

Australians at War Film Archive

James Watt (Jim) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/806>

Tape 1

00:30 **Tell me about your life before the war, where you were born and where you grew up and where you worked?**

I was born at Taringa although I lived at Indooroopilly, 446 Moggill Road Indooroopilly and I went to Indooroopilly State School. Our house since then

01:00 has been shifted away and it's now a big car sales yard. Then I went to the Indooroopilly State School and later on I went to State Commercial High School where I learnt shorthand, typing and so forth. From there I went to WD & HO Wills, the big tobacco company.

01:30 What I did there was getting out orders, a script would come down with the items on it to get the orders out and I got the orders out and at the age of nineteen I went into the army.

Can you tell me about joining the army?

It was a very exciting day in as much that my two brothers were away at that stage, Cecil was over in the Middle East and George was an engineer at

02:00 Morokia [?] up in Dutch New Guinea. I didn't know that at the age of sixteen when I went to high school that I'd ever go into the army but eventually I did. I was conscripted into the militia, and later on I joined the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. I recall the letter arriving and I was very excited of course and my brother had told me when I went to

02:30 Kelvin Grove to actually enter the army there he said, "It would be a good idea if you decided to go into the artillery." because he had been in the artillery previous to that. He said, "You are well away from the fighting and you are about five or six miles behind the line." When I went to see the sergeant I said, "My brother said that it would be good for me to be in the artillery." and the sergeant

03:00 at that particular stage said, "I've got news for you, you are in the infantry and that's where you will be." We had a little cut lunch. After our medicals we went down to the Roma Street Railway Station and eventually out to the Exhibition Ground where there was a medical department there. We had our medicals a second time out there and eventually

03:30 going down to Chermside Army Camp where we were taken on board by the 61st Battalion.

Where was the majority of your training?

At Chermside just on the outskirts of Brisbane, about seven miles out. I went into a cadre at that stage for six weeks and that's where they trained us because all of the other troops had been training

04:00 for about six months before that time and they wanted to bring us up to scratch as far as the training was concerned. Then we went into our various battalions after six weeks training.

What happened after that?

We went on the outskirts of Chermside because word came through that there was a

04:30 Japanese aircraft carrier possibly coming down the Australian coast and it was quite possible that they might land somewhere around and they might shell us and also the aircraft might take off and bomb us around about Brisbane. So we went on the outskirts of Chermside, at that stage it wasn't to be however.

05:00 The whole of our brigade, the 29th Battalion, 25th Battalion from Toowoomba and the 61st Battalion we all went up to Yandina. That was 1942, and whilst we were at Yandina word came through that the Coral Sea Battle was taking place and the Japanese might land anywhere on the Australian coast. As a result of that

05:30 we marched down from our bivouacs down to the railway station at Yandina. I can recall our captain

saying, "You have one hundred rounds of ammunition and we might have to fight anywhere along the Australian coast on our way up Townsville." This wasn't to be however because the Americans and the Australians had destroyed the Japanese force in the Coral Sea Battle. We chugged on and on to Townsville and we were based

06:00 at Anthill Plains first of all which was about five or six miles out from Townsville. Then we went up to Rolling Stone where we built a defensive area, up at Rolling Stone, which was around about fifty miles north of Townsville, and after that we boarded the ships to go over the Milne Bay in New Guinea.

Can you tell me briefly about

06:30 **your time in Milne Bay?**

When we arrived at Milne Bay it was a very deserted sort of area and Lever Brothers had a coconut plantation there and I think it was the largest coconut plantation in New Guinea, they had copper and so forth that they would mill. We were there for about four weeks and the Japanese decided to come down from Rabaul.

07:00 Then the Japanese landed at Ahioma or near Ahioma the big battle took place at KB Mission. My C Company went up to KB Mission to assist B Company, Major Bick's company up there. The Japanese had

07:30 tanks so it was decided that we would withdraw a little bit to a defensive position. The Japanese swarmed and they landed two thousand two hundred troops all together and they just pushed us back, they didn't really push us back but it was a better position for us to come back to what we called Number 3 Strip, which was Turnbull Airstrip. That's where we held the Japanese and that's where the first defeat of the Japanese on land and on the South Pacific. We were very proud to be part of that.

08:00 **Where did you go to after Milne Bay?**

We stayed at Milne Bay for about five or six months after that and then we went to Port Moresby then up to Dobadura which was just at the foothills of the Kokoda Track. We trained there and we were the

08:30 brigade that may of taken part in the Kokoda Track towards Buna and Gona and we were there also in case we were needed for the Wau and Salamaua show. Eventually some of our troops went down to the airport, down at Jackson Airport because we were going to make a daring landing behind the Japanese lines up

09:00 behind Lae. Whilst there, the 7th Division and the 9th Division we going to attack Lae, which they did successfully. They were to push them out and eventually up to Bena Bena, say one hundred miles or so away from Lae and they were to push them up towards us. However, although our troops were down on the Jackson Airstrip

09:30 eventually it didn't happen at all so all the troops came back from the Jackson Airstrip at Port Moresby back to Dobadura.

And then after that?

After that I was invited to go to an officers' course and from a private they gave me two stripes to

10:00 go to the officers' course, which was over in Woodside, South Australia. I was quite successful in getting through that and then I came to Canungra Army Camp and I was there for about four months training, training other troops actually there, we had fifteen thousand at Canungra Army Camp.

10:30 A list would go up on the notice board as to where the various officers were going to go to, they had a thousand officers there waiting to go up to New Guinea. We were told there that an officer would only last about six weeks, that was all the life expectancy would be for an officer in the front line, which was probably quite true.

11:00 Then I joined the 14/32nd Battalion up Bulolo and Wau and we came back to Lae and from Lae we did the landing over at Jacquinot Bay over in New Britain. We pushed up the coast there until we came across the Japanese up at a place called Wide Bay, which was in the Waitavalo and Tol plantation,

11:30 they had about four or five hundred Japanese there. Our battalions, the 19th Battalion and the 14/42nd Battalion which I was attached to forced them out of that area. A couple of months after that I came back to Australia because our brigade was going to be disbanded. Whilst in

12:00 Brisbane on 15th August the war finished. After that I was chosen to go up to Redbank Army Camp where I was successful in discharging many, many troops. After about twelve months discharging troops I went back to my employer, WD & HO Wills.

12:30 **How long did you spend working there?**

I always wanted to own a sports store, and there was a sports store available just down the road from there. In 1951, about five or six years after the war had finished with the aid of my brother-in-law Bob Rutso[?], we were able to buy a sports store. I had that

13:00 for twenty years and then I went into another sports store and we had that one for another ten or fifteen years, so most of my life has been in sports stores.

We will just take you right back to the beginning. What was your father's job when you were a child?

My Dad was a carpenter

13:30 and he built houses around the Indooroopilly area. I have two brothers and one sister, Joyce, my eldest sister, or the eldest of the family. George became a carpenter later on as well as and he worked with my Dad. Cecil was an artist and he was in the artistic field.

14:00 We all went to the Indooroopilly State School.

What are your main memories of your school days, did you enjoy school?

I detested school, the only thing that I liked about school was Friday because I was captain of the cricket team and captain of the football team, and I didn't like it at all. I had a very poor memory

14:30 for recitations and so forth. I'd normally know the first verse, but after that I was a little bit hopeless so I didn't like school at all. However, it was to be and then after that I went to the State Commercial High School where I was taught shorthand, typing. Before WD & HO Wills I was at a job as a shorthand typist

15:00 but that only last for about nine months, because the war was on at that particular stage and I went to WD&HO Wills. I worked there for about one and a half years before I went into the army.

What was the area of Indooroopilly like when you were growing up, what did you and your brothers and sisters get up to?

The Indooroopilly area was the last area,

15:30 that was the last developed area out from Brisbane, actually it was five miles out from Brisbane. At this stage I'm on the historical society of the Indooroopilly area, and I find that most interesting because I'm called upon on occasions, I can talk about the old Indooroopilly. It was quite exciting to be in the old Indooroopilly as it was in those days. I can recall going to my

16:00 first movie that I ever went to it was at the Indooroopilly Theatre called the Lyric Theatre. It was a silent film and that was my first time there. It was an army film called All Quiet on the Western Front, they had a piano at one end just playing away and I was only about four or five at that stage and it was quite exciting to go. My Dad wasn't very well off because at that

16:30 stage they had the Depression around about 1929, 1930, 1931. Dad had to eventually go up to Mackay to do cane cutting. I went up with him and my Mum up to Mackay and I went to a school there, Owens Creek State School, which

17:00 held about twenty-five, thirty I suppose. We only had one teacher and a lady would come for the young ladies to do sewing and so forth. It was quite an exciting time and Dad would go out and he would cut cane all day and his back was very, very sore and his hands were blistered, he had a pretty tough time. That was what you had to do in those days

17:30 and that was how it was during that particular time. It was very awkward for him and I realise at that stage, and all that I knew was that I had a comfortable bed to sleep in. My Mum would prepare the meals and all I ate. In the afternoon after school I would take a seven pound

18:00 syrup tin with tea in it up to my Dad and my uncle out in the cane fields and they would have a little afternoon tea before they started cutting the cane again.

What were the cane fields like?

Around the Mackay area is one of the most, it's a tremendous area going right up to Gargett, out to Finch Hatton out to Eungella Range, a huge

18:30 area of cane around that area. They all seemed to be quite happy because the troops needed sugar and so forth we were exporting a lot of sugar in those days. The children would come along riding their horses to school and it was quite exciting. As I would proceed along about two to three hundred yards from the school,

19:00 the kookaburra would be singing away it was really lovely. It was a lovely community aspect really, it was quite good. They were very busy men and in those days they cut cane by hand and not by the mechanical devices that they have today, it was quite exciting.

Did your brothers and sister go to Mackay with you?

No, Joyce, my sister,

19:30 she was working at DG Brimsley timber people, she was living at Coronation Drive, called River Road in those days, in Brisbane at her grandfather's place. She would go to the station then go out to

Yeerongpilly where she worked.

20:00 Cecil and George were still at school at that stage, they still attended Indooroopilly State School and they live with our aunty, Gladys, at that stage.

Was it hard being split up from your siblings?

It was yes, you sort of looked around because they protected me quite a bit, and they looked after me. I was only about seven or eight at that stage and my brothers would have been ten and twelve I should image, they looked after me quite well.

20:30 **How long did you spent in Mackay?**

Although I spent six months at the Owen's Creek State School with my great uncle and great aunty I was there for about six months. Dad went back there two or three times up to the cane cutting area.

21:00 I think eventually Dad went into the American Army, he was coopted into the American Army and he was building crates and things for them because he was a builder as I've mentioned. Dad did a lot of work on building those down on the wharfs, he use to build crates put all sorts of implements into them and sent them up to New Guinea.

21:30 **You mentioned just before that you owned a historical place in Indooroopilly and you had to talk about the old Indooroopilly. Can you tell me some of the things about the Indooroopilly?**

As a matter of fact it was only just recently that my daughter Beverly and I went to see one of the dear old ladies, they were quite young when I knew them during the earlier stages. She

22:00 was ninety-four and her name is Hazel Beck, and her sister Bubba Beck who was about eighty-eight when we had the interview with them and they were very good friends of ours because they only lived about two hundred yards up the road from the Indooroopilly State School where I was living just across the road. They were exciting days because

22:30 we had no bus in those earlier days the only way we could have transport was by the train into Brisbane. There were two brothers. Charlie who eventually married Hazel Beck and Chris the brother of Charlie. it was whilst they were visiting the Beck family

23:00 he asked them, "How do you get to Brisbane?" and they were able to tell hem that they went down to the Indooroopilly Station and that was the only transport that we had to go into Brisbane. Within six months he had the first buses running from the Indooroopilly State School into Eagle Street Brisbane, that's where they use to alight in those days.

23:30 I had my photograph taken with my Mum on the very first Indooroopilly bus to run from Indooroopilly State School into Brisbane and that was in 1925 and I was only about two or three. That was the scene in those days and the Indooroopilly State School had three hundred people, the headmaster's name was Mr Mills and he carried a cane.

24:00 When we went to school we saluted the flag and with the piano and the triangle we would march into our various classrooms. In those earlier days we had a couple of killing yards

24:30 not very far from out place and we would see very often the animals, the sheep being herded up the road, down Moggill Road down past our place, whips cracking and it was very exciting. It was the normal thing, they would be unloaded at the Indooroopilly railway station and there was a siding there and they would go up Station Road

25:00 and down Moggill Road and out to the slaughter house out at Marshall Lane, Chapel Hill and that's where they would be slaughtered for the consumption for the Brisbane area. Hazel and Bubba Beck were able to tell us that all of the area from going out towards Lone Pine and that was a huge holding yard for all the cattle in those days. It wasn't uncommon to see

25:30 unloaded from the railway station the cattle going up Station Road and down Moggill Road, cattle as well as sheep and they would be herded out to the slaughter house out at Marshall Lane. Apart from that we would see going down the road a train of sixteen bullocks pulling logs

26:00 out to the saw mill out at Chapel Hill. It was quite interesting to see these things happening, the bullocks pulling the big logs out to the saw mill at Chapel Hill. Hazel Beck was telling us in the interview that she very often would get alongside the driver

26:30 of bullock train, she would get up alongside of him and go down the road and she was terribly excited about that. It was very interesting days as I mentioned the theatre and the first movie I went to and it was about All Quiet on the Western Front and it was a German film, that was the background of the film. In those days we had

27:00 the piano at the end of the stage and they would sort of play throughout the film. It cost a shilling for Mum and Dad to go and cost sixpence for the children to go. A lot of money in those days when you think of forty or fifty times that. To go to a film today for an adult would be twelve or thirteen dollars and children would be around about

- 27:30 ten or eleven dollars or something like that. Sixpence was a lot of money in those days because the wages were only around about three or four pound a week and you would have to get through on that. During the Depression time you got less than that again so it was very difficult times. As I was discussing with Hazel and Bubba Beck
- 28:00 and also with our historical society was the games we use to play. It was interesting to know the different types of games that would be played, for example the boys would play bedlam, red rover, of course we always played cricket and football. Australian Rules football actually at the Indooroopilly State School. The girls would play hopscotch,
- 28:30 bean, rounders, it's interesting to talk to people about what just exactly what they did in those days, what sorts of games they played. After school the boys of course would play cowboys and indians because we had plenty of vacant land around the place, and we'd climb trees. I remember Jack Hamlin falling from a tree one day and breaking his arm
- 29:00 and that was a pretty nasty affair. They were interesting days when we were going to school. As I had mentioned, we had three hundred going to school in those days. I went along and I have been for the last three years going along to the Anzac service at the Indooroopilly State School and now they have seven hundred and fifty going with fifty-six teachers and it's a big day there and to honour
- 29:30 those who had been killed in action and so forth.

You mentioned that it was tough during the Depression, do you have any memories of the way that your mum would sort of try and do?

I do as a matter of fact as much that after school each day it would be my duty, because we had no refrigerators, we didn't have any wirelesses. We had a cage which was elevated

- 30:00 and the air would flow through, so that we would be able to keep our meat there, but we weren't able to keep the meat there for very long during summer time. The milkman came twice a day, the postman came twice a day, and things have changed a great deal since those days.
- 30:30 When I came home after school each day Mum would give me tuppence and she'd tell me to go up to her cousin's place, who had the butcher shop on Moggill Road in Indooroopilly, and I'd have to go around a quarter of a mile and get tuppence worth of soup meat, or soup bones as the case maybe. We had those everyday of my life in those earlier times we always had soup on the table.
- 31:00 We always seemed to eat well. It was nothing lavish but we always seemed to eat quite nicely. We had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [fowls] down the backyard so we had our eggs, we had our fruit, we had mandarins, and we had oranges in our
- 31:30 backyard as well. We even had sugar cane down the backyard and it had come down after we had been up to Mackay. We seemed to eat quite well. Mum always seemed to have a rainbow cake for us that we would have after school.

What is a rainbow cake?

A rainbow cake is a three layered cake and it looked like a rainbow

- 32:00 with icing in the middle of the first layers and then icing on top of that and it was a different coloured cake. We had a wood stove and we had a tank, we had running water and we supplemented that by the tank we had. We had a wood stove as mentioned and in the corner we had a wood box, and I can recall Mum when she squealed out at
- 32:30 one stage because there was a snake. I had to rush across the road to where Cecil was because he was still in school and it went a bit long for those who were studying for the scholarship and Cecil would come over and kill the snake...Exciting days.
- 33:00 We didn't see very many airplanes, I remember standing on the front landing of our place and you'd watch an airplane until it was always out of sight because there wasn't anything else to do, we'd watch it and watch it because it was an exciting thing to do in those days. I can always recall going down to see Amy Johnson, Amy Johnson was the first aviator to come from England
- 33:30 to Australia. Bert Hinkler, I remember Bert Hinkler landing at the airport. I wasn't there for Sir Kingsford Smith, I wasn't there for his landing because he came over from America over to Brisbane, but I wasn't there for his. Brisbane had a population of three hundred thousand in those days, but there's well over a million
- 34:00 people there now. On the Gold Coast you had to come across two rivers by ferry to get to the Gold Coast and the Gold Coast in those days probably only had a few thousand people, but today it's four hundred and fifty thousand people.

You mentioned that you went on the bus to Brisbane with your mum when you were young. Did you go to Brisbane often?

Mum always went to Brisbane,

- 34:30 every Friday, she would collect fruit in Brisbane. Mum always went on Fridays and of course I went with her up to the age of five then I went to school, it was good to be with Mum and she was a great mother, she really was. The three of us
- 35:00 boys were all in the army at the one time, and Mum use to proudly wear a little badge here and it would say 'three sons overseas' because we were overseas at that stage. Mum was a great mum and she seemed to have food on the table all the time, and especially when grandpa came along. Grandma had passed away, and when grandpa came along it was a great day because
- 35:30 we had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, we'd kill a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK and pluck it. Mum was great in making cakes and she would make an apple pie for grandpa, so that was wonderful days. We had wonderful times with out grandpa and he died in 1935. It was great anyway. We seemed to survive a lot of work was done around behind the Indooroopilly State School
- 36:00 at that particular stage they did a lot of diggings because what else could they do? They had to earn money somehow. I think they'd only earn about thirty shillings that would be about three dollars for the week, so they weren't good days.

Can you tell me about

36:30 any involvement that any of your family members had in World War I?

Yes. My Dad didn't go, he was on the reserve at that particular stage for World War I. I know that they had a defence force in Brisbane so he was in the

- 37:00 defence force. I think in those early days he might of gone up to Mackay to do some cane cutting as well as World War I that you are referring to now. Uncle Sid was killed at Gallipoli, he was a stretcher bearer and he had

- 37:30 both of his legs torn apart and he died on the hospital ship and he was buried at sea, and his name is on the cenotaph there at Gallipoli. Uncle Bill was in the Boer War and also another uncle, one of the Stronges, he was also in the Boer War,

- 38:00 they were in Africa as well as. I remember going into his home, Uncle Eddie Strong that's the person that I'm referring to, and he had a trumpet and he played the trumpet in the Boer War. He was selected to go to England for the fiftieth year of Queen Victoria's reign,

- 38:34 to play the bugle over there. Uncle Bill and Uncle Eddie were at the Boer War and also Uncle George was in France in the artillery in the First World War and Uncle Sid was killed at Gallipoli.

Did any of your surviving uncles tell you any stories about their war experiences?

- 39:00 Not so much Uncle Bill no, and also Uncle Eddie, they never talked about the war. I was only quite young at that stage so they didn't tell me very much about it. Uncle George Bowls, he told us a lot of information about what it was like over in the Flanders. I normally would have poppies

- 39:30 in the garden so that I can think about uncle George being over in France.

Tape 2

00:30 When did you start working for the tobacco company, how you left school and how you got that job?

I was at the State Commercial High School, which was right alongside the Queensland Parliament House.

- 01:00 In those days there were only three state schools, one was the State Commercial High School where we learnt shorthand, typing and business methods. The other one was the Industrial High School and then they had the Domestic High School for girls who were making cakes

- 01:30 and sewing and so forth. The State High School which had a different sort of things to learn as well as the Brisbane Boys College and the Grammar School, the Church of England School, the Mudgee College, they were all in existence in those days. There were only three state schools in the whole of Brisbane.

- 02:00 I went to an indent agent and I worked for him for about nine months. Because of the clothing restrictions and so forth he had to close down. So my aunty, Lil Gerard, who was very kind to me she said that

- 02:30 she knew somebody in WD & HO Wills and would I like a position there. So I had an interview and I gained my position there because people were leaving to go into the wartime, at that stage I was only about seventeen. The war looked so far off I had no thought of going into the army at all.

What were the clothing restrictions that you mentioned before?

The clothing restrictions were

- 03:00 making clothing. The clothing we were selling was bib and brace overalls and things of that nature and as a result of that they needed all the manufacture for the war time so the boss that I had, there were only the two of us, the boss and myself, he couldn't get any more clothing
- 03:30 so he had to close his place down. At that stage Auntie Lil said would I like to go up to WD & HO Wills and they were flourishing at the stage and smoking seemed to be a great thing, so I went up there. All I did was a script would come down and the travellers would go out and get orders and put down all the things that the tobacconists required and we would get them out
- 04:00 and onto a little shelf and then they would be packed up and sent out to the various areas. That was where I was right up to the age of eighteen and a half, and on my nineteenth birthday I went into the army.

What brands of tobacco did they sell?

As far as tobacco was concerned and a lot of people rolled their own in those days, Log Cabin

- 04:30 was a very, very popular [brand]. Havelock was another one but of course in the cigarettes the more reasonably priced one was called Capstan. The dealer were called Ardath and Garrick. It was a very busy time and very often we would work overtime to get all the orders out because
- 05:00 the Americans were coming into Brisbane at this stage and this was 1941 and the Americans were arriving over and we had to supply a tremendous amount of tobacco and cigarettes to them. Even when I went into the army WD&HO Wills would send me each month my ration,
- 05:30 they would send me four packets of tobacco, Log Cabin tobacco with the cigarette papers. I didn't smoke so I just gave them away.

You worked for the tobacco company but never smoked?

I didn't smoke, no. An interesting...this was when the war was over, the

- 06:00 manager, he was a First World War officer, he was rather pleased that people from his factory had sort of got their commissions, so my elevation was pretty quick when I came back after the war. He didn't ask me he more or less directed me to
- 06:30 be a traveller, but I wasn't very keen to be a traveller, and they were going to send me up to Townsville and Cairns as a traveller. I didn't do that I brought a sports store instead. The interesting thing was, I wasn't quite certain how I would go because I was a non-smoker and I don't know how they would have got on with a non-smoker going around selling tobacco.
- 07:00 Once I got to eighteen we were allowed to have our ration and I thought, the only one thing I could do was when Mr Foley the sub-manager comes along he was coming down about fifty or eighty meters away, I said to the boys, "Can you please give me a cigarette so that I could smoke it?" so that I would get my rations.

What did you do with your rations?

I probably would bring it home and anybody who smoked, I'd give it to them. I never even thought about what I did with my rations. I know in the army when they kept sending it to me I would give it away to the boys who were around my area

- 08:00 and my company and they were very pleased about it. Especially in the earlier stages up in Milne Bay when they couldn't get tobacco so I was very much sought after.

It seemed to be such an accepted thing to smoke in those days; I'm interested in why you never took up smoking?

That was very easy because my Mum and Dad didn't smoke so there

- 08:30 was no smoking in my family. My two brothers didn't smoke there was no smoke around the area. Also, I'm a teetotaler, my Dad didn't drink and my brothers didn't drink, so therefore it wasn't in our home so we just didn't know anything, we just didn't smoke and that's all there was to it, there were none in our home.

Were there any sort of health concerns about smoking at the time?

Not in those days no. There were no health concerns, there was nothing on the cigarette or tobacco to say about cancer can develop from that, there was nothing at all. It just seemed to be that everybody smoked, when I say everybody those who wanted to smoke, smoked. Very few ladies smoked in those days, it was a no-no for

- 09:30 ladies to smoke. Also getting back to Indooroopilly again, there was no area for the ladies to drink even in the hotels; ladies just didn't drink in those days. They had a room in the back of the Indooroopilly Hotel which was down near the railway station in there the men would be able to drink
- 10:00 and that was ok, but the ladies had a little room in the back where they could reside and wait for their husbands to have their drink and they would go home together. It wasn't until later on that the ladies drank and they were able to drink, but only in their particular room, their little room at the back of the Indooroopilly Stanford Hotel.
- 10:30 **Do you remember where you were when you had heard that war had been declared?**
- Yes I was at the State Commercial High School, I was sixteen and a half and I'd been through my junior period, I didn't do too well at school. I passed in arithmetic, English and geography but you had to a pass in five subjects
- 11:00 before you passed junior. I was there at that particular stage at the State Commercial High School. It didn't occur to me very much I just thought, "The war's on." because
- 11:30 we hadn't been through any wars at all, it didn't occur to me the difficulty involved during wartime. The boys at state school, it was around about one or two o'clock and I think we were at lunch when they the war was declared and we just thought, "There's a war over in Europe."
- 12:00 it just didn't occur to us to think anymore about it. I will tell you an interesting thing in as much that I said to my Mum, would she save any papers, the front page of all the papers during the war time. More so when I went into the army Mum would still save the papers
- 12:30 and when I came home after the war we had a stack of papers about that high of every day of the war. In those days we only had one paper called the Courier Mail, that's the only one paper we had, sorry we did have the Telegraph as well as. Mum would keep the front page of all the papers and I've still got some of them here but
- 13:00 I've reduced them down to just a small little bundle, but I've still got them here. All of the others have been burnt but I've kept the important ones.

In the early years of the war did it impact on your life very much at all?

No. When I was going to

- 13:30 high school it didn't mean very much to me at that stage, the impact wasn't great at all. In the earlier part the 61st Battalion my battalion they were training. They were formed in 1937 and 1938 and they had the 61st Battalion Queensland Hollanders
- 14:00 they were being trained. Most of those people became corporals, sergeants and even officers later on, because they had a lot of training that the normal people wouldn't have at that particular stage, but it didn't mean very much too me. I can recall on one occasion when the American
- 14:30 fleet came and this was before the Americans came into the war and that was the largest crowd I'd ever seen in Brisbane line the streets. They marched from Fortitude Valley up into Queen Street and that was the largest crowd I'd ever seen in my life. We felt that the Americans would eventually come into the war and be our saviours,
- 15:00 they were thought very much of in those days. They seemed to have trained troops, they seemed to have the navy, and they seemed to have the air force they were well thought of in those days as being our liberators I felt at that stage. The impact wasn't great for me not at all; the sense was in the army, my number two brother,
- 15:30 he was in the artillery in the army and he had a certain amount of training. That's why when he said when I got up to Kelvin Grove to say that I'd like to be in the artillery. George went into the army in 1941 before the Japanese came into it, he was being trained also in my battalion, the 61st Battalion,
- 16:00 later on he was into the engineers and went up to Dutch New Guinea away from my battalion. He made wharves and helped in the construction of airfields.

Do you remember hearing the news about Pearl Harbor?

Yes,

- 16:30 I was at WD & HO Wills at that stage. Pearl Harbor, of course the Americans came into it because of Pearl Harbor and we felt that with the Americans' capacity and the number of their troops, we thought that would be great to have them in the army or in the conflict with us, and of course the Japanese came into it at that particular stage
- 17:00 too, on the 7th December 1941. It was great to have the Americans in, but I'm not quite certain where I was at that particular stage, but I must have been at WD & HO Wills. I'm certain I was there, but what particular day it was I can't recall. In those days the Storey Bridge still wasn't built, the Storey Bridge was being built and it wasn't until

17:30 about 1941 I think that it was actually completed, and of course it proved to be a godsend as far as our traffic was concerned for the Storey Bridge to be made, because of the amount of traffic there would have been in the wartime.

In those years before, it wasn't very long before you joined

18:00 **up when the Japanese came into the war but was there a different feeling around Brisbane after the Japanese had entered the war?**

Almost immediately in as much as the American aircraft started arriving into Archerfield Aerodrome because Eagle Farm was just a grassed area and that's where Amy Johnson, Sir Kingsford Smith and also Hinkler

18:30 landed during their epic flights. It started to change immediately and we were on a battle footing at that particular stage. In 1941, about July the 61st Battalion was brought up to strength and the troops although they might have had three or six months training

19:00 they had to continue on with full-time duty at that particular stage. The air force was being trained as well as and Keith Proud, my best mate, he was being trained as a flier and eventually he went over to England and

19:30 he flew the Stirling aircraft. He got a great award from the Dutch Government for his participation in dropping spies and so forth over in Belgium and Holland. It's changed a great deal, I recall going over to Archerfield Aerodrome to see some of the first

20:00 American aircraft come in and then our 61st Battalion had to go down to Eagle Farm Racecourse and that's where the Americans first landed at Brett's Wharf and marched over to the tents that our people had erected for them at Eagle Farm Racecourse. That was the

20:30 first development of the Americans into Brisbane. After that we would see lots and lots of American transporters around Brisbane and it became a huge and massive base at times. Toowong area was a big base, Indooroopilly was a big base. We had wireless operations around the Indooroopilly area. Not a great deal happened in Indooroopilly, but

21:00 at the Indooroopilly railway station, that was an interesting thing that the Japanese would be brought down for interrogation just across the road from the Indooroopilly station. Then some of the Japanese who came down as prisoners because we felt that they had more information

21:30 to give them what they had already spoken about. They were brought over to the Indooroopilly pictures in our Eldorado theatre of course and they would have a guard each side and they would sit there in the movies and watch the movies the same as anybody else would. When they got back under surveillance, going back over to the camp just by the Indooroopilly railway station, they'd very often open up and give us

22:00 more information. The hardened Japanese more so the officers, they would be interrogated at the Indooroopilly railway station and brought across to the Indooroopilly Theatre, now the Eldorado Theatre.

Fascinating. It's a whole different point of view on Indooroopilly station.

22:30 **Can you walk me through when you were called up for the army?**

First of all we went into Kelvin Grove army barracks and that's where we were met by a sergeant, they seemed to be sergeant, he had all the authority in the world at this stage.

23:00 We were called in one by one and we went up and signed up and that's when I said to the sergeant, "Is it possible for me to get me into the artillery?" and he said, "I've got news for you, you are going to go into the infantry." They had thirty other fellows with me at that stage, thirty from our 61st Battalion and one hundred and fifty

23:30 from the 9th Battalion, they were being recruited at same time. We all went down by train down to Bowen Hills and from there we marched through to the exhibition grounds where there was a medical department there. We had our lungs and all sorts of things happen at that stage by the doctors that looked after us. From there down to

24:00 the nearest station at Zillmere to Chermside Army Camp and as we arrived at the Chermside Army Camp where there were four or five thousand people around. We were met with, "You'll be sorry." "You'll be sorry." as we went into at the Chermside Army Camp... "You'll be sorry,

24:30 you won't like this at all."

Who was saying that?

They were the people in their tents as we were marching down into Chermside itself to get our equipment and after that we went down to the tents that we were allocated.

What was the equipment that you got?

Naturally

- 25:00 our clothing, our pants our shirts our singlets and also rifle with no bullets at that stage. Then we went along to the tents and we had eight to a tent. We waited for further orders
- 25:30 and Sergeant Major Davie Hill was on and he was a warrant officer one by the time he was up with the officers, he was big time. His voice, he had the handle-bar moustache and he use to be at the Wintergarden Theatre or the Regent Theatre, one of those, and
- 26:00 he'd be the commissioner at that particular theatre, I think it was the Regent Theatre he was at. He was big time and he had been in the army for quite a long time. His training under his direction the 61st Battalion trained particularly well and
- 26:30 it was through his training we did train, we were able to combat ourselves or achieve ourselves fairly well, I think.

What sort of training did they take you through initially?

The six weeks training that we had a lot of manoeuvres going on two-day treks and we went out on a seven-day trek as well. There was bayonet training and we went down

- 27:00 and did some firing out at the rifle range. We didn't do any pistol shooting, there was Bren gun [light machine gun] shooting, communications they trained us fairly well. By that stage the 61st Battalion
- 27:30 had already been trained so we had to be therefore brought up in the six weeks to get up to their training schedule that they had. It was a little bit difficult to get all that training in six weeks. It was mainly bayonet training, rifle training and of course a lot of marching, marching up and down and we had to accept orders and that was the important thing.
- 28:00 I remember Private Jarmaine, he didn't like the orders that he received, he said, "I'm not doing to do this, I'm not doing to do that." As a result of that he got pack drill. Pack drill is just - stop the ordinary pack that you have on your back, it was a very large pack in which you'd have blanket and all sorts of things and it was very, very heavy and extremely heavy.
- 28:30 He had to do that for one hour, march up and down and, of course, being ridiculed by the troops as well. "Jarmaine, you are a donkey." and all of those sorts of things. Jarmaine was a much better soldier after that and he fought very well when the time came for him to do some fighting. Jarmaine, I will always remember him telling the sergeant, "I'm not doing this and wasn't doing to do that."
- 29:00 but anyway he had to do it. We all had to accept authority, which we did.

Was it hard to settle into that army style of life initially?

It was because you had been taken from mum and dad. Every night you'd have a comfortable bed to sleep in. Going back a little bit our bed was a palliasse,

- 29:30 a palliasse is where you have a big over sized chaff bag and you'd go down to the horse stalls and get chaff and you'd put the chaff and straw into your palliasse and that became your bed. After being at home with mum and dad and being nice and easy and under regimentation, regimentation wasn't very easy when you are coming straight from home and you are just a little kid.
- 30:00 You went in at that stage at nineteen years old and we were the last reinforcements to come to the 61st Battalion before we went away up to wartime. From the end of January it was only a matter of six months and we were in action. We had to grow up very quickly and we had to be accepted by the other people in the 61st Battalion that we
- 30:30 had got to achieve ourselves. Little awkward periods in one's life to take orders and be with other men it was pretty awkward. When you showered, you showered all together, so it was one of those awkward periods of one's life to go from mum and dad and suddenly you had to grow up overnight.
- 31:00 You had to be regimented and that's what happened there. We trained quite well and we were able to enter into the 61st Battalion. My company was C Company and when I arrived there somebody had mentioned that I had done some running so they made me a runner.
- 31:30 A runner is a person who takes communication from the captain to other areas, the captain or the orderly room because you might have to take it over to battalion headquarters. You had to straight away be a runner but that kept you away from all the rifle drills it was a much easier time for us.
- 32:00 I think there were three runners altogether taking communications over to battalion headquarters and other companies as required.

Where was it that you met up with the 61st Battalion?

At Chermiside, once we had our six weeks carder, or subsequent training, or earlier training it was then

that the

32:30 61st Battalion were at Chermside together with the 9th Battalion and the 25th Battalion at that stage were up in Toowoomba because they were a Toowoomba battalion. We had around about five or ten thousand troops at Chermside because there would be other troops there as well as probably artillery and all sorts of other developments that would form the army, so they had around about ten thousand I suppose at that stage.

33:00 That was when I met up with the 61st Battalion and I was marched over from our area with our tents over to the 61st Battalion and I was allocated with Jarmaine and Vicky Thomson and some of the other fellows and I was directed to C Company and that's where I was made a runner. Where as Vicky Thomson and

33:30 Jarmaine they went into the 15th Platoon and they had three platoons in a company. A company is around a hundred and thirty men.

After you had finished up at Chermside can you tell me about where you headed after that?

We were at Chermside for about three months that would be about

34:00 February 1942, and when it got to May in the meantime the would be aircraft carrier was off the Queensland coast, and they may well have been an aircraft carrier but there wasn't an aircraft carrier as we know, but there may well have been in the vicinity out in the ocean.

34:30 We went up in late April 1942 to Yandina. Yandina was just a nice quiet little area with four or five thousand troops coming into it, it grew over night. We went there and did a lot of training, we did

35:00 night-time training, we went over a mountain range to do an attack on Coolumb and we marched down on Coolumb and we attacked Coolumb, or the would be Japanese, we repulsed them. Then we returned to our camp and we were only there at Yandina for about three or four weeks. Suddenly the Japanese were

35:30 endeavouring to do a sea-borne invasion to Port Moresby. The Coral Sea Battle took place and we marched down to the train down at Yandina railway station, and we were told that it was quite possible that we might have to fight anywhere along the coast between Yandina and Townsville and we

36:00 were given one hundred rounds of ammunition. Bandoliers across here, and we were told that we might have to fight anywhere along the coast. We kept asking our officers, and Captain Campbell was my officer, had the Japanese arrived or what was going to happen, were they being defeated and with the American Navy and the Australian Navy, they repulsed the Japanese,

36:30 the Japanese lost pretty heavily and the Americans lost very heavily too. On the way up on the train we had, the people who would come down to the train and they'd give us food on the way through, and also papers because we hadn't seen any papers for a while.

37:00 We went through Bundaberg, Gladstone and Rockhampton, it took around about five or six days to get up to Townsville, it was very, very slow and it was an old goods train that we had. I was in a carriage and we were also taking up our Bren gun carriers at the same time. It was one of those interesting periods in as much there was tension all the time because

37:30 we thought that we might fight anywhere along the coast. The Japanese invasion was stalled at that particular time.

Did you feel ready to fight if you had too?

Yes, with all your mates around you and the training that we had particularly under the Scotsman Warrant Officer First Class Davie Hill

38:00 he made certain that we trained particularly well. Especially when you have got your mates around, you feel as though they won't let you down and you won't let them down, we were quite happy to fight if we had to. Luckily the Japanese didn't arrive, but I do feel that we might have been beaten at that stage because there were so many troops around the place. They seemed to be

38:30 invincible and they were coming down through Manchuria and China and down to Burma and of course Singapore had fallen at that stage, it was a bad time indeed. They seemed as though they were going to be invincible.

Had you made many good mates by this stage?

Yes, especially those who were with me in the cadre that we had, the six weeks cadre, they were

39:00 pretty good mates and they are still good mates today, but there aren't many of them about. I don't see Vicky Thomson, I don't see Jarmaine and a lot of them have passed away as well. It's rather sad that I don't see very many of them, I don't see hardly any of them at all there may be only two or three that are left out of the thirty-odd,

39:30 so I don't see very many of them at all unfortunately, and it's rather a shame really.

How close were you to these guys at the time?

Quite close, they would tell me about their mums and dads, their families and their girlfriends, so it was a pretty close period that we had. After all when there are eight of you in a tent,

40:00 I suppose they'd talk about their girlfriends more than anything else, they'd tell you about mum and dad and what dad was doing, it was a great period of time I thought. We became very firm friends and when you are out on patrols and so forth, later on you'd say, "G'day Jack." or "G'day Vicky."

40:30 you became very close. You felt as though with them you were going to have protection, they might of felt that you might have been protection as well but the protection that they offered was great. Those in the cadre with me proved to be very good fighters as well.

Tape 3

00:30 Can you tell us about how you and others were thinking about the possible invasion?

Very much, because the Brisbane Line came into the area at this stage. The Brisbane Line I think was just a little bit

01:00 north of Brisbane around the Strathpine way, nobody seems to be able to tell me exactly where the Brisbane Line was. The whole of North Queensland was to be given up by the government and the Brisbane Line was to come into the area and to be the defence of Australia. It was an awkward period especially for Mum particularly because

01:30 in my particular case we had myself and my two brothers were all in the army and it was pretty hard on mums. The period was pretty tough, you felt the invasion, it's quite possible for the Japanese. They swept everything before them and there was the possibility that they were going to come down to Australia, it was an awkward period. There was a terrible amount of

02:00 tension for everybody, for the civilians in Brisbane and Australia. There was always troops around Brisbane, movement of the trucks and very often tanks and Bren gun carriers. There was a lot

02:30 of movement it was a difficult period and particularly in Brisbane more so and probably Sydney and Melbourne because Brisbane was the crack of the whole thing, it was much closer than Sydney and Melbourne and therefore a lot of tension. There were troops all over the place, if you can think of Brisbane with a population

03:00 of three hundred thousand, and there would probably be about a couple hundred thousand troops in and around the area.

How aware were you of the policies of the Brisbane Lines at the time?

I don't think we knew anything about it, I don't think so. It filtered through to us up in New Guinea about the Brisbane Line it was a talking point,

03:30 but I didn't know much about it. Apart from the fact that if the Japanese came to invade Queensland they were given open slather to come right down to the Brisbane Line possibly defend them there. There must have been tremendous

04:00 tension for the mums and dads. It was a great relief eventually when the Japanese were defeated at Milne Bay. It was a wonderful thing for everybody to say that we had defeated the Japanese, but the tension must have been very, very big in Brisbane, particularly. I know that my sister,

04:30 she had not long been married, it was an awkward period for everybody, and of course with the three brothers away and especially with Mum and Dad, it was an extremely awkward period.

Was it a surprise because the Japanese had been kind of

05:00 **displayed in the media as not good fighters up until they took Singapore, was it a big surprise for Australia that they were doing so well?**

Not really, because of the numbers they had, they had a tremendous number of troops. They'd gone into Korea, Manchuria, China and down to Burma; they seemed to sweep everything before them.

05:30 They had a huge number of troops and also they had tremendous amount of equipment, and we had to sort of start developing those sorts of things, it wasn't surprising to us that they had done so well, especially with Singapore falling.

06:00 They had one hundred and fifty thousand troops there we thought, "They must be marvellous fighters." but it wasn't until we got to Milne Bay that we found that they weren't as good fighters as we had thought that they had been at that particular stage. I will go into more detail about Milne Bay later on but I thought that they were a bit stupid at Milne Bay. They did things that they would normally not

have done, they were very cocky

- 06:30 people, they felt, "We have come right down through Malaysia, and we have done over Singapore and we have got Indonesia." When they arrived at Rabaul and they sort of overrun a lot of areas and we only had skimpy troops in those particular places. They
- 07:00 were extremely cocky, they thought themselves pretty big time, I think. Their numbers that was the big thing and we felt Australia particularly with a population at that stage of only six million people and Japan with over one hundred million people, they sort of seemed to have a lot more going for them than what Australia did at the time. We didn't have the troops to combat them and of course a lot of our troops
- 07:30 and there were four divisions and they were overseas, three divisions over in the Middle East and one division in Singapore so it was a very difficult time for Australia at that stage.

You arrived in Townsville tell us about some of the training you were receiving?

The main training we had there particularly at

- 08:00 Rolling Stone and Anthill Plains, we were only at Anthill Plains for about a week and then we moved up to a better position to combat the Japanese. The reason why we went to Anthill Plains was the first of all they thought the Japanese would land paratroops on or around about Townsville. They considered the harbour in Townsville was a pretty good harbour for their ships and
- 08:30 a very deep harbour and then they thought the paratroops would land on the roads. The roads leading out from Townsville up to Charters Towers, the roads there we thought the planes might land on those particular roads, because there weren't any telephone post around not that I could see, and we thought that they would land there.
- 09:00 That proved to be wrong so then we shifted up to a better position where the mountains came down reasonably close to the sea at Rolling Stone. I suppose there was land probably about a mile and a half to two miles from the mountains to the sea, so that was a better position for
- 09:30 us to be in. We had the artillery behind us as well as, we had three battalions of our troops, 9th Battalion, 25th Battalion and 61st Battalion, we had our Bren gun carriers. We worked very hard there with barbed wire entanglements, digging slit trenches, we trained pretty hard there.
- 10:00 We went on one manoeuvre and it rained furiously for three or four days and that had to be called off because of the rain, and people were getting sick. It was a lot of training around that area, but mainly the training of putting barbed wire entanglements and so forth up.
- 10:30 It was a difficult period there because we thought that the Japanese still might invade that area and drive down to Townsville. The only troops that we had around our place was our brigade, I'm not quite certain where all the other brigades were at that stage. I know that our brigade was certainly there in the front line.
- 11:00 Aircraft would come over, we had aircraft spotters to record to see if they were coming over, they did come over from time to time and eventually we had three Japanese raids on Townsville,
- 11:30 they were by Betty Flying Boats. They had come down from Rabaul and they had a long way to come down just like our Catalinas they could fly pretty well for ten, fifteen or even twenty hours at a time. The Betty aircraft came down and they bombed around where the casino is at the moment, they bombed around
- 12:03 Cluden Racecourse. They did a little bit of bombing but there were no casualties at all from the bombings. They made three raids on Townsville and one at Mossman. I remember on one occasion we had gas training that was pretty important.
- 12:30 To have the gas mask on it's a shocking thing because it's very hard to breath.

Were the Americans in town at the same time?

The Americans were also at Townsville too, because their aircraft were flying into Townsville. There were mainly engineers and so forth in Townsville,

- 13:00 and the dark Americans were kept over the Ross River on the other side. Two of them on one occasion came across the bridge into Townsville and they were immediately shot dead. There was tension there all the time. From Rolling Stone we would be able to go on leave into Townsville,
- 13:30 a train load would go in each day of our thousand troops or so that we had in the battalion, we had the 9th Battalion as well as alongside of us and the 25th on the way. A train load holding about two hundred and fifty people would go into Townsville each day,
- 14:00 I think we had leave about once a week. It was good to get into town and have a steak and be able to go to the movies, they had an open-air movie theatre in Townsville in those days and we would go in there

and enjoy it. We were able to ring home and we had photo taken, it was quite nice to get into the town. We would pass the

14:30 airbase at that stage and we would be able to see the American and Australian aircraft on there and we felt a little bit safer. It was teaming with troops in Townsville because that was the first base that was the big base in those days in Townsville. There were ships coming in and out, there would be

15:00 warships out in the bay it was a big time, there were lots and lots of troops around. It was towards the middle part of July about the 27th July that the Japanese came over and bombed us and as I said they had three bombing raids on in Townsville at that stage, but teaming with

15:30 troops everywhere. You had to line up for a beer, there'd be a long queue with fifty, sixty, seventy of even eighty people just to get a beer. Beer I think was only available for so many hours during the day.

16:00 Townsville was extremely busy.

Did you see Americans with Australian girls?

My cousin was up there at that particular stage in Townsville and I was able to go out with her and they'd say, "Watty, you've got a girlfriend." they were very interested in the fact that I had a girlfriend but they didn't know that she was my cousin.

16:30 Not so much in Townsville more so in Brisbane where there were a lot more young ladies, but in Townsville there would not be so many ladies. A lot of the girls had been sent south to get away from the wartime conditions. We had a lot of

17:00 AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service] up there at that stage, the nurses in the hospital, there were not many ladies. I can't recall seeing any Americans out with our girls in Townsville more so in Brisbane.

What about Brisbane, what would you think when you saw Americans with Australian girls?

You didn't like it very much. They always had better uniforms than us

17:30 and I remember going on my first leave into Brisbane, it was quite exciting getting your first leave into Brisbane and the trams ran from just near the Chermiside camp into Brisbane. I remember going into Adelaide Street and we could hear the music, the American type of music and we walked up the steps to have a look and see what was going on

18:00 there were mostly Americans the doing the jive and jitterbug and all that sort of thing, they had a lot of Australian girls there at that particular time. You didn't like it but you had to accept it. But they had more money than what we did and also they had lovely uniforms and the girls were pretty keen on that, so we would miss out on all of that.

18:30 The Americans really took the floor in those days but you really didn't like it, and it wasn't very fair.

I was just curious something that you mentioned before in Townsville about the two black soldiers were killed, what for and who by?

By the American MPs [Military Police], the black Americans weren't suppose to come across the Ross River Bridge and they did so and they were

19:00 immediately killed, I thought that was a bit tough. The Americans were good fighters and they were there representing their country but the conflict between the white Americans and the dark Americans was pretty paramount. They weren't allowed across the bridge but they did so and they were killed.

19:30 That was the only killings that I know of in Townsville, and I felt pretty lousy about that, because I felt that they were there to help us and they came from American over to Australia to assist us and they were shot dead.

About the bombing, what was everyone talking about when they heard about the bombing?

They came over

20:00 to bomb our convoy we were leaving to go to Milne Bay at that stage and we had two cargo ships and we were herded into the cargo ships it was the only way that we could get up to Milne Bay up to New Guinea. It was the

20:30 25th or 27th July 1942 and the Japanese came over to do the bombing, the Betty Aircraft as I mentioned before they were the aircraft that they used. Our anti-aircraft kept them up at twenty-three thousand feet, their bombing was reasonably accurate but they weren't quite as accurate as they would have

21:00 liked so they went out and they dropped the bombs around where the casino is at the moment just near the wharf. You'd think at twenty-three thousand feet up and they were only two hundred meters off their target, which was pretty good. They did some bombing at Coolum Racecourse as well.

21:30 The subsequent raids didn't prove to be any more successful on the first one. There was one little girl up at Mossman and she was fragmented from the bombing, she was the only casualty I understand.

Now you are on the ship, tell us about the ship that took you to Milne Bay?

We had about a thousand troops on the ship and

22:00 as we came from Rolling Stone down to a wharf, people were yelling out to us, "Good luck!" as we were going down to the wharf. We went on board the Bontekoe, it was a Dutch vessel, as we boarded the Bontekoe we went

22:30 down below. They had hammocks there for us to sleep in but I'm not a very good sailor so I slept all the time up on the deck and I was pretty seasick on the way across. It took about three or four days to get across from Townsville to Milne Bay.

23:00 Conditions weren't all that good, the food was okay. As far as the food was concerned the cooking staff went on strike just before we were to leave for Milne Bay because they wanted more pay to go into a danger zone, I suppose they had something there. We were on six shillings a day and we were going into battle up to New Guinea and we thought,

23:30 "It's pretty tough that they should decide not to come with us." I'm not quite certain whether they did or didn't come with us, but we still had food on board. Some of our cooking staff were there with us to go to Milne Bay and they cooked our meals for us. I'm not certain

24:00 if the cooks who refused to come did come or not I'm not too certain about that. The conditions onboard, we fired our Bren guns at times, they were there for protection against enemy aircraft that might come. The interesting thing was we had two corvettes there to protect us and

24:30 also a cargo ship with us and the ship we were on and we had a thousand troops. In one of the books that was written just recently, the Japanese had trailed our convoy up to Milne Bay, that was in late July 1942. I haven't read the book so far but the

25:00 commander off one of the Japanese vessels said that they trailed us for some time but they couldn't get to us because the corvettes were going around and around all the time. We only went at about six knots because the cargo vessel that we were with couldn't go anymore than six knots. It was one of those very slow trips,

25:30 we didn't quite know, we were going to a place called Fall River and we thought it might have been anywhere and we didn't know where we were going. We didn't know if we were going to New Guinea at all at this stage. The people concerned would have known the hierarchy would have known but we didn't know where we were going we had no idea. Until we got to New Guinea and Fall River happened to be Milne Bay,

26:00 it was the code name for Milne Bay was Fall River, we didn't know where we were going. It took around three or four or even more boat loads to get the whole lot of our brigade over to Milne Bay. Some of our troops went earlier like Lieutenant Tomlinson, I think

26:30 Basil Fields, some of our intelligence sections went up there, I think Ronny Chalk and Bow went up as well. They went up to see the area that was allocated for our company and battalions. They went up about a week and a half before we went up.

What was it like,

27:00 **can you describe the cattle ship with all the troops on it?**

It wasn't very nice at all, it was quite smelly and of course preparation of the food was a little bit smelly as well and it would woof through onto the deck. We seemed to get through alright, I'm not certain what type of food we had but mainly M&V, which was meat and vegetables,

27:30 and also bully beef I should image, we had cups of tea and things like that. We had a mug and we had dixies to put our food into. The conditions on board weren't too bad most of the fellows were up

28:00 on deck all the time, we'd have physical culture throughout the day. Our guns would be fired; we had one gun on the back a six-inch gun or five/four-inch gun or something like that that we would fire occasionally. We'd test our Bren guns off

28:30 occasionally to make certain that they were working quite well. I can recall on the arrival that we saw what was New Guinea eventually, an aircraft came out to meet us and we thought, "Oh is this a Japanese or whatever." We didn't know quite what the aircraft was, but I suppose the authorities knew but we didn't know. They came over

29:00 and spotted us and guided us into China Strait and past Samarai [Island] into Milne Bay, but that was the first indication we had of anything around us at all, was the aircraft coming out to meet us. I suppose they would have recorded that back to the headquarters at Milne Bay that we were on our way. They would have alerted the authorities there

29:30 to have the trucks down to meet us.

Had you speculated with others on where you were going?

We didn't quite know where we were really. I didn't know that we were going to New Guinea, Fall River was the place we were going to. It wasn't until somebody indicated to me and others around me that

30:00 this could be New Guinea, we didn't know where we were we didn't know anything about Milne Bay. When we arrived going up China Strait, which is a strait through all the islands around Milne Bay, we could see the dark-skinned New Guineans waving to us. The Strait is reasonably close

30:30 to the island of Samarai and they were all waving to us and they were all dark skinned. I'm not quite certain when we knew we were at Milne Bay or New Guinea, I'm not quite certain when we were advised. We might have been advise when we were onboard the ship, I really can't say just when we were advised when we were going to New Guinea.

Can you describe that arrival for us, what

31:00 **you saw and what you were feeling?**

Milne Bay is thirty-two miles long by about eight miles wide and mountains and mountains and mountains all around us with clouds over the top of them. We were proceeding down and it seemed to be quite nice and peaceful, it's a lovely area Milne Bay if you were to

31:30 go there now it's a magnificent area. It would hold hundreds and hundreds of ships at one stage, it's around about two thousand feet deep, it's extremely deep. The Japanese later on could get right up close to shore to shell us and they did so later on in the wartime.

32:00 Arriving at Milne Bay it was quite exciting, the troops were all hugging the rails and having a look at all these mountains around us. We may have been told that it was New Guinea, I'm not quite certain when we actually knew but once we got on shore we certainly knew. As the Bontekoe was moving up the harbour,

32:30 Milne Bay itself a small motor boat came out and on board came a fellow just across the road from my place in Finney Road, the corner of Finney Road and Goldsey Road, and he was a sergeant from the sigs [Signals]. He said, "G'day Jim, what are you doing here?" but he had been sent up two or three weeks before hand to get the sig section going,

33:00 he was in the 7th Brigade Sigs. He moved on from passing me onto where the authorities were and he made up with them and then was able to send signals to the shore, "This is the Bontekoe coming in." what we required to take our troops out in so many trucks,

33:30 certain areas had to be allocated. It was one of those strange things, the eeriness about the whole thing; this was an eerie sort of a place. When we arrived at the wharf, there was no wharf, we only had pontoons out, the pontoons we had to go down and we were order to get all our gear

34:00 together and go down these rope ladders about twenty feet wide by about twenty feet deep and we had to go down these rope ladders. They are awkward things to get down because they'd swirl a little bit because the ship goes in, and there are others on the rope ladder

34:30 as well as you so we would be going in and out it was awkward to get onto these pontoons. There was no wharf there at all at a place called Gili Gili and we got to shore and then we were marched away for around about two hundred metres up a little track.

35:00 I remember Sergeant Doug Lowndes playing two-up, so he had a two-up school going almost immediately. The coconut trees looked very inviting, the native New Guineans who were around we asked them to scale up and bring down some coconuts which they did, we offered them one cigarette

35:30 but they wanted a packet of cigarettes. But for just one cigarette they would bring down some coconuts for us, and that was very, very nice. In the meantime, we didn't know where we were going at that stage, what allocation we were going to...and we were just milling around and the two-up school was going and the people couldn't spend their money very much on anything else, so

36:00 Doug Lowndes had this two-up school going. After that we were taken to our allocated locations. C Company was alongside the Wyhuria River [?], and other companies were taken to their areas that the intelligence section, with Lieutenant Tomlinson and also with Lenny Bow and Ronny Chalk, they had allocated

36:30 certain areas for our battalions and companies to go to. That night we didn't have time to put our tents up at that particular stage so we had to sleep on the ground. An interesting thing was, we were wearing shorts at that stage and we had our

37:00 sleeves rolled up because it was a sweaty sort of an area. Eventually, one hundred percent of our fellows went down with malaria, one hundred percent went down. That's why we didn't go into battle again for a few months after the Milne Bay battle was over. The roads were just ordinary roads, they weren't

- 37:30 gravel roads. Therefore, as the rain came down, which it did very often, the road became very muddy, the trucks soon churned them up and they were bogged. It was a difficult period for the first two or three days. I'm not quite certain how we got on for food,
- 38:00 we seemed to eat alright, I'm not quite certain that the cook house was established very quickly. I feel that we might of existed on tins of M&V and also bully beef, I don't know how we got on for a cup of tea or whether we just drank water. It's difficult to know after all these years, just how we got on for food.
- 38:30 The Bontekoe had to be unloaded and we could only unload one boat at a time, that had to be unloaded and then the cargo ship came in and I suppose the cargo ship had on all of our tents, and that had to be unloaded as well.

Can you describe the scene once you started building it? What did it look like?

- 39:00 We had to cut the kunai grass down first, we didn't have machetes in those days, we had to do that with our bayonets to cut the grass down. I remember on one occasion, one of our fellows, he saw a snake up the tree and he tried to lasso the snake down because it was a pretty-looking snake,
- 39:30 it was probably quite deadly I suppose, it was only about two feet long, he tried to snare it and bring it down to us. There were snakes around but we didn't see many snakes at all. The whole time up in New Guinea, and I spent a couple of years there, we didn't come across any crocodiles at all. Although crocodiles were around and we could hear them snorting, not that I could hear them snorting,
- 40:00 but other people had come across the crocodiles, but I didn't see any crocodiles at all, but they were in the area no doubt.

Tape 4

00:30 You were talking about the scene of Milne Bay?

It was an exciting time in as much as people and troops everywhere. Especially the roads, and of course it rained constantly and the roads were being churned up. In the meantime,

- 01:00 we had to cut down all the undergrowth and so forth so that we could put our tent, and the tents arrived so we put the tents up. Everybody was quite excited. We didn't anticipate that the Japanese would be coming anywhere near us, the Australian authorities knew that the Japanese would be coming towards us but we didn't know, we as privates didn't know. It was quite
- 01:30 exciting and everything was going along quite of ok, but we didn't get any letters of course, it just hadn't caught up with us at that stage. My job, I was asked to go down to the wharf area and we had some huts down there, they were native huts. We had to stay there to stop the Indonesians from
- 02:00 coming off the wharf inland because they might gain valuable information as far as the army was concerned or the air force. We had to stay there, not that anybody came down, got off these ships to come down to go inland at all, but we were there to stop them. There was a gate area and the swampland area around,
- 02:30 nobody came down but it was our duty and there would have been three or four of us on duty because we had to be on duty at night time as well as daytime. I was there for about four or five days, I suppose, down on the wharf, which was good because I didn't do anything. I didn't have to erect tents or cut down any grass or dig latrines or things of that nature.
- 03:00 We didn't dig any trenches at that stage, we were right alongside the Whyhery River, which was a river running past Number 3 Strip - a creek, I should say, it wasn't a river. I was down on the wharf and it was interesting to see the unloading of the ships, and I thought it was pretty good and I quite enjoyed it. I was invited to help
- 03:30 when the second ship came in, the cargo ship that came up with us from Townsville that had on board a tremendous number of barrels of fuel for the aircraft and also for our trucks. We had to work all night under flood lights to unload the ships and it was pretty tiring work, as well as my daytime activities
- 04:00 of guarding the little area to stop the Indonesian getting out, we had to unload the ships also. We had to, literally on ramps, and push the 44-four gallon drums up, up, up, up, and it took about two or three of us to pull, because it had a container about this high and about that round
- 04:30 filled with fuel and we had to push that up onto the truck, and it was pretty hard work. We did that all day, day in and day out, but we had to do it for the aircraft that we had. At that stage we had the 75th and 76th Squadron, they were there on land. They had landed
- 05:00 there about two weeks before we arrived there, the aircraft had come down from Port Moresby down to Milne Bay. There was an airstrip there already made for them, I don't know whether it was a dirt

airstrip or whether it was one of those metal airstrips, I'm not quite certain when they put the metal down for that airstrip

- 05:30 but they were operational anyway. We had to unload the ships and it was pretty hard work, all day and all night, because other ships wanted to come in and they were on their way from Townsville as well as bring these other ships up and they had to be unloaded as well. There was only one point of unloading, and as I mentioned before, it was extremely deep and we could get right in alongside the coral atoll.
- 06:00 We had to unload onto pontoons because you couldn't get right up alongside the dirt area. That was all, we had, we had no wharf at all. When the Japanese arrived, I think our complement was around about
- 06:30 9,000 troops and they all had to get over the side of the ships onto the rope ladders down onto the pontoon and then make their way onto the ground. There was a lot of activity going on all the time, there was activity all day and all night and troops arriving, as mentioned. Once those cargo ships would leave,
- 07:00 other troops were coming in. I remember at Townsville a friend of mine, my brother married his daughter later on, Pop Harsh [?], he was in the military police and he saw me off in Townsville, "Cheerio, Jim." he said, "Best of luck."
- 07:30 I happened to be at Gili Gili at Milne Bay when he arrived and he was on one of the cargo ships coming up as a military police man and I said, "G'day mate, good on you, it's good to have you here." it was great to see him come up. My brother married his daughter later on. There was a tremendous amount of activity
- 08:00 around the place. We didn't have very much opportunity for training because we had to build little bridges, our Bren gun carriers were helping to haul the coconut trees along to bypass over the streams. The streams sometimes were fast flowing because of the rain that we were having around the place.
- 08:30 Our pioneers, which were our type of engineers, they were building the bridges for us, and as I mentioned, the Bren gun carriers would be hauling the logs up. There was a tremendous amount of activity around the place. In the meantime the Number Three Strip, which was the strip alongside my company, alongside of the Whyhery River, was being made by the 43rd American Engineers,
- 09:00 and they were flat out all day and all night and under floodlight they would be operating. That happened to be the battle scene later on, the Japanese had to cross to combat our soldiers. All this activity was going around, there were trucks all around the place, there were troops on patrols here and there, there was a lot of
- 09:30 activity around the place, it was just hustle and bustle all over the place. Especially down at the wharf area, where the troops were arriving constantly. The 18th Brigade came as well as and they arrived only a week before the action, 2/9th, 2/10th and 2/12th and thank goodness they came because they helped us a great deal as far as the battle of Milne Bay was concerned.
- 10:00 A lot of activity was going on.

Tell us about their arrival, having been experienced Middle East fighters what did you think of the 18th?

We thought they were saviours; they had done extremely well over in the Middle East. One of the battalions had been in Tobruk, they had done the fighting there or the whole brigade,

- 10:30 might have been in Tobruk, I'm not quite sure. We felt that these fellows from the Middle East, they must be great fighters, and they were good fighters too as it turned out. It was great to be able to have them with us because of their prowess, fighting ability. In each brigade, there were about four or five thousand people,
- 11:00 which was great to have two brigades there. One untried brigade, but one brigade who had done a lot of fighting over in the Middle East. It was good to have them there and we were very thrilled, "Gee whiz, the 18th Brigade has come along." and they proved to be very good fighters as well. All that activity, and they were only with us for about a week or so
- 11:30 before the battle commenced and they were put in a reserve position, whereas our battalion, we were the front battalion at that stage, and we were spread out over about 20 miles. At one place we went to was called Ahioma, which is towards the front of
- 12:00 Milne Bay itself and that was our Don Company. B Company was about three or four miles behind that, they were at KB Mission, and then two platoons of A Company and my C Company, we were helping to guard the American engineers at that stage, the 43rd Engineers. One platoon of
- 12:30 A Company had gone over the mountain range the Stirling Range that went to about three or four thousand feet over to a place called Taupota. The Japanese were supposed to have landed at Taupota later on, but I will tell you a little bit more about that later on. Our battalion was spread out a long way,
- 13:00 spread out about 15 or 20 miles really. It was very awkward for our battalion at that stage because

communication was by telephone, but it was an awkward situation for us to be in spread out so much, especially as the Japanese did arrive later on and they landed between one of our companies.

Back onto the 18th Brigade,

13:30 **just tell us what they looked like to you, and what were you thinking about them?**

Great fighters, they looked great. They looked as though they could have knocked over the Japanese quite easily without our help. They looked great, and we were very thrilled to have them because with their prowess and all their officers had been in action, and their brigadier had been in action,

14:00 to have them with us it was tremendous. We were terribly thrilled to have them with us, because we felt that they could fight their way fairly well and certainly defeat the Japanese and we were quite pleased.

Describe how they might of, look in their face, did they look older? Did they look tougher?

When they came back after all the fighting

14:30 over in the Middle East that, they would have lost troops, and when they came back to Australia they would have had to have been reinforced and a lot of the reinforcements had been trained at Canungra itself. Therefore, half of them would have been tried and proven whereas the other half would have been just like ourselves - hadn't been in action.

15:00 They seemed extremely confident and we were very pleased that the confidence really showed, and it showed in us as well as them, "Gee whiz, the AIF are here." We were militia and we hadn't been tried, so we were extremely please to have them.

Did they give you any hassle, like the 'chocco' [chocolate soldier - militiaman] term?

Yes. When they were going into

15:30 action, and I will describe that to you later on, "We're here now and we will do them over." sort of thing. I'm not quite certain where the name chocco was mentioned at all, "We're here now and we will do the Japs [Japanese] over, don't worry fellows." things of that nature. It didn't go on very much but the odd person would say that sort of

16:00 comment to us, the sort of hard fellow would. In any organisation, you are going to have fellows who will let themselves out a little bit more than others. They did on occasions, yes. "We will do them over."

Did they share stuff to teach you, or did they tell you...?

Not at all. No that I'm aware of, there was no

16:30 communication as far as their training was concerned because, ok, they had been in the Middle East and now it was jungle that they had to fight in.

What about stories, did they tell you any stories about their fighting?

We had nothing to do with them at all, very little. When I say very little, I mean I had nothing to do with them, so I'm not quite certain how our officers got on with them as far as our lieutenant colonel was concerned, whether he was able to talk to them or not, I'm not quite certain.

17:00 They didn't pass on any information to us, I will tell you later about the sticky bombs. They had used the sticky bombs against the German and Italian tanks and they thought when they went into the battle of KB Mission that they would do over the tanks with their sticky bombs, but they didn't prove to be right, anyway.

17:30 No, we didn't do any training with them. They were only there for seven days and they have to be getting their stores off the ship, there was no communication between us anyway at all.

How imminent did the threat appear to you, with all this busy activity?

There was no thought of the Japanese coming into Milne Bay. Perhaps the authorities knew about

18:00 it, but we didn't know anything about it. It just wasn't evident to us apart from the fact doing patrols though out the day and one platoon was at Taupota over the range, we just felt that the Japanese were a long way away as far as we were concerned. There was no thought about the Japanese coming to fight us at all.

18:30 **How was it for you with you working the activity day and night?**

No, just that we had to clear the wharf because there was only one wharf, it wasn't even a wharf, it was just a landing going out into Milne Bay itself. The landing was only around about two to three hundred meters long. We just had to get all the goods

19:00 off it because there was only one landing point and there was all the activity. There was no thought of the Japanese coming at all, not at that stage. Although we had air raids, not many air raids I suppose, we had half a dozen air raids during that time. It wasn't until the action started that the Japanese

started to shell and bomb us, and also strafe

19:30 the Number 3 and Number 1 strip as well. The activity was such that we had to get our goods off the wharf, that was the important thing. It was just of those things, a tremendous amount of activity going on, but we didn't think we were going into action, we didn't think of it.

You were spread out over 20 miles?

20:00 Yes.

You were talking about the communication lines and how that was set up? Talk about your role as a runner...

My job as a runner was to take communications from company headquarters up to the battalion headquarters. Each day, Roy Cook, our ordinary corporal,

20:30 would have to prepare a message to say that the company strength at this stage is so and so, there are so many in hospital and so many sick people from malaria, and all sorts of things, so that's what I had to do. Or if Captain Campbell went out on a patrol,

21:00 either one of us, Ferguson or myself, went with him, because he might say, "Run back to company or battalion headquarters with the message of so and so." that was my role of taking messages, apart from the fact that I had been on the wharf area for a little time. Which was quite interesting, with a tremendous amount of activity, not so much in the company area

21:30 where they were still cutting grass down. It was one of those periods of time when there was a lot of activity around the place. Apart from the Japanese coming in to strafe us, there was no bombing that went on at that particular stage.

22:00 That was the only activity that we had around the place, everything seemed to be nice and calm and it was good. Our cooks were doing quite a good job in preparing meals for us. We always had adequate meals. Then of course, because of the fellows going down with malaria, we didn't have any Quinine

22:30 because the Japanese had taken over the Quinine areas and they brought in Atebrin. Atebrin had to be taken by us under supervision each night at five o'clock. We also had to have long sleeves and also our trousers rolled down. We didn't have to wear shorts from then on.

23:00 **They had worked it out in the meantime not to wear shorts?**

Because of malaria. A lot of fellows went down with malaria, a tremendous amount did. The hospital ship, the Manunda would come in constantly and pickup, anyone with malaria would be taken by hospital ship down to Australia and they would have to see out their days down there. I got malaria later on, but

23:30 the CCS [Casualty Clearing Station] was up and running at that stage, our Casualty Clearing Station, which was a type of a hospital. After that we went out around about 10 miles back from the Milne Bay area to an area where we got rid of malaria altogether. We had liquid Quinine, which was shocking stuff. To take it was awful,

24:00 but we had liquid Quinine to get rid of our malaria.

With the Atebrin parades, tell us how the officer would make sure you'd take it?

The Atebrin was given out and was placed in the palm of your hand. We will take, for example, a platoon which would have been around about 30 to 35 men. The Atebrin was given out in the palm of your hand and you'd have a cup of water and the officer would go along to each person in turn to make certain that you took it and gobbled it up and made sure that it didn't show on the palm of your hand. It would be in your mouth and you'd have your cup

25:00 and you'd drink the water and that would go down into your body, and he would go to each person in turn to make sure that they took their Atebrin. It's pretty important, as it turned out later on our fellows were going down with malaria and we had 100 percent of our fellows with malaria eventually, it was important for us to keep on our feet.

25:30 **What were the effects of the Atebrin?**

You'd go yellow. When people came back on leave and they were quite yellow, the wives would think, "You look a different colour now." but it made you go yellow. The other effects I don't know.

How yellow, or what kind of yellow?

26:00 When I say yellow, it was just a pale sort of a yellow, it wasn't a deep yellow at all, it was sort of a pale yellow I should image.

What kind of things were you doing to entertain yourselves if you had any time?

26:30 I didn't do anything at night time. I'd just write my letters to mum and then my families. Fellows would

play cards, of course, there was no entertainment, and when I say no entertainment at this particular stage, up

27:00 to the battle we had no entertainment there at all. It was just cards, I suppose, would have been the main thing. And smoking. Although interesting enough,

27:30 we did have beer, a lot of beer arrived at one stage and some of the fellows got quite drunk. One of the cargo ships that came in, and I was down on the wharf at that stage in the little hut, a tremendous amount of beer came ashore, which was unfortunate because

28:00 we needed equipment at that stage, we needed bombs, needed shells and bullets to combat the Japanese, but all this beer arrived and it was a tremendous amount of beer. I can recall being on the wharf at one stage and the Americans were doing the unloading and they said, "Aussies, would you like some beer?" and the fellows

28:30 around me said, "Yes." As the crane was coming down, instead of being out here onto the wharf area, he smashed it down onto the railings of the ship and of course bottles went everywhere and they went all over the place. Of course our fellows were able to gather up the beer bottles

29:00 and hide them. The Americans were quite good to us in that regard, not that I drank at all, but many of the other fellows did so they were very, very happy about getting the beer from the Americans, the smashed beer. When I say smashed, some of them were smashed but there were still plenty of bottles around the place.

How did you get along with the Americans?

29:30 I didn't have very much to do with them. The engineers would just say "hello" to them and "hi." it was different after the battle was over. During the battle, the Americans were fighting with us along the airstrip, but they were pretty good guys. I think we had the 43rd Engineers with us

30:00 and they were making the strip for us, but they had good food, lovely food. They had better food than what we had. We had mainly M&V and also bully beef and dog biscuits. We had plenty of dog biscuits to eat. They had ever so much better food than what we had. Those who were able to go into their mess sometimes, I

30:30 didn't go into their mess because I was only a private in those days. They provided quite nice meals for some of our fellows who went along with them.

When you were a runner, did you have to run hard with your messages?

No, we had a bike, and we would cycle to the areas that we needed to go to. When the battle was on, I was on foot

31:00 then and I didn't have a bike, but beforehand we did. Because of the distances, we had to go sometimes they'd be half a mile, might be a mile or even a little more than a mile, a bike was necessary. I think we only had one bike between two or three of us.

Tell us about some of the air raids, what were they like the Japanese air raids?

31:30 Different in as much that before the battle and after the battle, we didn't have anything to do with the air raids, I can recall being out on one occasion when we were coming back after helping to build this bridge and we were coming back and we could hear the drone of three aircraft

32:00 coming over. They were only about tree-top level and we waved to them and they turned out to be Japanese aircraft, but they were looking and went on past us and then another eight or ten miles down and they would have been trying to shoot up the Number 1 Airstrip, which they did. I think there were five planes in all, and two of them were shot down I understand.

32:30 by our Bofors [anti-aircraft gun] gunners, they were short range, I think their ceiling was only about five or eight thousand feet I think, but our main guns were up to 23,000 feet. We didn't see very much of the aircraft at that particular stage, they didn't strafe

33:00 us at this stage, they would have staffed the airstrip. There isn't very much I can say about the Japanese strafing us. I can't recall any bombing going on before the battle commenced, there was plenty of bombing after the battle. I think the Japanese wanted to make

33:30 certain that everything was kept intact, I think they were going to land and they were going to overrun us and therefore they wanted everything in tact, I think. That was the impression that I got.

There was an occasion when you were at KB Mission and a destroyer came into the bay, can you tell us about that?

That was during the battle.

34:00 **We might as well as start the battle then. Tell us about when you first heard that the Japanese were landing and fighting?**

I was out with Captain Campbell, he was OC [Officer Commanding] of our company. Let's go back, before this I had been over to Taupota. It took us eight hours to go up over the Stirling Ranges, about 3,000 feet down to the other

- 34:30 side where our platoon was. A platoon of A Company and I was sent over there with Sergeant Robinson, we had one section of about 10 that went over. Our job was to see whether the Japanese could bring heavy equipment over the Sterling Range against us.
- 35:00 We got over there and we stayed for two weeks, and when we got back we were under the impression that the Japanese could not bring over heavy equipment. But of course, as Kokoda, showed they could bring anything over. They could bring mountain guns and all sorts of things over, but we didn't think that they could at that particular stage. I had been over to Taupota and that was only a few days before the Japanese landed.
- 35:30 At that stage I was out with Captain Campbell, one day, and this was on the 25th August 1942, and Major Wiles came up and he was the 2IC [second in command] of our battalion of around about 800 troops, and I could hear him talking to Captain Campbell
- 36:00 and he said, "A Japanese landing could be made tonight." and that was the first that I knew of it. Captain Campbell turned to me and said, "Private Watt go down and see Lieutenant King to tell him to dig in because the Japanese might be landing tonight."
- 36:30 Lieutenant King was out digging trenches to get the water away because of the malaria and mosquitoes. I did my duty, I went down there, I'm walking at that stage and I walked about 800 meters, I suppose, to where Lieutenant King was with his platoon and the platoon was around about 30. I gave him the message and he said,
- 37:00 "Thank you very much." and I saluted and went on my way. I went back to company headquarters at that stage where activity was going on, a lot of activity was going on at that stage. I had to take a message up to
- 37:30 battalion headquarters, I'm not quite certain what the message said, but I rode my cycle up to battalion headquarters. When I returned to my company headquarters, Sergeant Stewart said, "Watt, I want to see you." So I went over to Sergeant Stewart and he said, "We are going into action."
- 38:00 He gave me 100 rounds of ammunition, it might have been 50, and he also gave me two grenades, one for each vest pouch. He said, "We are moving out in about one hour's time." So there was a lot of activity at that stage.

Tape 5

- 00:30 The night the Japanese landed was the 25th, about midnight. Prior to that, around about eight, nine or 10 o'clock at night, the Japanese cruiser started shelling us.
- 01:00 They shelled pretty much all night, they were sending over six-inch shells over our heads and they go "whirl, whirl, whirl." a whistling sound over the top of our heads pretty much all night. We spent that night digging slit trenches in case the Japanese had broken through and we had to combat them, and we were right alongside of the Whyhery River. They shelled us pretty much all night, and in the early
- 01:30 hours of the morning they vacated the bay, they just left behind the two transports because they wanted to get out around the island somewhere so that they could have a little bit more protection. They were shelling all night and it wasn't very nice at all, the shells were landing on or around about the Number 1 Airstrip, which was the gurney airstrip, which is the main airstrip north of the bay,
- 02:00 it was going on pretty much all night. Not that the shells fell around us, they didn't, they were shelling out about the Number 1 Strip. I don't think there were any casualties at all on that particular occasion, but we knew that we were in for a little bit of a battle at that stage. During that time we could hear the shooting up at Ahioma, and that's when the Japanese were shooting at the barge
- 02:30 that Sergeant Jim McKenzie was on and he was from our Don Company. The battle then started and the fact that the Bronze Wing [transport ship] was trying to get away with a certain amount of equipment from Ahioma and they were right towards the end of the bay up in that direction.
- 03:00 The Bronze then ran into a fleet of Japanese barges, and that's where our first casualty was at that particular stage when the Japanese shot Private Thurlow, he was the first one to shoot back, others might of, but he was the first one aft of the Bronze Wing and so started the battle. On the Bronze Wing were about 22 and Jim McKenzie
- 03:30 will take this up when he gives a lot more information about it, Jim McKenzie was steering the Bronze Wing into shore with Warrant Office Jock McMillan. Jock was later captured and murdered. We had 22 onboard and around about 15 to 16 were eventually rounded up by the Japanese and

- 04:00 had their hands tied around their backs around a coconut tree and they were all murdered. One of our fellows had 22 bayonet wounds in him when he was found. We didn't hear about that until later on during the battle, that the Japanese had murdered a number of our fellows. During that time we were
- 04:30 huddled around in our slit trenches just in case the Japanese had broken through, because you don't know, around about 10 miles up the way, you don't know what's going on and you are hopeful that the Japanese haven't broken through. They had not broken through at that particular stage, although they were pushing our troops back a little. It was an eerie night and nobody slept, I don't think at all, that particular night,
- 05:00 it was a very eerie night that we had. The next morning, which was the morning of the 26th...would you like me to tell you what I was doing at that stage? Or how the battle was going?

What you were doing?

That's where I mentioned before when I got my dates just a little bit muddled up. That's when we did our normal duties in the morning, we could hear the shooting

- 05:30 going on around about KB Mission and up towards Ahima. I was sent up with a message up to battalion headquarters and this was on the 26th August, 1942. When I arrived back after taking the message up, that's when Sergeant Steward called me over and said, "Watt, come over here." he said, "We are going into action." He gave me 50 or 100
- 06:00 rounds of ammunition. They were in bandoliers around our shoulders and two grenades one on each pouch, and we formed up and we left around about one o'clock in the afternoon, this is C Company I'm referring to now. Captain Campbell was in charge, Captain Rudder he was left behind because of a foot injury. Then we started on our way up to KB Mission.
- 06:30 The Japanese in the meantime had been pushing down the track and Lieutenant Robinson had stopped them to some degree around about Cameron Springs. These names all came to light during the battle, Cameron Springs...Private Whitlam was our forward scout up around about the Cameron Springs area.
- 07:00 He challenged the Japanese who were coming down, and there were four of them coming down, and he was immediately shot dead. Lieutenant Robinson's troops in an ambush position fired back at the Japanese and killed the four of them. A little bit later the main bulk of the Japanese came down and there would have been about 100 of them I should imagine. They came down and seeing the four Japanese dead,
- 07:30 they stopped and milled around. With that time, Lieutenant Robinson said, "Fire!" and they all fired into the bulk of the Japanese. They would have killed about 15 or 20 of them at that stage. Sergeant Ridley was on the other side of the road at Cameron Springs, Lieutenant Robinson pulled back a little bit, another 200 meters.
- 08:00 Sergeant Ridley and one other, could have been Corporal Fraser, they were left behind and Ridley said to Fraser, "Let's lie doggo and the Japanese might miss us." because it was between
- 08:30 midnight and two o'clock in the morning. During that time the Japanese had come along, about 70 or 80 of them who were still left and not killed, and they came along, and seeing two would be dead Australians on the side of the road, they decided to prod Sergeant Ridley with the bayonet. I believe the bayonet went actually in his leg, and
- 09:00 pulled out again and Sergeant Ridley didn't squirm at all, I would have if I had of been there, and then the Japanese went on their way. When the Japanese had gone on their way, Sergeant Ridley called out to Fraser, "Are you ok mate?" and he said "Yes, I'm ok." And they escaped across the road into the jungle and made their way up around Stirling Range.
- 09:30 The Japanese continued on towards KB Mission. Major Bicks at that stage decided to send out a small patrol to see where the Japanese were. Lieutenant Sanderson was the one in charge of the little patrol; Corporal Cyril McCullick was the corporal in
- 10:00 charge of the little section that went out. They had only gone forward a few hundred meters and they met the Japanese. The Japanese started firing at them and of course we started firing back at them. Lieutenant Sanderson with his Tommy gun [Thompson submachine gun], he was shot dead, also the forward scout was shot dead. The Japanese were calling out, "We will look after you, Aussie, we will look after you."
- 10:30 This is something from Cyril McCullick, who told me this only a couple of days ago, "We will look after you Aussie, we will look after you." With that, up came a couple of Japanese tanks and they started firing at Cyril McCullick and the others around him. Cyril McCullick thought that was a little bit too hot and he decided that he would take his little force up into the hills and they got back to KB Mission
- 11:00 some several hours later. The Japanese continued on a little bit. While crossing a small bridge, one of the tanks commanders trying to negotiate the bridge, he put his head out of the turret and Lieutenant Robinson who was back at KB Mission at that stage shot him through the head. The tank tilted over the bridge

- 11:30 a little, it was pulled out eventually by the other tank. That was around about half past six in the morning, coming up towards seven or half past seven. It was decided then at KB Mission that Major Bicks should put in another attack. He put the attack in with B Company, and B Company went forward and they sort of
- 12:00 started to attack the Japanese and the Japanese fell back. At this stage Major Bicks decided to fall back to KB Mission himself. That's when my company started off, about one o'clock in the afternoon. We went out on the road. It's about one hour and a half walk up the road towards KB Mission. In the meantime, one of the companies of the 25th Battalion had gone up to help Major Bicks
- 12:30 and also there were two platoons of our A Company were also going up to help him out. We put in attack around about four o'clock in the afternoon and disrupted the Japanese, I don't know how many of our fellows were killed but they apparently killed quite a number of Japanese. My company got up there between four and half past four in the afternoon.
- 13:00 The battle had stopped at that stage. The Japanese had attacked us once, and we had attacked them twice I think by that stage. But there were more battles to come that particular night. One around about ten o'clock and the other around three o'clock in the morning. The first job that Captain Campbell gave me was to go down
- 13:30 to see Lieutenant King and tell him to dig in because a Japanese attack was quite imminent. I went out into no man's land at that stage, I didn't feel any fear at all because I had all my mates behind me. I thought, "All the fellows are here." so I felt pretty good about it. I went down there but
- 14:00 I didn't see Lieutenant King, I saw Sergeant Soden and also Corporal Webb, and I gave them the message to dig in. We had no shovels, so we couldn't dig in very much at all. We could only use some of the coconuts that had falling down and we put those around for some sort of protection. I went back to company headquarters, which was
- 14:30 about 100 yards behind the front line. Around me were the mortars, Lieutenant Clinger, Sergeant Berfene with their mortars and they were firing into the jungle around about where the Japanese were. They fired constantly at the Japanese at that stage, they weren't quite sure where the Japanese were but it was harassing fire really.
- 15:00 After we had a meal of bully beef and dog biscuits, the dog biscuit of course are very, very hard and you have to crunch. After that Captain Campbell said to me, "I want you to go down and take some orders down to Lieutenant King again." which did and I went down through our two platoons and a little bit out,
- 15:30 I suppose into no man's land and I gave the message but not to Lieutenant King again, but to Sergeant Soden and also Sergeant Doug Webb. It was getting quite dark and I had to come back through our sentries, it was a little bit eerie coming back through the sentries again and eventually I got through the sentries. I don't know whether we had a password or not,
- 16:00 but I suppose we did. I eventually got back to our company headquarters again. At that stage, all was quiet. It was during that night that the Japanese attacked quite heavily with Woodpecker machine guns [Japanese machine guns] and also light machine guns and also with flame-throwers. They attacked
- 16:30 Lieutenant Tomlinson's platoon, Sergeant Ochenfels was there and also Eddie George and a few others, they had a platoon there. They were helped a little bit by some of the 25th Battalion - there was only a platoon of them. All was quiet again and the Japanese retreated. In the meantime, the guns are being fired over
- 17:00 inland all the time, the Japanese cruisers had come back into the bay again and they were firing quite steadily. I was given some messages to take up to Major Bicks, who was in our rear headquarters about 200 meters down the road, so I took the messages up to him. When I was coming back Ferguson said to me, he was the other runner, "Jim, don't go over the bridge anymore,
- 17:30 a sniper has a bead on the bridge." so I said, "Righto." I would go around the bridge at that stage to get back to company headquarters. But Lieutenant King had not been advised about the Japanese sniper following onto the bridge so he got shot right through the head and he was dead, and he was our mortar lieutenant. He had told me just before then,
- 18:00 in our conversation around company headquarters, that he had just got engaged to a young lady in Brisbane before he went away and here he was dead on the bridge. There was another battle early in the morning, and during that early battle Lieutenant King was shot through the throat and he bled quite furiously and was taken back by
- 18:30 Corporal Tim McCoy back to our RAP [Regimental Aid Post]. Lieutenant King eventually died at our Casualty Clearing Station, he died that morning, which was extremely sad because he was a very, very popular man. During that particular battle, which was the one early in the morning, the Japanese again attacked very furiously
- 19:00 heading towards Lieutenant Tomlinson's platoon and they had with them flame throwers, Woodpecker

machine guns and also the normal machine guns. They also had a knee two-inch mortar, they didn't actually go on the knee but it was cut like that and it stood on the ground, a little two-inch mortar to fire at us.

- 19:30 It was during that particular battle that the destroyer came right in close and was firing point-blank range at us, it was only about 100 yards from me and as the flame came out you felt that you could touch it, it was so close, it was probably 50 meters away, I don't know, but it looked as though it was coming
- 20:00 straight for me. I got down behind a coconut tree. As I normally do, I bit into my finger, I don't know why I did it, but I just did it because it gave me a little bit of added strength, so I bit into the finger but it didn't do any damage to the finger at all. The Japanese destroyer probably shelled us for about 20 minutes, but luckily it couldn't get
- 20:30 its guns down low enough, you can only go so far with your guns, you can go up quite ok but only so far down with the guns. The superstructure of the destroyer was about 30 feet high as far as the guns were concerned. So therefore the shooting came over our heads about 10 or 15 feet,
- 21:00 but it was quite bad. Doey Hanson was a very good friend of mine in the 14th Platoon C Company. Doey had one of the shells hit a tree and he got some shrapnel into his leg, and many years later he had to have that leg amputated, he was a cane cutter up near Mackay as
- 21:30 a matter of fact. It wasn't very nice at all. At that stage, around four o'clock in the morning, Major Bicks had a conference with his officers and he said, "I think it's a good idea since the Japanese have tanks, we should go back to a better position, about a mile back along the Gama River." and so went back to the Gama River.

- 22:00 Do you have any questions to ask?

I do, but I can come back to them.

We got back to the Gama River, and this was between four and five in the morning, we weren't quite certain whether any of the fellows would be left behind so we had to be very careful that we didn't shoot until we were quite certain that they were Japanese.

- 22:30 So we were lined up along the Gama River. The Gama River had fairly steep banks on it, but they did have a crossing, a gravelled crossing across the river, the river wasn't very big, it was more or less like a creek. One section was left behind; Corporal Webb's section was left behind at KB Mission
- 23:00 and Corporal Webb has since told me that the Japanese patrols came out between four and five in the morning looking for the Aussies, and they were about 20 meters away from him but they didn't see him or the seven or so of his party. He felt as there was no firing around that all, the troops
- 23:30 must of gone but he hadn't been told. So eventually he was able to get back to our lines down the road and we had to be very careful that we didn't shoot at them, anything that moved more or less was possibly a Japanese, but eventually they got back to our lines. Webb and I are pretty good mates, so I was very pleased for him to get away. That took us up to around about
- 24:00 seven or eight o'clock in the morning. Around about one o'clock in the afternoon one of the companies of the 2/10th Battalion went through us up to KB Mission looking for the Japanese. It was then that I was on the side of the road, seeing them through,
- 24:30 and one or two of the guys said, "Well done guys, you have done a marvellous job." That was pleasing from an AIF 2/10th Battalion to say, "Well done guys, you've done a pretty good job holding them up." A little bit later, around three in the afternoon, the remainder of the 2/10th Battalion
- 25:00 went up to KB Mission, they had their sticky bombs with them. Sticky bombs are sort of a round ball like so with a handle, and you banged that into the tank and hopefully, and eventually with certain ignition the tank would blow up.
- 25:30 They didn't have any other tank attack equipment at all, although they had been advised to do so. They got to KB Mission and during the night the Japanese attacked, they attacked with two tanks and also with several hundred Japanese. Our 2/10th Battalion put the
- 26:00 sticky bombs onto the tanks, the tanks didn't explode, so therefore at will they could shoot at whatever they would like to. The 2/10th Battalion lost 46 men that night, as well as several wounded. Two of our FOO [Forward Observation Officers] from the artillery were also killed.
- 26:30 The firing ignited some of the huts that were at KB Mission, so you can just image the tanks firing, the blaze of the huts going up, the shooting by the tanks and other guns around the place and the mortars going off. It was a real furious battle and we finished up with 46 killed and quite a number of wounded.
- 27:00 That was the night of the 27th. At that stage my company had been told to withdraw back for a sleep because a lot of the fellows and particularly B Company hadn't had a sleep for quite some days. We came

- 27:30 back to our tents and we thought that the Japanese had broken through in the early hours of the morning, I think it might have been the 28th, we thought that the Japanese had broken through so we were told to withdraw from our sleeping quarters, our tents that we had back along the road. We could hear in the background, coming across the strip,
- 28:00 a would-be Japanese tank and we thought, "Goodness me." and Captain Campbell said, "Right fellows, all down and wait for the Japanese tank to come along." As it proved, it wasn't a Japanese tank at all. It was a half track, but we didn't know at that time that it was an American half track. Captain Campbell said to Blakely, our truck driver, "Ram it when it gets close enough, ram it." and Blakely said, "Me, Captain Campbell?"
- 28:30 He said, "Yes you, Blakely, go out and ram it." And poor old Blakely wasn't very happy about that at all. We were all lying down at that stage, waiting for this would-be tank to come along and fire at us. I said to Doey Hanson alongside of me, "If we get down low enough, the Japanese machine guns won't be able to hit us." We got down very low on the ground. It was half-light at that stage
- 29:00 and it proved to be an American half-track, so that was very good and we were able to get out of it. In the meantime, the Japanese were pressing, they were pushing us back pushing us back and they pushed back the 25th Battalion until we got to Number 3 Strip. Number 3 Strip is now Turnbull Airstrip, but Number Three was where the fighting took place. The Japanese landed 2200 Japanese altogether, and they were
- 29:30 pushing up and they got right to the edge of Number 3 Strip. Then they decided a day or two later, or even that night, they decided to attack the Number 3 Strip, which they did and we had 1,000 troops along the western side of the strip. We had around about
- 30:00 15 or 16 medium machine guns, we probably would have had around 20 light machine guns and we had our mortars going furiously at them. As the Japanese were coming across, they blew a bugle first of all to say, "We are coming across." and they could audibly be heard saying, "We are coming across, you can't stop us, we are coming across, you can't stop us." in plain English.
- 30:30 Of course, a lot of them speak English, but anyway, in plain English they said, "We are coming across." They bunched together, and this is where they were quite silly, they bunched together coming across in bulk and of course our machine guns just mowed them down and the American half-tracks were also shooting at them. The American half-tracks had .5 calibre bullets, which are quite big bullets.
- 31:00 The Japanese attacked us once, and then they attacked us a second time early in the morning, and the second attack was pushed back also. There was also a bugle going, the bugle sounded and the next thing the Japanese started to retire. We thought there was one last place
- 31:30 they could go at, and that's around the flank. Around the flank we had 250 Australians there, our 61st Battalion on the right-hand flank, and the Japanese decided to go around there and of course they were slaughtered there also. In the meantime, Keith Duncan had one fellow killed in his arms, one Aussie killed in his arms and several other Aussies were killed
- 32:00 there also from our battalion. It was a rather furious area. At that stage, the Japanese had failed their attempt to take Number 3 Strip, the Turnbull Airstrip, they had failed and they were being pushed back. The 2/12th Battalion, the AIF Battalion started to push them back and push them back. At that stage, I was around battalion headquarters in a protective position,
- 32:30 but there were bullets still going over our heads at the same time. Captain Campbell said, "C Company you will be going across the strip now up to Stevens Ridge." that's where the Japanese had come around the flank to attack us at Stevens Ridge. They were pushed back at that particular stage, and we were very
- 33:00 pleased that the battle had virtually been won. In the meantime, the Japanese who had been at the Number 3 Strip preparing for battle, they were withdrawing, they withdrew towards Raby, another area, they withdrew around the jungle to Raby not knowing that our troops had bypassed them and they decided to come out on the road, 300 of them.
- 33:30 They proceeded up the road in bulk and they were all sort of chatting to each other quietly, and they were getting away from the battle. But little did they know that the 2/10th and the 2/12th and the 9th Battalion had laid an ambush for them. When I came along a couple of hours later, we had killed 120 of them. So much so, they were all on the road,
- 34:00 there were, here bodies, bodies there were so many bodies. Just imagine 120 bodies all laying on the roadway. We had to tiptoe through the lot of them, so you tread on this fellow's skull or that fellow's arm, we eventually got through them and then our C Company had to bury them all, we buried 120 of them. In the meantime, the
- 34:30 2/12th Battalion went on to have more skirmishes further on up to KB Mission. I'm not quite certain where 9th Battalion went, they might of gone up with them up to KB Mission, we had the job at the Gama River of burying all the dead Japs. One interesting thing, going back a day or so before, was the fact that Major Bicks was asked to go out and try and find the Japs if he possibly could,

- 35:00 this was the day before the big battle took place. He and Lieutenant Robinson, 'Blue' Baldwin, they went some several miles up the roadway but they couldn't find any Japanese at all, they returned and gave the information back to battalion headquarters. In the meantime, Captain Campbell was also told to go out to see if he could find the Japanese.
- 35:30 He eventually, with Max Richards and Doey Hanson and some of the other guys, and they went out and eventually they did find the Japanese and through the jungle they could see them sort of milling around waiting for an attack. As I said it was the day before the actual attack took place. Captain Campbell, I thought, was very brave, and also
- 36:00 Major Bicks and Lieutenant Robinson were all so very brave to go up there. Captain Campbell said to the small party around him, "Two rounds immediate fire." so they shot into the Japanese and then they withdrew back into our lines and gave the information about there were three to four hundred Japanese in this jungle.
- 36:30 That's how the battle took place, and eventually the AIF overran the Japanese around about KB Mission and they pushed onto Cameron Springs, and that's where Lieutenant French got his Victoria Cross. They started pushing the Japanese back, pushing them back all the time, and eventually some
- 37:00 destroyers and transports came in, I think they were all destroyers. The remnants of the Japanese force, I think we killed about 1,000 altogether, out of the 2200. They withdrew on some of the warships and got away. In the meantime, those who were not up at Ahioma to get on board the Japanese destroyers,
- 37:30 there were quite a number of them who were left behind, and they went around the back portion to Taupota over the Stirling Range. At Taupota, we had Lieutenant Chicka Shaw, the lieutenant in charge with Sergeant Jimmy White and also Frank Beach was there, there were quite a number of our fellows there.
- 38:00 We had about 30 or 40, I suppose, and they were able to kill about 56 Japanese. One funny thing about it was one of our fellows seeing the Japanese coming down the road, he was out on patrol, he was told to go back and report back to platoon headquarters, and that's when he took his pants off so that he could run faster,
- 38:30 to warn our platoon about the Japanese coming down the road. I met him just the other day again. We called him 'no pants Browny'. That was the battle of Milne Bay. In the meantime, our hospital ship the Manunda had come into port and the Japanese had control of the sea.
- 39:00 The Japanese commander on board the cruiser, Tenryu, he said to the captain of the Manunda, "If you are here in the morning we will sink you." so naturally they turned turtle and they left. In the meantime they were firing on the lonesome Anshun, which was unloading at the wharf, and they sunk the Anshun.
- 39:30 The Japanese made their way off out of it. In the meantime, the 75th Squadron and 76th Squadron, the Kittyhawks, they were doing a marvellous job of shooting up the Japanese, they were marvellous. They were from our Number 1 Strip and they did a tremendous amount of fighting
- 40:00 for us, and I think that helped us a great deal to combat the Japanese. In the meantime, we had Flying Fortress coming in Horn Island and Port Moresby and they were attacking the Japanese as well as the Japanese convoy that was in there. I can recall going down on the beach one day and I could hear the drone of the aircraft coming and here were the Flying Fortress going over and they were dropping bombs onto the convoy, so it was quite exciting for me at that stage.

Tape 6

- 00:30 The Flying Fortresses came down from Horn Island; they might have come from Charters Towers, also. We didn't have any Flying
- 01:00 Fortresses on our Number 1 Strip at all, all we had there was the two squadrons of Kittyhawks and later on we had a squadron of Australian Beaufort bombers and some Hudsons. During the battle it was mainly the Kittyhawks that took charge. During the battle,
- 01:30 Squadron Leader Turnbull got killed and he was working with the Japanese tank, I understand, and he got killed, which was a great blow to everybody. Not that we knew about it, but from an air force point of view it was a great blow. Squadron Leader Jackson from 76th Squadron, his brother is, the Jackson Airstrip
- 02:00 up at Port Moresby at the moment is named after him, Jackson Airstrip, and we landed there only a few months ago at the Jackson Airstrip at Port Moresby, which is named after his brother. They fought particularly well. It was wonderful to feel that the squadron were right over your head all the time and helping you.

What was it like in another way,

02:30 **being at the bottom of a Japanese air raid?**

That came a little while later, but at the same time I felt awful. I didn't get use to air raids at all. I hated them. I went through about 25 or 26 air raids altogether, it was awful. You feel that when they

03:00 are over the top of you, that each bomb is going to drop on you. It's a shocking thing. I can recall on one occasion at Milne Bay, I was in the slit trench with Sergeant Copeland and the Japanese were pattern bombing, one bomb after one another, and going right up the air strip and we were alongside the air strip and I said to Copey,

03:30 "It's the end for us Copey." Luckily the bombs landed about 100 yards away from us which is pretty close when you are bombing from 23,000 feet. We got through it and you feel pretty good after that. Bombing, no good at all, I hated bombing. Also the shelling wasn't very nice at all, I was underneath the shelling as well.

04:00 Later on, over in New Britain, I was under mortar fire there and that's not very nice at all, mortars going on all around. I had my commission at that stage, but that's another story.

What kind of things would you see with shelling? What would you see exactly?

The shelling from the sea?

Yes.

04:30 The only thing and I reported it to you before was the flame coming out of the muzzle, and on that particular occasion it was a destroyer firing point-blank range at us. Because it was mostly night time shelling that the cruiser would be out to sea, and they would be firing over our heads but you could hear the whistle of it all, all the time,

05:00 and that's quite disturbing at the same time. It's not very nice. It's one of those things that you wish you were somewhere else.

What about the first time that you saw one of your mates die or get killed? What was that like?

Lieutenant King was the first one that I saw killed. It's not very nice at all,

05:30 especially after he had told the little party that I was in, I was with Captain Campbell and Brogle Bill was our WO [Warrant Officer]. He said that he had just been engaged to his girlfriend back in Australia. Here he was dead, shot right through the head, right through the steel helmet actually, it must have been a downward position. The Japanese must have been up a tree I think,

06:00 because it went right through this steel helmet and right through his skull and he was dead. You feel... goodness gracious me. Also, Lieutenant King, I didn't see him get killed but Lieutenant King at the same time, it was shocking because he was telling us about his little baby, who was about only two, it was shocking to feel for them,

06:30 it wasn't very nice at all.

Did it bring it home for you too?

Absolutely, you feel you're lucky whereas those fellows are dead and they are gone. You felt pretty lucky about the whole situation. "Why him and not me?" When you think about it,

07:00 it wasn't very nice at all. It was easier to see the Japanese dead because the Japanese actually took a green potion before they went into battle. I understand that they had this green potion and when they were killed it made them go stiff. I would be quite common to see them as you proceeded along the road,

07:30 with dead Japs here and there, and they'd still be in a sitting position with their arms and legs out, quite dead. It's strange. Whereas you'd think that once you were killed you'd just flop down on the ground, but no. It was a strange situation to see the Japanese stiff, quite stiff but in grotesque positions, it wasn't very nice at all.

08:00 **What was the potion?**

I've got no idea. Nobody has been able to tell me at all what sort of potion it was, whether it was something to instil into them the rigours of fighting and they were invincible. I understand that they took some sort of potion. The Japanese also had steel vests.

08:30 I'm not quite certain if any of our bullets pierced the steel vests. The Japanese, in their hurry to get away from the fighting, threw them off or quite a few of them were thrown off along the side of the road. That was another thing that they had, it was a steel vest, and that was quite strange.

Were you aware of this when you were fighting?

09:00 Not at all. No, we did not, we didn't know about that. The night after the big battle on Number 3 Strip, I

noticed that quite a few of them had been thrown to the side.

Tell us about seeing Japanese dead, what was the feeling like seeing the enemy?

Extremely pleased. You felt, "To hell with you."

09:30 You treated them like dogs. They had come to attack us and probably kill us, they wanted to kill us and they had killed a number of our fellows. Not that we knew very much about it at that stage, but we wouldn't have known for a few days, and a number of fellows who had been strung up to coconut trees and murdered. We wouldn't of known about that at this particular stage.

10:00 But we were pretty pleased. They were there to kill us and they were so cocky, they were just sort of coming across and they told us they were coming across the airstrip, they were so cocky. We were extremely please that we were in the first battle to defeat them in the southwest Pacific. It was a great feeling.

Were there ever any feelings of empathy

10:30 **for them at all?**

I don't think so, no. The Japanese were quite happy to kill our fellows. I think their orders were to kill everybody. Whereas after we knew that a number of our fellows had been slain up at Ahioma, we still

11:00 wanted prisoners to get information from them. Our guys weren't very pleased about taking prisoners at all they would rather shoot them. I was at a listening post at one stage up at KB Mission, and we went out and brought in a Japanese prisoner who had been shot through the leg. All the time I had my hand alongside his head,

11:30 I was on his right-hand side. He wanted me to cut his throat all the time, he just wanted to die because to die in battle is the important thing and not to be taken prisoner, that was a no-no as far as the Japanese were concerned. Where the bullet went in it was just a little pierce the size of a bullet, but where it came out

12:00 the other side, the whole leg was opened up and it took two shell dressings - they are big things - it took two shell dressing to cover where the bullet came out, right down the leg, it was just split opened just like...We called for a motor boat to come up to take the Jap prisoner back and he died on the way back, so whether he was thrown overboard or

12:30 whether he was...I don't know, we just know whether the fellows who came up to get him decided to shoot him or something like that. He was quite alright when he left us at this listen place up at KB Mission.

Were there many cases of revenge?

No. Our fellows were particularly good. I remember Nugget Emit going out on a patrol at one stage,

13:00 and Lieutenant Nugget Emit, and he killed a couple of Japanese. From our fellows' point of view, I didn't see anything that all, that was wrong. Our fellows were quite good in treating the Japanese. Talking about prisoners. One fellow was over at Taupota

13:30 which is over the Stirling Ranges on the other side, he was a Japanese airman and he had been a chef in one of the hotels in Sydney, and here he was fighting against us at Milne Bay. He was a chef in Sydney and he went back to Japan and into the air force and he was one of the pilots shot down.

14:00 **Did you meet him?**

I didn't not meet him. Frank Bicks met him and Frank was telling me all about it, how this fellow was a chef down in Sydney and it was just interesting. Frank had to bring him back over the Stirling Range and put him in the hands of our intelligence department to be flown back to Australia.

Did you have to shoot anyone yourself?

Only one. We were out on patrol

14:30 one day, and there were only three of us, an intelligence person, myself and Doey Hanson, and we had to go out and map an area. So, for protection we went out with one of our intelligence fellows, Al Buyers was his name. As we were preceding down this track, a Japanese jumped out

15:00 only about 50 meters and he fired at us point blank range. Where the bullet went to, I've got no idea. We immediately went to ground and he started away down the track, so we were shooting at him. Eventually we found him and he was shot, shot all around the crotch, so to put him out of his misery, I decided to kill him, shot him through the heart.

15:30 I had no remorse, I brought his rifle home, Doey Hanson got his watch and he had a map of Australian on him. A lot of these fellows didn't know whether they were in New Guinea or Australia or where, a lot of Japanese I'm referring to. We couldn't get any information from him.

- 16:00 Around their bodies they have a white band around their torso, and before they go into battle, this in Japan, before they leave to go into battle in Japan, different people put different red threads in it, from aunties so-and-so and this is to sort of keep them out of danger,
- 16:30 and we shot right through that, this red band that goes around the body. I believe a lot of them did have those red bands around them when fellows went out and got rid of the bodies that we threw into a hole that we had dug for them. So they had
- 17:00 these for protection just to sort of say, "I won't get killed." But they wanted to get killed. When I say, "they wanted to get killed in battle." it is better to be killed than to be taken prisoner.

Was it hard this time or was it a case of having to die anyway?

I was quite happy to shoot him.

You mentioned

- 17:30 **souvenirs, was this something that people would do?**

The Americans, of course, were pretty keen on souvenirs. For a Japanese revolver, they'd give almost anything for a Japanese revolver. The Americans that I'm referring to are the 43rd Engineers who were with us, and they were making the Number 3 Airstrip,

- 18:00 they were quite happy to collect souvenirs. Swords particularly. I didn't bring back any souvenirs at all; I brought back the Japanese rifle, that was the main thing. The Americans were pretty keen to get souvenirs and rifles, machine guns
- 18:30 and all sorts of things. They had ways and means of getting them back to America, I'm not quite certain how they got them back, but they would have crates and things and took them back to America. I didn't participate in any of the doings with the Americans at all.

How would they collect them, would they go to the places where there was a battle or...?

- 19:00 The Americans were alongside our camp. The 61st Battalion fellows who might have been in battle would have probably got this or that off some of the Japanese who were dead that they were burying. They might have got weapons, revolvers and things like that, so the Americans
- 19:30 were pretty pleased to get them. They'd give almost anything for a sword or a Japanese revolver. The Americans were ever so much better off than what we were. So therefore, they were able to pay large amounts. Like 50 dollars was a lot of money in those days because we were only on six shillings a day, about three dollars a week,
- 20:00 the Americans were on good money, so they'd pay almost anything for a souvenir.

What would you have to do with the Japanese bodies that were left behind in battle?

On one particular occasion after the battle at Number 3 Strip, our fellows were burying them and I remember Noel Wharton was out burying the

- 20:30 Japanese. Eventually, Major Wilds decided as there were so many dead Japanese to bury that he would get a bulldozer in and he scooped out a big hole and just literally threw the Japanese into it, just dragged them over and threw them in. It was a bit grotesque I should imagine, but at the same time they were trying to kill us.
- 21:00 At one stage, I think we buried 86 altogether at Number 3 Strip, and that was apart from those 120 that I was referring to just before. Later on, the Americans came in and they wanted that area around there for bits for their aircraft.
- 21:30 I remember going past one day and seeing bones, bones being just tossed around, bones and skulls. It was quite grotesque actually.

How did you feel seeing all these sights?

I felt pretty pleased because they were Japanese. If they were Australians, of course you'd be very upset,

- 22:00 but because they were Japanese we were quite pleased about the whole situation. To the heck with them. They were trying to kill us. But that wasn't very nice.

Did it signify something to you at the time?

Absolutely, it showed our superiority over them which was great. The Japanese had come there and had been very cocky and they thought they would just overrun the position, they landed

- 22:30 2,200 and we were able to defeat them, which was good. I would say there were at least 1,000 killed altogether. An interesting thing is also a lot of the wounded when Major Bicks was going on his intelligence trek up the road.

23:00 He came across a Japanese hospital and all the fellows were neatly laid out with a bullet wound through the head. Instead of taken them back to the Japanese headquarters, they just decided to shoot them all, there were about 14 or 15 who were laid out, very neatly in a row, all shot dead.

23:30 **Where exactly were you when you killed this man?**

At Raby, just near the Gama River.

Where is that exactly?

You've got Ahioma, that's where the Japanese landed, you've got Cameron Springs, and you've got KB Mission and that's coming toward Number 3 Strip, and then you've got the Gama River, and

24:00 Raby is along the Gama River.

What did you do with that body there?

We had to bury him. We got one bottle of beer for killing a Japanese, one bottle of beer, and the beer started to come in again at that particular stage. If you killed a Japanese, you got a bottle of beer,

24:30 which is interesting.

How would you prove this if you were by yourself?

No, you couldn't. I was with two other fellows at this particular stage, so I think Doey Hanson got the bottle of beer. I didn't drink, so it didn't matter, but Doey Hanson got the bottle of beer. I suppose some of them put it over them, different people. Normally you would be going out with other people at the same time, going out with a

25:00 little patrol or something.

Just to clear something up, you said the Japanese had shot their own in that hospital?

Yes, it was sort of a field hospital just in near the Gama River.

They had set that up quite quickly. Describe the KB Mission area for us?

25:30 The KB Mission area was a number of huts; I'm not quite certain how many huts there were. I suppose there might be half a dozen or a dozen huts there. They were elevated with the sort of coconut leaf roof on them

26:00 and of course after a period of time they would brown off and then it was quite easy for them to be burnt. KB Mission had quite nice grass around the place, nice grass. It was a real mission area, but I'm not quite certain what the KB stands for.

26:30 I do know it, but I just can't recall it at this stage. I'm not quite certain what denomination actually had it. At KB Mission, a big battle took place there as far as the 61st Battalion was concerned, and as far as the 2/10th was concerned. The 2/10th Battalion had about 50-odd

27:00 killed there on that particular night when the tanks came up and blew them away.

How was battle compared to your expectations, what differences were there?

I was quite happy that we would be ok in as much with all your mates around you, you had been training with all your mates. I was quite happy with all my mates around me, that

27:30 I'd be ok. I wasn't fearful at all at this stage. However, and this is the point, as a runner I wasn't in with Lieutenant Tomlinson to do the fighting part of it. You all have your own particular roles, but I wasn't right there doing the shooting at all

28:00 as far as the Japanese attacking was concerned and things of that nature. You have all got your own little roles to do, the diggers have got their role to do, the infantry has got their role to do, well, I was running in the infantry. Although I went out into no mans' land a couple of time, I suppose I could have been shot there if the Japanese were looking, I suppose they were looking at me, I don't know.

28:30 It was just one of those things. I just wasn't there doing the fighting.

Describe to me a mission that you were on. A dangerous running mission.

It would have been the time at KB Mission, and that was quite scary. Especially the second time I went down to the 14th Platoon at KB Mission.

29:00 This was before a lot of the battles took place at KB Mission. I think that was a bit scary going out into no man's land and coming back through the sentries. I think that was scary. In the sentries, anything that moved they would shoot at, but our fellows were quite good. As I'd gone past the sentries, and even though I told them that I was coming

29:30 back again, I don't think so, but they realised that one of their troops would be coming back. The Japanese wouldn't have gone very far. If he was only a single Japanese, he would have been shot dead. Otherwise, no great problem there. I had some more problems up in New Britain as far as the fighting was concerned there. The bombing and the shelling,

30:00 the mortaring and things of that nature when we were at Milne Bay that I can recall.

How would you move, as runner, in these areas?

I was moving on foot and I was careful at the same time, because you are by yourself and you've gone through your forward position.

30:30 You went out on the road and you were going past 13th Platoon down to 14th Platoon. Yes, it's a little bit scary, but I didn't feel so because I had all these troops around me which was quite good. You train together, so therefore you know what each particular person can do and our training was pretty spot on.

31:00 We had 15th Platoon, 14th Platoon and 13th Platoon, each with around about 30 men. I felt quite happy that I wouldn't run into trouble.

How urgent were you in your running?

I didn't run at all, I just walked. I didn't think of getting killed at that stage,

31:30 I wasn't aware that I had a problem. I wasn't until later on when the Japanese destroyer started to fire at point blank range that I was a little bit concerned then, of course, the fact that I could be killed.

Where were you when they came across the 3rd Airstrip, were you amongst the machine guns?

No,

32:00 I was with the 14th Platoon at that stage. The 14th Platoon were up on a rise and the airstrip is like so, and we were here, there is a rise going up to battalion headquarters and the bullets were coming over our heads. We thought all the time that the Japanese would break through and therefore we would have to do something about it.

32:30 I was in a slit trench with Doey Hanson and one other, you normally have three in a slit trench, and we had a number of slit trenches around so we would have accounted for ourselves pretty well, I would have imagined. We were protecting battalion headquarters at that stage. I suppose we'd be 200 yards away from the front line and the bullets were going over our heads.

Describe the feeling of that

33:00 **scene for us, when you felt them coming from 200 meters away. What kind of thoughts were going through your mind?**

I was happy to a degree that the 61st Battalion would hold. 'A Cameron never yields' - that's our motto. I just felt the fellows around me would fight and fight very well.

33:30 There was no great panic at all; we all regarded each other as being bosom buddies at that stage. I felt quite happy with the situation that we had, I wasn't scared at all at that stage, no.

Was there a wound that people feared the most?

34:00 I suppose getting shot in the crotch would be as bad as any. I was only 19 and I felt, "I haven't had life at this stage." The fact that getting shot in the crotch, I suppose, would be as bad as any. I recall over in New Britain, I was with a mate who got shot through the arm and he asked me to write a letter home for him,

34:30 and I felt for him very much indeed, but that's another story, that's the New Britain side of the story. I can recall one fellow, Keith Duncan, describing the fact that this particular person, Mel Byers I think it was, had been killed in his arms. They were together on

35:00 a machine gun and the Japanese came around the flank and a mortar came over and Mel Byers was killed in his arms, the blood all over you, all over your tunic and so forth, it wouldn't of been nice at all. He would tell us more about that than anybody else, about the situation that he felt at that particular time.

35:30 He was at our reunion the other day, and it's interesting to get comments from them at times, I must ask him sometimes how he felt about it.

Did any of the men that you knew had superstitions or lucky charms?

I don't think so, not that I'm aware of at this stage, I can't recall anybody having lucky charms.

36:00 I had a lucky charm, I had the book of St Matthew right on my heart and I felt that if someone was to shoot me, it's got to go through the book of St Matthew first, and I had that for the whole war. You'd have your tunic and you'd have a pocket here and you'd pop it into your pocket so I thought, "If the

Japanese shoot me, they have got to

36:30 go through St Matthews first to get to the heart.”

What kind of beliefs did people use to get them through?

I don't know, I didn't see anything at all that would help them through the battle scenes, I can't recall seeing anything unusual that I can report to you, I don't know.

37:00 **As a runner, what kind of messages were you delivering, just examples?**

It was when had to go down to see Lieutenant King, and this was before the battle started, I went to Lieutenant King and told him to return to his

37:30 base immediately because the Japanese were expected to land that night. When I went around during the battle of KB Mission, I went down to Lieutenant King, I told his sergeant and corporal to dig in because the Japanese attack was imminent. The second time, about half an hour later, I relayed a similar message to him. I went up to Major Bicks to say,

38:00 “C Company in position, Sir.” It had all been worked out by Captain Campbell where to put his platoons. I can't recall any others.

Would you give some interpretation for some of these messages verbally or were they just handwritten?

No, they were verbally, there were no handwritten ones.

38:30 The only handwritten ones were before the action started, and I had to take the screen up to battalion headquarters to say, “How many were in our particular company and how many in hospital and so forth.” No, but otherwise I didn't have any written messages to take.

39:00 **Did you feel like you were in a position of trust?**

Yes, indeed. In battle, they haven't got time, the captains or the commanding officers, they just haven't got time to say “blah, blah, blah” and give it to you and for you to take it to another person, they just didn't have time, so they were just verbal messages.

Were there any messages that were difficult for you?

39:30 They were very easy messages for me to take. Just the fact of digging in, the Japanese attack was imminent to dig in and things of that nature, not long messages that I'd get misconstrued at all in messing things up.

So you didn't feel under pressure?

No, I didn't.

Tape 7

00:30 **I wanted to cover from Milne Bay. You mentioned that one night you were at a listening post, I was wondering if you can explain to me what that is and what your job was?**

A listening post is manned by about 12 or 13 guys, including the signallers.

01:00 The sigs [signallers] have to report in every hour that everything is quite ok. In the daytime, you go out on patrols, but in the night time you always have two on guard duty. The leaves are rustling and you think it's the Japanese out there; this was after the Japanese had gone away

01:30 but there were still Japanese in the vicinity, and you always thought there was the possibility of an attack. C Company was about one and a half miles away from us and C Company had out in front of them, they were at Raby and about half a mile or so in front of them there

02:00 would be a standing patrol. There is a standing patrol in front, and we were about a mile and a half up the road again at this listening post. If the Japanese had attacked us, I'm not quite certain what we would have done, they could have overrun us quite easily. They would have know that we were there, they would have known how many were there, they would have been observing us throughout the day.

02:30 Not a nice position to be in, and as I say, every hour you'd have to ring back. Naturally, if the wires are cut then there'd be all sorts of strife and I suppose I'm not quite certain that if after an hour or so that we hadn't checked in, that a patrol would have come to see if the lines were cut and also to help us. There was a pretty good chance in a listening post

03:00 that you could possibly get killed, I should image. I was on the listening post twice, you are only on the

listening post for about three days at a time, and it's pretty stressful.

You mentioned you kept a book of the Bible in your pocket, can you tell me where you faith

03:30 **might have helped?**

I'm quite certain it did. Padre Jones was our padre at that particular stage and he was from Indooroopilly also, he was just across the road from the Uniting Church in Station Road, of course that's all taken over now by Westfield Shopping Centre now, as you well know. It gave me help and protection, and when you asked before whether

04:00 anybody had different things that they would do to help them with, that was one thing that helped me. I was quite happy that in fearful conditions or positions, you'd be helped by having it with you. It was just a small little book about so high and it was only about 30 or 40 pages. It was the part

04:30 that St Matthew had spoken about during the Bible. It helped me, yes. I always felt that at the age of 19, you feel you would have liked to have lived a little bit more of life. I felt, "Will I get killed?"

05:00 I don't know life at this stage, but the good Lord has protected me for 80 years, so I'm very pleased indeed.

Do you know that other men had similar beliefs; did you talk to any of them about their beliefs?

Not at all. I don't know about that and I don't know if anybody else had the book of St Matthew alongside their heart. I don't know.

05:30 Most of them are pretty burly sort of blokes, they don't think of that sort of thing, but I was only a kid at that stage and I thought that it would help me anyway.

After the actual battle at Milne Bay, you went on some patrols. Can you describe the way that you would move on these patrols?

On the patrols you would have a forward scout out in front of you,

06:00 he would be around about 10 or 15 paces in front of you. If there was a skirmish, it was normal that you would either go to one or the other side, it all depended where the high ground was, you wouldn't go to the low ground, you'd always go to the high ground.

06:30 Not that I was out on patrols very much at all. When I joined the intelligence section, I went out on quite a lot of patrols with just somebody else because sometimes you'd have to measure distances and sometimes we had a native with us also. It was a bit scary at times,

07:00 there'd only be two of you going out on a patrol, whereas normally you'd have a section going out on patrol, the infantry were going around. There is an intelligence section with the battalion of about eight or nine guys. The intelligence department kept maps showing the

07:30 different positions of the Japanese around New Guinea. You also, in battle time you'd have to collect what information you could. Very often the Japanese that would be interrogated in your particular section, afterwards, you'd pass them on up to Port Moresby or something like that.

08:00 **Did you have anyone, or any letters come from home or anybody that was writing to you?**

I wrote to Mum constantly. I use to write them down in a little book to make certain who I had sent letters to. I'd write to my sister...

08:30 did I have any girls at that particular stage at Milne Bay? Until Margaret, my pen friend, came on the scene, then I started writing to Margaret. Sergeant Copeland had been back home on leave and he came back to Milne Bay

09:00 with an address of a young lady who would like to write to a lonely soldier. Although he passed that onto Colin Hoy first of all, Colin Hoy was a test umpire, I don't know whether you know about cricket, but anyway he was a test umpire at one stage, and Colin Hoy said, "I've got a young lady back in Brisbane also." so he didn't want to write to

09:30 another person, so Sergeant Copeland said, "Jim, would you like to write to this young lady?" and I did write to that young lady and after the war we got married.

What made you decide to write to her initially?

I was only nineteen at that stage. There was a photo of Margaret and I thought, "She's a very nice young lady."

10:00 I was on phone picket duty at battalion headquarters that particular night and around about 12 o'clock, I thought, "I've got the address of this young lady so I should write a letter to her." which I did. I wrote to her and she duly replied and said, "Dear Jim." or something like that.

What did you write in your letters to her?

I told her a little bit about

10:30 myself and also my family, that I was 19 and Margaret at that stage was 18. I just told her about what I did at home, and the hobbies that I had, I played cricket and I played football. It was just a one-page letter and I didn't know that she would write back to me at all.

11:00 What did the replies from Margaret say?

Margaret then described herself of course, that she worked at a beauty salon in Melbourne, and as it turned out, she always wanted to marry a Queenslander, so that made it a little bit easier for me. When I went to the officers' school over in Adelaide on the way back, I was able to get

11:30 three days leave to be able to be with her. I was smitten immediately and she was very, very good looking. Did you see my darling's photo somewhere? She was extremely good looking and she had honey blonde hair, which I liked, she was the same religion,

12:00 or Presbyterian, at that stage, she didn't smoke or drink and she had all the attributes. I felt that she had the 10 things that I like in a wife for a young lady have, and Margaret was tops in all 10 of them. That was good, and I was very pleased.

What was your initial feeling when somebody told you that you had received a letter from her?

12:30 After you had written to her for the first time, you weren't sure that she would write back?

I felt quite elated really, it was lovely to receive a letter back from this young lady. Of course, Copeland, our postman, "Have you received a letter yet Jim?" and I said, "No, not yet." but as soon as the letter had arrived he would hand it to me, he would know that there was a letter from Melbourne

13:00 with my address on it, so he would hand it to me he knew immediately before I did that there was a letter from Margaret, which was lovely. From then on it grew with love and so forth. Get from away 'love and best wishes' instead 'all my love', all the different things that go with it, so it was great.

13:30 I was terribly thrilled about that, she was a marvellous person. She went to West End State School in her earlier days, and from the age of about two to 14 she lived in Brisbane, and her father passed away, her mother died when she was eight, and she had to live with a grandmother, not her grandmother but a grandmother

14:00 up until she was 14 and her sister took her down to Melbourne to live, and that's where she was when we met. She was in Melbourne from the age of 14 to the age of 18, that's when I started writing to her, so she'd been there for four years at that stage, but she always had wanted to marry a Queenslander, or wanted to meet somebody who was from Queensland.

How did

14:30 this blossoming romance or getting letters from Margaret keep you going?

Yes, indeed, and naturally I wanted to meet her, we wrote for 12 months before I met her. Luckily I was able to go to this school in Adelaide, and on the way back I arranged to meet Margaret. We had arranged to meet at

15:00 Royal Park Army Camp and we would meet there at 11 o'clock and Margaret was to have a little plume in her hair and have a little white rose on this side here. I got there at 11 o'clock of course, I got there at 10 to 11 and Margaret didn't arrive, at 20 past 11 I felt there were problems and she hadn't arrived.

15:30 So I went up to telephone and yes, the call was taken, and they said, "Yes, she was on her way, she should be there soon." What had happened was Margaret, I was to be 21 soon after that, and Margaret had been getting a pen engraved for me. Today to engrave a pen is very simple, you just press a button and it's all

16:00 done on computer. But he had to painstakingly do it by hand, so that's what had kept her away. At 11:30 she arrived, there were two girls there, one on this side and one on that side, I thought, "Which one?" because I'm around about 50 metres at this stage. The one of this side of course had a little plume in her hair.

16:30 I went over to Margaret and I said, "Margaret?" and she said, "Jim?" At that stage, a tram was coming and we were going into town and the tram was full of soldiers and somebody got up to let Margaret to sit down, I was behind Margaret, about 10 feet away,

17:00 I couldn't look into her eyes at that stage and I hadn't kissed her or anything. I was thinking, "I wonder what she thinks of me?" It was quite exciting, so when we got into town I thought, "It might be wise to go somewhere to have a nice little talk to her." So we went down to St Kilda and in the train down to St Kilda and

17:30 we had our first kiss down at St Kilda. It was lovely. Now we have five children, 17 grandchildren and

seven great-grandchildren. But she was marvellous.

Did you ever thank Copeland?

Yes indeed, all the time.

18:00 Copeland was a great friend of ours after that, of course. He happened to be on leave when I was going through, Copeland was coming back to Australia and he was on leave down in Melbourne, so his wife and Copey and Margaret and I went to some of the shows and dinner together.

18:30 I still thank him in my prayers at night time, he has passed away, but his wife is still living.

You mentioned before when you were first talking about meeting Margaret, you had 10 things you had in mind when you wanted to meet a women, what were those 10 things?

First of all I think the most important thing is,

19:00 religion is one thing that is important. Also she had honey blonde hair, which I thought was lovely. I don't smoke and Margaret didn't smoke, Margaret didn't drink and I didn't drink.

19:30 The fact that she wanted to live in Queensland was rather important because if she had a family down in Melbourne, she'd want to go down to Melbourne or she'd feel a little bit away from her family, but her mother and father had died by that stage. They were pretty important things to me.

20:00 I think in any marriage, I think religion has a lot to do, the fact that you don't drink is very important and the fact that you don't smoke is very important also. All of those things sort of wrap up, there were 10 things anyway. I went along to my sergeant and I said, "I'm getting pretty keen on this young lady down in Melbourne." and he said, "What colour eyes has she got?" This was Sergeant Stewart,

20:30 he said, "Has she got dah, dah, dah?" He paused for a little while, because he was much older than what we were, and he was in the First World War. He said, "I think she's the ideal one for you, Jim." When we got married, we went along to Sergeant Stewart and, "This is the lovely darling that you gave permission for me to marry."

21:00 When did you ask her to marry you?

I was over in New Britain at the time. At that stage, I was really smitten. I didn't want anybody else to have her, because there were four young men who were interested in her at that particular stage. I thought, "I don't want to miss out." and she was such a lovely young lady that I just wanted to be with her.

21:30 In New Britain, at a place called Cutarp, we had landed at Jacquinot Bay and we pushed to Cutarp, and it was a lovely night and the moon was out and the palm trees were flowing around and I thought, "This is it." so I wrote and asked her to become engaged. I waited and I waited and I waited, and in the meantime we had gone up into action,

22:00 we were pushing on and pushing up to where the Japs were. Eventually a letter arrived, and the letter said something like this, "I'm very thrilled that you have proposed, but I feel that it might be wise for us to wait until you come back on your next leave to see if

22:30 you feel the same about me." which was quite a wise thing to do, because I could have had some young ladies in Brisbane at that particular stage and she was wanting to know and she was a bit hesitant to say "yes" at that particular stage. I was very pleased that she had even considered me.

When did she finally say "yes"?

23:00 I had seen her coming up from the army school. I went to in Adelaide and I had seen her for a couple of days, and we went down to St Kilda and so forth, but not for another two years after that. She waited and she wrote all the time when I was at Canungra and when I was in New Britain she wrote all the time. When I came back from

23:30 the war, luckily Margaret was with me when war ceased, which I was very thrilled about, and Margaret was with me. My brother and his wife had a little unit down at Coolangatta and said, "Would the two of you like to come down and share the place?" We were quite elated at that stage.

24:00 Whilst at Coolangatta Beach, on the rocks out there at the headland, I said to Margaret, "I love you and I would like to get married." and she said, "Yes." So I was very thrilled about that. I got in contact with my Mum and Dad.

24:30 Then there wasn't a ring available down at Coolangatta, so eventually we had to find a ring down at Mooloolaba and the shop is still there, the jewellery shop. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough money, I only took 25 pound or something down with me at that stage and the ring came to 32 pound.

25:00 My brother who went down with me and he lent me the money so I was able to buy the ring, so it was very exciting and it was great. The place that we shared at that stage was just near the Twin Town Services Club, just across the road on the Queensland side going up to Point Danger, only a few shops

along there, it was there for a long, long time.

25:30 **That's a lovely story. Just go back a little bit to Milne Bay, can you tell me about when you left Milne Bay and went to Port Moresby?**

Milne Bay became a thriving metropolis, the Americans were arriving, the two airstrips were

26:00 full of planes. The Australians were on the Gurney Airstrip and the fighter planes came into the Number 3 Airstrip, where all the fighting took place, and that was called Turnbull Airstrip after Squadron Leader Turnbull, who got killed. I can recall they had Air Cobras there, they were pointed-

26:30 nose Air Cobras. We had a couple of squadrons of them, and we also had the Lightning, the two fuselage Lightnings and they were marvellous, and we thought that they were great and we saw them flying in. It was a very full program, more troops were arriving and more troops were arriving. The 18th Brigade had left to go up to Goodenough Island then went up to

27:00 Buna and Gona, where they fought very savagely up there. They went in 3,000 men and came out with 1,500, so there was a big battle at Buna and Gona, which in your rounds you will probably hear all about them. It was growing so big, and they build a new wharf area because the other one was just pontoons and so forth, a little bit of gravel going out into the sea.

27:30 They had built one called the Lyall Wharf, that's where we left from to go up to Port Moresby. It was very sad to leave there because of the fellows who had been killed and the defence of Milne Bay, you left behind some of your mates buried there. Lieutenant King, Lieutenant Cling and a

28:00 number of other fellows who were killed, Whitlam and Thurlow, and so it goes on. You felt very, very sorry that they weren't leaving with you. We arrived at Port Moresby and it was around about the time of the Bismarck Sea Battle, which, there was a lot of fighting in the Bismarck Sea Battle. It was mainly aircraft attacking the Japanese convoy that was coming down to help Buna.

28:30 We saw all the planes going around and formulating and they'd get together, around about 20 of them, and fly out to defeat the Japanese Armada that was coming down to help Buna. In fact, they sunk almost every ship, they sunk around about 19 ships altogether, that was great as far as we were concerned. From there we went up to Dobadura,

29:00 it was just at the foot of Kokoda Track, we went up to Dobadura and we were the reserve brigade for the Buna, Gona campaign. We were the reserve brigade for the Battle of Lau,

29:30 we seemed to be the reserve brigade right through.

While you were being the reserve brigade, what were you doing?

Training, training, training. I was in the intelligence department at that stage, the intelligence section and we were still training. We went up there because he had 100 percent malaria, so we went up there. There were kangaroos

30:00 and wallabies up on the highlands. It was surprising - there was a huge plateau behind Port Moresby - to see these kangaroos jumping around. We were out on patrol one day and some of the natives invited us to have a meal with them and they were cooking a kangaroo, just on the coals of the fire, and the flames were coming up.

Was it good?

30:30 I didn't know. We didn't eat any. It was just this little family underneath the cliff of the mountain range. But we trained and trained and trained then we were to do a daring landing behind the Japanese lines up at a place called Bena Bena. It would have been pretty tough up there because the whole brigade was going up there. Some of the

31:00 fellows had even gone down to Jackson Airstrip ready to go up to Bena Bena, and it was all called off just like that. They were all down there ready to go and we were packing up to go also, as the intelligence section that I was in, but it wasn't to be so they decided to call it off.

How did you come to be involved in the intelligence section?

There is a little cadre that we had at Rolling Stone

31:30 for one week, and they taught us how to do mapping, not to interrogate anybody, but to do mapping and things of that nature. It was just common sense really. After the Battle of Milne Bay was over, we had gone out on patrol and we had killed the Japanese

32:00 on patrol. I was called to the office by Roy Cook to see Captain Campbell, and he had recommended that I go into the intelligence section. It's interesting in as much that one of our fellows had come down with one of our fellows from the intelligence section, who had come down with malaria, and his name was Jim.

32:30 He and I worked together at WD&HO Wills, in the tobacco company right opposite the St John's

Cathedral at Ann Street. We had worked together, and because he was going back home because he got malaria, he was going back home on the Manunda, I was to take his place, so that's what I did. I enjoyed it immensely and the intelligence department is absolutely spot on.

- 33:00 You'd go out on your own and you were doing mapping areas, you were more or less on your own and you were given a task to map this area and grid so-and-so, and go up that track and do all the information, this is possible on that track. There might be a hut there and there might be a creek running down there, so it was good and very interesting.

How were you training initially

- 33:30 **in the intelligence department?**

Training by members of intelligence department, we had a sergeant and a corporal and they trained me for my duties. I didn't have to interrogate any prisoners or anything like that, it was just going out and mainly mapping the area and I found it quite rewarding. Also, we had to observe, we had to

- 34:00 observe about what troops were arriving at Milne Bay, get their battalion numbers, anything the lieutenant colonel would want to know we had to take to him and tell him all the things that we had observed throughout the day. He, the colonel can't be everywhere at the one time, we had to be the eyes and ears

- 34:30 for the colonel, it was interesting and I loved it.

You said that you had one hundred per cent malaria amongst the battalion, how did you get rid of it?

I got malaria at Milne Bay and I wanted to shoot myself. It's extremely bad. You had a shocking headache, a really, really, really bad headache, just like a migraine,

- 35:00 or even worse than that, and I could have easily shot myself. Not that I'd have the courage to do so, but I just felt like I wanted to shoot myself, to get out of it. The malaria rate was 100 per cent. Some of them might of got by, I'm not certain, but as a result of that the whole brigade went up to Dobadura which

- 35:30 is just behind Port Moresby, about 400-odd miles past there, and we were there until we got rid of the malaria.

How did you get rid of the malaria?

We kept taking Atebrin, but of course there were no mosquitoes up there and that was the big thing. The lack of mosquitoes around the place and the malaria just sort of came away from your body altogether,

- 36:00 it was just the area that you were in. If we had of stayed down at Milne Bay it would have been bad for us with the malaria, because it could have turned to other things as well, but eventually we were able to get rid of it, I don't know.

How could you keep on training while you all had malaria?

For the first month or so we didn't have

- 36:30 much to do at all. Eventually the malaria was coming out of our system, the whole brigade went down with malaria. It was coming out of our system, and eventually after the first month and a half or so, we started doing light training then we go into more severe training. It's a very clear area around the foothills of the Kokoda Track,

- 37:00 it's a huge plateau of many, many miles all around that area, and that's where we got rid of the malaria, I don't know how we got rid of it but it came out of our system. When I went down to the officer's school, I got malaria down there again between courses. You had a week between this course and that course and luckily it happened to be the week that

- 37:30 I was in recess that I got malaria. They put all sorts of blankets on top of me because you sweat a lot at that stage. I got malaria for about four years after that, off and on all again the time for about four years.

When you were recovering as well as training did you have more down time,

- 38:00 **was the training less intense compared to Milne Bay?**

Yes, we had picture theatres coming to us, we had concerts, it was a good life. We had athletic meetings, we had football games, it was quite exciting. It was a real relaxing time for us.

- 38:30 Eventually the brigade was sent home because we had been up there for about 18 months, not that I was there for 18 months, but the brigade had been there for 18 months. I came down to the school over in Adelaide. Although the training was intense, because there was still the possibility of going into action. We were the reserve brigade

- 39:00 for a number of big battles that were taking place. Someone said that we were the lucky brigade, and I think that's about right, because we could have been in that one, we could have been in that one, we could have been in that one, but we weren't. After the Battle of Milne Bay, which was in August, September, it was another 12 months and we
- 39:30 hadn't been in action at all during that time, and eventually they brought us back to Australia for leave, so that was good. I had come back previously because of going to the school over in Adelaide.

When did you get the news that they wanted you to go to school?

At Dobadura, Lieutenant Colonel Meldrum had gone into hospital

- 40:00 and his 2IC took over, Major Wilds. He called me to his tent, and I was only a private at that stage, he said, "Private Watt, I want you to go to an officers' school." I was dumbfounded really, because how would a private go to an officers' school? The next thing, to go to an officers' school you had to be either a
- 40:30 corporal or sergeant or a warrant officer, so they gave me two stripes and away I went to the officers' school.

Tape 8

00:30 You told us you were a private, how were you feeling at this news?

I was dumbfounded because why should a private be going to an officers' school? As far as a corporal was concerned, and as far as a sergeant was concerned,

- 01:00 they were my peers. Goodness, if a corporal told you to do something, you did it. If a sergeant told you to do something, certainly you would do it very quietly. If a lieutenant had told you to do something that was big time. I thought, "I can't possibly go." I thought about it that night, and the next day I went back to Major Wilds and said "Major Wilds,
- 01:30 could I see you for a moment?" and he said, "Yes." and I said, "I don't think I can do it, I'm not qualified enough to go to an officers' school." He said, "Watt, you're going and that's that." So the next thing, Watt was down to Port Moresby. Luckily my brother was there, and he'd come over from the Middle East and he was going up to the Battle of Lae at that stage.
- 02:00 I was able to see him and he was able to see me off, not on the aircraft but down at Port Moresby. I eventually got down to the officers' school. I came home first, I flew back from Port Moresby down to Townsville and from Townsville got the train back to Brisbane and I walked in on my Mum and Dad.
- 02:30 The interesting thing was, on the way down I bought a block of ice cream and it was about this big, and I ate the lot, and I was sick on the train, I was in the toilet almost the whole distance, it was awful. Eventually I got home. Where they put you at that stage in Brisbane, when you got out of the train in Brisbane, they took
- 03:00 us to the pig pens in the Brisbane exhibition. They had a lot of hay in the pig pens, and that's where we could stay for the night - in the hay. What I'm telling you is the truth, that's all they had for us, they didn't have any rooms to take us, the pig pens was where to put our
- 03:30 gear and so forth. I went home to see my Mum and I was able to stay there for the night and I saw my Mum and Dad and the family. The next day, I had to come back to the pig pen again, those people who had nowhere to go in Brisbane, they'd stay in the pig pen. Put their blanket out and just sleep on the blanket, there was a lot of straw in the pig pen. What I'm telling you is quite the truth, that's all we had.
- 04:00 The next day I caught the train down to Adelaide. I didn't have time to meet my sweetheart in Melbourne because the train just arrived and the next thing it was on its way again, and I eventually arrived in Adelaide and went to the officers' school. The officers' school, we were there for four months and you had to pass each particular section before you went onto the next section.
- 04:30 We had a thousand would-be officers being trained. Then you went on from section to section to section, and the last section was the infantry section, whereas the others would go to their respective areas, like military police would go to their area, we stayed at Woodside Army Camp and we did our infantry training there
- 05:00 for tactics and all that sort of thing. Lord Gowrie [the Governor General] was the person who came over to bestow on us our commissions, that was in December and that was quite exciting, to have Lord Gowrie there. The way that they give you your commission, each particular person, there was 100 of us who were being commissioned at that particular time, they march you
- 05:30 with a band to a particular area and seated is Lord Gowrie and all of his entourage there. When they call out your name, I'm not quite certain if they call out 'Private Watt' or 'Lieutenant Watt', whatever the

case may be, you go forward, you click your heels and you salute Lord Gowrie. He shakes you by the hand and he gives you your pips

06:00 and then you step back and salute again and then you go back to your seat. That night we had a big dinner and the next day we left for Brisbane and I was able to have two or three days' leave in Melbourne in which time I met Margaret.

Why do you think he had decided to send you to officers' school?

06:30 **What qualities...?**

I don't quite know as a matter of fact. It's interesting, isn't it? I've always been captain of any teams that I had been in. I was captain of our Australian Rules football team in the army; I think I had been captain of all teams that I had been in.

07:00 At the Indooroopilly State School, I was captain of the cricket and football team, and I think they were the qualities that they were looking for, a leader, I think so. I was very pleased indeed. Then we went from there to Canungra. The only way out of it was to feel in the back of my mind that I could get killed and be prepared for death. I had to prepare myself

07:30 for death, otherwise if you didn't do that, you'd have the privates, corporals and sergeants under you saying, "He's no good, we don't want him as a leader." You had to be prepared to die and show that you were a leader of men. They gave us six weeks, I think.

08:00 I remember one of the officers coming to see us at one stage at Canungra, and in action you'd last for six weeks, that's what they gave you if you were up against the Japanese, there was a good chance that you were going to get killed. The only way out of it was to feel that I could get killed and I was prepared to die.

How do you prepare to die?

You had to be prepared in the back of your mind

08:30 to be killed in action. How you can prepare yourself was for your inner self to tell you that there is a very good chance that you are going to get killed. But in getting killed, if you are leading your men at that particular stage that you would feel that you were competent enough to lead

09:00 them into action, if you got killed whilst being in action, you were prepared to do that. I don't know how you prepare yourself mentally, but anyway that's what I felt. I had to be prepared to die.

This officer, what did he say to you again about your expectations of death?

No, just that the officer said that

09:30 if you were in the front line, there is a very good chance that you could get killed within six weeks, that's if you were in action for six weeks, there is a very good chance that you are going to get killed. A lot of people had been killed at Milne Bay, Buna and Gona and also up there on the Kokoda Track, there were lots and lots killed. Over in Adelaide, we had 1,000 officers over there,

10:00 being trained as officers in their various fields, so many for the infantry and so many for the engineers, and so forth. When I got to Canungra, I had leave in Brisbane for a month, and then I was posted down to Canungra Army Camp which had only been going for about 12 months I should imagine.

10:30 We had 12,000 at Canungra and we had one battalion of 1,000 officers ready to go up to New Guinea in the various fields that they were going to, 1,000 officers altogether. Every day you would have up on the notice board '20

11:00 fellows will be leaving today by train to go up to Townsville' and from Townsville they would be going over by aircraft or whatever over to their various battalions that they were posted to. When you get commissioned, you normally don't go back to your own battalion because fellows might say, "I don't want to serve under him." so I went from the 61st Battalion

11:30 to Canungra and from Canungra I went to the 14/32nd Battalion, which was 6th Brigade, and we eventually went over to New Britain. I met them up at Bulolo just at the foothills going over to Salamaua. I don't know if you know all these areas.

12:00 When I arrived at Bulolo, one of their officers who was the intelligence officer had been posted out of Southport just here, just where Australia Fair is at the moment. There was a hotel there and that's where the intelligence

12:30 training ground for officers. The colonel asked of those, there were about seven of us who went to the 14th 32nd Battalion, if there were any people who could look after the intelligence section. I said I had done a certain amount of training in the 61st Battalion and he said, "Right, you are now acting intelligence officer."

13:00 I was the intelligence officer there for a little time until such as the fellow came back from the school

down here, so I was the intelligence officer there for about two or three weeks.

I will take you back to the officers' training school and just ask you some of the things

13:30 **that you would be trained in specifically?**

The first part of it in, which the intake was 400 people, but realising that apart from the 400 people for the first intake for the first month would be others being trained in the 2nd Division and 3rd Division and the 4th Division, and they would all be there as well.

14:00 It terribly cold, it was a cold place. Just imagine going from New Guinea down to Adelaide in wintertime, and the condensation. The roof was an iron roof and the condensation and little drips would drip down on you in the morning, say at half past five six o'clock in the morning, you'd have these little drips coming down from the roof onto you. We had the big greatcoats on

14:30 and it was terribly cold. Getting back to the training there. The first thing was weapons, although we knew our weapons reasonably well but we still had to be trained in them and to be lectured in them rifle, Bren gun,

15:00 three-inch mortar, Sten gun and the Owen gun [submachine guns], all those things. It was mainly guns that we had to be trained in - to take them apart and to assemble them and all that sort of thing - so that was the first month. The second month was

15:30 gas, intelligence, engineering, I'm not quite certain of the other things and I'm not certain what the third month was, but the fourth month was certainly the infantry tactics. You'd assemble around mud maps,

16:00 or sand maps, and 'the Japanese are entrenched here and you are here and you have 100 men and what would you do to take that particular position over there', and it was very interesting and I enjoyed that very much. The profile of the mud maps or sand maps. Then we'd go out and

16:30 be taught infantry tactics out in the field. "Ok, the Japanese are out there, you, Watt, are the platoon commander. What would you do? You have got a machine gun and you have got three sections, how would you go about it?" All the fellows under you would have to be the fellows who were being trained as officers as well as

17:00 and you'd have to direct them. The mortar bombers would be sent over for two minutes and you'd have your machine gun on the flank and that would be firing. Once the machine gun lifts your infantry would go in, tactics all the time, it was very interesting. One fellow was just about ready to become an

17:30 officer, in fact he did become an officer. We were using live ammunition and the grenade was thrown and it hit a branch and came back and split his back open. He eventually got his commission but he was in the hospital at the time. That was the training that we had there. Also we had being trained doctors, dentists and

18:00 padres at the same time because the Japanese wouldn't know if they were doctors, dentists or padres or who they were. The Japanese wouldn't know they'd just come in firing at everybody. They'd just as well shot a padre or a doctor as anybody so they were being trained also, there would have been about 100 or 120 people being trained also.

You have already mentioned that you went to New Guinea, and that's where you became an acting

18:30 **intelligence officer?**

The was in New Guinea at the time.

Tell us from there after that training in New Guinea again tell us about landing in New Britain?

From Bulolo we went down by trucks down to Lae. We were there for

19:00 a couple of weeks until a big ten or eleven thousand ton American ship came in and we were all assembled down at the wharf. We board that particular ship to take us to a place called Jacquinot Bay, which is just near Rabaul. We did a landing there,

19:30 I think there were about 10 or 11 American barges came up to take us off. At that particular stage I was not an intelligence officer. The officer had came back from school in Southport, so I was just a reserve officer at that stage helping him. Our first forces went ashore and there were no Japanese there - they had been cleared out

20:00 beforehand. The Japanese had been in that area, but they were not in that area at that particular time. They had been pushed back by the New Guinea infantry and they had been pushed well back. My job then was a fairly easy job at that stage; I was just with the intelligence officer. I slept in his

20:30 tent and but I didn't have a real duty to do at Jacquinot Bay, and my duties - I had just little to do. From

there, they decided to make a landing further up the coast and I was put in charge of that particular front area, it was a matter of 10 miles up the coast.

- 21:00 I had nothing to do so they put me in charge of that particular area at a place called Cutarp. More troops arrived and more troops arrived up at Cutarp, which was going up the coast towards the Japanese. That was when I wrote to Margaret for the first time. At Cutarp, once the
- 21:30 brigadier arrived and once the colonels arrived, I had nothing to do, they made me the liaison officer at that stage. To liaison between the brigade headquarters and the various battalions. At that time, the brigade intelligence officer went on leave, not on leave; he came down to the school at Southport also. The next thing,
- 22:00 I was called into the brigadier's office and they made me acting brigade intelligence officer, that's what that painting is up there. From then we pushed up the coast, we went up to Sampun which was about three or four hours trip up by boat, and all of our other troops came up after us.
- 22:30 Two battalions of troops, the 19th Battalion and the 14/32nd Battalion, and we landed at a place called Sampun. I had a lot of work to do at Sampun because I didn't know very much about being a brigade intelligence officer, and we had to send the situation reports back to division, and
- 23:00 we had to indicate where all our troops were at a particular time. You had to send that at eight o'clock each night and it had to be done in code. I'd write it all out - where the troops were at that particular stage. I was only getting about five lines to put down where our troops were. That would be taken down to the signals tent and they would code that and sent onto
- 23:30 division headquarters so they'd know exactly where we were. The next thing, we pushed up the coast further, and at that stage we had a jeep with us and it had been landed by barge. I was able to go with the brigadier as it was up to a place called KLI Plantation. We were getting closer and closer to the Japanese,
- 24:00 KLI Plantation was only a matter of about three miles away from us and they had about 450 Japanese there. The brigadier came into that tent, there, that you can see on the side there, then he decided to go into action the next morning to dislodge the Japanese from their foothold at
- 24:30 Waitavalo and Tol. That's when he asked me the next morning, after he had laid his plans to go down with him onto the isthmus to observe the battle. We requested 45 Beaufort bombers to come in and bomb this particular area. First of all, the mortars put smoke down on that particular area where the Japanese were and then the artillery started up onto
- 25:00 the smoke, and then the planes came in to bomb that particular area where the Japanese were. We had requested 24 bombers to come in from 100 Squadron but only five came, the brigadier was mad, he was as mad as a hornet, the fact that instead of 24 bombers only five bombers came in. Then the 19th Battalion was to go into action and the 19th Battalion
- 25:30 had to go across two streams and the Japanese were firing down on them. They were pushed back and in a concerted effort they made another attack across these two streams, and Walnut River was one and Marvello River was the other one. The 19th Battalion got across these two streams and started storming the hills around
- 26:00 Waitavalo. I was in the middle of all of this and it was very interesting. One Japanese plane was shot down and the pilot survived and we had to bring him in for interrogation. At that stage I had an American Japanese interrogator with me
- 26:30 and it was quite interesting. He did all the interrogating because he knew the Japanese language. We attacked that particular position and equipment started coming in because we had raided some of their caves, they had built big caves into the mountains, and we raided these caves and we got certain information like clothing and crates and all sorts of things.
- 27:00 From that, the Japanese interpreter would know what battalion and divisions that we were up against. It was quite interesting and I enjoyed that very much. At night time, I would have to do the situation report again, about five lines, and I had to put in where the 19th Battalion was,
- 27:30 where the headquarters was and where the companies were. I didn't have very much room to put all the information on that was required. Then that went down to the signals department and they put that into code and sent it back to division headquarters. Divisional headquarters at that stage was at Jacquinot Bay. The battle progressed
- 28:00 and certain equipment was coming back for us to look at, and at that stage another brigade had an intelligence officer and I was relieved of my duties. I really wasn't qualified to be a brigade intelligence officer. At that stage, I was made liaison officer,
- 28:30 going around to the various battalions and being given information from them, what they required, the technical things, and also what equipment they needed. I brought that back to brigade headquarters and if they had wanted stores, I would go get it for them. The battle continued

- 29:00 and I should image we had about 40 or 50 killed, and I think we killed about 150 Japanese during the battle for Waitavalo. Our troops came across, as we pushed the Japanese back more troops came into the area, we had around about 3,000 troops there I suppose, altogether, we pushed the Japanese back.
- 29:30 Because I was relieved of my duty and I became the liaison officer, I had to take about 100 reinforcements up to the 19th Battalion. When we arrived at a particular point, the Japanese heavily mortared us. They had a 4.5
- 30:00 mortar, a big mortar, and they shelled us pretty heavily. That's where I felt that I'd like to go to ground with all the privates, because it was my first real action as a lieutenant, in action with troops around me. All the troops immediately went to ground and I happened to be still standing
- 30:30 directing them, "Get out of that foxhole and do this and do that." It was a difficult position for me. I had to take control of myself, although I wanted to get behind something, I had to take control of myself and be prepare to die as far as that was concerned. These mortars were landing around us; nothing was really close to us they were landing about
- 31:00 80 or 90 or 100 yards away, it was very disturbing at the same time. That was the first indication that I had as an officer to really direct men in battle. As the war progressed, and we pushed the Japanese back a little bit further the 2/22nd Battalion in Rabaul,
- 31:30 they had been forced out of Rabaul and they made their way down, this was three years earlier that I'm referring to now, they had been forced down to Tol Plantation, the Japanese in their barges came down and they had found all the Australians and they
- 32:00 murdered 156. I went out with a patrol one day and we found 13 skeletons just lying on a track and we found 150 skeletons altogether. The skeletons had steel helmets still on, false teeth still in, boots
- 32:30 still on, but they were just skeletons and it was...very, very eerie feeling. That was tough to see that and other patrols found about 150 Australians who had been murdered. They called it the 'Massacre of Tol'. The Tol Plantation very, very bad.

What kind of evidence was gathered that they were murdered?

- 33:00 Only that books revealed that to me later on, I didn't know that they had been murdered at that particular stage. I don't know they tied their hands behind their backs, but I can't recall even looking. I didn't disturb the skeletons at all, it's best that some of the other people could come down and see, the intelligence officer and his entourage would come down.
- 33:30 They didn't know what to do in that particular case. I know that in books that I have read since, they had their hands tied behind their backs and they were bayoneted to death, 150 of them, they call it the Massacre of Tol and it was very, very bad. I felt awful about it, and one person was from Warrnambool.
- 34:00 He had his cigarette case alongside of him and it had been there for three years. This was 1942 that the Massacre of Tol took place, and now we are looking at 1945 around about June or July of 1945, so it was about three or four years that they had been just lying there. With their steel helmets on. It was just an eerie feeling to find them all.
- 34:30 You became very bitter again against the Japanese for what they had done to our fellows.

What about their clothes and their materials?

Their clothes had all, they'd all been taken, whether they had been taken by the natives or not I'm not quite certain, but there was no clothes around them at all, nothing at all just skeletons. The boots were on,

- 35:00 false teeth still in and the steel helmets were still on.

You knew that they were all Australians?

I didn't know who they were at that stage but I just felt that they were Australians. I didn't know about the battle at Rabaul, I didn't know. It's only that

- 35:30 since then I've read books about the Tol Massacre, but I didn't know anything about it. They had our steel helmet on, the steel helmet was the same as what I would wear and they had those on so I felt they certain were Australians.

Could you look at it for long?

- 36:00 We searched around, looking at all the skeletons, but searched around to see how many we could find. On this particular track we found about 13 or 14 but other patrols had found about 150, the Massacre of Tol.

How were they laid out?

They were just lying with their

- 36:30 skulls to the sky actually, just bones sort of like that, just head back. They must have been bayoneted in the front and they just must of fallen backwards because almost all of them, I can't recall one that
- 37:00 hadn't fallen backwards. It was a very eerie sight I can assure you, the Tol Massacre, very, very bad.
- Do you remember what kind of thoughts were running through your head at that time?**
- I blasted the Japanese, I thought, "The rotten sods." I felt very, very bad. When you think of the families of those particular fellows...
- 37:30 They didn't have any numbers on them because the Japanese had taken all of those so we didn't know who they were. But this fellow was from Warrnambool, that's what I know, he had his cigarette case down alongside of him. I didn't take any further action in it as much as the intelligence officer and some of our brigade people
- 38:00 came down and they took over, and also the padre would have come down also. How they removed the skeletons I'm not quite certain. It would be difficult to know just how they removed them, but I wasn't party to that, so I wouldn't know how they took them out.
- Did you see the padre come down?**
- I didn't not, I didn't see the padre come down. Padre O'Reilly was our padre as a matter of fact, and he was a pretty good guy.
- 38:30 He was the one who would have observed all of that, but what he would have done I'm not quite certain They probably buried them. All of those people are up in the Rabaul cemetery now. I went up to the Rabaul cemetery a little time ago, a few years ago, and saw all the fellows who had been
- 39:00 killed at the Waitavalo and Tol Plantation. Probably all of these fellows, I don't know how they would differentiate between each one who had been killed, probably a tomb would say 'soldier unknown' or something like that.
- What did it feel like going back?**
- Very eerie, and you felt for the fellows because a lot of them were
- 39:30 the same age as myself when I joined the army at 19 and 20, and I felt pretty awful about the whole situation. They wanted to live and they had lives ahead of them also. I went up with 13 reinforced officers from Canungra and I was the only one not wounded,
- 40:00 we lost one killed, and all the other 11 were all wounded in action. That reveals that there is a pretty good chance that you are going to get shot or killed. I was the only one to miss out, so I was very lucky.

Tape 9

- 00:30 **You mentioned that there were some Japanese taken prisoner; can you tell me about what happened with them?**
- I will take one particular case.
- 01:00 We had a Japanese American interpreter, he looked just Japanese. There was an occasion when he stripped off and he went for a swim. Of course the natives around the place, thinking he was a Japanese, they were going to kill him. So we had to take him on guard
- 01:30 down to the stream each time he wanted to have a swim. We went out one day at Waitavalo and Tol, Wide Bay it was at that stage, and we went down the coast and we had to pick up in a barge a Japanese prisoner.
- 02:00 He was handed over to us and he was put into the barge and he came back to our base at Waitavalo, Tol. He wanted to help me into the car, he put his hand out to help me into the jeep, that was very nice him to do that. He had been eating grass,
- 02:30 he had no food. He was probably a remnant anyway, just wanted to escape back to Japanese lines, but our fellows found him. He was brought in to be interrogated. We started to interrogating him and I was outside the tent at this stage and
- 03:00 he was starting to be interrogated. He didn't give us very much information but we could see that he was quite hungry. We provided him with a very nice meal, the same meal that we would have, we gave him a very nice meal. After that he opened up and gave us a lot of information. As I say, I was sitting with
- 03:30 the interrogator at that stage I don't know what he said. I spoke to the interrogator later on, and we

also had the interrogator, the American Japanese, and a captain with him also attached to the Brigade I Section, the intelligence section. He gave a lot of information so we were very pleased about that. Another Japanese was shot down in an aircraft

04:00 and we brought him in. I'm not quite certain what the information was that he gave but he was then sent back to divisional headquarters and I'm not quite certain what happened to him there. He was only a young fellow and he appeared to be about 19. Very youthful in the face. He was flying one of these Zekes [alternative Allied designation for the Zero] or something, I think a Zeke is a different type to a

04:30 Zero [it is not]. He was brought in and sent back to Jacquinot Bay to divisional headquarters down there.

05:00 **Was there any sort of information that the Japanese would give that you heard?**

No, not really. There was nothing that we had that was any great information to us. The Japanese that we were fighting against at

05:30 Wide Bay area, they didn't know very much. They may have been sent down eventually to Cowra, but I'm not certain that they had very much information. They wouldn't be going to Indooroopilly to be interrogated, but the war was almost finished at that stage anyway. By the time they got back,

06:00 the war was within a month or two or being finished. They still would have been interrogated at some length I would imagine, but there wasn't very much interrogation from our part.

How did your time in Rabaul end?

In Rabaul it was only a subsequent trip that we did by the Fairstar and that's why I went to Rabaul.

06:30 We as a battalion came back to Australia, and we were disbanded and my next duty was to go up to Wewak with the 6th Division up there. Thank goodness the war had finished because the Japanese were eating our dead and their own dead and they had no food at all. It wouldn't have been a very nice place to have gone into. That was at the Wewak, Aitape area,

07:00 and that's on the north coast of New Guinea. I was very pleased that I didn't go up there, because that would have been a nasty kettle of fish. To get killed up there after the various things that we had been through, I didn't think that was very nice at all.

Before we talk about the end of the war just a few more questions about the time when you were the acting intelligence officer.

07:30 **Can you go through what would be a typical day, a typical duty?**

A typical duty would be, first of all I had a sergeant, corporal and about four ORs [other ranks] and also this chap who was the

08:00 American Japanese interpreter. A typical day would be that sig reps would be coming to you. You had maps on the wall just like this, that's my tent there actually. The hand that I have on the table was where the American Japanese interpreter would be. All the maps I had up, they would be the position

08:30 of the allied troops around our particular area. We had troops over on the north side of New Britain; we had two battalions on the south side of New Britain. We had a little bit of a navy, but not very much, so we had to make

09:00 certain that we knew where everybody was at a particular time. On the maps would be where all our troops would be. So if the brigadier came in and he had a look at the map and would say, "We have got a platoon there, we have got a company there, the battalion headquarters and the 19th Battalion is there, the 14/32nd Battalion is here,

09:30 they are patrolling that area." We had to give him all the information that was relative, so that he'd know exactly what part to play on that particular day or for that particular week. That would be the main part of it collating things.

10:00 In the intelligence department, the thing would be that the brigadier would want to know where all the troops were at that particular stage. When the battle was on we would be collating clothing and material that would be relative. Then the Japanese interpreter would be going through that so that we would know what battalions and the troops we were up against.

10:30 We had one only Japanese that we had captured and he was the airman, and I'm not quite certain how much information we got out of him. Mainly, the brigadier would want to know exactly where all the troops were. He'd come into the tent and he'd look it over and say,

11:00 "Watt, are there any more patrols due in with information?" and I'd say, "There's still two patrols still out and when they come in I'll give you more information about what's going on." Also we'd have identification of aircraft,

11:30 they didn't have control of the sea at that stage, so that was alright. We had a couple of bombing raids

and they did bomb us on a couple of occasions. Nowhere near my particular area at brigade headquarters, but they did kill the cook and his assistant, they dropped on the cook house. We only had a

12:00 couple of raids.

Can you describe the difference in the atmosphere between New Guinea and New Britain?

Almost identical. I did happen to meet a person there called Goldpak. Goldpak was in charge of 40,000

12:30 New Britains and his word was law, whatever he said you had to do. They bowed and scraped to him, but I didn't speak with him at all. I didn't meet him at all, just only a few meters away from me, but he didn't want to come over and say hello to me. The people

13:00 around him were the people who were in charge of the district, district managers, they would bow and scrape to him, he was law for 40,000. He got medals for bravery, for bring out about 45 airmen who had landed in his area,

13:30 it was quite a large area, he had brought these airmen out both Americans and Australians. Getting back to your question again it was very similar.

How about the atmosphere amongst the troops?

14:00 Morale was very, very high because we were chasing the Japanese at that stage and pushing them back. Most of the troops that we had with us had been trained at Canungra and they were pretty good troops and they had trained very well. The atmosphere was pretty good, we were quite happy with those around us.

14:30 We were quite confident that they'd do the job when called upon to do so, they were pretty good troops. The 14/32nd, the 19th Battalion and the 36th Battalion. We speak very highly of them.

Can you tell me when you first came back to Australia after having been in New Britain?

15:00 We arrived back in Australia and we went to Strathpine. Luckily Margaret was given leave to come up from the Capital Hair Dressing Salon in Melbourne, so she was able to meet me up in Brisbane and that's when we got engaged. Life went on exactly the same,

15:30 in town, the trams were running, the buses were running, it was as if you hadn't been away, but there were lots and lots of troops around. Life seemed to just go on just the same, the race meetings were still being held, the cricket and football matches were being played. You felt, "We are away fighting and all

16:00 this is still going on." It should still be going on but you felt at that stage, "Wait, it shouldn't be, why should we be up there fighting in New Guinea and New Britain and everybody is home here sort of leading a normal life?" It was really strange; it was one of those interesting things that you felt that shouldn't happen. You felt that everybody should be up in New Britain

16:30 and everybody should be up in New Guinea all playing their part, but no, it doesn't operate like that. Life was altogether different because you need people to run the homes, you need people back home to make boots, you need people back home to make ammunition and so forth. Naturally that the sort of thing you should do,

17:00 you need cane cutters and all of those sorts of things. But you come home and life just goes on nice and easy. I think at some stage, you are not thinking rationally at that stage, you are thinking, "We left Joe Blow up there in New Britain and he got killed and a number of other fellows got killed and here we come back and life

17:30 here is still going on just the same." That's the way it should be but you feel that in the back of your mind.

How did you deal with these feelings?

You had to come to terms with the situation, you had to come to terms with "that's the way that life is you need people back here doing

18:00 things so that you can be in the field, you need people back here manufacturing and you need people back here milking the cows, you need people back here making all the things that attributed to making certain that you in the field was getting the supplies and food that you require." It's a funny feeling when you come back, it's sort of just strange.

Did you try and explain these feelings

18:30 **to anyone around you?**

No. When we get to our reunions that's when you start talking about these things to your mates. You don't talk about them to civilians, you talk to them about, "The buses are still running and the trams are still running." and they sort of say, "Yes, I noticed

19:00 the same thing." The situation is that it's got to be that way, it's got to be an area where you are manufacturing things so that life can still carry on up at the front line.

After you arrived back in Australia at Strathpine, when did you hear that the war was over?

19:30 I was in brigade headquarters at that stage and word come through to our office at Strathpine to say the Japanese have decided to finish the war. I was quite excited and I immediately rang through to Mum because my darling Margaret was there at Mum's place and

20:00 she was able to find out at the same time. Everybody was jumping up and down and being so excited. But word had come through to Strathpine to our brigade headquarters to say that the war was over. I was able to ring home, and I don't know who else I rang at that stage, to ring home and say, "The war is over." Everybody was extremely thrilled and especially my Mum, because her

20:30 three boys would be coming home.

How did you celebrate?

The celebration, that particular day we were all given leave and we all could go home and it was great, but we all had to report back the next day. In Brisbane, there was just turmoil. People were out on the streets and the traffic couldn't get through, everybody was hugging everybody else and

21:00 Margaret, I, and George and Jess, my brother who had come home on leave, my brother and his wife, we all went into town and people were kissing the policemen, it was a terribly exciting occasion. We thought, "This is great, this is absolutely marvellous, the war is over." and there was no need for us to be in jungle greens or army style uniforms. As it turned out, I

21:30 was asked to go up to Redbank Army Camp to discharge the troops, so I was very pleased about that. It was a wonderful occasion and everybody was so joyous and everybody was laughing and dancing in the streets. The traffic could hardly get through Brisbane, you have probably seen photos of it, it was just so exciting. But then you thought of the other people who were still up there in New Guinea and my

22:00 own battalion, the 61st Battalion, they were still over in Bougainville at that stage. It was many months before some of them could get home from there.

Did you think about any of the people who had been lost?

Absolutely, and that was the toughest part of it. Lieutenant King, Lieutenant Cling, being killed and others. around who had been killed,

22:30 Gordon White had been killed, young Irvine had been killed, you think about all of those things, it was hard to think about those people who were left behind in graves up there. The same thing applied to those at Milne Bay who had been buried. They were later on

23:00 transferred to the Bomana Cemetery up in Port Moresby, the big cemetery over there in Bougainville, and they were all transported back to have their graves put into Bomana Cemetery also. You certainly thought of them and you felt, "Why me?" When I came back in my analysis,

23:30 I felt that everybody should do two years training. I felt that all Australians should certainly do a year or two years training from the age of 18 to 20. There are so many reasons attached to that. Not that we had drugs in

24:00 those days, but today there are drugs. And also discipline. I thought that it would be marvellous if everybody could live a happy life without drugs and without smoking, without all sorts of things. Also, I felt that every major city

24:30 should have one squadron of aircraft. I know we only have about 50 to 100 in Australia at the moment, but I felt that if we could have a squadron of aircraft in each major city. Particularly Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, we should have at least one squadron. Some of the other cities like

25:00 Townsville, Cairns or Mackay, they should also have a number of aircraft. Not that I went into action with tanks, but to get behind a tank, you did a lot of training with tanks. We did our training out here, just out here behind Dream World. I remember we went out there, and we had about 40 to 50 tanks and we trained with them for a little time from Canungra.

25:30 It was lovely to sit behind a tank because the bullets couldn't possibly penetrate a tank and we felt safe. There again, if the cities were able to have a squadron of tanks, say 20 or 30 tanks, that would be great. I felt two years training for civilians and also have a squadron of aircraft

26:00 in some of the major cities and also a squadron of tanks. I thought that would be wonderful to do training with those, but everybody to be participating in training for this particular time, for drugs and also for discipline. The discipline has gotten out of order as far as I'm concerned, and

26:30 it's very poorly done. So that's what I'd like to see done.

Tell me about your job when you were discharging troops at Redbank.

I was 2IC of the Number 2 Holding Company and in that particular holding company was where the troops who were out of Brisbane, the troops in Brisbane could

- 27:00 go back to their homes and they would come back the next day. But the troops say in Toowoomba and out, they would have to stay in camp until they could get discharged.
- 27:30 I was second in charge of a holding wing where people from out laying areas would stay overnight until there papers came through or if there was some information that was required by the army. Sometimes people had to have additional medicals and things of that nature. On one occasion the
- 28:00 2IC of WD & HO Wills was coming through, Mr Fullie, he was the sub-manager, and he said, "Jim, I'd like to see you back at work." and I thought to myself, "This is a pretty good job out here." I felt that I wasn't very happy to go back to work at this stage. I didn't go back for another 12 months after being out there.
- 28:30 Troops would come in and they would have to sign the fact that they were leaving the army, they were given chips for a new suit, they were given a chit for clothing and any money that was owing to them. They would get that money and it was recorded and they would have to go along to the Commonwealth Bank to get the money out.
- 29:00 It was a pretty straightforward occasion that they would have to attend to. Some of them who had medical problems, they would have to be analysed. Alongside of us was A Company, and they were being discharged too, and also the air force was being discharged
- 29:30 at Redbank, so a whole lot of them were being discharged at this stage. It took 12 months to put everybody through, because people were coming back from all sorts of areas. There were prisoners over in Germany and they had to come back, there prisoners from the Japanese that had to come back. It took 12 months by the time I was able to get out.
- 30:00 That was the application up at Redbank camp. Some of them had medical problems and they had to be looked after also, and that was what had kept them back a little bit longer,
- 30:30 they had to go out and get medical aid. Everybody received their money and deferred pay was a big thing. Depending on who you were, around about a shilling or two shillings a day was put aside for deferred pay, so that when you got out of the army there was a certain amount of money for you to buy whatever. The land that I had at 137 Waverly Road,
- 31:00 I was able to buy that for 160 pound, and the deferred pay paid for that land. Then I went back to WD&HO Wills, and they had to take you back.
- 31:30 **What was your experience going from army life back to civilian life?**
- It was very difficult for a start because some of the people at WD & HO Wills, because you became an officer, they didn't like you at all. It's just like, "I've got the captain working for me now."
- 32:00 I was only sort of a lowly private when I was at WD & HO Wills, I was nothing, I was just getting the orders out. The person in charge, he was a sergeant in the army, and when I came back as an officer he wasn't very happy with me, it was a difficult situation.
- 32:30 The manager Mr. Marshall, he had been an officer in the First World War so, and he took a liking to me, in becoming an officer and coming back into his ranks again, and he looked after me very well. Promotions came very easily from then on, so I was very please that he started to look after me. He took me out of Jack's department
- 33:00 into another department so that I would be elevated up the ranks, so it was good and I received more money by being elevated. I was very pleased that he, the manager, was an ex officer. It was very difficult getting back into it again with that situation around you.
- 33:30 Life came back rather easy again. Whilst at the Redbank Army Camp I got leave to go down and marry Margaret down in Melbourne. It was good, and then Margaret came up with me to Brisbane and we stayed
- 34:00 at my Mum's place until such when my Dad build a house for me at 137 Waverly Road and that's where we lived all that time. We were there for about 30 or 40 years at Waverly Road.

What were the main things that you missed from the army life?

Seeing your mates.

- 34:30 It was great getting back to the reunions. The interesting thing is that some of the officers, they were shy when they got back to the reunions, some of the fellows didn't like them and over a glass of beer and so forth, once they got plenty of beer in them, they would talk and it was a little bit difficult for the

- 35:00 officers, so they just didn't come. The fellows just didn't like them, or something had been done during their army campaigns, it was quite difficult for them at times. When I got back into life, I went back to cricket
- 35:30 and I became secretary of the Indooroopilly Cricket Club again. I played football, I played for Queensland at that stage, Australian Rules, and I went down south. I remember going to Parliament House in Canberra and we all had our names on, and I forget which
- 36:00 one of the politicians said, "What? You are still in the army?" and I said, "Yes, Sir." because I was still in the army at that stage. I still had my pips on, he said, "Good work, very pleased that you have done so well." It was interesting. I think I was the only one in the army at that stage, so I was able to meet some pretty interesting people.
- 36:30 **What do you think are the main lessons that the war had taught you?**
- It certainly taught me discipline, there's no doubt about that. It certainly taught me to eat different foods that I didn't like. In civilian life, I certainly eat different foods. Porridge, I didn't like porridge, but I grew to love porridge and because it was there and I just had to eat it.
- 37:00 I turned from a boy into a man. I think army discipline was wonderful for me and I still say to people of authority 'yes Sir, no Sir'. I think they are the main things, the food that I ate. You felt that you accepted
- 37:30 things a lot better because in wartime it was extremely difficult to really come to terms with what was going on around you, especially seeing the dead Australians and people at the Tol Massacre plantation, all those things.
- 38:00 Life to me is very precious at the moment, extremely precious. I think of all the things in family life and they are so important. To be with my family as it is now, my darling wife Margaret has passed away and my darling Carol has passed away.
- 38:30 You say in the morning, "Thank you good Lord for another lovely day." You are thankful for the life that you have at the moment. They are the things that I can think about. I think that wars at the moment, and it must be difficult for the people who are going through the wars at the moment, especially over in Iraq and
- 39:00 other places around Afghanistan and so forth, it must be very difficult for the people in those areas. Every time when I think that somebody has been killed over in Iraq, I feel for the families, they are the ones who will suffer. If you are dead then you are gone, it's the families around you, it's very, very difficult for them to really carry on.
- 39:30 I felt during the wartime, mothers and sweethearts had a difficult job to do, you knew whether you were in danger or not.

Just as a final question, you help to win the war, do you think we finally have peace?

- 40:00 No, we haven't won the peace at all. I think there are still wars going around us, and no, we haven't won the peace at all. I can't qualify exactly what we should be doing but no the wars are still going on around us. Australia is quite safe I think at this stage and that's the important thing. Australia is a wonderful country
- 40:30 and I'm extremely pleased that I fought for it. I think that we, in Australia, don't realise exactly what's going on around the world.

Do you think that the sacrifices that were made during the war were well worth it?

At that particular time, certainly so. I don't like to see anybody pass on, but certainly so. I think what we did was to stop the Japanese

- 41:00 coming to Australia and I think all Australians should be proud of what has been done for them, I really do.

INTERVIEW ENDS