of the Pacific and we come back and try to get Japan again, up. Twice we went into Guam, which was an American base. And the second time we went in, we were sailing in as the American fleet were sailing out. And the, "Oh, this is going to be good". And then we managed to do a bit of weathering the storm there and then we headed out again. But it did take us a month to get to Japan. And that was quite a journey because

38:30 the food on board was starting to run out, you know. You'd go down for a meal as they call it and you might get a boiled potato and a spoon full of, "cowboy's breakfast", some yippy beans, and that was it.

How many on board?

I reckon we would have had about one thousand five hundred on board all together, army and air force. We finally got in and then after that of course there was other troop ships that left later than us,

39:00 but they arrived shortly after us in Japan on I remember the Manoora and the Kanimbla. The Westralia, they all came up with more troops on board, so over the period April, May, June, by the middle of June, the force of Australians in Japan had gone from about nine thousand at the outside to about sixteen thousand five hundred, you know they really poured people in.

Tape 2

00:32 **Just talk about getting to Japan and where you were based.**

Oh yeah, the port of Japan that we used for the occupation, that's the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, was Kure. That had been the Japanese naval base and shipyards. Huge complex all very hush-hush and very

01:00 secret, but it had all been flattened by bombing. Complete and utter desolation. Down around the dock area, my guess to it would be they were building, so badly burned and bombed that the collapsed debris would have been about seven storeys high. Concrete, steel, everything, all sorts of things, shops all completely blasted.

You you're saying that even after it was bombed it was still about

01:30 **seven storeys high, the rubble?**

The rubble, yeah. The docks complex was huge, huge building. It was all so secret, in fact the Japanese alongside the railway line had build high wooden walls right the way along so anybody travelling on train couldn't poke a camera out the window and take photos of their naval base.

So it had been in preparation a long time?

Oh yeah, forty years they were really

02:00 under military's rule and gearing up towards a war, but no the township of Kure itself was devastated, it was very little there. The naval academy, which was on an island in the harbour, called Etajima, was the Japanese naval academy. That'd survived. That hadn't been bombed to any great effect. So at least they had some

02:30 buildings in which to house troops. But we were sent down towards Hiroshima at the outskirts of Hiroshima to a place called Kotaishi [?]. And the reinforcement in the main assemble there and allocated to various units. The unit I drew was an infantry battalion which was located about eighty miles north up the coast at a place called Fujiyama [?] Fujiyama had been

03:00 an industrial complex during the war that had been flattened, but fortunately we were at an old Japanese naval sea plane base, about five or six miles out of the township itself, right on the coast. When I say fortunately, one thing about it, it was a cleaner area than most places in Japan or hygienically better prepared in that

03:30 we weren't surrounded by masses of paddy fields. And the old buildings there, although some had been burned and whatnot, was still intact and we were able to use those for accommodation until new barracks could be built. But there wasn't any rest for the wicked. We were no sooner there than we did about a fourteen day indoctrination course for the battalion, you know just to make sure

04:00 everybody was up to a certain standard of training and drill. And then we're into our employment roles. The first job I can recalls was sorting Koreans. Korea of course had been under Japanese domination for a long time. Now Korea had been freed, or South Korea was freed, those

04:30 Koreans who wanted to go home were being repatriated. Now the Koreans and the Japanese don't like one another. There's no doubt about that. What the animosity is I don't know, what its history is I don't know. Shintoism of course was strong in Japan, where as Buddhism was strong through the others, and whether there was a clash of religions and what not, but we had to put escorts on these trains taking these families

05:00 down to the southern port of Shimonoseki where they were put on the boats and sent back to Korea. The Americans would bring the train down, we'd swap over at Fujiyama station, they'd go out to our camp and have a meal and a rest and then go back and we'd go on with the, with the people.

Were you among the first units to be sent to Japan?

I was in the first reinforcement

05:30 to the units that got there, the units had actually arrived in February, 16th February I believe was the day that the units of Morotai landed.

After the shepherding Koreans work, were you assigned any other particular role?

Oh yeah, yeah, there was always jobs on.

06:00 People would get information from somewhere there may be a cache of weapons or something. Because Japan had been honeycombed with tunnels. And when we're talking about tunnels we're talking as tall as a house, you know, you could really walk in, you could drive trucks into some of them. Some of them had workshops in them, some of them were just food stores, some of them were arms stores. And all of this had to be dragged out and hot rid of. If it was foodstuffs that was handed

06:30 over to the civil authorities for the use for the population. But if it was arms or ammunition that all had to be turned over to the appropriate troops who'd to the demolition of it either by blowing it up or dumping it in the sea. Ammunition, a lot of ammunition was dumped in the sea.

Was any of it recycled?

No, no. It was something we hadn't heard of in those days. They had a thing called salvage, you know. Salvage of brass and that sort of thing

07:00 **Funny thing though, given that the era itself was brilliant at making the most of everything.**

Yeah, yeah. Still I suppose that as a result of the war there'd be, we would have stockpiled ammunition. We would have had masses and we did have masses of ammunition. I remember once, it was in the first six months, seven months. I was training on six pounder anti-tank guns.

07:30 Now they'd come up from the islands and they, we had four of them there was a stack of ammunition. Now they wanted to return the guns. They were going to send them back to Australia. They were pretty useless anyway. But we spent, I think a fortnight, out on a, on an old Japanese training rage, just firing off ammunition just to get rid of it. Because it was either come from the islands, they didn't want it back in Australia, so we just had to get

08:00 rid of it. And the only way to get rid of it was to shoot it up, I suppose. Could have taken that out and dumped it in the sea, but they were trying to get rid of the Japanese stuff that way. And I might add that Japan was one big arsenal. Gee they had some stuff stockpiled. It's incredible the lengths they went to produce things. They produced oil out of pine tree roots, believe it or not.

08:30 Their oil and their gasoline was produced from pine tree roots. And stored very cleverly in well camouflaged tanks at ground level. One other one, I never, I remember finding this, we came across a tunnel that was stacked to the ceiling with bundles of bamboo poles. A bundle would be, I suppose about two feet in diameter. And they'd be about seven foot

09:00 long. One end would be sharpened to a point and they were just tied in bundles and stacked in there. And I often puzzled about that, what the Devil were they for? I don't know. Anyway, as usual somebody writes a book, eventually Dennis Warner, who had been one of our Age wartime correspondents, lived here in Mornington, he wrote a book. And he talked about these

09:30 stores of ammunition and things in Japan and these sharpened sticks. And what they were, had there not been a dropping of the atom bomb, they were going to issue the populace and the school kids that started training with these seven foot bamboo poles, and the idea was, it was a home made bayonet. And their idea behind it all, "If you can kill

10:00 one of the 'hairy barbarians'" as they called everybody, "then you're serving the Emperor". Pretty grim, but nevertheless that had been indoctrinated in the right from the time they trotted through the school gates, you know every school had a little shrine to the Emperor. And that's what was on. The workers in the factories has been trained in bayonet fighting, using these bamboo poles, the police used to train them,

10:30 and even the school kids. So they were gonna have a fight to the death, there's no doubt about that.

Did they ever you up to Tokyo?

Yes, yes. Guard duty in Tokyo that was quite a trip, an honour. The last trip I did there was in August, September of '47.

11:00 I must explain here that the British Commonwealth Occupation Force made up of Indians, British, New Zealanders and Australians, the four nations. The Indians were to be given their independence, right? So their troops were going home. They were up in Tokyo doing the guard duty and we went up to relieve them, to take over from the Indians.

11:30 And instead of normal fourteen days' tour of duty, they stretched it out to one month. Now, that suited me, 'cause not only did I get a good run-eye in Tokyo, which was in part badly damaged, really badly damaged, particularly the northern part of it, the industrial area. But there were things there, you know there was a

12:00 shopping centre, the Ginza, a bit overrated I thought. Probably not today, it'd still probably be back to its glory, but it had a lot of impact on me. There was a lot of scenic attractions, a lot of places to go. And when you weren't on guard, or training for a guard, you could go on a day tour. The Americans were very good at organising these. The American Red Cross would take anybody anywhere. And you could go out even to the film studios and watch the Japanese

12:30 making films. Yeah, went to parks, and went all over the place. If you wanted to pick up anything of Japanese culture, yeah there was an insight into quite a bit of it there. And inside we didn't get where I was with my battalion, because I said we were outside of the town, we weren't in Kure. We weren't in amongst the civil population, we were away from them.

And were you

13:00 **promoted at any stage?**

Yeah I was made a lance corporal, one stripe. I was acting, temporary, unpaid and I think most of the time unwanted. But still, I was a lance corporal.

It's not a very glamorous role, is it, the LC [lance corporal]?

No.

I don't think they even got any extra cash, did they?

Sixpence a day more.

Well I guess that would have bought you a sandwich and a milk though?

No, oh crikey, a tin of boot polish if you were lucky.

13:30 **Were you sad to finish up your two years there?**

Not really. What had happened, my mother died whilst I was in Japan. That left my Dad home virtually on his own. He tried to have another go in World War II but he got knocked back because of his physical condition. And he was working for the

14:00 railways, engine driver. So he was home on his own because my brother was still away with the merchant navy and I thought, "Ah well, time to wind it all up. Where do we go from here? I'm not interested in staying on in the regular army or any of that, I just go home and become a civilian again". And in fact that's what happened in September, I said we were up in Tokyo, I did the first

14:30 fourteen days of guard duty. After that we were lucky we were given 14 days of leave, no duties, and were able to see quite a bit of Tokyo and the surrounds. And then send back to our unit in Fujiama, de-kitted, onto the boat and home.

You seem a little despondent about the fact that you had to give it up.

No, no, no, no, I said I made a lot of good friends, made a lot of mates, you know

15:00 you do in service life. You meet people, and you're a bit sad to leave them, but like everything you've

gotta move on, you've gotta make your own life, your own way. So I did that.

What ship did they send you back on?

I came home on the Kanimbla. And we were lucky again there. We went on the Kanimbla four days before it sailed, as an advance party. And we

15:30 were sent down to help the cooks, the navy cooks, 'cause in the navy they do everything, they bake their own bread, the whole lot, and were mixing dough and helping them bake loaves for the voyage. And having done that, we were then free of all duties for the whole rest of the trip home. It was glorious, we had twelve to fourteen days sitting on the deck at the back of the ship, spread a blanket out, playing cards and smoking these great big American cigars;

16:00 thought we were kings, all heading down to Sydney. But quiet trip home. No storms or anything to upset us. We got into Sydney, again onto buses, out to Marrickville, stayed overnight there, and then down to Melbourne for discharge.

Was there any reception for you?

No, no. In

16:30 those days it was unheard of. People just trickled back the whole of the war time. You'd have a war time parade, but that was more of a morale boost, or selling war bombs or something like that.

And were you a different fellow from the lad that went off to Japan?

Oh, I think so, I think so. I think I grew up very quickly. The war time years didn't give you much chance for what do you call

17:00 entertainment. Socialising, the dance was the big thing. People went to the local scout hall for a dance on Saturday night or whatever. Prior to my enlisting, I'd been a bit keen on ice skating and roller skating, I used to do quite a bit of that. But, oh I didn't pick up those threads afterwards. Came back, took the discharge. Couple of fellows who had been in Japan with us lived near me.

17:30 One of them played quite well, oh we played about six or seven years at the local football team. And then they started to get married and drift off and make their own lives.

Did you notice any change in the city of Melbourne when you returned?

No, No I didn't have a great deal. Where I worked I went back to working in the wool-caper, virtually in the same location. And that was up the King Street end

18:00 of town, you didn't see much of the what they call the central business district now.

The West Melbourne area?

Well, going out that way, yeah. More towards Spencer Street Station. But Myers was still there, Coles and all those places. It has changed a lot in my perceptions now, to go into Melbourne, I can't get out of it quick enough.

When you go away you notice things a lot more freshly, but I

18:30 **wondered whether the effect of the war?**

The one thing that had happened of course, you grew up in the Depression and people losing jobs, you know unemployment galore. Then came a war where there was a dire for manpower, everybody had jobs. After the war, with all the fellows coming back everybody was saying, "Oh, I hope I can get a job". There was no shortage of jobs. There were new industries, because we'd

19:00 suddenly realised that we had an industrial capacity that we didn't even take on before the Second World War. And the only reason we took it on was because we had to, you know to make a lot of things ourselves. Whereas we'd imported a lot of stuff, we'd started manufacturing here. And there was jobs galore. Plus of course the servicemen coming back, marrying, setting up families, that put a real boom on the real estate. And what had been paddocks when I

19:30 went to school in Hampton High, that was half a mile up from the school was acres and acres of swamp paddock, that just became housing, miles and miles of it.

Going back into the wool business, I can imagine that we would have started exporting furiously.

You see, the original scheme I was on, the wool committee, was stockpiling wool, because there was no call for it overseas. But

20:00 once the war finished, everybody wanted wool, and we had piles and piles of it, and was furiously producing catalogues for auction sales and all that sort of thing. And shipping, getting rid of it. So they did very well out of that. The farmer didn't do too well during the war because he didn't get a price for his wool. They was just bagged into bales and put into storage. Because after the war, and the price

went up and up and up, and he was laughing all the way

20:30 to the bank.

What was your specific role when you went back?

I went back into shipping, the overseas shipping side of it. Getting the stuff into the boats, and all the manifests had to be drawn up, every bale had a number and a code and all that sort of thing all had to be documented in the proper manifests, and away they went.

Had any of your experience in the army improved your work

21:00 **chances, position back in civilian life?**

Oh, well, because all the bosses that I had worked for had all been in the army, so I suppose a sympathetic eye was cast on you if you applied for a job.

I believe after the First World War, RSL [Returned and Services League] men were given jobs out of preference.

I don't know, I don't think so.

21:30 Returned servicemen may have been given jobs, but not so much RSL men. When you say RSL you imply?

I mean returned servicemen.

Yeah, there was a thing called, "Soldier Preference" to try and re-establish them. I don't know how well it worked. I just came back from a little trip down to Warnervale, we drove around the Great Ocean Road. Tourist driving, you know, one turn you're doing

22:00 this all the time for miles and miles and that was built by returned service men that couldn't get a job. They gave them picks and shovels and a horse and a dray and said, "Go and build a road", and UNCLEAR cut out of sheer cliffs. It was tough.

Did you receive any interest or response from civilians when you got back from the BCOF duties?

No, oh people said, "Ah you've been to Japan, what was it like and what's

22:30 the attitude of the Japanese?" And that sort of thing. That was always hard to gauge. We'd changed our attitudes, I must say that. I think anybody that served in Japan might have gone over there with all sorts of ideas of, "Still hate the sight of you", because they'd had a brother that had been in a POW [prisoner of war] camp or had died or killed during the war, and nobody was favour disposed towards the Japanese.

23:00 But when you've lived with a civil population, and they appear to be just the same as you are, you start to shed a lot of those ideas. Particularly when you meet up with the kids and you say, "Well, these kids have nothing to do with the war, it was never their fault. They're just the by-product' and some of them were in pretty dire straits".

Did any less informed individuals

23:30 **take issue with the fact that you'd been in Japan?**

No. I don't think so. I don't think there was ever any antagonism. Not that I know of. Certain blokes have said to me, but they're mainly ex-servicemen, said, "Oh you must have had a gleeful trip over there", and oh yeah, yeah I really enjoyed it. No good standing up to your waist in

24:00 snow in the middle of winter in Japan. Very cold place.

What were you rights and privileges as a returned soldier?

I had one, if I went back to the place where I had been employed, I resumed my employment with the same sort of status and seniority and that was fair enough too. Because you know

24:30 it was a tremendous job, a tremendous job trying to fit everybody back in. For a population it was only seven and a half million, I think at the beginning of World War II. We put nine hundred thousand people into the services. And nearly one in eight went into the services. And a tremendous job then to extract all these people and put them back into the civil life. They were

25:00 civil armies. They were civilian army. Civilians just signed a piece of paper, "You will go to the war". And the same with the navy and the air force.

And what about entry into the RSLs? Were you entitled to that?

No, no, you see, the RSL has always been a very conservative organisation. It was made up of fellows form the First World War who served overseas. And I

25:30 would say that no soldiers or service men have ever served their country in such terrible condition as the member of the First World War had. It was a shocking thing. But they hardened their arteries, they said, “Well if you didn’t go overseas, we don’t wanna know you”. Because we went over, what they contended, was after the war,

26:00 they didn’t want to have us in their company either. Despite the fact that in Yokohama cemetery, just south of Tokyo, there’s about one hundred and eighty-seven graves of Australian members of the BCOF. You know accidental killings, couple of murders, I’m quite sure they were murders. Blow

26:30 themselves up on mines.

What about any other recognition from the government in regard to your service?

Oh no, no, not really. We call ourselves the “Forgotten Force”. We’ve maintained that all along. In fact the fellow Dr Jim Wood who wrote the book

27:00 about seven or eight years ago, that was the title of his book, The Forgotten Force. There was no recognition in any way. No matter how good the service was, there was recommendations made for even decorations to people. None, none at all.

Were you ever invited to march on Anzac Day?

No. Never. Not till about

27:30 1972 when the RSL had a change of heart and started to admit members of the BCOF to their ranks. Then we put forward a contingent to march on Anzac Day. And they still march today. We still have a contingent marches on Anzac Day.

What are your views on that?

Long time coming.

28:00 But it needed a change of heart. You know you’ll even credit, a lot of people criticised Bruce Ruxton. Bruce Ruxton was in the same battalion as me in Japan. He’s a big chop boy, he come from the islands. He was one of those who fought to get BCOF admitted to the RSL. We’ve still, we’ve never been denied the rights, or privileges if you wanna use those terms, of

28:30 DVA [Department of Veterans’ Affairs] pensions and that sort of thing. If you were ill and you could prove that it was due to your service, no mater where it was in Japan, or anywhere, you could still be accepted by DVA and granted a pension. And I think overall we’ve been treated like all other ex-servicemen, fairly generously. We’re very lucky in this country. We’ve got a very good

29:00 treatment of our ex service people.

And was there ever a special medal struck for BCOF?

No, no. We suggested it, but no. No a few years back they had a review of awards and medals and they came out with a thing called the Australian Service Medal. Now the idea is if you served after September ‘45, around the Pacific, you

29:30 served in Malaya, you can get that with a bar on it that says “Malaya’. We got one with a bar on it that says “Japan’. That may change. We’ve just been through a review, which I’ll deal with later, I won’t go into any great things here because there’s still contentious issues.

In stead we are going to wind back the clock until about 1926.

‘26, oh yeah. The cold weather, cold for spring in November.

30:00 I remember sitting up doing this in the nursery.

Let’s talk about your early years with your family. So you were born in Prahran, and primary school around Elsternwick I think you said?

Well I went to, through a succession. Primary started at Newport.

30:30 Then we moved to Mooney Ponds. I think I went to Aberfeldy State School. Mooney Pond Central and then Elsternwick. I finished my primary schooling, or state school as they called it then at Elsternwick, year eight.

And the reason for all the moving around?

The Depression wasn’t good for anybody. My Dad was luck, I suppose. He had

31:00 a family. He’d taken on a war service home, lost it because he only had three days a week work on the railway, you know couldn’t keep up the payment. The banks weren’t very sympathetic in those days. They’d reap the property off you quicker than they will today. But we sort of moved around, and he never owned a property, he never bought again. I expect he was a bit bitter about the whole thing. Particularly when I became married and

31:30 I wanted to buy a war service home, or get a war service home loan. Very savage about that. But anyway I survived.

What was he doing in his three days work?

He worked for the railways as a train driver, steam trains. In those days they started off as a cleaner, then they did an exam, became a fireman, and that was shovelling coal, you know. And then they did further training, he became an engine driver, steam driver.

32:00 But his health wasn't good. He'd had a bad lung from the First World War.

What had he done in the First World War?

He was a field ambulance. He was a stretcher bearer and a field ambulance. He was at Gallipoli, wounded and evacuated at Gallipoli. Went back to Gallipoli in time for the evacuation. Then he went to France and served in France. Firstly

32:30 as a stretcher bearer, and gradually, I think maybe his health had started to play up then. He finished up at a general, one of the general hospitals working in the hospital.

So did he march on Anzac Day?

Oh, yeah, very much so. That was the one chance they had to get together with their old mates, tell a few lies like we all do.

What are your memories as a little boy at Anzac Day marches?

I'd go with my mother,

33:00 and we'd go into town with Dad. In those days, and I think it still applies I'm not sure, if they wear their medals for something they didn't have to pay on the trains they went in for free. Everybody travelled by train. We'd get out at Flinders Street, walk over Prince's Bridge, and about half way down to the shrine and there'd be barriers and whatnot. The kids would all be put through and sat down there and you'd wait for hours and the march would get underway. And then we'd wait

33:30 at that spot until the march was over and Dad would come back and join us, if he was going off to have a few beers with his mates, he'd say so or whatever. Or else he'd come home we'd just head for home. There was no football or anything like that, no entertainment at all.

What did you think of your dad as a soldier then?

I think I looked up to him, I thought his contribution was a long one, he was one of the longest serving members. He didn't come home

34:00 for discharge until, I've got it out there, January 1921 he was discharged in Australia. He didn't rush, because he had married my mother over there. And he was given a job at the army headquarters in Horsbury Road in London on Medical Records. Because he'd been through the hospital and the ambulance system.

34:30 And that helped him later on, because he then took up, he'd gone into RSL, most of them did. He then took up the job of fighting for pensions for fellows who put in for pensions, were knocked back, appealing against it. Because he had this knowledge he could then go as an advocate for them and say you know, "Such and such a thing the medical records weren't accurate", they weren't, a lot of them just didn't exist.

35:00 The casualties were so great and so horrendous you know, and they were not properly documented. So they had a hard case to prove, and he'd go as an advocate for them and I always admired him for that.

I imagine that's something you would have learned much later on in life, and I wonder what you knew as a little boy about him.

They didn't talk much. On Anzac Day they'd

35:30 gather with their mates, and if you happened to be there you might hear the odd comment about so and so.

Has that ever happened?

Yeah but not mainly, "Poor old so and so has passed on, died". And that still happens today, they get together and they don't, nobody likes to talk about the bad times, the boys have a joke you know, "Remember so and so, what an idiot he was", or, "I remember such and such an

36:00 occasion". And that sort of thing goes on.

And what about your mum? Does she ever talk to you about her first husband?

Well, I gathered later, I found out, that he'd been killed in Egypt. He was with the British Army in Egypt. And how, what the nature of his death was I don't know. She had a pretty tragic life, I suppose,

36:30 losing the first husband, and she was only young when she died. She was only fifty five I think, she died of cancer. There was nothing they could ever do for cancer in those days, not a thing. She, not only that, but in the blitz on London, when the Germans bombed them in 1940, '41 her father was still alive. He was

37:00 too old to go to the bomb shelter, their house got bombed and he was killed. She had more than her fair share of war time memories.

I don't suppose you recall receiving the news of that happening?

Yeah, I think we were living in Elsternwick, yeah, a letter came from her brother who lives not in London, but in Cornwall, breaking

37:30 the news. Yeah, and I know she was pretty cut up at the time.

Did she put on a stoic?

Oh yeah, she did, she regretted of course just only a couple of years later she started to develop cancer. So rough life all around. But still, they were a pretty hardy breed all of those people who came out here as migrants

38:00 and helped kick the place off. And those that put up with the Depression, I think they, they had a lot to battle with too.

And your big brother, there's quite an age gap there between the two of you.

Yeah, he was born on the way on, on the trip ship coming back from England in 1919. But he's still going a long time he's going to be eight four next month.

He would have had a much older understanding

38:30 **or much more mature understanding of the situation.**

Yeah, well he'd have a broader knowledge than I would. We never talked much about it. He lives over at Kridd (Sp?) Point, he comes over occasionally and has a meal with us and we go over to visit him.

Was he a big brother that looked out for you and taught you?

Oh yes, if that was the, that was the ethos of the childhood in those days. Nobody picked on the little kids without the big brother knowing about it and that sort of thing.

39:00 He did look after us, there's no doubt about that.

With the age difference you may as well have been an only child going through school and so on.

Well in the later years, yes, yes he'd left school and was at work before I got into about the seventh grade or something like that.

Tape 3

00:34 **What did you know about Germany and Hitler and China and Japan?**

Well Germany and Hitler, we were fairly well informed about that. Bearing in mind that of course Germany

01:00 fought in World War I. And to see the sort of resurgence that was going on in Europe really started off a few people thinking and there was a, as I think I said earlier, a feeling that war was going to eventuate out of Hitler. Nobody liked Hitler at all. We heard some of the things about the atrocities, but not to the extent that we did after the war when they you know threw open the gates of some of

01:30 those concentration camps. But no, nobody liked Hitler. Nobody liked Mussolini. Not even our next door neighbour in Mooney Pond, he ran a fruit shop, "My country turn much Mussolini", he said he'd got out. You know Mussolini had bombed and gassed the Abyssinians in about 1936, and that didn't go down too well. No, nobody really liked Mussolini.

02:00 **Was there any kind of assemblies or discussions or making children aware of what was happening anywhere?**

Modern history, as such, wasn't really pushed. No I don't think there was any great emphasis on that. We did have a great emphasis on something, I think they're starting to reinstitute, it was called, "civics'.

02:30 We learned our system of government, you know we learned about our constitution and how the people voted for representatives and how the parliament was structured and those sort of things, and I think

that was pretty important. People could relate things to things that was said on the radio or appeared in the paper.

Did you know much about your own politicians?

Yeah, yeah, I can remember our

03:00 politician was a member for Balaclava. He'd been a flying hero of World War I. He flew with the Australian Flying Corps in Palestine on the Sinai and had been captured by the Turks, shot down, captured and eventually escaped. So you know he was a local identity around the place. And he went on, I think he became

03:30 Minister for Air eventually in the Federal Government. People took quite a big interest in politics. Communism of course was only after World War II that that really became a threat out here.

Yes, I guess you would have been

The unions were, well the railway's unions, a fellow names JJ. Brown, he was an avowed communist.

04:00 But there was Sharkey, Lance Sharkey, I think he was tied up with the Waterside Workers Federation. And they were the main areas of all the contestants against communism. As far as our knowledge of Japan and China, we'd get information mainly through film clips you know newsreels, and report in the papers.

04:30 And papers were much more prolific than they are today. We had three papers in Melbourne. We had the Sun in the morning, the Herald at night and the Argus was a morning paper. And at one stage we had a thing called the Evening Star, that was another

And the most important one of all, the Sporting Globe.

The Sporting Globe, yeah. And most people bought "The Sporting Globe" to see if they'd had a

05:00 win at the race to see how much their horse paid on the SP [starting price] bookie.

I always thought it was hilarious that the Sporting Globe, the blokes' newspaper, was printed on pink paper.

Yeah, ah well.

Your birthday was on the 11th of the 11th, so obviously that was a big deal for you?

Yeah, but still, he mentioned early about the ceremonies at schools, we didn't, every Monday morning

05:30 the school had an assembly. Every school, state school, high school, all had an assembly. The headmaster or selected teachers who had something to say, would address all the groups. Then we'd have a raising of the flag, and then you'd march off to your classes. So, you know, I thought that was a pretty important part of school life.

06:00 We didn't see anything wrong with it.

Was there any band music?

At the Elsternwick State we had a drum and fox band, yeah, and beat the drum, and kids were taught to blow the fife or the flute.

And what about your birthday, then, do you confuse Remembrance Day?

No, It's a funny thing, when you're young you're looking forward to the next birthday, you

06:30 might have ideas of a party or some goodies, but as you get older, you regret your last birthday. You say, "Oh God, another one gone. Am I that old?" So I'm afraid again we got a bit pragmatic about it all, it's just a date that comes around.

When the war was declared, I wonder if you can recall that evening, Menzies' address.

Yeah, I do. Everybody knew there was something coming along. I think we had to

07:00 listen to the ABC at nine o'clock on the Sunday night. Everybody was there, sitting in the lounge or on the floor or what not, around the wireless set. And well he was pretty melancholy about it. Nobody, nobody was happy, that we'd gone to war, but they probably thought, "Ah well. At long last we've made a decision. Somebody made

07:30 a decision. For good or for bad, we're in it". And I must add that at that stage, the feeling towards England, that was always known as the mother country, that was pretty strong.

It would have been in your family.

Well you've gotta, I think you know those days ninety four percent of the population were either English, Irish or Scottish extraction. Other nationalities were a rarity in

08:00 many cases. There was no out and out racism against them. In fact I never recalled seeing any of it. Not as a child, anywhere. After the war there was always a joke about you know who they called the DPs, they were displaced persons who came out from Europe. They were brought out in shiploads. They were Balts they called them, Baltic states. But they

08:30 were intelligent, in most cases educated people. And they absorbed and disappeared into the community very well, I thought. Yeah.

Given your mother's tragedy, what was her response to the announcement of the Second War?

There might have been a tear or two, I don't know.

And your dad? You said that he tried

09:00 **to enlist again.**

Yeah, yeah. He went and had a go at enlisting again, and they wouldn't take him. He tried the army and then the air force, the medical corps, go back in the medical corps, but well let's see, he was born in, he would have been almost too old. He was born in '97, '93, seven years, he was forty six.

09:30 **And your brother? Is there anything to talk about there in terms of his response?**

No, he, as I said he was working at the time, he was working, I think he was working for Radiola AWA [Amalgamated Wireless Australasia] or something like that they were making radio sets down in South Melbourne. And, no I don't think he had any great feelings about it all. He might have

10:00 sparked up his ideas later on when he got pulled up into this Universal Training Scheme as a twenty one years old. And he was released to go and do his radio training to go into the merchant navy.

Did you have much awareness of his joining the merchant navy?

I knew he was scheduled for it, but he disappeared quickly, you know, he came home one night and said, "I've gotta go, I've got this letter, and I've gotta go in".

10:30 You see travel was restricted then. Flying was not on because it was very urgent. Train, if you didn't have priority, to get onto a train, interstate train, he had to go to Western Australia. So he had to go in and arrange a priority thing, you know, get him a booking on a train over to the west. There was a bit of a flurry for two or three days to get him packed up and away. And he disappeared off the scene

11:00 '43? No, '42 late '42.

So you were almost a young man by then, I guess?

Oh he was twenty-one, yeah he was over twenty-one, yeah.

But you were almost a?

Well, yeah I would have been about sixteen?

Before the war, did you have any ambitions?

I'd always wanted

11:30 to fly. When the air force knocked me back, colour defective, I said, "All right, can't fly".

So you wanted to fly before there was any thought?

Oh yes. You see when we lived at Mooney Ponds it was only an hour's walk out to Essendon Airport. Go out there and sit there all day just watching Tiger Moths taking off and all that sort of thing.

There must have been a lot of little boys doing that?

Oh yeah, they'd get up and, we'd usually get around in gangs, you know groups, five, six, seven,

12:00 all trotted up, all shapes and sizes, off we'd go.

And did you have a gang?

No, I, there was four of us knocked around as a group. But we weren't a gang as such you know, there was no sort of pecking order or anything sorted out. We'd all just gone to school together, played together. Sailed boats together and that sort of thing.

Did you and your friends then

12:30 **have any of your own plans in the way that young boys have plans? Did you have a plan for what you wanted to do when the Japanese invaded?**

I don't think so. I don't think we ever had any, if they had invaded that would have really posed some problems because there wasn't a great deal of weaponry available other than the old 22 Rifle,

13:00 which was pretty common, but, as I said earlier, it was pretty hard to get ammunition for it during the war. Still, there were things came about, there was the, I remember the Volunteer Defence Corps. I think that was set up by the RSL. That was just volunteers and they used to train on Sunday mornings or something. They were nearly all ex service men anyway. And their idea was to be able to defend or look after a vital

13:30 installation or something like that, you know. I remember Elsternwick Park, down at the Elsternwick Junction, the football ground was full of 44 gallon drums of fuel, petrol. And I think the local VDC [Volunteer Defence Corps] was going to assist in making sure nobody grabbed the petrol or pinched it or whatever. Yeah, those sort of things went on, but later on that was expanded, that was an unofficial organisation

14:00 it was expanded and some of them went onto what they call garrison battalions. You know they went down to the forts and that sort of thing. Look after the area, the peninsula here. I think that had a garrison battalion on it too.

And was that a volunteer, or was that Manpowered as well?

No that was volunteered, mainly of ex-servicemen.

Did your dad do anything like that?

No he tried to, but again, you know the railway could, it was impractical because

14:30 when you're driving the trains, you're on shift work, you don't have a start at nine and finish at six o'clock at night. You can pick up a train at ten o'clock at night, go up to the bush, bring back a load of wheat or something like that.

Sound like he was really in a rock and a hard place most of the time.

Yeah, they had a tough life. I think that, well to put it bluntly, I think the World War II almost kicked the guts out of a lot of them.

15:00 They were pretty low down. But the estimation I think of the general public towards it was pretty high. And maybe that was a sustaining factor.

You mentioned that you went down and did some training corps work in Brighton. Was there any other cadet training that you did for the CMF [Citizens' Military Force]?

No. After I cam back from Japan I joined

15:30 the CMF. Don't know why.

Tell me about the Air Training Corps. Was this junior?

Yeah, well the idea was, you went in at sixteen, and you, we did the drill. And flying theory and all that. And then when you were eighteen you can then go straight into the air force. It was unpaid thing. I think they issued a uniform,

16:00 after I had given it away because of a medical problem. They issued a uniform for them, sea cadets. I'm trying to think, I don't think the navy was pushing sea cadets. I think they were pretty well off. They had sea scouts. There was a big sea scouts group at Albert Park Lake. I'm trying to think where else. And

16:30 those kids, obviously they wanted to go into the navy too.

Who were your teachers for the Air Training Corps? Trainers I should say.

Usually a sergeant instructor, an air force bloke. He'd come on the week ends to instruct in drill or some mechanism, the theory of flight. What else did we do? Compass

17:00 work, those sort of things. Yeah they were permanent air force instructors would turn up for that.

When they knocked you back, this defectiveness, I'm sure a lot of men have that?

A lot of people have it and wouldn't even know it.

Except when women ask them which dress they like better, the green or the red and they can't figure out what you're talking about.

"No, no dear. I like the blue". Then there's the blue.

17:30 **That's what prompted you to fake your ID?**

Oh no, plus I thought, "Well here's the opportunity, I'll give the army a go. See if I can bust in".

Why didn't your brother have his ID with him?

He just left it behind. He just took off and left it there.

The ID, did everybody have one?

Oh yeah, everybody had one. It was a card, a proper buff coloured card with all your details on it, where you lived and that sort of thing.

And photographs?

No, no

18:00 there was no photo ID. No that would have thrown me out of kilter wouldn't it? No, it was a card and there were things; if you looked older than your age, and that happened to me, you could be pulled up on the street and somebody would say, "Have you got your ID on you?" And you went, "Oh yeah", it'd be a Manpower man, and he'd be going round to see who wasn't working.

When I think about Manpower, I imagine detective looking individuals.

Yeah, a bit of a

18:30 Gestapo. Well I suppose they had a job to do and because there were the spivs who didn't wanna be in the war effort, didn't wanna do this, didn't wanna do that, except run the sly grog and a few other things.

Could you tell a Manpower man coming if you saw him in the street?

Probably not, he'd just wear a suit like everybody else walked towards you.

19:00 Even a policeman would pull you up. And he'd ask you, "What are you doing here at this time of the day? Have you got your ID card?" "Yeah, yeah", gave it to him.

I guess if you were of a certain age you should either have a job or be in the army?

Yeah, everybody was sort of slotted into something, they were organised. And it worked quite well, it's to their credit, overall I thought they did a very good job.

And then women too were Manpowered?

Yeah, and strangely

19:30 enough I don't think, I've mentioned this in RSL circles, I don't think we've ever given the due recognition to the women's efforts of World War I and Two. I don't. We've got a lovely park over here in Mornington. It's probably got the best collection of memorials in Australia, bar the national capital. And I suggested that maybe there was one missing

20:00 and they said, "What's that?" And I said, "Maybe we should put up a memorial to the women's services". And it didn't go down too well, and I don't know why. Don't know why, because there were a lot of girls joined the AWAS, that was the Australian Women's Army Service. They did all sorts of things. Drove trucks, they were mechanics, they cooked they did typing, stenography, signalling, you name it. Then there was the

20:30 AAMWS [Australian Army Medical Women's Service], they were sort of, not qualified nurses, but trained for nursing duties and they did a tremendous amount of work. I mentioned the Land Army. There was the WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force], they were the first women's service to be formed for the air force. WRANs [Women Royal Australian Naval Service], yeah, they all had a part to play, and they did it most conscientiously

21:00 and I thought did a marvellous job, and I still do believe that we haven't given them the due credit that they merited.

I'm sure you don't want me to comment on that?

Well I've always made that as a statement, and I say it to anybody. I wouldn't resign from any of that.

Take me through your attempt at enlisting.

21:30 **You did mention before you got fined, but I wonder how long a process before, whether you knew what you were doing was a bit bad.**

Oh yeah, yeah. Well we, I tried to work it cunningly. You see my brother had gone and had the certificate, the ID card. So I scraped away and changed a few things. Now, there were army depots all over the place, we lived in Elsternwick, and I had a mate who lived down in Garden

22:00 Vale. And he was going to join the army, he'd turned eighteen, and he was going to join the army. So I said, "I'll come with you". So down we go down to the army drill hall in Landcox Street in Brighton. And we fronted up there and, yeah, "We want to join the army", and the recruitment sergeant said, "Yeah, well come in here and I'll check this". But they had huge rolls, you know, of

22:30 people, probably provided by Manpower to make sure you didn't get in if you were under Manpower. I produced this ID card and away we went. He couldn't find anything, so he said, "You live at such and such an address?" And I said, "Yeah, that's me". And he was sort of looking at me and said, "Well you don't look old enough". Although I did look older for my age, I looked just as old as the other

23:00 bloke who went with me. And he was, they found him, so he was at the start of his process. And they said, “Come back in a couple of days”. So I went back in and he said, “Have you got that ID card with you?” “Yeah’, away he went and muttering away there, and he came back and said, “This isn’t yours, is it?” And I said, “I think so”, “No”, he said, “That’s not yours, you’re so and so”, and he told me who I was and I said, “Oh, he’s been doing some checking up”.

23:30 That disappeared everything. And about three weeks later I get this, what they called a bluey, a summons came through the post, you know, “Appear in the Magistrate’s Court in Balaclava”. Five pound and seven costs, I’ll never forget that.

That’s a whack of money isn’t it? I’m sure you weren’t earning that.

No.

Did your mum and dad find out?

Yup, they had to pay the fine.

24:00 **Did you get a belting?**

Oh no, I got a sort of a, “Don’t do it again, it’s costing us money”, sort of thing.

Did you know when you tried to enlist that you could be breaking the law?

Oh yeah. Yeah.

24:30 But, you know, it was worth a try.

Did the magistrate say anything to you when he fined you?

No, no. The only question asked was, “Are you so and so and so and so?” I said, “Yeah”, “Your charges are such and such, such and such?” “Yeah”. “How do you plead?” “I’m caught, I’m guilty”. “Right, five pound and seven, out you go”.

I guess the Crown wasn’t trying to enlist by faking your ID?

Yeah, playing around with an ID card

25:00 that was the thing I was charged with.

You said Manpower got onto you after that. Is it possible they would spend some time in the local courts checking up on people?

I would think that as your name went through from the court, they’d get it referred back, something would be referred back to them.

Can you tell me a bit about your meeting with Manpower and what happened then.

I just got a call, I think I had to go down to

25:30 might have been Punt Road, somewhere down there? St Kilda? Used to be an army depot down Punt Road where the Alfred Hospital was, it’s not there now. I think it became the car park. I think I’d front up there and they said, “Ah yes, we’ve got you down here. We’ve gotta find a job for you. You’re off to so and so. Away you go”. They handed me I think a piece of paper or something to take and present at this address.

26:00 **And what were your thoughts about that?**

Not too happy about it all. I mean in those days I think, oh about twelve and six a week was your wages. You know as a junior, as a junior. So I said, “I’d be better off in the army. Six bob a day”. Two days and I’d covered a week’s wages.

26:30 **Work in the wool store, there must have been a lot of women there having taken on men’s jobs.**

No, no. That was fairly heavy jacko in there for the storeman. A bale of wool was that high and that high there. Some of those had got three or four hundred pound of wool in them, pressed. And that’s heavy going wheeling that about. But I didn’t have to do that. I was on the clerical

27:00 side, you know. I’d go around with a clip board and make sure that the bale and the so and so was in its right position. Or else if there was a shipment going anywhere, that you’re sure you have that pulled out there and had it ready in a certain bay for loading. But oh, it was interesting. Nothing to rave about as a job, just another clerical job. These days they tickle it on a computer screen and bang, done.

So, what sort of fellows were

27:30 **working there, then?**

Mainly older blokes. Boys who, probably a lot of them were unfit for the army. And yeah, they’d be older fellows who were into their forties. And of course some of them had been at the wool game all their life,

they were sort of supervisors and seniors and really know all the capers that went with wool. ‘Cause there’s that many types of

28:00 wool. Greasy and Combs and you name it. It goes on and on. Cross bred. Not a game I enthused about at all. That’s why later on, I went back into it, and as soon s I got out of that I was happy. I went to Defence Production and in the public service.

I’m sure it was unpleasant in many ways. Although I believe

28:30 **there’s a lot of lanolin in wool.**

Oh, yeah.

You all had very soft hands. Getting out of there and into the army, was it a big deal? You mentioned before your boss offered to keep you on.

Oh yeah, they’d say, “If you really wanna go”. I said, “Oh yes, yeah I wanna be in it”. “I can get you an exemption if you want to”. “No, no I’m quite happy”.

29:00 **When you think about joining the army, did it occur to you that part of your job would be to go and kill people?**

Oh, I think everybody realised that’s what you’re gonna be trained for, yeah. I don’t think you can have any reservations. Some people may, I don’t know. Don’t think you can have any reservations. If you want to join the army, as I said, you go where you’re

29:30 told and you do what you’re told, and you’ve got no choice in it, you know.

Did you imagine being in situations where you’d have to shoot or bayonet?

Well I’d trained up for that sort of thing, because that’s what we did. Bayonet training, crikey. Bathurst and Cowra, acres of bayonet dummies and all sorts of, bags of straw, you know, tied up, lying on the ground, in trenches, everywhere and you ran through stabbing away at these things.

Did they have names

30:00 **the dummies? I mean nick names.**

No, no. Only the sergeant following up, he had names for all of us. And they weren’t kind names.

When you joined up, did you have much news about your brother?

Not really. I had very little information about him. I used to write a letter home, and then Dad had had a letter and he mentioned

30:30 where he might be. You see, he’d gone off to WA and picked up a boat and he went up, from what I gather he went up to Colombo and then from there they were going from Colombo to South Africa. Carting munitions across all the time. And that’s, therefore they kept towards the end of the war I think he with joined the British Fleet or something at the fleet ammunition ship. And they started to go towards Malaya. They were getting ready

31:00 to invade Malaya and that side. The Burma campaign was over so I didn’t catch onto much of that at all. In fact he stayed in the merchant navy until about ten year I think. I didn’t see much of him at all until he finally gave away the sea. He ended up getting a reasonably good job. He was on a boat going from Melbourne here

31:30 down to Burnie in Tasmania, or Strahan, and then back again, picking up timber or whatever. And that wasn’t a bad cop, I think he rather enjoyed that.

When you joined up, did any of your mates join with you?

No, none that I knew. Most of them had gone before me. As I said I was a younger buck for my year, my class at school.

And your mum’s response to this decision of yours?

32:00 I don’t think she was happy about it all. But I think like a lot of women in those days, husbands had gone off, sons had gone off. She probably accepted it the same as everybody else did.

Did your folks give you any parting words of advice before you set off for Cowra?

The old man said to me, “Don’t you ever

32:30 let me hear you got into some sort of trouble that your mother wouldn’t like to hear about”. That was all he ever said to me. I did meet up with another mate I went to school with. I met him at I think it was Cowra. He was not in the same battalion, training battalion as me, but he happened to be up the canteen one night, and I had a talk to him. He’d joined up ahead of me. I think he was, he finished off, he was killed at Tarakan.

33:00 Yeah. I was sorry about that because his mother worked in the big beef ham and, what we called the ham and beef shop then, what we now call the deli, in Elsternwick, in Glenhuntly Road. And she was a hell of a nice woman. I felt sorry that I lost this mate and she's lost a son. And she took it pretty hard.

The Cowra basic

33:30 **training, I asked you a bit before about the scuttlebutt in town about the breakout. So it was the biggest ever?**

Biggest ever anywhere in the world. There was one thousand two hundred Japanese prisoners went to break out that night, and I think about a third of them got over the wire. There was two hundred and thirty or something killed,

34:00 and that included some of them hung themselves. Rather interesting thing that they found out later on, that most of the Japanese who were there were under assumed names anyway. Because they didn't want to give their real name for transmission back to Japan because to have surrendered was a, well shocking thing, and they were afraid anybody that had family that the family would be suffering as a result.

34:30 **This fire in the Japanese compound you were sent up. You'd only just started your training?**

Yeah, I'd only been there a few weeks in one of the huts. We were about a mile away, they were up on the a hit of a rise, and we were down in what you call the valley looking up. And there it was like a butte. The next minute the sirens went from up the camp and then they came and

35:00 got us to go and stand around the hospital. Pointless exercise, but still, I suppose somebody thought, well I suppose if they got out it's one of the places they could have headed for, because the hospital was all lit up, you know. But strangely enough, when they did break out of Cowra, they went nowhere near the civil population. No civilian was ever molested. In fact, some of them, three of them gave

35:30 themselves up to a farmer's wife, and she sat down and gave them tea and scones as farmers' wives are want to do if visitors suddenly arrive on the doorstep, and just held them there until the police came and collected them.

In your training there, did you have a chance to have a chat to the local shopkeepers and so on about it?

I didn't go into Cowra all that much. See, in those days, I've been back to Cowra a couple of times, in fact I went back the year before last.

They have a nice rose garden there.

Yeah, well we went out

36:00 to the gardens, the Japanese Gardens, and we went out, I took, my brother came with me, we went to a reunion up there. And he was interested, so we spent a couple of days. Went out to the war cemetery. Big town now, quite a big place. In those days there was nothing there. My memory of Cowra there was a local cinema, a dance hall, a couple of milk bars, couple of pubs

36:30 and that's about all I can recall of it. It was, you know, you didn't spend much time in there. I think I only went about twice the whole time I was there. Not much point in going in there, nothing to see, nothing to do. No.

Did you find your basic training very helpful?

Oh yea, it was all based on experience. And the experience was coming from the

37:00 corporals and sergeants conducting the training. They were all people who'd served, some of them had served in World War 1. And they'd pass on their own knowledge at the time. And it was pretty sound, yeah, I thought so.

I'm very interested to talk about your street and village training. Is that what it was called?

Yes, street and village fighting they called it, yeah. We went out to the

37:30 trying to think of the name of the place, it was Durlik [?], out on the hills. And we did a bit of it there. Yeah rather interesting. Learning to, fellows weave their way forward while somebody else covers from the back. And if there's any opposition comes up, then how are you gonna handle it. Are you gonna go up over the roofs or are you gonna go around it,

38:00 are you gonna go through the wall. Learned how to put explosive things up on the wall and blow the wall in and go through. But it had us puzzled as to why we were doing it.

Is it something you talked about at the time, or was it afterwards when you got together?

Well we talked amongst ourselves, you know, why the devil are we doing this? Nobody seemed to want to give us any answers to it, and so many years later when I read about Dennis Warner's book and Operation Olympic, I thought,

38:30 “Oh crikey, the timetable would have been about right”. Yup that’s where we would have been heading.

And you were gonna go to Japan one way on another.

Oh, yeah we were gonna get there.

The business you mentioned, you’d dig a trench, you working with tanks. Tell me more about that.

Yeah, tank operation, you know, they’d take up firing positions up on the crest of the hill and just over they were pointing over and we’d go down the valley and walk across and they’d fire their machine guns and their

39:00 main armoured over the top onto an objective. And then as we wen tup the hill, they’d have these trenches dug. And then we hopped into the trench and laid down. Took your tin hat off and put it over your face so that when the tank went over and if anything crumpled in, you didn’t get your head buried. You’d still have something to breathe. And they’d come through and just rumble straight over the top and move on. And that, you’d keep on repeating this

39:30 sort of leap frog thing all the way through.

What’s it like having a tank roll over the top of you?

I never looked. My eyes were too tightly closed.

Easy enough for accidents to happen in those sort of circumstances.

Well they did. People don’t, ‘cause it was an accident these days in the services, and there is an enquiry and rightly so I suppose, as to why this happened, all sorts of recrimination. Look at the Black Hawk, you know. They

40:00 were really out to pin somebody over that. But in those days, war time training, the battalion of infantry and training was allowed two percent casualties. No questions asked virtually. They were accepted because everything was live firing. I believe Canungra had a five per cent allowance. They had their own little cemetery up there just, you know, it was more a dent. And they were the realities, if you couldn’t hack it you’d be moved out. You’d be shunted off somewhere else.

Tape 4

00:33 **You worked with a grocer. How affected was that by rations?**

Well that was a bonus, see. Things were rationed you know when I was there. Now when you weigh up into paper bag and stack it into a rack in the grocery shop, occasionally there’s a busted bag. That went home.

01:00 Even the butter patch. You used to use a butter patch and weight up pounds of butter, they’d have grooves in them. At the end of the day, you’d get a skewer and you’d scrape the butter out of those grooves, and put it on a peace of grease proof paper, and that went home. The bacon, you’d slice your own bacon by hand. You’d turn the wheel and move the piece of bacon backwards and forwards and there was always little bits of bacon. All

01:30 those things went home. Even, I can remember my Mum giving we strict instructions every week, “Bring home the wrapping off the butter”, the box. Butter came in a big fifty-six pound block in a box covered with grease proof paper. And you’d peel the paper off, but fold that up and bring it home because it was smeared with butter. And that was used in the backing. If you was gonna do a roast, that went over the top. Broken

02:00 biscuits was another thing. In fact, we had a showcase things. And the broken biscuits were always popular, and the boss would say, “Make some more broken biscuits”. So you’d pull the tins of biscuits down and you’d put them in and pound them up. Because they sold quicker than the other biscuits did. And there was always bits of biscuit to go home too, and that went into sweet or nibbles or lunches or whatever. So working for that grocer,

02:30 mind you I was being paid, I think he was paying me something like seven shillings a week. I worked Tuesday after school, from about four thirty till after six. Thursday the same, Friday night I worked till nine o’clock. And Saturday morning I’d work till after one o’clock. And it wasn’t just in the grocery side of things, because there was other store holders in the market. The bloke from the vegetables

03:00 would come over and say, “You going up So and so’s way?”. “Oh, yeah I’ll take it for you, Jim”. Put it in my box and you’d deliver that. Came Saturday, there’d be a bag for you of fruit to take home from the fruit stall and that sort of thing. A few potatoes. All those things helped, helped keep the family economy going. It was a barter system. You provided a service, and someone gave you something back.

03:30 And it worked out quite well.

How much did that business rely on credit?

None. People didn't have credit in those days. If you took on credit, I think you were looked on a bit of a fool. The only credit people seriously took on was buying a house. If they bought a house that was sort of formidable, but you had

04:00 the big stores had lay-by. That was okay. If you put something on lay-by you paid it off over a period of time and eventually it became yours. Or if you couldn't pay it off, stiffed you, you could dung your dough. But nobody took on any credit and nobody gave it. They were always weary about not being repaid. The only bloke you could

04:30 top anything up was an SP book maker. You could phone him up and put a couple of bets on.

It's your own risk, I suppose.

It's your own risk. Yes, that was made known to you too.

Where did your pay from the grocery go? Into your pocket?

No, no I, at that stage I was still at school. And I think if I hadn't taken that money home, I mightn't been able to do my two years at the high school.

05:00 Because there were books to be bought. We did wear a uniform, although that was not strictly adhered to, it had to be a cap, peaked cap in those days with a badge, school badge. In winter we had a pullover with a school collar on it. And long grey trousers and that was about it. That was the uniform. Those things had to be paid for. Oh, if you

05:30 played sport, I think you had to pay a sports fee as well. Cover sports equipment. I didn't see a great deal of it. I think out of my seven bob I'd get about two and six or something like that. And that's see me into the pictures on Saturday afternoon.

What sort of movies were you watching at that period?

There were some good movies came out.

06:00 I remember going to see some very good movies. One of the ones that stuck me, strangely enough was The Mikado. Kenny Baker was the singer, a brilliant singer, and very well done, absolutely magnificent. We had Judy Garland, "Over the Rainbow", The Wizard of Oz, that came out.

06:30 During the war of course, there were propaganda films galore.

Were they pretty much accepted as propaganda? What was people's reaction to these?

Oh no, some of it was. They said, "Oh, just another propaganda film". Some of them were pretty realistic. Noel Coward made a very, very impressive one called, In Which We Serve. It was from the destroyer in the British Navy and it was pretty much down to earth and pretty realistic.

07:00 War films, I'm trying to think. No there was a lot of newsreel, longer newsreels that we have now. I remember particularly during London and the Blitz, they had a series called, London Can Take It. And these were actual films shot of bombs falling and fire fighting and getting all casualties out from under the rubble and all that sort of thing. And

07:30 it was pretty realistic and pretty much down to Earth. All propaganda in a sense, but nevertheless making people aware of the necessities of things that were being imposed upon them. Be it rationing or anything else.

What effect did the footage of the Nazis have on you? Perhaps before the war, the rallies and so on.

08:00 I think Australians in their inimitable style would make fun of them. Kids would goose step around and put their arm up and shout all sorts of stupid things. But no I don't think, it wasn't our world. It wasn't our era. Maybe we still tend to think that way in a lot of areas.

In the actual cinema, would people react to movies

08:30 **or newsreels vocally?**

Oh, yeah, you'd get bursts of applause, if there was a good weep in there I think you might even get tears. Movies were pretty much the entertainment of the day. Except of course for the big socials that was the dances. There was dances everywhere. Dance bands, dances going on.

And during the newsreels, would people cheer, or jeer or?

Yeah, and a lot of it would

09:00 show some graphic films of Australians. We had some pretty good newsreel photographers. The Dakota movie, that was brilliant. Damien Parer's work on that. The other one was Desert Victory. That was on Montgomery and El Alamein. And the Australians took a big part in that. It brought home quite a bit.

09:30 It's a good medium the movie. I know you can edit things out, and I believe they can even fake things in. But nevertheless it's pretty graphic, and what you see is pretty much a shot of home sort of thing.

Definitely stirs the emotions too.

Yes, they can. No doubt about that. Yes indeed.

10:00 **How would you come out of a film, a good war film when you were younger? Would you go with some friends and how would you be feeling coming out?**

You might have gone as a group. Come out and look at one another and give a shrug or a smile or whatever. And then start a brief discussion on it. Nobody went into any great depths I don't think. The comedies were pretty good too.

10:30 There was some good comedy stuff came out. Peter Costello. Slapstick comedy, but still, that's what people wanted. They wanted a laugh.

I saw a documentary about the Charlie Chaplin film The [Great] Dictator.

Oh, The Dictator, yeah.

When did you see that?

Yeah, that came, that was about 1937? '38? I'm not sure. That was a brilliant film, really. That was a great parody on Hitler. There's no doubt about that. And that

11:00 really struck home too. I tell you what. A lot of people saw the funny side of it but I think they realised that the things he put in there highlighted totalitarianism at its worst. Even old Jack Oakie playing the part of Mussolini he was fantastic in that.

He was pretty good wasn't he?

Yeah.

You mentioned before that nobody liked Hitler,

11:30 **but he ran the country, was it before the war? It was blatant affirmation.**

Yeah, there were people that said, "We admire Hitler because he's got the trains", oh not the trains, that was Mussolini got the trains running on time, but he got them back working and all this. He got them working all right. In the munition factories. Making more munitions.

Did you see much evidence of that sort of thought when you were younger?

Not really.

12:00 Maybe I wasn't at an age to reason those sort of thing out at that time. When you're growing up through your teens, and mine was fairly brief because I then went to the army where you were no longer treated as a teenager, you were treated as an adult. You don't have a great deal of time to dwell on those sort of things. Maybe you thoughts and your

12:30 priorities on different things. If I got the chance I was always thinking about the week end whether I'd be roller skating or ice skating or what not, those sorts of thing.

And you mentioned the dances before.

Yeah, they were the big go. Everybody went to dances. They were all over the place.

How did the war affect Australia socially and in terms of the creation and so on?

13:00 If anything it probably lifted our social life. Because before that the Depression had made people stay at home. You couldn't go out. You didn't have money to go out. You just couldn't afford to go to the pictures every week. But once the war came and there was plenty of employment, money in the pocket, disposable income, sure. Same with, well even

13:30 cigarettes maybe. They were, cigarettes were laid on. Suddenly. They were sort of scarce at one stage. But I don't think anybody really went short of tobacco. No, you could get cigarettes. Cigars maybe they came from overseas, I don't think they produced any here. That's why when we got to Japan, we saw these big boxes of American cigars

14:00 in their PX [American canteen unit], and we'd have one of those, you know. Really acting up big with the cigarettes, sorry with the cigars.

Did blackouts or brownouts cause much of a problem in your area?

Here in Melbourne, we had the brownout murders. That kept people back for a while.

What were people saying about that?

There was a lot of fear. People were afraid to

14:30 go out. Unless it was absolutely necessary. Because it was an eerie feeling, because if you walked along the street, all the street lights had a very dim down light effect. And coming towards you could hear foot steps. You knew it was somebody walking towards you, but there was and apprehension, you couldn't see who are they, what are they? You couldn't see them until they walked under the light.

15:00 So there was that element to it. The same, you had to watch the motor vehicles. They all had discs over the head light with a little slot on them and you had to be very careful just crossing, particularly at the corner, because a car could come round and the first thing you could see was these two little slots.

I've often wondered about those. Do they do any good at all?

Yes indeed.

So you could see the light coming from it at a ground level,

15:30 **from a car?**

Oh, yeah you could. You could see it was an indication there was a car there. I don't think they had much road illumination at all. Not a great deal. The other interesting thing was that the innovative things people got up to, petrol was strictly rationed. Very, very hard to come by. Mainly reserved for primary production, or essential industries.

16:00 Tractors were run on kerosene. Cars were run on kerosene. They had a thing called a "hot box". Fitted it was worked from heat from the manifold and sat over the carburettor. And what it did was, kerosene came in, and it was heated in there to a vapour and then taken in through the carbie, so you had this. The other thing they had was a thing called a producer gas unit. That actually sat on the back of a car

16:30 and, oh they burned all sorts of things. Wood chips, acorns, anything that could burn and produce a gas went into that. Even some of the, there were taxis where on top they had a big bag, huge bag on top. Probably the full width of the taxi and the whole length of the top. And that'd have producer gas in it. They'd run on producer gas.

17:00 **What sort of bag? What was it made of?**

Rubberised canvas type things. They were novel things, but they hung around for a while. I don't think they did the car engines any good. A lot of people were glad to get rid of whatever cars there were. Mid you there weren't many private vehicles. Not many people owned their private cars in those days.

What did you have to do with cars during that period?

Nothing, everywhere I went I went by tram or train,

17:30 as most people did. Occasionally there'd be a thing called a works picnic, and they'd get a furniture van and they'd fit it out with seats along the side and jam about forty people into the back of the furniture removalists and you might come down to Carrum to a park or something like that. And they'd have races and a picnic and

18:00 ice creams and that sort of thing, fun day. But they were a rarity. Due to the rationing the ration of petrol, they tended to taper off. A lot of people rode bikes. A lot of people rode bikes. To work, going from work. Where I lived in Elsternwick was pretty close to Point Nepean Road, and peak hour traffic in there was masses of bikes coming down.

I like the idea of not many cars and public

18:30 **transport and bikes. It takes a war to bring that on.**

I still use public transport when I can. If I've gotta go to the city, I've got a friendly doctor in Frankston. And I can drive my car in and park at the back of his surgery there and leave it. And I walk over about five minutes to the station and I get the train, because I don't gain anything in time by driving a car. It takes me an hour to get into town by car.

19:00 And then I'm stuck with the thing. Where do I park it? You've gotta pay to park. And I'd sooner use the public transport wherever possible. You're relaxed, you can read the paper.

Those cars that ran off all those different means. What did they smell like the emissions?

Some of them were a bit vile. Had a modern car, catalytic converter, doesn't work properly and gives off like

19:30 a what they call a rotten egg gas. Sometimes you'd get a "woff" like that from them. It's amazing what they burned in them. Anything that was combustible.

Well, necessity is a great thing.

Charcoal was a great thing. People these days don't see coke or charcoal. Coke in those days they had a gas company in Brighton, they were all over the place. There was another one in Highett. They used to

burn coal and produce gas on it and store it. So

20:00 the gas systems, hot water services, cooking etc. The by-product of that was what they called coke. It was like a burnt rock with a lot of little holes all through it. That was amazing the heat that could generate and the gas that could generate. Beauty of it was, having used it once, you could put it in a pile, pour water over it and leave it for a couple of weeks and burn it again, and it would come up. Renewable resource I think they'd call it these days.

20:30 **Back to the brownout, besides those murders, what other effect did it have on crime from your perspective?**

Crime wasn't as rampant, I'll use that term, as it is today, right? People were basically honest, you've heard it said probably, well yeah it's true in hot weather you could leave

21:00 your front door open and the screen door just on the latch. Open your windows at night. Go for a walk around the block and nobody would break into your house. Murder was a rarity, real rarity. People didn't fly off the handle and stick knives into one another or take out a gun and shoot one another. If they did it would be as I said pretty much a rarity, violence, crimes of violence.

21:30 Robbery was always on, but that was more burglary of businesses, business premises, breaking and entering, than individual homes. A lot of homes didn't have anything worth pinching anyway. What are you going to pinch? There's a radio, and a radio stood about four foot high and about two foot six wide and it would weigh. Nobody's gonna lug that out through the window.

22:00 These days they hop in and they've got the TV out the window before you know it. No it's a different society. I think people trusted one an other I suppose.

You were saying before people knew one another too.

That's right. The communities, they weren't what we call closely knit, but everybody knew one another in the street. And this came out of, I can remember during the Depression,

22:30 you knew everybody in the street. And somebody would lose their job and you'd be playing cricket out in the street and Mum would call you in and say, "I want you to take this over to Mrs so and so". And it'd be a pot of stew or a pot of soup. And that'd go up to the house. And after a while you'd say, "What's this going on?" After a while you knew what the draw was, the husband had lost his job. So people did

23:00 help out one another. They shared things. If somebody grew a decent crop of vegetables, and he would give over the fence to the neighbour next door. People shared what they had. Might not very much, but what they had they did share. Furnishings weren't a great importance, so long as you had a table and a few chairs to sit down for your meals. Lounge suits were becoming fashionable, but

23:30 nothing big or extensive about them. So social mores and standing just didn't ring a bell.

And when someone was killed during the war, how would a family respond?

Usually with messages or personal appearance of sympathy to them.

Food?

Not really, no. That would

24:00 as I said, even when things were rationed during the war we weren't badly off. Nobody was starving. Things make me smile occasionally. People talk about poverty or so many living in poverty. I'd wish you could take me out and show me the poverty. I'd like to compare that with some of the poverty I saw people living with in the Depression. Or more importantly,

24:30 what I saw in Japan when there was real poverty. I'm always a great believer in the old saying that, "I had no shoes and complained until I met the man who had no feet'. So you'll always find somebody that's a little bit worse off than you are. We were a product of a different era. The schools had a big

25:00 influence on us. Religion had a big influence on us. What was the third thing? Oh yeah society as a whole had an influence. The way you developed in that society. People would check you, you know if you were on a train and somebody let out with a bit of bad language, he like to have a fist come out of the mob and clap him over the ears, 'cause they don't like to hear that talk in front of ladies.

25:30 That went on. And that was one of the things that was accepted.

How were Americans integrated into society in the war?

We didn't see a great deal of the Americans here. They were on the Melbourne Cricket Ground for quite a while, stationed there in transit. There was another big crowd out at Fisherman's Bend. I think I peddled my bike out there one day and they gave me some

26:00 baked beans for lunch and I thought, "These are great, I've never had these before in my life".

First of many.

Yeah. Started to get used to it. No I think the American serviceman that was here, I think he was proud of what he was doing just the same as we were. I don't think there was any great arguments, hatred or anything like that. No

26:30 we, we were glad to see them here.

How different to the Australian men were they?

They were more affluent for a start. The uniforms were excellent compared to ours. They certainly had a lot more money to spend. But an American is incredible. He can be as generous as they'd come, as generous as anyone you'd meet, share the wealth with you no worries at

27:00 all. I think not only that, I also seen some of the actions they do, and I think they're incredibly brave people. Sometimes foolishly brave. To me I still think that we tend to down-play them, whereas if you get to know them they're pretty much like we are anyway.

Would they turn up to the dances you went to?

Yeah, they'd go to dances and that sort of thing, yeah. And they were always welcome.

27:30 Yeah they were always welcome. No problems. There was always these arguments about taking the girls and all that. The girls were going for the money and all that sort of rubbish.

What was the attitude towards the girls that went out with them?

I don't know, I don't think, well some of them may have been criticised. I don't know why, I couldn't see why. I mean let's face it, the girls had to have a social life the same as everybody else did. So I couldn't see that

28:00 if they went to a dance it wouldn't matter who they went with. Soldiers, civilians, Americans, whatever.

From your perspective, did it seem like a female heavy society at that stage?

Oh no, it was a male dominated society, there's no doubt about that.

Even in numbers?

No, not in number, but everything that I think was legislated

28:30 or mooted as an acceptable thing seemed to be geared towards the men. Even after the war when I went to work with the Commonwealth Public Service, the rule was there and it applied to my wife too, that when we were married, that she had to give up work. They didn't employ married women unless they were widows. Her husband had to look after the family and that was the whole

29:00 ethos behind it. Once the wife was married, she left the job, and that applied in a lot of places. Whether it's fair or not, I don't know.

When you were finally able to enlist, what did you think of the longevity of the war at that stage?

Oh gosh, nobody had an idea that it was gonna finish up in eighteen months, no.

29:30 No it looked as though it was gonna be at least two or three years. They were still fighting up through the Pacific. They were still fighting in the Philippines. They moved on, they got up to Okinawa.

From the war's beginning they always said it would be over before Christmas. Were they still trotting that line?

Those were propaganda ploys I think, for wishful thinkers. I don't think wars are ever over that quick.

Were they still

30:00 **trotting that line publicly when you joined up?**

No, the reality had hit home. You don't fight a war without casualties for a start and it's gonna take a lot longer than we anticipated. There's been a lot of criticism about Australians' contributions in the last years of the war. The fighting at Wewak, was that necessary? The fighting in Bougainville, was that necessary?

30:30 Those places had all been by-passed.

When did that thought germinate? Was that something that happened as it was going on?

No I think it happened in the last couple of generations in hindsight more than anything.

And when it was actually happening it seemed necessary?

Well it seemed as though it was necessary. There were Japanese there and there was only one way, one

thing to do. You go and engage them. Otherwise they'll cause trouble, they'll fight.

31:00 **By the time you enlisted, you must have had a bit of an idea of what sort of military force, or type, the Japanese were?**

Well, yeah. We knew that they were in the main well trained. But they were fanatical. They were patriotic too, very patriotic to the point of being fanatical about their homeland.

31:30 you gotta understand it took me some years to actually come up with the thought and knowledge that the Japanese believed in their own invincibility. As a nation. That the history of Japan started from a goddess who wept and the tears dropped into the ocean and formed the islands of Japan. That's how far back they believed

32:00 their history goes. And that they are a sort of chosen people. Virtually.

What did you think of the strength of your allies when you joined up?

Well it was amounting strength, there's no doubt about that.

Did you think you were invincible?

They were into Europe in large numbers. Huge battalion campaign was being pushed well north. Well I thought, "We're on a roll here, there's

32:30 no doubt about that". Of course the Russians were surging across Europe. All of those things put us in a very good frame of mind. I think. I don't think anybody saw any quick end of the war. Just that they dropped that hot brick as the Americans called it, on Hiroshima, and that certainly made them think, and the second one on Nagasaki. That made up their mind in a hurry.

33:00 Because you can't have that sort of thing as a nation and hope to survive. You just couldn't. If you're talking about obliteration, that's what it was. That completely flattened them. One or two bits of twisted steel here, a little bit of a building frame. Everything else was just gone, vanished.

How was that news reported in Australia?

33:30 Well, when they said they'd dropped an atomic bomb everyone was running around scratching their heads saying, "What the hell's an atomic bomb?" It was only later on, I think, they found that the reality of what it was. We didn't pay much attention to it, I don't think, here. We knew that it was going to hasten the end of the war, there's no doubt about that. And it certainly did.

Did they

34:00 **estimate casualties or anything?**

Before it? From it?

From the atomic…

No I don't think they had any idea of what they were. In fact I'm not sure they're even know today how many really died. At a place called Etajima, which is the port of Hiroshima, the Americans set up a hospital to treat victims of the atom bomb. Medical

34:30 side of things. But I think it was equally as much a research station to find out what the effects of that bomb had been on the civil population. As far as the total number killed, I've heard figures from sixty thousand to one hundred and twenty thousand in one bomb. What it was, I don't know. I do know this though, I went to an

35:00 island off Hiroshima. I was there for two months. There was an area, barbed wire, signs everywhere, "Keep Out, Prohibited Area", blah, blah, blah. Well the Australian soldier, what the hell do they think we're doing? Let's go and have a look. Through the wire we went. Up over the hill.

35:30 And we came to this long, great valley. Now we looked down the valley, and suddenly everybody looked and then looked at one another. There's bone sticking up over the ground there, a leg sticking up there, a skull lying there. What we came across was the main burial ground for the victims of the bombing of Hiroshima. They'd just laid them in the valley and pushed the dirt in over them. 'Course the heavy rains

36:00 had washed a lot of it away, I was talking to a fellow, he was in Japan in the air force, but he also became a researcher and historian, military historian. I told him about it and he said, "Yeah, I know about Hiroshima. I said, "How many do you think were there?" He said, "How many do you think?" I said, "I don't know, it's a fairly long valley. Maybe twenty thousand". He looked at me and

36:30 he said, "Multiply that by three and add four". And that's what he reckoned was in there, sixty four thousand. So, you know. People did disappear. People just went.

Besides the "Keep Out" signs, any sort of markings of what it was?'

No. Decontamination, well these sort of symbols for decontamination or contaminated areas. I think they only

37:00 developed them later on. When they started to get into nuclear power plants and those sorts of things.

Was that guarded at all, that valley?

No. The whole reason we were there, the Japanese during the war built the biggest battle ship ever built. It was three of them. There was Yamato, Tsutsuji, and the Mutsu.

37:30 Now, the last one [Shinano] as that came down the slip-way, being launched before it was even fitted out, there was an American submarine sitting on the bottom of the bay of Tokyo. It saw this thing come out and out a torpedo in and sank it. But the other two were lost, one was lost off the Philippines,

38:00 the other one [Yamato] was lost off Okinawa. Bombed out of existence. They were on suicide missions. They were huge, biggest ever built. And they had great guns on them .The guns were 18.2 inches I think. And they were capable of throwing a shell about twenty-five miles. Long range, really long range. Spare [gun] barrels, they had six spare barrels

38:30 these war ships, on this island of Nishinoshima, which was also a Japanese naval storehouse, quite a big complex. Had its own little electric railway and all that sort of thing. And our main job, really, was supervising some Japanese labour to cut up these spare bowels. What they did, they were up on big wooden trestles, so they dug trenches underneath them, the full length, and deep into the ground

39:00 and brought out welding equipment. And they'd just cut it up into two foot sections and let each section fall into the hull and filled in over the top of it. I bet those barrels can be dug out and re-used because they were all copper bound, bound with copper wire the whole length of them. That'd be worth a fortune. Even in Japan at that time. So I reckon they would have been dug up and recycled somehow. But

39:30 that's why we were there.

When you saw these bones, did you twig? Did you know what it was about?

We knew it was a mass grave. But it was only then quipped that Hiroshima was over there. It had to go somewhere. There was nothing on the mainland that anybody knew anything about. And this was a fairly scarce inhabited island.

Tape 5

00:31 **I'd love to know about training in street fighting. Did you have a street to fight in?**

Yeah this was sort of like a little country town. About twenty houses. It had been abandoned. The whole thing had been abandoned. Whether it had been a forestry camp or a workplace, I don't know. But, yeah, it was rather interesting to run around there.

01:00 We tried to do the training without destroying too many of the buildings, 'cause they wanted to use them again. So we used to use things called "thunder clashes". They'd give off a clang a bang a lot of noise, a lot of smoke, but we'd use those in place of ordinary grenades. They had an old brick wall there and they did demonstrate to us how you could blow a hole in a brick wall using charges

01:30 tied on bits of wood and you built it like an x and you'd lay the whole lot up against the building and then fire the two charges together and bang it blows everything in.

Do you line up the wood with kind of angle of the bricks, is that how you do it?

No, no, you just get two bits of scrap timber, maybe, six feet long, that wide, just lash them together like that in an x and then you put one charge there and another one up the top so

02:00 that you just rest it back against the brick work.

The charges against the brick work, between the wood?

Yeah, when it goes off. I think it's TNT [Trinitrotoluene]. One explosive follows the line of least resistance and the other one cuts against, I think it's TNT, that's right. It was block TNT, cuts against, and that would blow a hole in the wall.

Can you tell me

02:30 **what the procedure is? How do you deploy down a street?**

Well, the only basic infantry section is that the smallest subunit, right? In a section you have three men, the Bren gun [light machine gun]. One's on the gun, one's the ammunition number and the other fellow, he's the lance corporal, he's guiding them around. Then you've got section commander and his

03:00 rifle section, which are all riflemen , couple have got submachine carbines. Now, you'd come in, renegade it to ground in a position and cover the speed or whatever. Then you'd start feeding people in

from wither side. If there was any shots fired, everybody freezes where they are and work out where it's coming from. Then the brim might move forward to fire on that particular spot while people

03:30 move forward again. Grenades come into it a lot. You throw a grenade and as soon as you rush forward you gained a bit of ground. It's a matter of working your way patiently through each building and each street until you get to the other end. That's what the Americans I think started to find out. Parts of a rack or this insurgency they've got over there, the Brits are good at this. They've been doing it for years. They did it in Cyprus, they

04:00 did it in Malaya and places like that.

Would you throw a grenade in each door?

No, if you suspected there was, yeah. Or through a window.

So it was at your discretion as well?

Yeah.

I think I interrupted you, sorry, so through a door or window or on the roof you were about to say?

Yeah if you could get up onto the roof, you could drop it down a chimney, bang. If

04:30 you suspected there was people in those rooms. 'Cause what the enemy used to do, the Germans were pretty good at this sort of delaying tactics, they get a room in a house, and sandbag a corner of it. Two walls there and a sandbag corner. And they'd lift their machine gun up and point it out of the window. And they'd watch down the street and anyone coming up the street, they'd fire the thing down and then if somebody tried

05:00 to throw a grenade back, through the window, they were right, they just hopped down behind the sand bags. Keep themselves protected. There's all sorts of things. You've gotta watch it. It's a slow careful sort of an operation. Probably the slowest military operation you can undertake, the street and village fighting. The Germans found that out at Stalingrad and Leningrad, Moscow.

05:30 **What do you do for village fighting as opposed to street fighting?**

It's both, it's one and the same, but except that what you do in the streets is different from what you propose to do in the houses, but they're inter related. In other words you start off fighting out in the street. Suddenly there's strong-point in a house, so you're gonna have to do something about how you tackle the house. Get rid of the strong-point, then you move on.

06:00 There's all sorts of funny things have come into it since. Mines, the use of anti-personnel mines. And what they called CD mines, Command Detonated. They used those in Vietnam, the Vietcong used a lot of those anti-personnel and CDs.

Were you trained much in the way of booby traps?

Not for service in Japan, I wasn't, but I trained in setting

06:30 booby traps and springing booby traps later on. And that's another story. It's related to the CMF, not me.

You've been trained for what's potentially an invading force. You'd be looking out for booby traps, wouldn't you?

Well, you would have expected if you were gonna do a beach landing there might be some opposition on the beach. In the way of mines or obstacles.

07:00 **When you heard that the war was over, was there a part of you that was a bit disappointed?**

No. No. I, you felt like saying, "What the hell have I been doing all this for?" But sure. I think everybody was glad the war was over. I mean, if you're involved in a war, it doesn't matter whether you're in Australia, out of Australia, where you are. When the war stops,

07:30 there's only one thing comes to mind. "Good, I survived. I'm still here". It's a heartfelt feeling that people say to themselves. If they don't there's something wrong with them. They really need to see a trick-cyclist, psychologist.

What followed was a fair amount of labour.

Hunt, search, chase up rumours

08:00 as lot of guarding of installations, 'cause you put a force on the ground, you've gotta have certain things for it to exist by. Rations, stores, petrol dumps, all that and that's gotta be guarded otherwise it'll disappear overnight, particularly if there's a starving population. Rather interesting sidelight, we'd found some tunnels that were based on a place called Onomichi, which is a little

08:30 seaport just down from Fujiyama. And in it was boxes and boxes of tin fish. And it had all come from Scotland. I think what had happened, they'd grabbed that in Malaya when they invaded Malaya. And somehow or other it had all got back to Japan, and been put into this tunnel. It dragged out, and it was quite a bit of it. There was, they had like a school and

09:00 troops were quartered in the school and a big playground outside. So they stacked this all up. They put guards on it at night, everybody hooked around it at night to make sure nobody took any. And it would have been there, I suppose about three months. When they came to move it, the whole stack in the middle was hollow. So, you know, human ingenuity, be it Australian

09:30 troops knocked it off and flogged it, I don't know, but the whole thing had been hollowed. It was just there standing on its own frame of boxes.

Were the guards raked across the coals for that?

Yeah, well no doubt there'd be inquiries as to, "Did anybody see anything?" Yes, obviously not, 'cause it had been guarded for incidentally three

10:00 months. Boy, whoever hollowed it out, they knew what they were doing.

By labour, I actually meant in Australia before you made it to Japan.

Ah, yeah. The Works Company, yeah.

It must have been pretty frustrating. Did many of the men go AWL [absent without leave], or just nick off?

No. Some might have, but leave was pretty good. You had virtually every week end off for a start.

10:30 Even during the week you'd be back in camp by four thirty, five o'clock. Clean up and have a bit of tea. And then you could go on leave and provided you were on parade and could muster the next morning whatever job you were going to. So as far as that went it was pretty good conditions. It's just that the sheer drudgery of what you were doing didn't impress anybody.

What were your

11:00 **observations on that period post war in Melbourne, and not rebuilding, but**

Well, it became a pretty bustling city. It had been a very much a, what would you say, a hotbed of conservative thoughts and deed. But suddenly things started to brighten up. Rationing was decreased

11:30 over a period of time. I think petrol rationing was probably the last to go. But things started to appear, and people appeared going to work, people seemed to be reasonably well dressed and well fed. And there was a big feeling of optimism I think. You know there was just so many things going on, so many new jobs, new industries. People were going into things they'd never even thought about in their lifetime.

12:00 And of course because of war ravaged Europe and other places, out produce here was in high demand. Wheat, wool, meat, you name it. And, boy, it was going of. Affluence really flooded in on a rate that had never been seen here before, there's no doubt about that.

Was quite a lot made of Australia's performance overseas in war as

12:30 **a nation building, culture building, identity building force?**

Culture building? Ha ha. Some of the things that Australian soldiers may or may not have done, doesn't lead to demonstrate a very good culture.

Did Melbourne come out of the war different in those ways?

I think it must have. I think it must have. I'll say it again, I think the eye-opener was what the women were capable of doing for a

13:00 start. There were still women working on the trams, as commies, drivers, you name it. Trains, the lot. And ah jeez, didn't know the women were capable of doing this. It was a real eye opener. And I think we moved forward fairly slowly and then we, we'd absorbed a lot of the migration post World War II. And boy

13:30 that was needed. Because the high demand for labour. The snowy scheme was underway that was a huge undertaking for a company of this size. Most the '50s, absorbed the migrants there into those jobs. They moved on to other places. And all in all we became a pretty dynamic sort of country. And by comparison to overseas, I don't think we've

14:00 looked back. We've had sessions, as you call them, and they're only a flutter of the of the eyelids, sort of thing. People lived fairly well. I mean look at me. What more do I want? I got a house, I got a bed. I eat three times a day, more if I want it. So we got nothing to whinge about, and I think the whole of our nation's sort of moved forward. We went from that nation of seven and a half million, and what

14:30 are we approaching, twenty million now? So we've done that in a fairly short span of time. Whether it's by good luck as opposed to good management, well, that's debatable as to which side of politics you're on and.

Before you went to Japan, what did you see in the way of returned or damaged soldiers?

15:00 Not a great number. Most of them came off the hospital ships, or the hospital trains. And they were taken straight out the Heidelberg, you know, they were out there, and we didn't, unless you knew somebody who was ill, or out there, and you went deliberately to visit them , you wouldn't see too many. But Heidelberg was really flat-chat. There were a lot of other places run by the Red Cross. Big place in

15:30 Toorak, top end of Toorak, former Governor's residence. That was turned into a nursing home. A lot of amputees and people like that were in there. Those people who required long term treatment and rehabilitation were very well looked after. I would say that. There's no doubt about that. And as I said before that, our

16:00 repatriation, discharge system and the treatment of veterans was second to none in the world, there's no doubt about that. We have what I call a very generous system of compensation.

And projects like this I think are testament to our respect for?

Well, the real value I see in this, and I said this earlier today, is that hopefully

16:30 these sort of interviews will provide factual basis for those who may wish to do research in the future and write a book or an article or whatever. Whatever it is, it's gonna be based on fact. Not supposition, or what may have happened. There is too much of this starting to creep in, and I'm afraid we don't do ourselves any

17:00 service by what I call perverting our military history. That's what it is.

Let's get the facts of your term in Japan. This fourteen day indoctrination course sounds pretty interesting.

A lot of battalions do this sort of thing. If you marched into a unit, they just don't accept you at face value, you gotta do certain tests. You might have to do weapons tests, how you handle weapons. They might take you to the range and see how you shoot. Because they've

17:30 set a standard, and it's a standard they want to abide by, a drill. You go square bashing for a couple of days and right turn, left turn, three bags full and all this sort of thing. Backwards and forwards, until the instructors are satisfied that you're up to the standard of the rest of the battalion. And there's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with that. If you went into a job, you were a newcomer to a processing plant or something, and you weren't up

18:00 to the standard, they'd put you through a training course. In industry, to try and bring you up, because it's to their advantage to get you up there as soon as possible. Not only from the productivity point of view, but from the safety point of view. And we'd see a lot of this going on.

What were you told in terms of the run of affairs in Japan? When you first got to Japan, what were you told in terms of how it was being run and what your role would be?

18:30 We were given a little booklet getting onto the boat. I wish I'd hung onto it, because I thought it was invaluable. It laid down a whole lot of guidelines to follow. And finished up with a little phrase book in the back of it, to learn to communicate with the Japanese, which was essential. You need to have basic communication with them.

19:00 Either by sign or oral language, a difficult language to learn. But over a period of time you get your certain fazes. If you want things done you gotta use them, so

What were the rules?

For a start, we had a thing called non fraternisation. In other words, you weren't allowed to mix with the Japanese population.

Just full stop? Just not at all?

We had to keep

19:30 them at arms length. And indeed there were penalties. If you were caught in a Japanese home, without lawful excuse or reason, you could be charged. Now they tried to change that. The commander in chief, Robertson tried to change that, because it's almost impossible to police a thing like that. People go out. They're gonna meet with

20:00 people. The Americans didn't follow it. They only had it for a little while and they gave it up. But right through our occupation we had to have this stupid bastard non-fraternisation rule. And I'll be perfectly blunt if they'd have done away with it, some of the other things that did occur in Japan, and not good on the social register,

20:30 may not have occurred. I'm talking about things like the VD [Venereal Disease] rate. You know. It's like

everything else, if you build a wall, some person wants to climb over it. And if the wall's not there, it takes its own course and things are not traumatised and not sought after. It happens. So I think the non frat rule was a stupid rule.

21:00 Still, it was there.

If they had a non-fraternisation rule, did they contradict themselves and offer sex ed [education] and VD counselling?

Yeah, yeah. Well we had all those things. We had some horrific films. It'd curl your hair.

What would they entail?

Before and after shots, and all that sort of thing. And they even had, I think in Kure, they had a Kure Japanese

21:30 hospital. They had specimen jars with deformed children and those sort of thing, as a result of VD infected. And VD was right, you know, the Japanese had a very, very poor hospital system. Very poor, because life to them didn't mean anything.

Someone said that Japanese women were encouraged to contract VD in case of invasion.

There was talk about

22:00 that at one stage. But I don't know. My impressions of the Japanese women were that they were strictly moral people. They were very moral, and friendly. Loved to be sociable, they really did. They liked to do a little bit of entertaining or we entertained and laughed, and do all

22:30 the things we do. And more so the men. The men were very reserved, should we say, But no, I would have found that to be a difficult thing to convince the average Japanese woman to do. No. What did they used to say. "Me?

23:00 Me no sickie-sick. Me no sickie-sick". They were the words, "I haven't got VD". And that came into conversation because we employed them. One of the benefits we did of the occupation was that we employed Japanese labour to do al lot of things. Heavy work, and some of them worked damn hard. Washing, kitchen, we had mobile laundry set up

23:30 eventually, where you could put your clothes in and it was brought back to you all nicely ironed etc. That made life a little bit more easier. But the, they were employed in kitchen, and food handling and all that sort of thing. So there had to be some betting of their standards before they were employed. And they worked damn hard. I could tell you that.

24:00 I seen Japanese women do things that you'd never ask a woman to do here. She wouldn't do it, wouldn't physically be able to do it. One was at a railway siding where they were loading railway sleepers, you know, the cut railway sleepers. The Japanese have a carrying cone called the jika that sits down their back and they've got two prongs that stick straight out at right angles. And it comes up over your shoulders and it has a

24:30 headband that goes around here. And they had, they were loading them into these flat car type things, the doors were open and they had a ramp built up on an angle. And they were picking up two of these sleepers, putting them on the Jika frame and a girl would walk up the incline like that, into the flat car, turn around and off load them. Bang.

25:00 I said to myself, "Boy, I wouldn't like to be involved in that". I got a bad back as it was. No they worked hard. You may have seen also the yoke with the two baskets hanging on it. We had a bit of a trouble with the entrance to our camp and they wanted to improve it. There was a little hill there, they wanted to shift it. They shifted the whole damn thing an a thing like

25:30 a long handled shovel a hoe, like a mattock, and these women with these baskets. And the men loaded up the baskets and they trot away and drop them somewhere else and they'd keep going almost at a trot the whole day, they'd keep going. Incredible. Yes indeed. No they're a, they were hard workers. They could give us a lesson when it really came to hard yakka.

26:00 These days of course, we're lucky we've got machinery to do most of the work. But no they were, it was a matter of work or starve for a lot of them.

Just to get back to fraternisation, in those sexual education classes what did they advocate, in terms of not getting VD?

Don't do it. But they also had a system

26:30 You've gotta be quite frank about this, if you were going on leave, you had a leave book to sign. And you had to sign your name in the book, and they'd issue two condoms to take on leave. Now, if you came back to the unit and about ten, twelve days later, and found out you had VD, you'd be

27:00 charged, self-inflicted wound. You didn't use your condoms. You know. In addition there were areas not where we were, because as I said we were about five miles out from the town, but round Kure which

was the big base area. There were brothels. There's no doubt about that. They were everywhere. So what they did, they set up

27:30 a thing called a POC [?]. We used to call it, "The Wash Your Dick Place'. The idea was that if you'd been to a brothel, and run the risk, then you went there and they'd have a syringe and God knows what else to give you a good solid was out. Not a pleasant experience, but nevertheless, if you didn't have your

28:00 name in the POC book, and you got VD, you were charged again, self inflicted wound. Because the facility was provided for you to make sure you didn't get it. Now VD was a problem. It became a bit of a notorious thing to the extent that they sent an investigating committee comprising three bishops from various

28:30 religions. Bishops General came up and did and investigation. But the conclusion was that the rates being suffered were no greater than they were in Sydney. So the whole darn thing was dropped. That's a fact.

That doesn't sound right. Somehow I imagine that soldiers being what they are…

I'll tell you a story, and this is fact.

29:00 There was a young fellow in the same group as me, same platoon, same section. He signed on for a second term in Japan. You had the option, if you wanted to you could re-engage. Now, immediately you did that, you could go back to Sydney. They'd take you back on the boat. You'd have a month's leave in Sydney. Then you'd come back on the boat and you'd do your second term. Now this young fellow I'd

29:30 swear on a stack of bibles, that he never had anything to do with the Japanese women. Never. He didn't like the Japanese. In fact his brother had died in a prisoner of war camp. So he, you know. He was quite happy to serve on it the army in Japan. He went down to, he signed on, down he went to Sydney. He came back and you gotta bear in mind that the gestation period for VD is somewhere between ten

30:00 to eighteen days. He no sooner arrived back in the section we were at Kure doing guard there somewhere, we got up this morning, and he said, "Andy, what do you thing this is?" And he showed me. And I said, "Come on, down to the RAP [regimental aid post], you're going over to the College of Knowledge". Over on the island, they'd be treating you over there. He had VD. Where had he picked it up? Last night in Sydney, out on the town.

30:30 So, there. That's a true story, I wouldn't mention his name. I could still see the horrified look in that young bloke's face when that happened.

And did he get done for self inflicted wound?

I don't think so. I don't think he was processed. I think he went over to what we called the College of Knowledge, that was a wing of the general hospital. All the VD cases

31:00 were isolated in there and treated accordingly.

And what diseases exactly are we talking about? Just gonorrhoea and

Syphilis, Gonorrhoea. There was another funny thing that's still talked about it medical circles, called NSU [non specific urethritis], whatever that is. And he said, "It's only a strain", yeah, strain

31:30 all right. You'd go to the toilet and you'd need a six inch nail to bite on.

And what did they offer in the way of treatment besides a dicky wash?

'Course penicillin was the go. And these fellows over there just lined up for a shot of penicillin until they were cured. The test

32:00 of cure wasn't an easy thing. I don't know if you've ever heard of the hockey stick, have you? The medical instrument about eight inches long and it's got a curve on the end like a hockey stick. And that's inserted and swung around. And pulled out and sent off for testing and to see if there's any germs around. If there isn't, you're cured. If not, you stay a bit longer.

32:30 **Do it again?**

Well, if you were a repeat performer in the VD caper, it was like a baseball game, they call it three strikes and you're out. So if you repeatedly came up with a dose of the VD, they must have looked at you as an incorrigible sex fiend or something. You were sent home for discharge. You were just a medical liability.

33:00 That's all. So home they went.

Were these brothels patrolled by the MPs [military police]?

They tried to, they tried to. Some queer incidents happened out of them. The MPs used to do what they'd call a brothel raid. They had a jeep fitted with spot-lights and a siren. And they'd get around the brothel area and at a

33:30 given time they'd all come roaring in with their siren going, and the lights on, trying to catch people. And there'd be blokes running down dark alleys with a bundle of clothes under their arm, and their boots around their neck and all those sort of things. KD was one I heard of, he got hold of a pair of these Japanese getas. You know what a geta is? A wooden clog? Clip clop, clip clop, sounds like a little pony clopping along. And this bloke, the MPs of course, of he tried to run

34:00 in boots they'd follow you with the jeep, 'cause they could hear the sound of the boots going. But this bloke he got himself getas and he'd clip clop clip clop, "Oh that's a Japanese going home", all sorts of subterfuges. It was a problem, but had they had legalised brothels and properly

34:30 vetted such as we've got now, I don't think the problem would have been there. And strangely enough if anybody mentions BCOF service from time to time it does get thrown up, "Oh you blokes were over there, you must have had a wonderful time. All that VD, you know", oh crikey!, "What are you talking about?" It might have been a base area, but it certainly

35:00 wasn't in my unit. Mainly because, a, we weren't close to the civil population and b, we were kept fairly busy. Still, there's no use denying that it existed. It did. They handled it very well, I thought. Firstly, if they'd have had legalised brothels, and secondly the non fraternisation hadn't been applied as strictly as it was, it wouldn't have been half the problem.

35:30 Maybe that's a thought for the future.

They certainly expected fraternisation. I mean there was a certain expectation?

Well it was damn hard, you know, you wanna buy souvenirs to send home, you gotta go down the market place. They turned a blind eye on you going into a shop or a stall to barter with the Japanese. They mightn't wanna know where you got the yen from, it was probably from the black market stuff. And the black market thrived over there.

36:00 And I'd say this, if there hadn't been a black market, the Japanese really would have starved. Because most the stuff they wanted was food.

What in particular did they want?

Anything sweet, condensed milk, worth a fortune. Anything in the pharmaceutical lines. Yes. But there wasn't much of that flogged, because that was for our, supplied

36:30 for our own use. And anybody that did that was sort of frowned upon, and you wouldn't get any brownie point from his mates if you was flogging pharmaceuticals.

How easy was it to flog other stuff and save your own rations?

No problems. They didn't go so much on meats. After a while the canteen service started to improve a bit and you could buy things like tinned sausages, frankfurts. Tried to flog them, no, they didn't wanna buy that.

37:00 **Not a part of their diet, is it?**

No, no they just weren't used to that. They preferred fish. Fish and rice that was the basis. We found that out when these two Japanese came out to visit us. We thought, "We'll treat them right, we'll give them good Australian beef". It didn't go down. Mum cooked a big Chinese meal, oh they were wrapped in it. Plenty of rice, plenty of fish. Sweat and sour things. Pickles, you name it.

When you were trying to sell things in

37:30 **Japan, what was the procedure?**

You wandered around surreptitiously, let's put it that way, Very casually. And you make sure there's no MPs looking anywhere. Then you either walked into a shop where you knew they would buy stuff from you, or quite often in certain places you walked out, the buyers were kids, little kids about this

38:00 his, and they'd have a roll of notes. They'd been sent out to do the buying, see? Because they worked on the theory, and they were probably right, that we were softies as far as kids go, and if you want a bargain, the kids were pretty tough. Yeah, with their bargaining. But everybody virtually knew what the going rate was for a tin of milk or a packet of cigarettes. Cigarettes were another things you could sell.

38:30 You'd have people, if you went into a dark place you'd have little voices talking to you, you know, "Do you sell chokoreto [chocolate], do you sell this, you sell that?" All these things that'd be coming out, And you know, whatever you had to sell wasn't hard to sell. Best thing I think, I found this out when I was out doing our last stint up in Tokyo. Tokyo had a lot of shoeshine boys. Polish your boots, and they

39:00 were pretty popular. Now, they loved our nugget and kiwi boot polish. Tins. We could buy that for four pence hay penny in the canteen. Take it outside the gate, and you'd get a hundred yen for that. A hundred yen would buy you ten, what we called Lady Blamey. They were pots of beer, and they were that tall, and they were that round, You'd go in the beer hall and you'd pull out a roll of notes and we, you'd

39:30 throw it all in the middle and the girl would just keep bringing the beers and taking out of the middle. We didn't care if she took more than she wanted, because we were drinking on four pence ha'penny worth of shoe polish. Good beer too. Liked the beer, Japanese beer.

Tape 6

00:31 **Let's start with the business of the tunnels**

The tunnels? It's hard to imagine what these tunnels are really like. They were huge. They were all over the place. Some of them had complete workshops in them. Some of them were seven or eight feet tall, just hollowed into

01:00 the mountain. Or a cliff or something. But virtually hundreds of them, for all sorts of purposes. Some had laboratories, scientific works in, some, as I said had workshops for machinery. Some had food, some had arms, ammunition.

How were they supported?

They were just tunnelled into the brick. Very few had any wood props or anything like that to them.

What do you mean tunnelled

01:30 **into the brick?**

Well they just chopped into a cliff face. They just kept going. Just keep on carving their way in.

And what do you think stopped them from collapsing?

Well, the sheer fact that they were rock. Yeah. Some of it would have had to be blasted in I would imagine. It was amazing the amount of tunnelling that had gone on in the numbers that existed. For all multitude of purposes. I read in

02:00 Dennis Warner's book that what they had done, we all know about the Kamikaze planes. For the defence of Japan itself, they had constructed tunnels into the hills and built a little ramp and a runway and they'd have one of these Kamikaze planes in there and they were gonna use them in a similar way to the buzz-bombs [German rockets] on London. They had enough fuel on them to get out to where the invasion fleet would be,

02:30 and a five hundred pound bomb strapped underneath they'd fly out and have a go at crashing onto one of the troop transports underneath. That was one form of tunnel. But in the main these had been developed for years. Years and years they'd been developing these tunnels.

How did they operate the tours with BCOF boys?

Tours?

Well, I'm sorry, not the tours. Your duty to

Kure duty?

03:00 That I couldn't answer. I don't know. I have no idea who programmed what unit or

No, no, sorry. I didn't make myself clear. When they sent you out on duty to go and seek out, what were your instructions?

Usually you went as a platoon, that's about thirty blokes under an officer. They would have an interpreter to go with you. So that if you wanted further information on the spot,

03:30 you could question the locals. And that paid off. The Japanese were a bit reluctant initially to come forward and give any information as to where things may have been hidden. 'Cause this had been indoctrinated into them over the years. After a period of time, they started to loosen up a bit. And people did come forward

04:00 and obviously information was leaked in odd places. And the job became a lot easier in finding these things, because they were notified where they were. But there were still places being turned over. As late as 1948, I believe, I wasn't there, I'd come home by then, but

04:30 according to Jim Wood's research and his book, down at a place called Matsue, which was in southern Honshu under the control of the Kiwis at that time, they did find another tunnel with a cache of arms and ammunition. And what they'd done, cunning blighters, they'd taken these rifles and so many

05:00 machine guns, wrapped them into oiled cloth along with about one hundred thousand rounds of ammunition, and buried it at the end of a little village. They'd done a little tunnel in and buried it. in front of that they'd built a little Shinto shrine. Working on the basis, of course, that we being a people who respect religious places, wouldn't bother to look there. But somebody talked eventually, that's

where it was.

05:30 **From the tunnels that you saw, were they electrified?**

Some were. Some of the bigger ones, the workshop ones, they had air-conditioning plants in the, keep them at the right temperature for whatever work they were doing, scientific or otherwise.

How sophisticated were their air-conditioning at that point?

Not too bad. Not too bad. Some of the facilities even had their own little electric railways running in them. This place at Nishinoshima

06:00 they'd had a little narrow gauge, about that wide, running all over the place. It'd go 'round, being an able storehouse they had big embankments where they'd store the ammunition inside. And they'd take the truck or whatever it was and you could go in there, load up, come back down to the wharf. Even the wharf rose and fell with the tide, and that had a track running right

06:30 the way down so they could work it twenty four hours a day if necessary. People of great ingenuity.

In the workshops, could you describe them for me?

Some had lays, you know the standard metal turning lays, grinders, benches and all those sort of things for doing engineering practise or work things for whatever they were working on. Engine repair,

07:00 Bigger than a garage, but you were usually able to carry out regular maintenance works. And some of the manufacturing works. All run by the Japanese Navy too. 'Cause Kure was the centre.

Were you yourself allowed to talk to the interpreters?

Occasionally I talked to an interpreter. Mainly if you weren't sure of a name for something you'd say, "So and so namae", and they'd give you the name

07:30 for it. And you'd repeat it over and over in case you forgot it. But that was the usual approach. Most of them were pretty good. They picked up English quicker than we picked up Japanese.

Did you pick up any Japanese?

A little bit, mainly rude words.

On duty with the tunnels, you mentioned that there was destroying enemy armaments and distribution.

Yeah a lot of that had to come out and be loaded onto barges,

08:00 onto trucks. Firstly if you found a tunnel and it was there, you had to put a guard on, otherwise it'd disappear overnight. So then you didn't go into them, you didn't start going in, because you never knew when it was booby trapped. The engineers used to come in and of the initial tunnel search, and as they went, they'd tie a rope across. Then if labour was necessary, they'd get labour and clear up

08:30 to that rope. Then they'd do a search, tunnel search and a labourer would finally clear it all out. And it had to be a fairly slow process. Cautious, and I don't blame them. I heard of two or three that, people were suspicious that there may have been booby-traps, so what they did, they put charges up on the ceilings and blew the lot in. Buried it all. Whether it had been dug out again, I don't know.

09:00 **Did you ever come across a situation that was definitely booby trapped?**

No, I did not. But there were, I no doubt, although it wasn't a probability it was a possibility, because the Japanese weren't bad at booby trapping themselves.

And the destroying enemy armaments, you mentioned that a lot were just turfed into the sea.

Some of it, or a lot of it, the ammunition particularly. But that produced some rather interesting little

09:30 sidelights. We were down on this little island, Nishinoshima. We were burying these spare gun barrels. Now we started to get report of fires at night along the coast line. Well what'd this? Certain time of night, on would come these blessed fires. What's going on? Is somebody signalling? What's it all mean? So eventually we got a powered work boat out

10:00 and as the fires come up, they cruised along and found out what they were. The Japanese naval air arm had a flare that they dropped by parachute. And this was in a light aluminium casing. The idea was they dripped it and it would light up the sea underneath. The Yanks had been supervising the destruction of the ammunition in this particular area,

10:30 they'd taken a whole lot of these flares out and taken them out to sea and dropped them in thinking that's the end of it. What had happened, the currants were fairly strong, and they'd drifted some of these things back and they stopped at various places in the shallow water. The seawater had corroded the case and the flare was phosphorous. If you expose phosphorus to the atmosphere, catches fire and away it goes. And these

11:00 were the mystical flares of Nishinoshima. Scared the hell out of us. Thinking we were being observed and they were trying to signal something. Alarms and excursions they call them.

What of the food that you redistributed? Did you take part in that?

No, that was the civil government. There was a set up called Allied Military Government and they'd laid down all the military

11:30 law that the Japanese had to follow. They dealt with the Japanese police. But they very quickly, and I thought very wisely, tried to set up a civil administration. Similar to what the Yanks want to do in Iraq, get them underway. Get them floating. And the foodstuffs that were for public distribution, or anything that could be put back into the

12:00 Japanese economy, that was handed over to them. It was up to them to organise their things at their expense.

Was there while you were there, genuine fear of insurrection?

Initially, yes. We were dealing with the imponderable, in some cases the inscrutable and the unknown. The thing was that just

12:30 as we arrived, the war crime trials were starting up in Tokyo. And some of the major figures were being arraigned before those tribunals. What we were afraid of was that some of the Japanese who had been fanatically loyal to their senior officers, may, if one of those senior officers was found guilty and to be executed, there might be some uprising of support.

13:00 This was a genuine hypothesis, you can say. That's a probability. But fortunately. I think the women of the tribe might have prevailed. I think they might have said, "Look, enough of this nonsense. We've had our war, we've lost. You fellas behave yourself", and I think that may well have prevailed. You did have a couple of murders in Japan.

Just on that note about

13:30 **the women, I would say it's a fair bet that they were a fairly subordinate gender?**

They were. Downtrodden if you wanna use that term. They started to reassert themselves. One of the first things that we did, as I said, they held elections in Japan for their own government. And they had to be instructed in who could be candidates and whatnot. Some of the women just didn't believe that

14:00 they could even be candidates, let alone vote. For the first time in Japan's history, the women had a vote.

Were you there for that first election?

Yeah, I didn't take part in the terms of it, but we did send supervising teams out to the booths to make sure that it was all done in accordance with the democratic process. That there was no strong-arm tactics used on anybody to persuade them to vote one way or the other. There was a free and open franchise.

Did you see any of

14:30 **the propaganda about the election? Were there posters up?**

Oh yes, that was put out through the civil affairs, or the Military Government, announcing it all. Where the electoral booths, they had to be told where the booths were, and all these sort of things. There's a book called, Sowers of the Wind, no, Time of Fallen Blossoms, written by a fellow who himself spoke Japanese and was an interpreter

15:00 for the Australians in the occupation. He had a very interesting insight in the going on to preparation for the election, and the conduct of the election.

From your perch, could you tell any difference in civilian Japanese behaviour prior to and after the election?

Well the election was held fairly early in the peace. We got there in about April, and it was only about t a matter of weeks later that they had this election, so it would have been hard to

15:30 do any valid comparison between before and after. But as you stay there a while, and I said this I think in part previously, that you got used to things going on around you, and you sense that there was a lessening of tensions, and more of an understanding of what the occupation was all about. See don't know why, but for some reason when the news was first

16:00 put about the Japanese population in Kure, about half the population took to the hills. They were told the Australians are coming, and they're gonna kill you and rape you and do every darn thing. And off they went. And it took a while for them to filter back and say, "hey, that was all a nasty rumour'. There was a matter of eying off. They eyes us off and we eyed them off for a while and gradually they

16:30 had work. They found out that they could get food and be fed. And maybe they had a change of heart

towards all of that. The women had a big influence I'm quite certain.

You must have seen, whether you knew it at the time or not, a lot of ex service men amongst the Japanese civilian population.

See when they came back for discharge, they had no other clothes. They only had their service clothes. They weren't gonna get any

17:00 anywhere. There's no shops selling civilian clothes or anything like that, they just didn't exist. So what they did, when they processed them through the repatriation centre, the first thing they did they took all the badges of rank off them so there's no discrimination amongst them. They're all reduced to the one level. All of them the same in their funny little uniform, and their little peak hat and their badges and stars and things, they all came off.

17:30 Then they gave them a medical. And I'm sure they weren't gonna be carrying diseases around the countryside. They were fed, they were given a generous dusting of DDT [dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane, insecticide], you know, pressure, all over. Delouse their clothing and their body. They then found out where they lived. They were given a one way rail ticket, and taken down

18:00 to the Hiroshima station, "Get yourself a train and go home". So they would have been confused. I'm sure of that.

Did you meet any?

Well, they'd work in the camp, they'd be doing labour-jobs on the camp. One fellow came to mind, he'd obviously lost an arm somewhere, chopped off there, but he'd got a job digging trenches. And he could grab that mattock short handle, and he'd work

18:30 with the rest of them, just digging away.

Well they call the Australians diggers, but I think the Japanese…

Well you know you gotta give credit where credit's due. This fellow, obviously he wanted to work, and that's what he's prepared to do.

With your limited Japanese, was there ever a chance to talk to an ex Japanese service man about his time?

No, we didn't broach any of those sort of things. No. I don't think anybody asked anybody, "Where were you", he could have been in Malaya, he

19:00 could have been in China, could have been in the Philippines, anywhere. We never worried about that.

What were there any fellows who couldn't stomach occupation and took you on at any stage?

Only saw one incident of what I would call a rank disobedience, and that was a

19:30 bivouac party where something had been done and said, and one of the members of the party didn't want to work and he was arguing and trying to get the others to stop work as well. Didn't get him far, I think the sergeant walked up and gave him something of a bloody ear and that was it, went back to work. There were a couple of instances of what I'm sure were murders. Where fellows were, one was stabbed

20:00 to death and the other one took place at a railway station near our camp. We're at Fujiyama, the other station up the line was Daimon. One of the officer's baton was found on the railway line there. He'd been run over by the train. Now, to those who knew him personally, he may have been selling a little bit of stuff on the black market,

20:30 don't know what he was doing over that far though. It was a long way over. Seems strange, the Japanese story was that he committed suicide. Australians don't commit suicide by throwing themselves under trains. Not to my knowledge. I've never heard of anybody doing that, throwing themselves under a train. The Japanese did, they did it right after the Cowra breakout.

21:00 Threw themselves under that, the Orange Express. The Kempsey Express I think it was. But I don't think that was a suicide, I think it was a murder.

And the stabbing? Who died there?

I've heard of this, and this is second hand. The fellow who told me, he's a committee member of our sub branch.

21:30 He was in the engineers, 13th Army Troop and he'd only been there about a week or so, and they went down towards the gate of their camp one night, and there's a group of about eight or nine Japanese there. And one of them came over and had obviously been an ex naval officer, because he still had the uniform without any rank on it. And he had a few smattering words of English and he wanted to,

22:00 "You come with me and I'll take you and buy you a beer". The mate looked beyond them, and there was another group down a darker alleyway. And he said, "No I'm not going anywhere", and he didn't go.

Two nights later, one of their blokes was stabbed in that alleyway. He must have said, “Oh, all right I’ll come along with you, where are we gonna go”. Down there and the gang had settled him.

22:30 **Back in your mess hall or tent was there a fair bit of chit chat about that?**

Yeah, those sort of things went on, people discussed them amongst themselves. But you couldn’t dwell on it. Let’s face it, you gotta go out and do your work the next day.

I don’t need much imagination to understand what would happen to Australian soldiers if they took matters into their own hands.

Nobody

23:00 really got to that stage, I don’t think. No I don’ think we ever had any near riot, or offer of violence by a group of Australian soldiers. I didn’t hear of it, I’m not saying it didn’t exits. I think people talk about rape, I have heard, although never witnessed, a pack-rape by Australian soldiers. That may have

23:30 well been on.

Perpetrated against a Japanese woman?

Yeah. Didn’t do our cause any good.

Is that something you heard over there, or when you got back?

I read that in a subsequent publication by a fellow I’ve no doubt knew it first hand.

It must have been, unfortunately, tempting for some Australians who had grievances against the Japanese to give them a hard time.

I don’t think they would have got far. Don’t think they would have got far.

24:00 I think even the labour that was given us, working for you, I think it would have been explained to them that no way did they have to put up with any sort of violence or anything like that. Because of non frat, you didn’t mix with the people much, you just gave them their order or demonstrated what you wanted done, and you would have left them to it. Or stood back and watched them do their job. No, I

24:30 don’t think there would have been any move at all against Japanese.

would the officers, or the Provos [provost – military police] intervene in those circumstances?

Well, the Provos present they’d certainly intervene , there’s no doubt about that. They would be the first call. Japanese police, pretty rag tag mob initially, they’d sacked virtually the whole of the Japanese police force. Because they were

25:00 brainwashed from the militant era, the old Kempeitai [Japanese military police] as they were known as. They were put off. Very few were retained as trustworthy and they were recruiting. Now their police weren’t too sure themselves initially, what their powers were. But I think gradually they were given an understanding of what they could do and what they could not do. There were some silly things done,

25:30 again I heard of an incidence that the Japanese, when they first put their policemen out, they had these funny-looking swards, ceremonial type things. Why they wore that I’ve never known. ‘Cause you’d get a couple of Australian soldier lurching around with a few beer under the belt and say, “Oh, souvenir of war”’. Next minute, the poor old copper’s struggling in the canal and his sword’s gone. So no doubt he’d complain about that.

I guess an Australian soldier sober

26:00 **and one drunk is a…**

Well the only thing is, there was no need to take a sword because they had many darn swords there. We had in our battalion alone, we had 44 gallon drums stacked with swords, hundreds of them. And going home to Australia, you’d go down and pick out one yourself and take one home. There was no need to take one off anybody else, none.

I wanted to ask about the first job you had when you got

26:30 **there, shepherding Koreans back to Korea.**

Yeah.

Again, where were the Koreans moved from initially?

I’ve no idea. The Yanks used to put the trainload together up in their area further up, probably Osaka somewhere up there, Kyoto, maybe Tokyo. And down they’d come on the train, whole families, kit and caboodle. We’d take them right to the end of the

27:00 southern part of the island of Honshu, Shimonoseki was the actual port they were being shipped from. Once the Kiwis had gone into the act, we took them down to a place called Yanai, we’d hand over to the

Kiwis, we go over to their camp, have a sleep and a meal and get the train back. And they'd take the train-load on. I fired a shot in the air on a train escort.

27:30 We'd picked up the train at Fujiyama. Must have been about five or six at night. It was a slow, old train. We were about eighty miles away, and I reckon it'd have to be eighty tunnels in that eighty miles, seemed to be travelling through tunnels the whole time. We got right down to Hiroshima and it was close to midnight I think. They

28:00 by gesture, and what not, they had their little stoves and heating things on board, but they wanted water. So we pulled up at Hiroshima station, and I think the engine was being changed or more coal or something on board, while we were waiting for that to happen, we said, "Okay, you can come off and we'll find a tap". And we found one right down the end of the platform. So we escorted this group with their kettles and pots and things

28:30 down there. And they were no sooner drawing water than about thirty yards away, were some trucks parked in the siding, the rail tracks. And around the corner of them came a mob. They got sticks and they got rocks. And they started to take on these Koreans that were collecting water. Whether it was some sort of a gang war, or some

29:00 political overtones, don't know. All I know is, I'm down there, I'm watching these Koreans and there's rocks whizzing around everywhere. I said, "Morrie, this is gonna get unhealthy", so I went up the spout, and bang up in the air, over their heads. And they stopped about turned and disappeared. Of course, the sergeant on the train, he came down and wanted to know what was going on. I told him. And he looked at me and said I was drunk, but I think

29:30 he was. That's by the by. I fired my shot up in the air just to scare them off. What the basis of that was, I don't know. I've discussed this with other fellows, one chap was up here in Mount Martha himself. He's a very good linguist. Picks up languages like that. And he'd served eventually in Japan as an interpreter. And he said he

30:00 probably thinks it was gang war. Cause of the crime in Japan, the Koreans were the bad guys. They really were. They ran a lot of the crime in Japan.

It stands to reason I guess, if they had been virtually run by the Japanese for a good fifty, sixty years.

Well the country was, but I tell you what, they weren't afraid of the Japanese populous in their trading with them. Their dealings with them.

Could you tell the difference from looking at them?

Yeah, yeah you can.

30:30 The Korean is bigger in stature. Bit more arrogant, oh very much so, shifty eyed. You can call anybody that. No, you could pick out a bloke that was Korean.

Were you able to communicate with any of them while you were doing this work?

The Koreans? Well they spoke Japanese. So whatever we had on the line of Japanese smattering, you, the rest of it was signs the

31:00 old conventional thing of point to there and oh yeah, righto. Understood.

Apart from that incident, did they give you any grief while you were repatriating them?

No, no. Most of them were family groups, and they were ore than happy to be on their way. Strangely enough, though, those who were repatriated and sent, and this was a compulsory thing, they had to go. Later on they had the trials run in the between the southern coast of

31:30 Japan and Korea. To stop smuggling, people coming back, people smuggling, Koreans trying to get back. The reason I think they would try to get back, because they were racketeers and they'd been plucked up and sent home, and they wanted to get back and continue on with their cosy old racket. Strange but, no they did do that.

What ethnic differences could you observe in Japan while you were there?

Differences?

Ethnic differences.

Ethnic differences. Well

32:00 apart from the Koreans, the only other group I felt sorry for. Japan. Canada and America had a lot of Japanese citizens. They were, they'd been born in those countries. Now because of the war hysteria that started when the Japanese came into the war, a lot of those people had been just scooped up and put into internment camps

32:30 and treated, to my mind, very badly. At the end of the war, they were put on ships and sent back to

Japan. Here they were, they spoke English, they never lived in Japan, had no idea of the conditions there and suddenly they're plopped in amongst the populace, "Try and find yourself a job". Most of them of course got jobs as interpreters, or later

33:00 on there were a few rest hostels set up and they were helping to manage those for the occupation forces. You could go down there for a week or so at a rest home or something.

Were you able to talk to any of those people?

Ah yes I spoke to, well I went to a place called Beppu, which was in the southern part of Honshu. And the lasses there, I felt sorry for them because

33:30 they really were intelligent people, and through no fault of their own, complete family mix up. And I thought to myself in later years, "How would that be if that had happened to my wife, if they'd have just picked her up in Hong Kong and shoved her back into mainland China". She's part Chinese. Her mother is. But her mother was American Chinese. Wed tend to treat people somewhat horridly in certain things.

34:00 **You said earlier today there was a cemetery in Japan with one hundred and eighty-seven deaths of BCOF serving officers. Apart from the two deaths that you've already told me about, were you witness to any accidents over there?**

No. But we heard about them. They were all published, we had our own newspaper, and they published

34:30 details of what had happened. I think probably as a warning for others. Things could really happen to you. Careless driving. The roads were shocking, the roads were terrible. We sent some armoured cars over there, great lumbering things. They tried to run them down to Hiroshima and two of them overturned. The road just gave way underneath them. Two blokes killed. Those sort of things

35:00 happened. Nobody had thought about the fact that the roads weren't up to the standard that we were used to.

I imagine there would probably be incidental mine accidents.

Oh yes, yeah. We had one fellow in the, they had a bomb disposal squad. Tin Bomb Disposal. And this fellow was a corporal. He was off doing

35:30 a job unloading explosives from some place they were at. I'm trying to think of the name. It was near an island. They got it onto a barge, and suddenly the barge exploded. The whole lot went up. There were Japanese labour killed as well as a couple of ours. And he grabbed a rowing boat, and he rowed it out and he rescued Japanese

36:00 that were in the water off the barge. And apparently this impressed the locals no end, but it also impressed the military sufficient to give him George Medal for bravery. Unfortunately he was then promoted to sergeant and he was trying to delouse a mine somewhere on a boat about twelve months later and blew himself up. But those things happen if you start playing

36:30 around with mines. Japanese explosives were very unstable things compared to ours. We can take a block of TNT or a stick of gelignite and throw it in a fire and burn it and it will splutter, but it won't detonate. It needs a shock to set it off. The Japanese, they used a different thing called Picric Acid in a block. It looked almost identical to ours, but if that

37:00 became wet it was terrible stuff to handle. Very, very dicey. So maybe there was a not aware of these things. People obviously blew themselves up handling it.

It's a bit scary when you think of where the Japanese took some of that stuff into the tropics and so on.

Oh yeah. True.

I imagine morale was pretty good amongst your battalion. But when something like that happened would it be dealt with?

Well

37:30 the thing is and investigation, but okay, you can't dwell on it. Those that were involved may be say, set back for a little while. Traumatised, I don't know. I wasn't involved in anything like that, but it was reflected on me in anyway.

Did you ever have any fears while you were over there?

38:00 Not from the Japanese. There was a bit of trouble with the Indians. The Indian troops were going home. They were being sent home for independence. Now, sure, probably Indian troops had been very badly treated by the Japanese during the war. Those in prisoner of war camps. Some of them were shockingly treated, the Indians troops.

38:30 This was a funny job. It was a guard, but we weren't armed, we weren't allowed to wear military boots, we used to wear sand shoes. Weren't allowed to have a web belt on it. And we're up at a place called the Psych Hospital. There were a few that had gone a bit troppo.

Australians?

Well, all four nations. There was a couple of Poms, Kiwis and what not. And they had this

39:00 house, two storey house and a ward in it. And our job in guarding them, they were completely locked in. Had to have keys done to from the outside, and you had to ring a bell and somebody would come and lock the door to let you out. But our main job was to sit alongside a bloke while he had his meal and make sure he didn't pick up a knife and try and cut his throat or stab himself. Cushy job. Just up the hill from us was

39:30 some Indian quarters with Indian troops. I don't know what the basis of the fracas was, but apparently they'd had a run in with some Australians somewhere. They went back to their barracks, and they came down to the Psych Hospital. We were the targets. We were quite safe in one way, we were locked inside, but we thought, "Well, hang on how are we every gonna get out of

40:00 here?" And they were throwing stones, and I'm talking about little one, I'm talking about half bricks. They were flying everywhere. So a phone call, corporal of the guard, he put out a phone call to the battalion, and the battalion, which at that stage was out at Hiro, must have got onto the armoured cars. Because the next thing, a couple of bloody armoured cars appeared. Probably primed and armed. And chase the Indians back. Kept them out of the mud.

40:30 They stayed for the rest of the night. And the next morning a platoon of Ghurkhas [Nepalese troops in British or Indian service] arrived. The Ghurkhas were Indian army. But the Indians don't mess with the Ghurkhas. The Ghurkhas were very loyal people and very stout. One minded nation. So they decided the situation. Everybody breathed a sight of relief. No more Indian troubles.

Tape 7

00:33 **In little Australia, with this tiny population of seven and a half, and here you are in a country of millions.**

That's right. It's hard to conceive the teeming population in a place like that. That was an eye opener. That so many people, we were used to quarter acre blocks and a house on them. So many people living, well the size of this room, you'd have twenty people living there. No trouble. And what they did, they

01:00 showed a lot of ingenuity. There was rubble from the bombed buildings, they'd pick up, they had these great heavy tiles, huge things, and they'd build walls out of tiles. Stack them up, make them neat, put dirt on the top and they'd be growing sweet-corn or something along there. Something to eat. That's what they had to do to survive. So you gotta pay them, you had to pay them, you know they were really pulling themselves up by their bootstraps.

01:30 I've commented on poverty before, if you want to see abject poverty, you looked at some of these people and the way they had to live.

Tell me a little bit more about that.

Well the kids would be in rags, filthy, bloody rags. Nothing on their feet. Just rags hanging on them. Running noses, nothing to wipe their nose with. And these poor little waifs, a lot of them, nobody wanted them, a lot of parents had been killed. They'd be wondering around in groups.

02:00 And I can tell you, there's nothing worse than sitting down I a mess-hall and eat your dinner, it was not too bad, in front of you. And suddenly you'd look over and at the window the line of little eyes looking at you watching you eat. And you know what they're there for, they're waiting for you to go and scrape your leftovers into the rubbish bin, and they'll be into that picking them out to take them home, or take it to someone who needed it.

02:30 Many was a time I'd seen a bloke leave a whole lot in his mess tin and tip it in the kid's little billy can or whatever he had. Just to give him a feed. Because you're really looking at kids on the starvation line. And I think to myself, "Boy, you pull the statistics out of there about so many living in poverty and ACOSS [Australian Council of Social Services] claims this and so and so". I think, "God, we're really badly off, we can't be that

03:00 badly off'. 'Cause that's real poverty, kids live in a hole in the ground. A bit of concrete blown over the rubble, they'd scrape a hole and they are living in there summer and winter. And the winters are damn cold.

The kids would have picked up English far faster than the adults.

Well it became almost a compulsory teaching in their school. And of course this was great for the kids and they'd wanna practise it, so they'd come along with

03:30 their latest phrase, they tried it out on you.

Did you make any little friends there?

Didn't have time, we're on the move most of the time. I think those who were in fixed establishments in Kure, fixed barracks, employing labour. Kids around there, the local kids, they'd get to know them. I think I've got a photo somewhere of one group who had adopted a kid and they had him dressed up

04:00 in a miniature Australian uniform. They cut a shirt down and made him a pair of shorts and all sorts of things, and had him all dressed up.

Would the Australian hospitals there look after Japanese children?

No, no. Strictly a military hospital. The Japanese had their own hospital.

Who was manning those?

The Japanese hospitals? What there was of their medical profession, the Japanese had never been, well they are now, but they were never strong in medical services.

I wouldn't have thought that they had many

04:30 **pharmaceuticals or surgical equipment.**

No, well pharmaceuticals were nearly non existent. 'Cause the population was so big that if somebody died from something, nobody cared. Really. And as far as their service men went, if he was wounded it was up to him to survive. Yeah. Terrible, they had nothing like the setup that we would have to look after sick or wounded service men. But still

05:00 a fantastic nation who pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, there's no doubt about that.

Were you able to every visit villages and have a good look at how they lived in the provincial areas?

You could, well you had to be careful because of this non frat thing. The non fraternisation. You could sneak off, you could go for a walk somewhere and you might turn around and there was a nice

05:30 bit of paddy field with two or three houses there and you could sneak down on the porch as it was and just have a look inside the rooms. Pretty frugal. They sleep on the floor, this tatami matting. Sleep on the floor with a block of wood under the head. I think they've learned a bit since. I saw something recently where the businessmen in Tokyo, they have this particular facility, sort of accommodation thing, and it's like a series of

06:00 tubes, and they book in there for the night. They stay late at work, or they're playing up a little bit and they don't want to go home to the missus. They pile in here and they just slip into one of these tubes and they sleep and go to work the next morning.

There's one in Melbourne.

Is there?

It's way out of the suburbs, but it's not very attractive looking I'd have to say.

Who wants to be cocooned anyway?

Let's talk

06:30 **about some of the more official things that were going on there. For example did you ever catch sight of General Macarthur?**

Oh yeah. God, yes I've got many occasions. Yes, he'd be coming out of the Dai Ichi Building which was the headquarters, and getting into his car with a fanfare of the MPs saluting and piling into jeeps and his escort screaming off with their sirens blazing. Oh Mac

07:00 wasn't bad looking. Look, a lot of people have said derogatory things about Mac. I think overall he did a pretty sound and worthwhile job for the occupation, I really do. He set that nation up and on its feet again. He did. There's no doubt about that.

Someone described for me that when he would come out and get into his car, that the route that he'd be taking, all the lights would,

Oh, yeah they'd switch the lights off to let him be able to run through, there's no doubt about that.

07:30 **And official ceremonies and the like.**

We had our parades, Anzac Day parades. We had the mounting of the guards in Tokyo. That was a big show. That was virtually half the morning taken up with ceremonial and most impressive parades, and it was always a crowd of visitors, and people would, with cameras, cinecameras, taking photographs of what was going on.

08:00 But apart from that, parades were a bit of a bug bear. But it's something you got used to. You were drilled for it, you expected it.

were you ever visited by any Australian dignitaries? Politicians or high brass?

No, they did come over there, what's his name, Chifley, the Prime Minister. And Dr Evatt [Foreign Minister] came over to Japan, but we were well away from that, we were eighty miles

08:30 up the coast and nobody was gonna bother us.

What about your CO [commanding officer], Robertson, was that Red Robby?

Red Robby, yeah, a good bloke. He tried hard to get some common sense into what he wanted to do there. Particularly about this non fraternisation and legalisation of brothels and things. But he was, Robby was a tough soldier, but he was a good soldier. And he was respected, there's no doubt about that. Much respected.

It sounds very much for the Australians that

09:00 **it was a fairly focused couple of years that you spent there.**

Yeah, yeah. Everybody was sure of what they had to do. If you stepped out of line and you weren't sure of what you had to do, somebody would soon tell you. A highly disciplined force. It really was. They made it the basis of the Australian Regular Army. It became the Australian Regular Army. The three battalions that were there, '65, '66, '67 became 1, 2 and 3 or the Regular

09:30 Army.

And if somebody did step out of line there was always the Provos to deal with.

The worst ones of the lot, there was a thing, I've gotta smile, they've got a thing on the ABC now, they call it Redcap [Military Police officer]. You seen that? Trying to glorify the Redcaps.

Well she's quite good looking, don't you think?

She's, yeah, yeah. Well they didn't have girls like that. They had these stupid little Pommy twits with this cheese, we called them cheese cutter caps, they sat down over their nose, and they had to keep

10:00 their head up to see you. Oh they were out and out mongrels.

Which nationality were they?

British.

British Provos?

Yeah, British Provos, the Pommy Redcap. Australian troops just don't like them anywhere. The Yanks are a genial sort of Provos until you get his hackles up. And when you get his hackles up, you back off, because he pulls out that damn great truncheon. And if that doesn't work, he's got that great 45,

10:30 and he'll point it at you. And he'd pull the trigger if. He wouldn't think twice about doing that.

Did you ever upset any of them?

Well we tried to get a train in Tokyo. One of the electric trains. Take us somewhere. And the driver must have complained to the Provos, and he came down and hunted us out of the cabin. With a big pistol. Threatened to put us in the stockade. We were gonna go into the stockade. And we thought, "Oh, right. Time to

11:00 go. Let's go and have another beer somewhere. Time to go home".

I'm interested to know whether you ever had any chance to go out on dances or meet with any of the Australian nurses that were there.

No. Up in, during touring duty in Tokyo, there was a thing called the Union. The Union Jack Club. You could go there and get a meal and either a

11:30 luncheon or a dinner. There was a dance on there, and there were mainly English lasses. What do they call them? WVS? Women's Voluntary Service or something. They were helping to run the thing. Some of the families, I met a couple of girls there from the Canadian legation. They'd been in

12:00 a prisoner of war camp and interned in Japan during the war. But they'd been treated fairly well, apparently. Diplomatic family. But they'd come along to the dance, too. It was a social life for them. And you could meet people that way, but as far as our nurses go, they were on the island of Iwo Jima doing their duty at the general hospital. The only time I came into contact with them was when I did my knee in playing

12:30 football and finished up for a couple of weeks in there getting physio and whatnot. Enjoying the comforts of home. Or comforts anyway. That's about the only time I ever had any contact with the nurses. We had nurses, and we had AAMWS. I'm not sure. But they were there too. And they were very good.

13:00 Surprisingly some of these reunions we have, quite a few of them turn up. Nurses and the AAMWS.

Was there any such thing as tourism while you were there?

Well there was these, you get theses trips to what they call a leave centre. Where were they? There was one at Kawai, that was up passed Tokyo. They had a golf course and nobody had any golf clubs anyway. But about the only golf course in Japan I think.

13:30 That was the most sought after one, because apparently it was very luxurious. I didn't get up to that. There was one at Kyoto, which was the ancient capital of Japan and had a lot of history. Gardens and imperial palaces and walks and that sort of thing, very pretty stuff. But the one I went to was down at a place called Beppu, which was a bit of a volcanic

14:00 area. Quite modern, most unusual hotel. Most of it was underground. It was built in under the hills with connecting tunnels again. When you walked through the tunnels there were barber shops and things on either side. And from there they'd take you out to some menagerie or something like that or look around. We went and visited a great Buddha. And what they did with the Buddhists building it,

14:30 I don't know whether they ran out of cement or sand, but anybody of the Buddhist faith that died, they cremated them and saved their ashes. And that went into the mixture for building the great Buddha. That's one way of recycling. Get your face coming and going.

That's an interesting point, you must have observed some Japanese funerals while you were there.

Not really. I think

15:00 I may have seen one or two. Japan's short of space. They don't bury people lying down. They stand them up, and they dig you down like a post hole digger and they,

I would have thought they were cremated.

Some are, but majority went into these posts. You might see a cemetery of white posts around the ground. That's their marker with the Japanese hieroglyphs on it. But they'd build them up, plant them

15:30 that way.

Before when you were talking about the trips you did. I was also wondering whether Japan at that stage was open to international visitors.

No. I think to even come in for talks and that sort of thing, they'd have to be properly approved delegations with permits and that sort of thing.

Could you ascertain what knowledge the Japanese had of the outside world from there?

16:00 The Japanese person, the individual? Very little. I said they referred to all foreigners as hairy barbarians. And that's the way it would have

And did they call you that, though?

Not to your face. But that was what they'd been brought up on. Years of it. And don't like, don't trust foreigners. You don't like them. They don't like you.

16:30 **What of broadcasts? Was there any access to international broadcasts?**

Radio America. That was out of the Philippines, I think. We had our own radio station set up. WLKS. That was a news and music broadcasting. We had our own newspaper, BCON [British Commonwealth Occupation Newspaper]].

17:00 **Where were you able to listen to WLKS?**

If you got a radio that worked. You could hear it most of the places in the occupation area.

Don't mean to be facetious, but if you can't get a radio in Japan, where can you get one?

Well there weren't many about. I remember I tattered around, I picked up a Japanese field radio. A little thing about this big. It had a bullet

17:30 hole through one corner of it. I could take that around. And by twiddling the dial and shaking it and doing all sorts of things, occasionally you get a bit of music out of it.

Where was WLKS?

That was based in Kure. Broadcasting out of Kure. And the BCON was probably up in Osaka.

And would it be military broadcasters speaking, or?

Oh yeah. It was run by four or five warrant officers. May have had an officers in charge, I don't know.

And did they have

18:00 **plum, British voices?**

No, they were run, anybody that was selected from any of the services. Yeah. No they were all right.

And BCON?

BCON, that was published up in Osaka as a newspaper type thing. About a four, six page thing.

Like a little broadsheet?

Yeah.

What information would they print on that?

Home news, what was going on down home.

18:30 You'd get the race results, but usually from a fortnight ago. The football results, political comment, that sort of thing. I think they'd get papers sent up from Australia and they'd go through and condense and report on what was going on down home.

And among men, would you do things to make you feel less homesick? Have Melbourne Cup days, or Grand Final gatherings?

No, we didn't have any of

19:00 those things. We knew they were on. And people might try and get a bet somewhere off anybody who was running a book. But no, we didn't worry about those sort of things.

Did you ever miss home, then while you were there?

Yeah. There were times, I suppose, when you sat down and said, "I wouldn't mind leaving all this. Go down home for a while".

19:30 There's nothing you can do about it right now, you'd shrug it off and just get on with what you have to do. And say, "Ah well, how many months have I got to go?"

Earlier today you mentioned the Japanese film studio.

Yeah they started back into film production. And it was rather interesting, because they seemed to have pretty good technical equipment

20:00 for that age. Whether they had been geared up from the days of producing their own propaganda films and that sort of thing, I don't know.

Where was it based?

It was in Tokyo. It was in one of the outer suburbs of Tokyo. The Red Cross, the American Red Cross organised a tour, and we went out there for the day. It was rather interesting, I thought.

What did they have?

I think they had some,

20:30 not a romantic type thing. The Japanese aren't very strong on romantic situations. To them it's a bit, "Oh no, we don't talk about that". Or they did then. There was a girl singing, I remember that. Not a bad voice, except that they've got this sort of wavering way of, like a stricken violin

21:00 occasionally. Still, it was very well done. A lot of it is mimed things too that they photographed.

They were actually in production when you went out there?

Yeah, they were actually producing a film, yeah. They had another thing I went to it's a traditional theatre. Kabuki? This is all mime, and it's all males, and the males

21:30 dress up and play the parts of women and whatnot, and they do all this pantomime and miming and it's very good.

Is it very slow?

Yeah, very slow and very expressive. And every gesture had some subtle meaning to it. Well done.

I'm fascinated about the film studio. Did you see film cameras rolling at the time?

Yeah, it was a full set. Lights, cameras, action and away they went.

So big studio set?

Yeah.

22:00 It was quite good, I thought.

And the director?

Yeah. They had the full bottle. Everybody running around and shifting chairs around. Sit here and take him there and moving booms. Yeah. I remember that. I think that was the first trip I went on.

The show must go on.

They still produced a lot of film.

22:30 **You said Bruce Ruxton was in your…**

Yeah, Bruce was in another company than me.

Were you mates?

No, no. I knew of him. You got to know people in other companies. His name was Bluey. Bluey Ruxton. He was a gingery, not a real red hair, but a gingery type was Bluey Ruxton. Not a bad bloke. His heart was in the right place.

Must have been funny all those years later watching him

23:00 **through the media.**

Yeah, well he's still at it. I think he was in yesterday's paper or something and made a comment. Won't shut him up. Well the media bait him, see? They go out chasing him for comment. , "Yeah, I'll give you something, if you don't like it that's too bad".

I want to talk about the local cafes and food and whether you indulged much

23:30 **there.**

No. Couldn't, weren't allowed. Firstly you've taking food away from the populous. There weren't any cafes as such, didn't exist. Wasn't enough food to go around. You go tup to Tokyo, there might have been some sort of street stalls. That's where I first tasted squid. And whale meat. I had a piece of whale meat. But that was like a two bicycle

24:00 wheel trolley thing with a fire going underneath boiling some fat and they'd cut a piece off and drop it in, and you'd get it on a skewer to chew on. Alright, not the average takeaway as we know it now. As far as Japanese food goes, you'd never know what the source was. Could have been the water buffalo that died in the paddy field last week. So you weren't allowed, you were

24:30 told, "Don't touch it. You don't know what the origin of it is".

It sounds like you pretty much towed the line when you were over there.

Well you had to. What else were you gonna do? Where were you gonna go? Unless there was something deliberately organised, and even when you went to a leave-hostel you were still under military discipline. It was run by an officer, or a warrant officer and you had to do what you were told to do. You'd

25:00 put your name down to go on this trip and that trip. That's about all the choice you had. You could go and have a few beers in a bar, they'd set up there before tea. But other than that. No, it was mainly to relax and unwind a bit. Had a boat trip going down there. Motor launch, big motor launch.

Was it fulfilling your ambitions?

No I don't think I had any ambitions that really needed to be fulfilled

25:30 at that stage. I just turned nineteen when I landed in Japan, and I was under twenty one when I stepped off the boat to come home. So I don't think I had any great ambitions. I don't think I'd even know what I wanted to be or where I was gonna go. I had started a bot of a rehab course up there. They started education courses. And I thought, "I wouldn't mind being a draftsman". I'd always like drawing and things so I started to do

26:00 a little bit of that in my own time. Sheets would come to you and you'd complete a sheet. And if you had an assignment you'd do that, send it back again and they'd feed you another sheet. But I didn't go on with that. There was enough left too, if you wanted to. A lot of fellows did really well out of it. They had an education rehabilitation thing. A friend of mine, he'd been a trainee school teacher

26:30 before he went into the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force]. When he finished he came out, and he went to, finished leaving honours, we didn't have HSC [Higher Schools Certificate], finished his leaving honours. And then went to Melbourne University, did a Bachelor of Education. And never looked back, became a senior master of Mornington High School here.

27:00 And really enjoyed what he was doing. But he'd been in that before he went into the air force, he'd been trained in that.

Were you able to do the rehab courses with him?

I could have taken drafting. See I'd started it. If I wanted to go on with it, they would have paid for all my fees. The only thing was, they paid an allowance, and it really wasn't much to live on. So I know blokes who were really struggling to get through their courses. Purely from the financial aspect. Those things

27:30 were available. And again I though that was pretty generous, to have that as part of your reach instruction of your rehabilitation.

Was that something you would do in addition to all your other duties, or would they make allowances for you?

Oh no, if you had any, you had to do it in your spare time. Yeah. I think we had a place called the everyman's hut in the battalion if you wanted somewhere with peace and quiet to

28:00 write a letter you'd go there to write the letter. They'd provide the paper and the envelopes for you. I'd sneak down there and do my assignments. Whatever I had to do. These days you don't have to do any drafting, it's all done by computer design.

What about letters, were you much of a correspondence with your family?

As I said, my mother had died while I was there. And Dad and I kept up

28:30 a running correspondence I suppose every now and then. Cigarettes were still short in Australia, and we had plenty of them, had them running out of our ears. So what I'd do, he'd send me up a cake in a tin. And it'd be all stitched into a bit of canvas, he got someone to stich it in and use an indelible pencil to address it. And I'd

29:00 carefully slit the whole thing open and take the cake out., We'd eat that and I cleaned the tin, and I stacked the cigarettes in to fill that, seal it down again, stitch it up again put his address on the top and send it back to him. So that was a little bit of an interest. Something to look forward to every now and then. Cake turning up. I remember on of our fellows had a cake sent up to him. And he had a sniff and he said

29:30 "Oh, no good. It's gone off". So he put it in the rubbish bin, tin and all. One of his mates said to him later on, "What did you do with that cake?" "No good", he said, "it had a queer smell about it'. "Well go and get it". And he had one look at it, sniffed at it and looked at the other blokes and said, "Got your knives?" "Yeah", into it. And before he knew it he had a piece left for him about that big.

30:00 Somebody had spiced it up with brandy. He didn't know what brandy was and he thought that it was gone off. They put it in to keep it.

Would you mind talking about what it was like when you received the news about your mother when you were in service?

Well, I did, yeah. I was in hospital.

30:30 I was in the general hospital, done my knee in playing football. Just come in good and they came in one night and said, "Get your gear together, you're going home", and I said, "Home? Oh I'm going back to my unit right?" Then they started saying, "Oh no, there'll be a jeep down below that'll take you down to the ferry. And over on the ferry you'll get another pick up there, and they'll take you down to Iwakuni'. I went, "Iwakuni?

31:00 What am I going there for?" "Well, you're going on the courier plane". Oh my God, the penny dropped. I had no gear, hardly any gear at all. So I managed to get a message to a mate of mine who was at Iwo Jima, had a good cushy job there. And he came over and I said, "Look, I've got this on, I've got no gear". So he sort of split his gear and gave me shirts, trousers, things. Because I'd

31:30 been picked up off the football field, out on the evacuation system to go to the hospital, I had virtually nothing. I think even he scrounged me a pair of boots. Different size to him, but he got a pair. I was duly booted and spurred and they put me on the plane. Unfortunately it was the old DC3, the Dakota. It took five days to get from Japan. Slow trip. And that was the courier aircraft. So they're called

32:00 On board I had, for companionship I had a, this corporal from the War Graves Commission and two war correspondents going home. There was outwards going mail. I'm glad that was on board, because I didn't have a great coat, I had no warm coat, only summer weight. And there's no air conditioning in the blooming thing, you I went burrowing into the

32:30 sacks of mail to keep warm. It was freezing all the way down. We got to Melbourne and we'd come from Morotai, we came through Darwin, stopped at Alice, down to Parafield and stayed there overnight. Came to Melbourne the next day to Laverton. I was brought in to a centre near Spencer Street Station. Didn't bother to pick up a leave pass or anything. Nobody offered one, so I

33:00 went straight and hopped on the train, and headed out to Elsternwick. And as I got off the train at Elsternwick, a voice behind me said, "Morrie", and I turned round and it was a friend of the family's. He'd been on the same train, he must have known I was coming. And I turned and said, "Oh, yeah". And he said, "How are you?" And I said, "Alright". And he said, "Well, I'd better tell you, I think you're gonna

find out in the next ten minutes when you're home.

33:30 Your mother's gone". I said, "Oh, God", he said, "Yeah, she was buried yesterday". So it was all for nothing. I had about a fortnight down here in Melbourne. Sorted out a few things, including a girlfriend, then headed back to Japan. There was a lot of, "Dear John" things went

34:00 on up there. , "Dear John" letters. Mainly based on articles, not very favourable to BCOF that was published in the papers. And I think I might have been a victim of something similar.

Articles suggesting that the BCOF boys were not being true to their girls?

That's right. And loaded up to the eyeballs with VD and that sort of thing, you know. Dear Dorothy, you ever hear of Dorothy Drane? Dearly loved in BCOF. They

34:30 resurrected that song from The Wizard of Oz when she died, "Ding Dong the Witch is Dead'. That's by the by. Then they put me on a plane and flew me back again.

Obviously they were offering you compassionate leave

Yeah.

Did they at any stage suggest discharge to be at home with your family?

No, because,

35:00 see, I'd only been in Japan, I got there in April, this happened in October. September, October. And I'd only done six months, and I'd signed up for a two year engagement. So unless there was really mitigating circumstances like younger members of the family that needed looking after or something like that, I don't think they would have listened.

35:30 They would give people compassionate discharges providing there was circumstances dictated that that person should stay there with the family.

Were there any misgivings with still being enlisted while your mother was dying?

No, no. That happened to a lot of people, must have, during the course of World War II. My father's mother died when he was in France in World War I.

36:00 So history repeats itself, goes on. You could never anticipate or understand where those circumstances are going to arise. So, you just roll with the punches, I guess.

This business with the girlfriend, you've kept that under your hat for most of the interview.

Well, everybody had a girlfriend of some sort, you know. We were all gonna have big plans. I think as far as having girlfriends went, I'm

36:30 not being derogatory to young people today, but I think our age group would have been four to five years more mature in their outlook than they are today. I think today an eighteen or nineteen year old, I would say he's about an equivalent to a thirteen or fourteen year old or a fifteen year old. But still maybe that's just my impression.

Did you have an understanding with this girl before you left for Japan?

Yes I'd said, "Look, we're going over here.

37:00 Soon as I get back to Sydney we'll see about some serious thinking". Because then I would have been twenty one, and in those days you had to be twenty one to be an adult and make up your own mind what you were gonna do. I remember my brother saying to me at one stage, "What about so and so?" I said, "Yeah", he said, "Are you serious?" I said, "Oh, I think we will be". And this is before he went

37:30 away, he said, "Let me know. I'll buy you the ring, you know, if you want me to", and I said, "Look, things are gonna happen". As it turned out, I suppose it was all for the best. Then I wouldn't have met my wife, would I?

No, and all that said and done, that's wonderful. But I'm interested that you said that you felt that's possible that the bad publicity contributed to,

I have no doubt that

38:00 a lot of it did.

Did she say that when she spoke to you?

No, but she was sort of distant and cold and said, "Oh, look, you fellas are having a good time over there and I'm sort of stuck at home here on my own". And I said, "Oh, come on. We're not really having a good time. We're still trying to get on top of what we're trying to do". But no. But whether this, they say absence makes the heart grow fonder and I think it's the other way. If you're not Johnny on the spot, you

38:30 mightn't be in the running.

Was that a real heartbreak for you?

Oh I took it to heart, I suppose. I did take it to heart. Still, when you, it's like all things, you gotta get over it. Romantic attachments.

Oh yeah, you soldier on and so on, but I just think

Oh, it wasn't just the soldiering on thing. I think for your own emotional stability you'll overcome

39:00 that. You have to, otherwise you'll go around the twist. Who wants to go round the twist on romantic attachments?

So when you went back, then, were you a different sort of a soldier?

Oh I might have been a bit more serious. I realised that our family structure had changed dramatically. I had a lot more to think about. Because here's poor old Dad, home on his own. Sitting there twiddling his thumbs. Still

39:30 working. Still doing his country runs on the blooming train. He was getting worse in his health. He had been crook from about 1938. At that stage Heidelberg wasn't a repatriation hospital, that was built during the war. The repatriation hospital, that was the Caulfield Hospital. You know, Kooyong Road? And he'd been bunged in there, very bad. He had pneumonia and pleurisy and God knows and with one good

40:00 lung. It looked as though he was gonna hand it in at one stage. But fortunately, sulphur drugs had come along on the pharmaceutical lists, and they were able to pull him along with those. Get him through. But he wasn't well. He was never a well man after that. No. I thought to myself, "Have I done the right thing by sort of hanging out, staying in Japan?" I couldn't see

40:30 any way to, unless he was hospitalised, I couldn't put in a claim to say, "I've gotta go over there and be with the old man and look after him". They'd say, "Well, hang on, that's what repatriation's for", the Repatriation Commission. And they did look after him. They looked after him pretty well. Got the best of what was available at that time. So I've got no regrets about that.

Tape 8

00:31 One of the things they had done, they'd collected a whole lot of orphans from Hiroshima, parents had disappeared. And they set up, I suppose what you can call an orphanage for them on Nishinoshima right next to the camp where we were doing the work. To keep that place operating, they had to have some sort of income. There was

01:00 no grants or anything from the government, nothing. So what they did, they had trench-fires. They had great long trenches and they burned fires in those twenty four hours a day. And they had 44 gallon drums, cut in half longways, put them there. And these little toddlers, they'd go down to the sea, pick up buckets of sea water, take them up and pour them into these troughs. And they'd boil the water away and left in the bottom was the residue of salt. They'd

01:30 scrape the salt out, package it. Salt was a pretty rare commodity, much sought after. So that was their source of income, selling salt. Now, we arrived over there and because we'd got this blooming great naval store house with all sorts of stuff in it. Including these boxes and boxes of picric acid explosive, which was the Japanese basic explosive. Whereas

02:00 I said our stuff you could throw it in the fire, and it'd melt and sizzle and pop and whatnot, but won't explode. When you put picric acid in the fire, burned with a hell of a heat, huge flame. So these kids must have thought Santa Claus had arrived when we got there, because we'd go down at night with these boxes of picric acid. Make sure they had all their troughs with water in it, light their fire and we'd go on and throw the box of picric

02:30 acid, and kick the kids out of the way and psssshh right the way, and you could see the water level accelerating down like that, and I think their productivity probably went up about a thousand percent per day whilst we were there just feeding the fires with the picric acid. So something came out of the destruction of enemy equipment and getting rid of all their explosives and whatnot. The orphanage was able to survive. But there would have been thirty or forty

03:00 kids there. And they were all steps and states. Barely able to walk to about, eight or nine year olds. And all homeless, familyless, no relatives at all to look after them. So hopefully those kids have gone on from there and survived. They were great kids, they really were.

What did you see of survivors of Hiroshima or surrounding areas?

03:30 Some nasty ones, disfigurement, burns, mainly from burns. A few that were semi-crippled, they were still able to get around. But see they didn't have things like crutches to get around on. They were just

hobbling on sticks, virtually. They didn't have wheelchairs to get themselves around on.

04:00 They just tottered as it were. And you couldn't but help say, "That's a shocking thing we hope that never again will, this sort of thing happen that we're gonna see these sort of people". It was as far as the survivors go, I felt sorry for them. Something I hope never to

04:30 see again. People try to either rationalise or justify the use of the bomb. I would justify it, on the basis of if it hadn't been used and brought the war to an end we would have had a lot more casualties, particularly in the invasion of Japan. And for that reason

05:00 I can be thankful in one way that they did drop the bomb. Because otherwise, I could well have been in that invasion of Japan. Morally you can argue it till the cows come home. Whether it was moral or not, but I think there's an old saying, "All's fair in love and war", and that was a pretty tough war. So whatever they did to bring it to a halt was worth while. That's all I can say there, but for the survivors

05:30 I felt sorry, I really did. It's like any survivor of an accident, a serious illness. I remember when I was going to school, that was mid '30s. We had an infantile paralysis they called it then, an epidemic. First time in history, the schools were all closed. Nobody went to school. They were home. And people you played

06:00 with at school finished up in bathchairs. A thing like a wicker thing, like a bed, paralysed. And you had to feel sorry for them, like you do for anybody in unforeseen circumstances. The bombs as so, I don't think about it. It's over. Done. I don't know how many of those people are still surviving today. I know the Americans through their

06:30 centre and Ugina [?] were doing a lot of research. Whether they helped them in any way, I don't know. Whether and other philanthropic organisation in the world ever helped them, I've never heard of it. But there would have been a cause.

It's an interesting perspective you must have had, because you saw all their weaponry, and their stocks. And you saw the actual effect of a defeated nation.

Yeah. Doesn't change your opinion

07:00 and the older you get the same opinion becomes confirmed that war is a tremendous waste of human effort that can always be directed towards improving the human race rather than getting rid of it. And I'm not sure that we really solved anything, frankly. People said to me, "Do you think the Japanese will ever come south again?"

07:30 Who knows? They may, but they may do it by other means. Either economic or whatever. They could do it because they're a very dedicated nation to themselves. More so than we are. We're pathetic, really, in this day and age.

When you were there, what did you hear of this concept of a hundred-year war?

I've never heard of that, really. People say it was gonna go on

08:00 for a hundred years. If the nuclear powers of the world start throwing bombs at one another, you might have a one-year war, but the place mightn't be worth living in.

You were talking about an old lady who threw a rock or two.

She may have had a son or sons who were in the Japanese

08:30 navy or the army and been killed. She would have no cause to stand and cheer at the hairy barbarians marching through her town. So maybe she had a reason. We don't know.

Generally, how would you characterise the population's dealing with an occupying force?

It was new for them. It was new for us as a role. I don't think we've ever done occupation before. Or since.

09:00 I don't think we've done it since. And it was probably new to them. A lot of castles had tumbled down for them, of course. Their emperor had to be cleared and no longer he was God, or descendent of God. Nor did he have divine right. They were now gonna become a democracy. Those changes. Culturally this would have been one hell of a shock to them because they'd been built up for years

09:30 on successive shoguns, emperors, you name it. Destinies, dynasties, it had all been gone and was all building up towards this great catastrophe they now had before them. Everything had been pulled apart. Everything they believed in, everything they'd been taught had been disproved. Boom, they're back on the bare bones of their backsides and nothing to show for it, and how are they gonna get out of it?

10:00 They pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. Sure, they've lied about a few things since, there's no doubt about that. But don't we all? Sometimes we become strangers to the truth I suppose. Particularly where politics are involved.

And war sometimes.

And war. Yeah.

Did you have any chance to see any films screened

10:30 **either American or British?**

We had, films came up, but they were brought up, a fellow would arrive with a couple of projectors and he'd set them up in one of the hangars at the seaplane base we were at. And it was good because it was a B-Hang, on one side was the boozer, and on the other side was the film. So on a hot summer's night you could go over and anytime get a beer, and wander back and sit and have a beer. If the film wasn't a good one, you'd go back to the bar.

11:00 Surprisingly, we didn't do a great deal of drinking. We did not. It was available. There was beer available on the ration. We had a ration of two bottles of Australian beer per fortnight.

Per fortnight?

Per fortnight. You could get two bottles of Australian beer. However, one of the joys that we found with Hiroshima was, right out on the

11:30 north east corner, was a brewery called the Kirin Brewery. And they made a beautiful German lager beer. Untouched by the bomb. Blew a few windows in, the rest of it was completely in working order. So that was in full production.

It proves there is a God then...

We had these little bottles about a little bit bigger than a Crown Lager is today. And we used to buy those for sixpence a bottle.

12:00 Unlimited. Drink all you want. So during the summer months when you drank a lot more, and you didn't sleep much at night. Hot and humid. And try to sleep under a mosquito net is just as bed, it gets more humid in there. So you'd stay up and stockpile a few beers and drink through the night. Fellows would play cards and that sort of thing. You'd swap your Aussie beers if people

12:30 wanted for so many of the other ones. And that'd be the time you did the most drinking was during the summer months. Because it was damn hot. But during the winter you didn't feel like drinking much, it was too damn cold.

Was there any guidance or rules about drinking a certain amount or not?

No. We were never under any

13:00 advice or instruction as to, "Don't drink too much", or this sort of thing. You gotta remember that your rate of pay was six shillings a day. That didn't go far. You had to buy your own boot polish, toothpaste, tooth brush, razorblades; they gave you two razorblades a fortnight with your pay. What else did we have to buy?

13:30 Oh, we had what we called "blanchard webbing [?]", what we called white webbing, and you had to buy your own box of blanchard and your own brass polish, polish the brass work. So by the time you'd eased out a few things, there wasn't a great deal of money left for drinking. Except when you could go to the bigger places like Tokyo, with a roll of yen, do a bit of trading, and down to the beer halls.

14:00 But the rest of the time, no. Christmas '46 the first, the Christmas I was in Japan, we got an extra ration of beer, but it was freezing cold. Snow everywhere. You'd drink a couple of beers and your teeth would start to chatter and you didn't wanna do anything. I think we ended up, drinking like an old English custom of Mulled Ale. You know, you'd heat a poker.

14:30 We had these chukkas we called them, water and oil drip onto a hot plate, and it sputters and sparks and fires up. You put a bit of wire in there and heat it up, the hot-plate, when you get it red hot, you get your glass of beer and psht in the middle and froth and foam all over the place and drink it while it was warm. It was the only way you could drink it, otherwise it was too damn cold.

I've never heard of that.

Oh, mulled ale, it was an old

15:00 English custom.

Did you have much to do with sake?

Sake is a clear liquid. It looks like gin, it is very potent. I got an idea it's about fifty percent alcohol. Nice to sip in very small quantities. But again they drink it warm. They have these little cups they put it in and they stand that in hot water.

15:30 I don't know whether it's to get the fumes coming off it or whatnot, but it's quite okay. It's nothing I'd go for. There was another thing, grades of sake. That was what you called Ichiban, that was number one

sake, then you go right down to number ten which came in great big bottles about that big and about that round, and it was made out of seaweed instead of rice. And it had froth and all sorts of foam and funnies hanging around and I couldn't

16:00 tackle any of those sort of. No. The Japanese also tried to produce a thing called whisky. They tried to copy the Scots. They produced and distillers exactly the same as the Scots had. Lord it was terrible stuff. Some of it they called, we nicknamed it Purple Heart Whisky. If an American gets wounded he gets Purple Heart, if you drank this stuff,

16:30 if you were going to drink this stuff you were worth a Purple Heart. It was gonna hurt you.

I thought the key to whisky was good water. I would have thought they had good mountain water in Japan.

Yeah. They've got very steep mountains. And that water gets shed down the streams very quickly and out into the sea. The water we had in Japan at the camp, we had a

17:00 reservoir, concrete reservoir built. And the water would come into there and we didn't trust it a great deal. We used to back a truck up and throw bags of chlorine, slit the end of the bags in to try and chlorinate the water. And it was so heavily chlorinated that when they made tea with it, the tea took on a purplish tinge. And when you went to

17:30 scoop it out and drink it, it smelled like iodine. Great stuff. You get used to it after a while. But I'm just wandering how many kidney complaints we had the BCOF boys. Crook kidneys from drinking chlorinated water. Boy it was heavily chlorinated.

Doesn't sound like a very scientific method to hang it off the back of a truck.

Well, trouble is, so many hundreds of thousands or gallons or mega litres or whatever they measured it in. That needed so many bags of chlorine. So just back the truck

18:00 up and. Yep.

Do you remember any of the movies you saw?

I can't give you the names of them, there was that many of them. We got months and months of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans in cowboy movies. Other blokes got that fed up with them all.

18:30 We were at Iwo Jima Christmas '46 and they still had these things going on, so the blokes had gone out into the local village, and at some stall they bought cap pistols and water pistols. And when the time for the film came, towards the end, and over the great chase, all would go up like mad, firing guns. All the blokes

19:00 would stand up and start firing at one another and squirting water-pistols. It's the only time I've seen an Australian Army where routine order came out it was put up on the notice board that soldiers will not be in possession of cap-pistols or water-pistols. I thought, "Somebody's got a sense of humour". That's a fact, there were so many of these blooming Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. I think he died recently, didn't he? Roy Rogers? I think I saw his name in the paper.

19:30 He must have been a decent age. Crikey.

So Christmas in Japan. Did some of the Japanese recognise it, or begin to?

No it's not one of their festivals. Their festivals are mainly devised around agriculture. The cherry blossom festival. The cherry trees don't produce cherries.

20:00 They are purely ornamental. And they blossom for a week. But what it does, is signal the first week of spring which is the start of sowing season, or planting season or something. And then they have their harvest festivals. And some of them were street parades. Some of them they'd tow these great wagons along with huge wheels on them and these various gods and deities built up. All tied in

20:30 to the festival. And it was colourful and impressive, but we didn't understand any of it. It was all gobbledygook to us.

With the non-fraternisation policies, did you get out amongst those festivals and have a look?

You could. If you were in the town and there's a festival on, you can stand and have a look at that. Providing you weren't mixing in with the populous. They'd all take it in turns of pulling these

21:00 great things through the streets. I thought, "One of these days we're gonna get some drunken Australian soldiers who are gonna rush out there and grab one and start having a race or something". But that never happened. No. Apart form that, Christmas was our festive season, not theirs. No great significance to them at all.

21:30 Not a great number of Christians in Japan. They were, where were they? Down the southern island.

Not near where you were?

Yeah there was a Catholic mission in Hiroshima. It got shaken up a bit I think. Didn't shake their faith, but still they got shaken up. But

22:00 the Jesuits had a big place on the southern part of the island. They were the ones who were trying to teach the Japanese. I think one of the Shoguns got a bit fed up with them after a while and knocked most of their heads off and said, "That'll keep you quiet for a while and stop you talking". The Christian religion was not very strong in Japan. Buddhism is. Buddhism's taken off more than

22:30 Shinto. Shinto was absorbed as the national religion. There were Shinto shrines everywhere.

Was there any sense that they occupying forces were pushing that along with democracy? The western way of life?

Well we were supposed to be demonstrating our way of life. And that leaves for another little anecdote. I was

23:00 doing a guard down at the Kure docks one night. Bitterly cold. And a couple of Pommy Red Caps came in, hopped out of this jeep, they'd been patrolling around the town. Outside the guardhouse we had a brazier type of thing going to keep warm outside. Almost red hot so you could get something out of it. They came over to have a bit of a warm. Nobody objected to that. Everybody was cold. One

23:30 of them looked and said, "You bloody Australians. You beat everybody. You are the lemon". I said, "What are you going for it for?" He said, "Couple of nights ago, we're out on brothel raids. And we tear into this place we believe to be a brothel. Upstairs, sure enough, burst

24:00 into the room, and here's a Japanese woman, laying on the ground, nothing on, and an Australian soldier standing there with his slouch hat on and his boots and the rest of his clothes under his arm. And we said, 'What are you doing here?' And he looked at me and said, 'I'm teaching this woman the democratic way of life'". And I thought, "Oh, my God". Little bit of repartee. So that's just an aside. A

24:30 little anecdote that is true. That actually happened. Talking about teaching people the democratic way of life. I don't think that's what the hierarchy mean when they said we should go out and show by example. Lead by example.

Keep your hat on at all times?

Yeah, and your boots, ready to run. No, I think you,

25:00 by their standards on dress, and they were pretty tough on dress, you couldn't go on leave unless you were inspected to make sure everything was according to the dress laid down for the summer or winter period. And your dress, deportment, how you conducted yourself, and your attitude towards

25:30 the civil population, that had to be somewhere above reproach, if it wasn't you'd hear about it. Somebody would be on you. And I think these were the sort of examples that we were supposed to set. Whether we set them well, I believe we did. I believe the standards we established for conduct as a military force were more than acceptable, and

26:00 I got no compunction to say that all in all I was proud to be a member of that particular deployment in our military history.

How important was it to represent an Australian identity?

That was a bit hard because a lot of the Japanese didn't know what Australia was. They didn't have a clue. And we

26:30 used to try to explain to them, and show them magazines that'd come up. Maybe they had animals in them. Try to get them to relate. And they were amazed. They'd never heard in the closest. Knew nothing about it. Someone didn't even know where we were, where Australia was on the map. No. To them, all foreigners were known as hairy barbarians, and that was it.

27:00 Boy, that's changed. Everybody knows where Japan is. It shifted it down, just above the northern New South Wales border at one stage about twenty years ago, but I think that's changed, I think they've gone back home again in stead of blowing up everything.

So much for the Japanese plan of invasion. If none of them knew where Australia was then...

Oh, their military would have been. But the civil population was completely divorced from the military.

27:30 Here we had reports of engagements that we were in, good or bad. And here our people were pretty informed of where our troops were and what they were doing. They would not have had a clue. They would have, had they been given the opportunity, and I think they were frustrated firstly at Coral Sea, where they couldn't get round

28:00 to land at Moresby. What they wanted to do was the airstrip.

How important was it to you to maintain your Australian identity over there?

Well, see we weren't only just doing it for the Japanese. We were in it amongst three other nations. And it was important that we conducted ourselves every bit as good, if not better, than those people. And some of them were pretty old regiments of the British Army.

28:30 You had the Cameron Highlanders, hundreds of years of history. Got on well with the Jocks, they were all right. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers. The Middlesex Regiment. I don't know how they got that name, they must have had the same problem we might have at the moment, called themselves the Middlesex. But they were there. You had the Ghurkha Regiment, that's right.

29:00 Second battalion 5th Ghurkha.

I've heard about some all in brawls basically, between,

Indians, Indians more than anything. We didn't come into fights with the other nations.

Not even the French Canadians?

French Canadians weren't there. They came in the Korean War. Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. They were in the Korean War, they weren't with us.

29:30 There was no Canadians in the occupation.

How much did you have to do with Americans in Japan?

Not a great deal. We had our area of responsibility, and they had theirs. The only time we met was when there was a duty thing, a change over, or when we went up to Tokyo. But we got on well with them. They're very generous people. They'll give you the world, they will.

30:00 **Do you think they had a different attitude to being an occupational force?**

Well, life in the services for them in peace time, and I guess you can say we were into the starting of the peace, was pretty good. Well paid, well provided for, well catered for. One thing, you wouldn't credit this, but we when we got up to Tokyo,

30:30 one of the first things to do was to get the yanks to take us out to what they call the PX, their canteen. You could actually get milk drinks out there. Milkshakes. We hadn't see fresh milk in years. Everything came in tins. They were sending tanker loads of it over. Fresh milk, or refrigerated milk. You'd go there and sit back and burst yourself on a malted milk, or a malt as they called it, or a shake. And this was heaven.

31:00 Beats drinking. No they were good. They'd swap you, to buy anything at the American PX you had to have American dollars. Now to do that we'd offer them yen, we'd get this Yen. They weren't interested in our money. So we'd give them a pretty good trade in. More than the going exchange

31:30 rate to get some Yankee dollars, because you could go up the counter, and dirt cheap you could buy a Rolex watch, no worries at all. They were all the go. Rolex or Waltham. What else was the go? Fancy razors, all this sort of thing. Like a department store it was, shop for anything. I'm not sure whether you could buy a jeep over the counter. They used to sell jeeps. The American Army

32:00 sold jeeps.

Anyone you know buy one?

Not that I know of, no. But you'd have to get petrol for the darn thing, and that'd be a bit hard.

The Americans dropped the bomb. Did they load it around that they were the victors?

No, I didn't see any outward sign to that.

32:30 We'd, as humble privates, we weren't party to any other hierarchy discussions or conferences. Or any protocols that were put in place by politicians. We wouldn't know what they were on about. I think they tried to gain a trade advantage by controlling who could go to

33:00 Japan on the permit. You had to get a permit to get into Japan. Occupied territory. And they were pretty restrictive on who they'd let come in. And I think a lot of Americans got in and signed the Japanese up to supply certain things before anybody got their nose in the door. And I think the same thing could have happened in Iraq. It was talks about that at one stage about these contracts for

33:30 the rebuilding. Who was gonna get them.

So in terms of attitude, not a great deal of difference?

No. I thought they were friendly, generous. They were helpful. I enjoyed their company, anyway.

What were some of the more extreme things that were bought and sold on the black market?

34:00 When a ship came up from Australia, at one stage we only had the one wharf operating. So they'd work round the clock, day and night until that ship was unloaded, and out in the midst another one would come in. This particular night I was on guard at the gate, and what they did, they'd have trucks lined

up, big American GMCs [gun motor carriages].

34:30 Six wheel drives, half a mile of them. They'd go round like that alongside the ship, the slings would come over from the hold and load the stuff in. They were unloading sugar this night, and sugar was a very highly priced thing on the murky market. The trucks were loading up, and they'd drive up to the gate, and our job was to get what they called their work-ticket, the driver would produce his work-ticket, what

35:00 unit he was from, where he was going to and what his load was supposed to be. And we'd check it out, "Sugar, sugar yeah right. Okay, away you go", wave him off. That night seven truck loads of sugar disappeared out of that ship. We heard how it had been worked later on. We'd picked up, the occupation force

35:30 picked up American vehicles. Jeeps, and these big Yankee six by sixes. Every vehicle had a number on it that was about nine digits, about that long. Now, somebody had got very, very cunning and they cut themselves a set of stencils and the zero in that number became a nine. You'd go along, the one became a four, or a

36:00 seven or something like that, and they changed the numbers, drive in, phoney work-ticket made out, pick up a load of sugar, out, disappear onto the black market. Bring out the rag, clean off the number, drive back to his unit. Seven truckloads of sugar. Somebody would have made a killing out of that. Whether they ever caught up with them, I don't know. But, boy, that would have really been worth something.

Do you reckon there were people on the inside

36:30 **helping them out?**

Somebody would have had to have a lot of knowledge about how things worked. They knew exactly what system was to be followed. The drivers of course would be driving in and out of those gates all the time. Yeah.

Were you taken to task for

There was an inquiry. The whole of the guard was grilled about, "What did you see? How did you go about

37:00 this?" I was saying, "There's nothing I can do about it, we did what we were told to do, pull them up, take the work ticket, check the number, get up, check the load and let the driver through". Nothing they could do about it. Whether they actually caught up with anybody eventually, I don't know. Maybe they did. It only goes to show there's always a smart operator somewhere.

37:30 **Things like pharmaceuticals were a no no for the black market?**

Not for the black market. Pharmaceuticals were brought in as medical supplies for the field ambulance or the hospital or the unit RAPs. If anybody started knocking those things off, and somebody was really ill or injured and there was a critical shortage of it, nobody would be happy about that.

What were some of the less moral things you heard of being exchanged

38:00 **on the black market?**

I did hear of pharmaceuticals being sold, and I wasn't very happy about that. The sugar incident didn't worry me. I thought that "Crikey, Australia's gonna send up more bags of sugar anyway. We'll end up with a couple of warehouses of it to spare". So that didn't worry me. I can tell you a little story, though, that we

38:30 never touched the rations that belonged to the unit. However, there were things you got to know nobody wanted. At one stage, the rations were very poor, and to boost the quality, we were given little bottles of Vitamin B1 tablets. Little brown bottles of Vitamin B1. What we did with those that were spares, all over the place. You go in on the ration

39:00 party, going past your barracks you'd heave a box of them off. And everybody would have half dozen of these little bottles. So somebody would write down home, and get a packet of saccharin tablets, little saccharin tablets, sweeteners. Now you'd undo the bottle of the B1, you'd take the bit of cotton-wool out, take a few of the tablets out, and you'd put the saccharin in on the

39:30 top. Now the Japanese, they were desperate for anything sweet. So you'd scrape the label off the B1, in case they could read English, take it out and say. Well there'd be a rush. They'd buy these saccharin, they'd test them, undo the bottle, stick your finger in, and take one. Right-o, and they'd buy one. We reckon we might have boosted the health of the Japanese nation by a large degree with all that Vitamin B1.

Tape 9

00:31 Well, there's another thing that was in over supply, mosquito lotion. Now the mosquito lotion we were issued with was the consistency of Vaseline hair tonic. Clear, oily. The idea was, it came in fancy bottles with clinkly finger grips on it, splash

01:00 it on and rub it all over. It was that potent that if we had to clean the gun-barrels out on the six pounders, we'd tip a couple of bottles of it into a fire bucket, and soak our cleaning brush in it and put it through on the long rod. It'd clean everything out. Marvellous for cleaning out, fouling out of the bores of a gun. We'd get this stuff, scrape the label off

01:30 it and the Japanese had set up barber shops. They were mad on having short cropped hair and shaved and all this sort of thing. But they also like a bit of bay rum or anything that had a bit of a perfumed smell to it. Oh boy, mosquito lotion was the ideal thing. You wouldn't credit it, you'd go and flog this, and they'd test it again, they'd sprinkle some, rub it on into their hair, comb it, "Yeah, yeah", they'd buy the bottle of

02:00 mosquito lotion from you. Whether we contributed again to a section of the Japanese community that from there on have been bald throughout their life, we don't know. Might have burned all their blooming hair off. That was just one of the things we got rid of.

They probably didn't get malaria on the other side.

No, no, well that was the idea they used to give to us, if you went out at night, around the camp, you had to have your sleeves rolled down, and

02:30 the mozzie lotion on and whatnot. Because the hills were all terraced paddy-fields, mosquitos would swarm everywhere.

I think you mentioned off-tape about the diseases and epidemic among the locals.

Yeah, they were very prone to water-borne diseases because a lot of the cities didn't have a guaranteed supply. They were located on the river.

03:00 And they just drew their water, drinking water, everything, out of the river. Did their washing, washed their clothes, emptied their toilet, every darn thing went into the river. You never knew and they were prone to dysentery, bowel problems, worms all those sort of things. Cholera, which is very much a water borne

03:30 disease. And they had another one that came out over there. I think it came out here in Australia about the 1950s, a thing called Japanese B-encephalitis. That was a killer. It was a brain thing, an inflammation of the brain from it.

Your work in clearing stuff out of tunnels,

04:00 **did you see much in the way of chemical weaponry?**

No, look don't get me wrong. We didn't physically do the clearing. We found, that was my job, part of the job, go out and look and find. Then having done that, the engineers would take over and they would direct labour into clearing those holes. They'd search it themselves to make sure there was no booby traps, and then they'd send the labour in to clear up to a certain roped area, and then they'd work through the fort.

04:30 Chemical weapons, just south of Hiroshima in the inland sea, was an island named Okunoshima. That'd been out of bounds to everybody, including the Japanese, and from that island, in the first sixteen months, we removed thirty thousand tons of mustard gas.

05:00 **Did you have anything to do with locating that?**

No that was a special job for a crowd called DEE [Destruction of Enemy Equipment]. They did use Japanese labour who worked on the island before. Some of it was burned, another, I believe they took an old merchant ship, whether it was a Japanese ship or what it was, and they set charges in the bottom of it, then they

05:30 put the drums of chemicals on board, and that was taken out somewhere into the deep part of the inland sea, and the bottom blown out of it, and the whole lot sunk. But there were thirty thousand tonnes removed from there.

And that was during your period in Japan?

Yup. On other little thing I can tell you about. Went out to fire

06:00 off the six pounder guns at a place called Haramura. Anybody that went to the Korean War would know about the Haramura. It was a big training area for them. And it was also a Japanese training area during the war, and we went out there. I went out on the advance party with the guns, we offloaded, got them out to the camp, put them into our area, started to have a look around the place before the main body arrives.

06:30 One of the places was a thing like a double storey warehouse. Went and had a look at that. That was still

packed in boxes with Japanese machine guns. Nobody had bothered to take them out. This was October, the war had been over twelve months, and nobody had come out to collect them yet. But they were there. A warehouse full of them. We were taking a wander around the range, and we went way

07:00 out to an area right out in one corner, and there was a thing like a gardener's shed. And it is all locked. And everybody said, "Why would they bother to lock it?" So straight away, some way or other the lock and the hasp and the staple all get levered off the door, and we go inside. And there's these little cardboard cartons. So we opened one up, looked at it. It looked like a Brasso tin. About

07:30 that big, so round and a mechanism on the top. We're banging them and shaking them and all sort of things. Anyway we couldn't get anything out of them. So we wait until the main body arrives, and got hold of an interpreter and showed him one of these. His eyes popped open. They were gas grenades. They'd been nipsered [?] at it out there for their own training. And it was

08:00 Lewisite gas. Lucky weren't we? But Australian soldiers are a bit curious about that. They like to dabble in things they shouldn't.

Good thing you didn't have a screwdriver or anything sharp on you to try and puncture it.

Yeah.

What duty would you say you mostly were doing?

08:30 Did a hell of a lot of guards at installation. Making sure nobody walked away with them overnight. Supervising labour and doing tasks like Nishinoshima with the gun barrels. Where else? Dockyards, clearing tunnels, not physically involved in it

09:00 but, yeah, getting it organised, handing over the engineers.

What would be involved in finding those tunnels? Were you involved in that?

I don't know, the information had to come from somewhere. They had a thing set up in Kure that had quite a lot of linguists, Japanese linguists. It was staffed by both American, British, Australian,

09:30 everybody, Provos, the lot. They contributed to this place. And it was called Combined Intelligence Distribution or something Services and Interrogation Centre. And they came up with a lot of information. They'd get a bloke for some minor crime,

10:00 Japanese crime against the occupation. Maybe he'd been caught with some black market gear he'd bought. So they'd haul him in and give him a grilling. Maybe they'd even do a deal with him. I don't know. So they'd ask, "What can you tell us about other things?" And eventually things would start coming out where things might be hidden. And I think a lot of the information as to where things were

10:30 came out of that sort of information.

We haven't touched on the marriages and romances between the occupation and the Japanese.

As I said, quite a few married Japanese wives eventually. Some of them did it by having a Buddhist or Shinto wedding, which was illegal anyway.

Illegal of us or them?

11:00 Them. Both. Never favoured by the Japanese. It was wrong for a Japanese woman to marry a foreigner. Much frowned upon.

What was the attitude the other way? What was the attitude among the men of marrying Japanese?

I don't know of anybody in my particular company or platoon that did, but those that I've met here since,

11:30 at the reunions with their wives, they seem quite happy. I don't think there was any recriminations against them. I don't see any problem with it. It would be wrong for me to be critical.

And at the time, what did people think? It was pretty radical.

Back here, of course, not on. Not on back here. That's why there was opposition to Gordon Parker bringing his wife back here.

12:00 But he managed to get that changed and that opened the flood gates. So there's quite a few here. I know they had a reception, I think it'd be about five or six years ago they had a reception at the Melbourne Town Hall for some reason. And I think there were over two hundred wives turned up then. That's here in Melbourne, so there could be quite a few.

Anyone you knew when you were there?

None that I knew while I was there. No,

12:30 I've met Gordon Parker and Sherry quite a bit since.

And do you think BCOF left behind a lot of kids?

I don't think so.

What makes you think they didn't?

Well I think we would have heard about it. People talk. I don't think there could have been any great dramas about illegitimate children left behind. Certainly not to my knowledge. There may have been, but no, not to my knowledge. I think

13:00 people would have talked if there would have been something going on.

What sort of things would you be sending home from Japan?

Silk was always the go. Lengths of silk if you could buy it. Scarves, I used to, Japanese being enterprising, they produced white silk scarves with the BCOF emblem on them and that sort of thing. And they'd be sent home.

13:30 Lacquer work. Very patient, they apply about thirty coats of this lacquer, very thin every time, rub it back, do more, comes out like a duco. Black duco with all the fancy things drawn into them. Rings, yeah there was a rush on rings at one stage

14:00 that were done out of beaten silver and that sort of thing. Damasin [?] work where they take gold leaf and they press that into things. That was all very popular. There wasn't a great deal offering. Oh, pearls of course. String of pearls.

Did you wonder how they'd be received back in Australia with a fair bit of anti-Japanese sentiment?

No, you could buy pearls here.

14:30 And they all knew where they came from, because as far as cultured pearls there was only one bloke in the world that was doing it. That was a fellow called Mikimoto. He had a pearl farm. And we went out there. Went on a visit to Mikimoto. We couldn't buy any pearls there, but we saw them grading them. They sit at a table with a great pile and they have a little thing like a ruler and they just push them into the piles. And they do it by size. And it's amazing how they match them up. Pretty accurately. Practice.

15:00 And he has these nude divers. Female divers. He'd take them out and you see them diving over the edge and they can go down, they hold their breath for two minutes or something under water while they do the harvesting down the bottom. Come up, empty into the boat. Yeah, they were most impressive. Most of them had very big, developed, you know. For a start, you would think they could be taken for sumo wrestlers.

15:30 They were big girls. That's a fact, they were traditionally nude divers. What else was there in Japan that was much sought after?

16:00 **China work? Things like that?**

No, at that stage the likes of Noritake and Mikasa and that, they were unheard of. They weren't even in the production game. That came later on. In our day it was English china, the bone china and that sort of thing that was the sought after thing.

You knew you were gonna be there for two years?

That was the engagement I'd signed

16:30 on to serve. Not less than two years. Actually, they sent me home after eighteen months.

Were you counting down the days?

Towards the end you get a bit anxious. Not far to go and you'd boast to other blokes say, "couple of weeks, and I'm on my way, boys. You're gonna be stuck here' and all that sort of thing.

Were you that adamant? Were you that keen to get home?

17:00 Yeah, I suppose I was towards the end. Oh, I know something that was much prized. Opticals. One other thing, during the war, the Zeiss Company in Germany sent technicians to Japan. And samples of how to produce these high quality opticals. And the Japanese being fast learners, what they produced was, as we know it today, leading

17:30 the world probably in lenses and that sort of thing. So any binoculars and those sort of thing they were much sought after. I had a beautiful big pair of binoculars. Coated lenses, you could read the name of a ship a mile away.

What happened to those?

Arrived at Sydney, our gear didn't come off the ship for a day, did it?

18:00 It was late getting down to Melbourne, and when it arrived in Melbourne, they'd gone through our bloody gear and pinched stuff out of it.

Who are 'they'?

Wharfies. Oh yeas. Indeed. They'd say, "Take stuff home", they'd say, "Look, can you take this home for me and deliver it to my Mum or to my girlfriend", or whatever, and

18:30 they'd do that for one another.

You mentioned the Japanese being fast learners. I've heard stories of them knocking off pretty good imitations of anything Western soon after the war. Did you see much evidence of that?

Weapons?

Anything Western, like good imitation of a

Oh, they went wholesale for doing that. These people were renowned for doing, they didn't care about copyrights or anything like that, you know. Boom.

What sort of things did they copy?

19:00 Lighters, cigarette lighters. You'd buy a lighter and say, "That's a good Ronson lighter", no, made in Japan. Cigarette cases.

This is when you were there?

Oh, yeah, there were stalls selling oodles of those. Watches. Had to be very, very if

19:30 your watch played up, because in those days they were all wind up watches there was no digital or battery operated, so if you took your watch to a Japanese watch maker and there might be seventeen jewels in it, when you got it back, it might have a few less. They'd prise them out and put a little bit of glass in instead. They'll say, "Oh, that'll keep them going for twelve months, and by that time they'll be home and wonder what's happened". They got those

20:00 little jewels out of the watch movements. What else were they great at? Yeah.

It's a pretty big culture shock you had. Pretty big experience. What effect do you think it had on you as a person?

It made me, I woke up to the fact that there was more in life and in

20:30 the world than just what I'd seen in Australia. I'd seen other things and other places and each of these things, in their turn, does have to make some impression on you. Good or bad. As I said, these Philippines I've been there, didn't like it. Two times I've passed through there and not impressed. Would not trust them as far as I could throw 'em. I'm not very strong at the moment. Not on.

Did that mean you

21:00 **were a bit restless when you got home?**

No, I'd done a lot of travelling, travelled around a fair bit of Australia. No I wasn't restless. There was three of us got our heads together. One fellow's died since, the other fellow will be travelling up with me to Woorandra [Willandra?] with me at the end of this month. He and I were in the same platoon, the three of us were in the same platoon,

21:30 and we got together and we were talking one day. We said, "Canada sounds like a nice sort of place to visit". So we went down to the Canadian Consul or legation or whatever there was in Melbourne, and went up and said, "We'd like to make some inquiries about migrating to Canada". They very smartly talked

22:00 us out of it. There was absolutely no work in Canada. None whatsoever.

When was this?

This would have been about 1950. That's probably the only time I think I thought about it. Since then I've become more convinced that we're very, very safe here. And no matter what we may thing, we

22:30 are safe and we don't know how well off we are. I've had no ambitions to go anywhere else. A few places, from curiosity I would like to see. One would be Grand Canyon, Disneyland maybe.

Any desire to go back to Japan?

No. There's been trips back organised by the association. Some have been two or three times. Mainly those which married Japanese wives, take their

23:00 wife back. No I believe it's changed tremendously since. No I've got no desire to go there. As far as Europe goes, no, not interested. Relatives in England, don't even know that they're still alive. Not much point in churning over there either. America doesn't grab me.

23:30 **Not sure what we talked about on camera about recognition towards BCOF. You've been active in this issue**

Well, we've been pushing this issue since the Veterans' Entitlement Act came in 1986. Seventeen years we've been at it. But BCOF as a force is the only force that's been put together and sent overseas on active service

24:00 and isn't recognised for the service pension. The issue is not money. We've all settled into our retirement. What we've got is what we're gonna live with for the rest of our lives. Be it good or bad or indifferent. There's no great. But it's the fact that your service is gonna be recognised as overseas service, as valued as

24:30 any other overseas service ever was. The RSL didn't wanna know us until about 1972, and they changed their attitudes. Their cash-registers must have started slowing down, so they wanted a few more members. And they brought us in. We're still pursuing this thing of recognition of our service.

You've written a whole bunch of letters.

Oh, yeah we've written to that many ministers and whatnot and departments.

25:00 And we went before this clerk review we got a favourable response there, but it wasn't quite what we believe it should have been, so we've out that issue up again. But as yet, we've heard nothing as to what's to be accepted from the clerk review and frankly I think our people are getting a little bit annoyed. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs seems to be spending a lot

25:30 of time overseas unveiling memorials or doing reunion trips and all this sort of thing. Whereas in fact we're still sitting here twiddling our thumbs and saying, "What about our service?" And it doesn't require legislation, he's only gotta do a letter in writing that's called, "Creating and Instrument in Writing" if he does that, which a predecessor did when the same situation came up about troops in Malaya.

26:00 yeah, no problem. Everybody would be happy. We'd all go to the next reunion and say, "At long last we got there". And that's what it's all about. Recognition of your service. Still, we keep going. Helps filling the day.

Does sound like a lot of work.

When you've got time the work is not important. We've even had a fight about it in the RSL about it or arguing with

26:30 some of the people in the RSL about it. You'll always get those differences of opinion.

You must encounter a few

Yup, we do. But it doesn't worry us. It doesn't worry us. We're passed all that. Passed worrying. Worry only makes you crook.

When you came home, it wasn't too long after that Korea became an issue. What was your interest in that?

Well

27:00 By then of course a lot of our blokes had married. They came out '47, fiancées, a girl, decided to get married. And that would have given them a different perspective about signing up again to take on another tour of service. And with another two years K [Korea] Force.

What was your perspective?

I thought

27:30 to myself, "Look, I've had one trip over that way. I wouldn't mind going I suppose for the interest of it, but in the finish I'll give it away". Forget about it.

What influence did the idea of action play on that decision?

None really. I knew if I had gone, I knew I'd have been doing exactly what I was trained for before. Same thing, I was an infantry

28:00 and that's what I was gonna be. So I gave it a miss. Some went, others didn't. Others that had never seen a service signed up and went to Korea. To their credit. But we get on well with the Korean vets. When we meet them, we believe we've got an empathy with them, because they trained in Japan, the same places we were.

28:30 Some of our blokes went to Korea. One of the fellows travelling up and around with me, same platoon in Japan, he went to Korea. Decided he'd give it a burl. Away he went. But we see quite a bit of him, he's on our committee. He's our welfare officer. No, we get on very well with the Korean vets.

Well, you share the same forgotten status.

Yeah, they had a

29:00 grouch. I don’t blame them. They weren’t well treated coming back. Don’t know why. And they had their casualties over there. Yeah.

INTERVIEW ENDS