

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Leonard Reader (Len) - Transcript of interview

**Date of interview: 26th August 2003**

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/811>

### Tape 1

00:38 **So just as I was saying before, we'll just get you to run through the basics if you could, whereabouts were you born again?**

Napoleon Street, Battery Point, the old stone hospital. If I had my birth certificate I could even tell you the matron of the hospital because it's on it. It's in there in the wardrobe.

**You were saying you, yeah, went to the Huon pretty soon after that?**

Yeah, I was only about ten months old. My father

01:00 got, it was during the Depression, started in 1929. My father went down and he worked for some people called Burnaby's on a big apple orchard and to make a few extra bob they used to go trapping water rats.

**Whereabouts?**

Down Lymington, down around Lymington there. There was big money in water rat skins them days. For a nice sized water rat you'd get about sixpence

01:30 which I have been told, whether it's true or whether it's not I don't know, that they used to tan the skins and split them and they used to make the old pound notes and five pound notes and ten shilling notes. That used to be made from water rat skin, the originals.

**Bazaar, I've never heard that.**

I have but whether it's true or whether it's not I don't know but anyway we had a little cottage

02:00 down there on the property where they worked for Burnaby's. I was about five and from there he lost his job because the Depression got a bit bad, went to a place called Adamsfield out near the osmiridium [mining] fields. Mum's mother and father and sisters were out there, went out there for a while and Dad heard that there was work on the west coast, so we went through to

02:30 Gordon River to a place called the Gordon Flats, which was a little township. There was about fifty-six to sixty houses there and they were all employed by the department of main roads then, rebuilding around about seven mile I think they had to rebuild to make the two lanes on the highway. It was only one lane open

03:00 and it's built on a peatbog through there, and if you drive through there you'll find a mound on the side of the road. It's where the peat has been pushed up by the road going down and it's all corded and done with tea tree and tea tree logs and branches and the same was the bridge water causeway. That's built on mudflats and that's corded. Convicts all corded that out to the bridge.

03:30 **Where did you go to school around there?**

What schooling I had was roughly about two and a half, three years, was at Gormanston.

**Is that far away?**

We moved into Linda. It was about a mile and a half, two mile away. Apart from that I only had a little bit. Mum taught me but I only had about two and a half, three years schooling.

**Did you have brothers and sisters?**

Yes, I've got quite a cluster of brothers and sisters. I've got one sister but there's five brothers,

04:00 actually six brothers. One died when it was only thirteen hours old. That's actually buried down at Cygnet, at St Marks Church at Cygnet.

**Right, where were you placed, were you younger?**

No I was the eldest.

**OK right?**

The first cab off the rank. The one next to me died. That's the one born in 1932, on the twenty second of May 1932 and he lived for thirteen hours. Had he been

04:30 born today he would have lived, had a hole in the heart and strange as it may seem I was sixty five year old and I had an operation for a hernia, for a hiatus hernia, or not hiatus, hang on, aorta hernia. I had a bubble on the aorta and had to have an operation right through my breastplate, right down, and

05:00 they said that that was much the same thing. It was part of the same fault, so it was probably a fault in the family. My grandfather died in 1936 in Elizabeth Street in Hobart, in front of what used to be Billiard and King.

**What's that now?**

I think that's Ray Appleby's bike shop now. He had the

05:30 same thing and it burst and he bled to death in about two and a half minutes and as I said then apart from that there's five other brothers. The second eldest brother that's alive, he's in Brisbane and the youngest brother's in Merriwa in New South Wales. I've got one in Burnie, one down at Margate or at Electrona and one at Latrobe.

06:00 **So when did you enter the workforce, was that pretty young?**

Fourteen or a little bit before I was fourteen. I went to work at Mount Lyle. I worked for roughly six weeks as a junior labourer. It was during the war. They were very short of manpower, so they reckoned I was big enough, tall enough and ugly enough to do a man's job, so I got a job crane chasing

06:30 or which is virtually dogman on the crane. A bloke by the name of Claude Mather was the driver when I was there. I don't know if Claude's still alive and I hope he don't mind if I tell you, say this. He was one of the first chaps I'd ever seen that was wall-eyed. He had one pale blue eye and one brown eye and it was rather a strange experience looking at this chap with two eyes different colours and they were

07:00 natural. It wasn't artificial, was his natural eyes. I've seen one other feller since that the same.

**Were you working pretty closely with him?**

Yeah, he was fifty feet in the air and I was on the ground. He was driving from the overhead cab works but occasionally he'd want to say something, so I'd jump on the bales of the crane or the hook and the crane would go up, and have a talk to him. Many years later when I'd left

07:30 and after I'd joined the army and went back to the workforce again, I decided heavy work wasn't for me, so I went to night school and got electric motor attendant's papers and went driving the same crane as I'd chased years before, drove for six and a half years on that.

**So were you doing that job all the time until you joined up?**

No, I worked in various places at Mount Lyle. I was one of about eleven

08:00 chaps worked on the Mount Lyle field that could go right from the open cut right through to the finished product. I worked at West Lyle in the open cuts. I worked as a guard on the locos, taking them off from underground to the crushing plant. I worked in the crushing plant. I worked in the flotation works. I worked in the smelting plant on the middle floor, feeding furnace. I worked crane chasing and

08:30 I worked over in the refinery.

**Just about saw it all, didn't you?**

I went right through the lot. As I said, I was one of about eleven chaps that worked there that could go right through the field, start at one end and go through to the other.

**How did you come to join up into the army?**

Well I originally was going to join the navy till I found out you had to be able to swim and I swim very professionally, just like a stone, straight to the bottom

09:00 and I thought, "Well that's no good, I can't swim. Oh well, that's out." But what started it off was I wanted to get off the west coast and see what life was like away from the west coast of Tasmania. I'd been on the west coast from when I was about seven. I wanted to join up when I was eighteen. That was just after the war, just the finish of the war

09:30 for the occupation forces and back them days you were supposed to be under your parents control till you was twenty one and my Dad was one of these chaps that was, well I'll say he was hard but he was fair. You played up, you got a biff under the ear, or in his case a boot in the backside or occasionally a sharp fist under the ear hole, but it didn't do me any harm.

- 10:00 I objected at the time but I can't see where it done any harm really. It taught me right from wrong, give me a good sense of discipline. It give me a good sense of social values and I decided that I was going to get off the coast and have a look round, so when he told me I couldn't do that I had to think up a way of getting around it and I'd had a blue with the boss at Mount Lyle. I was about
- 10:30 what, roughly about sixteen and a half, seventeen. I'd had a blue with the boss and told him where to put his job and I went to work for my father off-siding on a truck and working for your parents just doesn't go down, not when you're too much alike. It was one row from days end till nights end. I had ideas on how to do a job and he had ideas on how to do a job.
- 11:00 I'd advanced, my mind had advanced mechanically where his hadn't because I was brought up in a mechanical age where he wasn't and it just didn't go down, so I decided I'd go to work for the PWD. I worked for about eighteen months in the public works department as a road patrolman and one of the mates come through one day and eased his truck right down and sung
- 11:30 out to me that, "Your boss is watching you through binoculars from the top of the Princes River Hill." "Oh right," so I propped my shovel up against the bank and sat on it and had a smoke. Along come Roy Carr in the finish, Roy Clarke I should say, and he said to me, "I want to see you." And I said, "Yes and I want to see you." I said, "Just hang on a minute." And I picked up my shovel and all my tools and threw them in the back of the ute and the
- 12:00 wheelbarrow with it and I said, "Send my cheque." He said, "I was just going to have a go at you for sitting on your shovel." "No need to mate," I said, "I know all about it." I said, "That's why I sat on the shovel." I said, "I won't work for someone that watches me through binoculars sitting five or six mile away." I said, "I do my work when the boss is not here," I said, "And I do my work when the boss is here," I said, "If he treats me fair, but I won't work for a person that sneaks
- 12:30 around, hides behind bushes to see what I'm doing." I said, "My section's the best eight and a half mile I had. My section was the best section on the west coast road," because I used to, you'd get a fair bit of rain in those days. You'd get a lot more rain round there then than you do now and occasionally I'd jump on the pushbike and ride my section from one end to the other to make sure the drains were clear, so that you didn't get washouts.
- 13:00 I'd do that on a Saturday and Sunday and not to get paid for it, just to make sure the drains were clear and no washout but Roy didn't see it that way, so him and I parted ways and that was when I wanted to join the navy and, "No, you can't do it. You won't go from under my control till you're twenty one." "All right," so I'm back working for Mount Lyle and Mount Lyle give me the answer to how I'd get away.
- 13:30 They said to me, "You've got to go for a medical but you'll have to get your father or mother to sign your consent form." "Oh right, thanks very much." I madly wrote a letter to Anglesea Barracks. There was a piece in The Mercury wanting people to join up. I filled that in and sent it away. I got my paperwork back to report to the Royal Hobart Hospital for a medical and report to Anglesea Barracks on Monday morning. I think,
- 14:00 I'm not sure about this. I'd have to look at my discharge. I think it was the twenty seventh of August 1948, was a Monday morning, so I said to Mount Lyle, I said, "I'm finished." That was on the Friday. I said to my father, "I'm off to get my medical." He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "Hobart." He said, "You haven't got to go to Hobart for a medical." I said, "I do because I joined the army." "I didn't sign your papers," he said.
- 14:30 He said, "I'll have you charged with," not fraud, what do they call it, anyway, "For copying names." And I said, "Well you're going to look very funny in court when you find out it's your own signature." "How did you do that?" I said, "You was half sprung," I said, "About a fortnight ago." I said, "And you signed my papers to go for a medical for Mount Lyle." I said, "But there was only one form to sign for Mount Lyle, the other six were for the Australian Army." I said, "So I'm off
- 15:00 down on Saturday." So I hit Hobart on say Saturday afternoon, went to the barracks on Monday morning, went down to the Royal Hobart for my medical and they said, "Right, you're in." "Thanks very much," and I went to Greta in New South Wales, done my training in Greta in New South Wales. That was in '48 I finished. I had September, October, November. Finished in November
- 15:30 and was just about finished our training and they said, called for volunteers to go to Japan, "Would you like to go? Those that want to go step forward." Well it was one of the first times in the army I volunteered because you were told not to volunteer for anything but I did. I went to Japan and I was in Japan and was packing up the battalion to come home in 1950, in June 1950
- 16:00 when the Korean War broke and they lined us up, took us up on the battalion parade ground and battalion parade, "Those that want to volunteer for Korea take a pace forward. Those that want to volunteer, a pace to the rear." There was three chaps that didn't want to join. One, his mother was dying and he was coming home on compassionate leave. Two, that was Timmy Holt. The other one was Pedro McMurray and a Danny Houlahan
- 16:30 and they were both too old for frontline service, so they brought home the, our battalion was badly depleted because through natural attrition we'd let the battalion run down. I think it was about five hundred men and officers at that time instead of a thousand, so they built the battalion back to strength, took us up to Haramura training camp, which was originally the Japanese army commando

training camp.

17:00 We did a fortnight school there, come back and did a bit of field exercise in barracks, at Moorehead barracks [Hiro, Japan]. My company went back to Tokyo for a bit of guard duty while they got the battalion ready and then we came down and packed the battalion up and on the twenty seventh of September 1950 we shipped out on the [USS] Aiken Victory

17:30 for Korea.

**Where did you go straight away, where were you sent first off?**

We first landed in Pusan. We left from Kure, which had been a Japanese navy port. There was all the ship building facilities there, dry dock facilities were there but they were a bit mangled where they'd been bombed through the war. We left from there. We landed in Pusan, which I've got a photo of out there

18:00 of what Pusan was like in 1950. We went from Pusan to a place called Taegu. We did extensive patrol work out at Taegu. Then towards the end of November we enplaned at Taegu and flew up to Kimp'o airport. MacArthur had

18:30 taken Inchon on at that particular time and retaken Seoul, so we moved through Seoul up to and sat on the 38th Parallel, which is the demarcation line between North and South Korea. We sat there for I think about a week doing patrol work around there and so forth and then there was the ok to move through into North Korea and then away we went, went to North Korea.

19:00 **I really want to dwell on this later on and talk about and ask you questions about the details of that, could you give us a brief outline of events in the next couple of years there?**

Well I can't give you the next couple of years because I was only there five and a half months.

**OK.**

But we, first bit of an argument we got into was in the Inchon pocket. We did a bit of patrol work there and quietened

19:30 a few North Koreans down. Then we got the ok to head for the Manchurian border, which is the Yalu River, which is the actual natural barrier between North Korea and was Manchuria then, which is China, part of China. We moved up into, or we had a little bit of an argument, bit of a fire fight

20:00 just on the outskirts of the Inchon pocket. We moved up into Sariwon. We got a, was either moving up through the Argylls and, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 1st Battalion. They were a part of the brigade I was in, 27th Brigade.

20:30 Moved up through them at night in the middle of, or in night time, darkness and we moved into this position that was going to head out from first thing next morning and heard this noise of marching feet and the 2IC [Second in Command] of the battalion ordered all the vehicles to turn their lights on and it was a heap of North Korean soldiers heading back for Pyongyang to defend Pyongyang

21:00 but they had walked right into our lines. There was only about five hundred of us I think at that particular time and there was two rifle companies, a headquarter company, battalion headquarters. The other two companies, I can't think what they were doing but they were doing something and they stacked their arms and because we were still in

21:30 SD [Service Dress] uniform, we had Royal Australian Regiment flashes on our shoulders, which were red with white writing, "Oh Russki, Russki, Russki." They raced over and thought we were Russians come to help them and the 2IC had enough noose. I think he was before his time. He was very quick off the mark. He grabbed the loud hailer off one of the Yankee tanks and told them to, give up their arms, that they were surrounded,

22:00 never had a chance. There was five hundred of us and about two thousand of them, so had they really decided to at that particular time, they could have went through us like a pack of Epsom salts and the Middlesex went through us and took off next morning. They had a, got sniped at from a couple of positions but soon quietened that down.

22:30 Then we moved through and we got onto the outskirts of Pyongyang and the Yanks decided that they were going to take the glory of Pyongyang, so they moved us off to one side and they didn't want us any more because we'd done all the hard yakka for them. They turned us over to another, I think it was the 1st American Division and they were heading up into North Korea.

23:00 And when they took over Pyongyang they decided that they had some extra troops there, the 187th Airborne, so they decided to drop them in to a position to try and cut the North Korean army off but they found that there was no-one there, so they decided to march back to Pyongyang again and come against the 239th North Korean Division.

23:30 So they got themselves in for a little bit of a tangle and couldn't get themselves out and they radioed for help and we were the closest to them, so we set out for them but in between them calling for help and

us setting out to go to them to try and relieve them, we come to a place, well it's known as the Battle of the Apple Orchard. It's a big apple orchard, full of

- 24:00 fruit and everything and the North Koreans were dug in amongst the apple trees. And C Company was the leading company, so they decided that they were going to move the North Koreans out. They lined up two platoons abreast, fixed bayonets and decided to go in. The North Koreans didn't like the look of cold steel, so they moved out very smartly and it was like a shooting gallery.
- 24:30 I think there was about two hundred and forty, or two hundred and fifty of them got wiped out. I'm not sure on that figure. Of course this happened over fifty years ago. We took a lot of prisoners and got 187th Airborne out of their predicament. Then we moved onto, through there, moved on up through Sukchon, Sunchon, don't think I'm saying the same name twice, it's not. The
- 25:00 Korean people are very funny. They name towns very close to each other very similar names, so we moved on from there through Anju up into, no I think it was Yongju, then through, up into Anju, Sinanju, couple of little skirmishes up there on the way up,
- 25:30 up onto the, we were forty mile I think it was we got, or forty kilometres from the Yalu River from the Manchurian border. That's where we lost Colonel Green there, and then the Chinese decided they were going to come in and help their North Korean mates out and the Yanks got a bad attack of nerves and decided that was it, with a disease called,
- 26:00 'bug out' and they just up sticks and off, and left thousands of tons of equipment behind. They just couldn't get away quick enough but then we got pushed right back then back over the 38th Parallel back to Uijongbu where we had Christmas there. We had a three week rest until the Chinese decided we'd been there long enough
- 26:30 and decided to drop a few shells in amongst us and move us out, so we went back into Seoul again and rearguard action for the Yanks as per usual, and then we went back to what they called the D-line. That was back near Wonju and from there we started to push north again. We got a different person in charge of United Nation troops there,
- 27:00 Mark Ridgeway, General Mark Ridgeway, and he decided that the American troops should, had 'bug out' fever too long and it wasn't going to work any more, so started pushing north again. And we had a couple of little skirmishes there and pushed up through Chuam-ni up to
- 27:30 Chipyeong-ni I think it was, and a feature called the 'Doctor'. We'd had two goes at it and that's where I got wounded and that was on the fifteenth of February.

#### **How did you get wounded, what was the situation?**

It was a case of one of our blokes had bad nerves. We'd pulled back from this argument on the hill that's called the 'Doctor', and what it was

- 28:00 we went up a valley and there was two roads met and then went into one and the North Koreans were set up on the other side of this feature and they controlled the intersection where the two roads met, and they had A Company bogged down, tied down with machinegun fire. And we was ordered to go up and take up the side to see if we could quieten the machinegun.
- 28:30 We didn't do much good that night. It was too late, so we pulled back to a feature and we'd been without tucker all day and the CO [Commanding Officer] wasn't going to give us all permission to nick off and get rations, so the company commanders drew straws to see who was going to get to go for the rations, one company could go. My company was a company that drew the short straw. We went down a water wash to get rations
- 29:00 from a truck on the road and take them back to the company. I was forward scout taking the lead coming back and there was a young bloke on guard seen these people coming up this water wash talking away. He had an American pile cap with
- 29:30 the earflaps on. He had the earflaps down. He could hear the noise but he couldn't hear the voices properly. I looked up and saw this bloke taking aim at me. I sung out and told him to drop the rifle, it was Australians, B Company. Bang, I copped it and from thereon in it was a case of going back to a casualty clearing station, back to a MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] unit, from there onto hospital at Pusan.
- 30:00 From there back to 130th AGH [Australian General Hospital] in Kure, Japan and from then I was down to Iwakuni and I was flown home and I came home on a DC-10 on one of KLM [Royal Dutch Airlines] planes that was on charter to Qantas [Australian airline].

#### **Where'd you fly back to, was it up north?**

- 30:30 I flew back, landed in Manila, 'cause I had gas gangrene poisoning and every time the plane got up to a certain height the gangrene would go berserk and my body couldn't make blood fast enough, so they'd have to drop me off at the nearest hospital to get blood transfusions and I landed at Manila, Butler Island,

31:00 or Manus Island as it was called, Butler station. Then into Darwin, Darwin to Brisbane, Brisbane to Sydney, Sydney to Melbourne, Melbourne home.

**How long did that take altogether?**

Round about two and a half months and then I had a bit of a time in repat hospital back here, a couple of months in the Royal [hospital] where I could be under the doctor's eye pretty continually.

31:30 Then a trip into repat, a few months in repat. I had treatment and operations. All told I think I had about thirty two operations on my arm.

**So whereabouts exactly where you hit, is it in the?**

Took the back muscle out, cracked the elbow joint, broken in several places between the elbow and the shoulder.

**Just the one shot?**

Just one shot, only need

32:00 one. You make an awful hole with a 303. Had it gone in the right place I'd have lost interest in everything but he got told in no uncertain terms that he'd done the wrong thing. He panicked a second time then and took off. I think he came back again. I know who it was but I'm not saying on tape.

**Sure, you don't have to.**

I know who the chap was.

32:30 **And so when you came back were you able to work soon enough or?**

I had round about six months as an outpatient when I left repat [repatriation] hospital. Of course my arm had wasted away to nothing. I had no control over it. I couldn't, it used to flop by my side like it didn't belong to me. I used to undo the middle button of my battle jacket and push it in there. That got me into strife

33:00 with a few officers at times, not saluting them but anyway I finally got discharged as medically unfit and I got a job with the zinc works. Repat didn't want me to take it 'cause it was in an acid plant and my arm was still open, so I went back to Mount Lyle again and

33:30 got a job back at Mount Lyle back in the smelting plant. That's where I decided that heavy work wasn't for me, so I went through, put myself through night school, got my electric motor attendant's papers that allowed me to operate electric motors. The papers I had would even allow me to operate a power station if I wanted to, so I decided to go back and I went back crane driving the crane that I'd chased some

34:00 six years before, and I did that for six and a half years. The nerves started to pack up, so I got out of that and went out driving front end and rear end loaders, mobile cranes, spare driver in the blow room, driving fork trucks, stacker trucks, rail cars, locos

34:30 underground for a couple of years there or what, for three years I was the spare driver. Anyone went on holidays I took their place and I went on holidays one Christmas and when I went back my boss had gave my job away to, which was driving a face shovel loading pyrite, he gave my job away to another bloke, which was a friend of mine by the way,

35:00 and put me back permanent driving loaders again with a drop in wages, so I decided that was no good and the Irish temper got the better of me when I snatched my Tom. I came down here and never looked back. I went to work for A.V. Jennings and when I left A.V. Jennings, working for a foreman there called Shaun Higgins and he's one of the funniest men I ever worked for, old Shaun.

35:30 I went over to Moina one day to have a look around at dinner time, and I heard over there they were looking for crane drivers on the Tasman Bridge. I went and asked Shaun could I have a bit of time off to go over and see if I'd get a job and they wanted me to start, this was at twelve o'clock. They wanted me to start there at two o'clock that afternoon. I worked there for four and a half years driving cranes while they were building the Tasman Bridge.

36:00 When that finished I went to work for Joe Wiley driving a shovel up here in a quarry. Work got a bit slack there and I got put off. I went working for a firm of, well actually they were into building supplies, supplying steel shuttering for doing big concrete buildings,

36:30 Acro Proprietary Limited. They've since been taken over by Cyclone, which is owned by Boral, went to work for them and one hot day I done my back in and the boss sacked me, so that was all right. I put up with that but I fought him and got medical expenses

37:00 paid and I went to work for CIG [Commonwealth Industrial Gases] then in 19..., I can't think of the time but it was February 1967 and I worked there till I retired in 1989.

**That's an incredible story Len. We're just about near the end of this first tape, just wondering,**

**did the arm give you a lot of trouble**

37:30 **in your jobs?**

It gave me a lot of trouble to start with because I had no control over my wrist but I wore a, I designed myself a wrist strap that come right down here that I put my fingers through.

**Sorry Len, we've just got you from about here up, can you show us again, yeah, so it covered about?**

I designed a wrist strap that laced up the back up to about there. It had the fingers cut out of it and the thumb cut out of it so that it was solid, a leather strap. I wore about

38:00 three of those out before I eventually got back the full use of my wrist and gradually it built the strength in the arm up so that I could work without it and from then on I've been right, done a bit of truck driving, shovel driving, whatever. But I didn't let the disability stop me from earning a living or raising a family

38:30 and I got married, married a girl from Hobart here, went back to the west coast, went back for nine and a half years. Always promised myself I'd get off the coast but never ever had the incentive to go for some reason, and when Tom McGay gave my job away that's when I, that give me the incentive. And the day I was leaving I finished work at twenty past four,

39:00 went up and knocked on his office door and he said, "Come in," and I didn't know that all the heads of the different departments on the level were all in there. There was a meeting and he wanted to know what I wanted and I told him I didn't want nothing, that I'd just finished but I'd like to shake the hands of a gentleman, and I said, "I always promised myself I'd get off the coast." I said, "I only come back here initially for twelve months." I said, "I've been back nine and half years" I said, "And I would like to thank you for giving me the

39:30 initiative to get off the coast again and," I said, "I think you're a real gentleman." And the other blokes that were in the room all looked at the floor. There wasn't one of them looked at me because it was a left handed compliment, if you can understand what I mean.

## Tape 2

00:41 **Let's go right back to the beginning, what are your memories of the Huon [Valley], you were pretty young?**

Yes, well I can remember a few things from down there quite vividly. Used to be a bloke by the name of Jack Coad used to have a horse and cart, used to drive into Lymington

01:00 every so often, and Stan Darine had an old Ford truck and he went come around the corner one day and the truck skidded on the gravel road, hit the horse and it broke its hip and they had to put it down and the blokes are there with a shotgun and they put the gun up to the horse's head and

01:30 poor damn thing was in pain and they'd get the shakes. They couldn't do it and Dad come along, and Dad and I, we'd been around the traps collecting the skins from the water rats, and Dad come along and, "Give me the gun," he said. Bang. He said, "Don't stand there and take an aim." He said, "You just put the gun up and go bang." He said, "If you stand there taking aim," he said, "Your conscience will get the better of you and," he said, "You get the shakes and then you can't pull the trigger," which was right.

**So he gave**

02:00 **it to you, you took the shot?**

No, Dad took the gun. Dad shot the horse and it's right. If you stand there and take aim on something and dwell on the subject, your conscience gets the better of you. You can't pull the trigger. I seen a couple of instances of that on the west coast, or one instance of that. I didn't actually see it personally but I heard all about it from

02:30 one chap that was actually in it and I'll talk about that later.

**Well you can tell us about it now if you like, it doesn't matter too much, whatever.**

Well I was about seventeen, eighteen at the time and we'd been in a pub up there drinking in Stan O'Neill's Hotel, drinking under-age of course, and there was a bloke there by the name of 'Squawk' Regan.

03:00 He got drunk and he's very argumentative and he went out and got the shotgun and he reckoned he was going to shoot his brother because the brother had, they were planning darts and he put his hand on the dartboard and of course his brother went, bang, bang, bang and pinned his hand to the

dartboard, so he didn't like that. So he went over and got the shotgun. He was going to shoot his brother Jimmy and the policeman

03:30 at Gormanston at that time, was Kelvin Spalding, and Kelvin had a lot more guts than I've got. Kelvin kept walking into the shotgun and saying to Chris, "You haven't got enough guts to pull that trigger, Chris. You're just not game, are you?" And he walked into Chris and took the double barrel shotgun off him that both had a charge in it and both were cocked, took the gun off Chris, turned Chris round, kicked his backside and told him to go home and go to bed

04:00 before he give him a biff in the ear. I'll tell you something from me. I'd have been hiding behind the nearest concrete wall I could find, not walking into a shotgun taking it off him, but that's what happened in Gormanston. It was known as a wild and woolly place the west coast and it was in the early days. There was some awful funny things happened round there.

**We'll ask you about that later on as well.**

04:30 Yeah.

**Was your dad involved in the First World War?**

No.

**He wasn't the right age was he?**

Dad was too young for the First World War. Dad was born on I think from memory the thirteenth of January 1908 but one of his uncles was in the First World War. That's the bloke out there on the wall. He got the

05:00 MM [Military Medal] in France and got killed four days after. He was with a, supposed to be, from what I understand, with a guy called Guy Whittle that got the VC [Victoria Cross] and that's the great uncle out there. I've got his photo on the wall there.

**Is his story sort of part of your childhood, did you hear about him growing up?**

Yeah, heard about

05:30 him growing up and that.

**Was your dad's dad in that war or was he too, was your grandfather?**

My grandfather was in the First World War. In fact in my family there was two people, Uncle Albert. There was Albert Arthur, which was a great uncle and there was Albert Edward which was Uncle. Both landed on Gallipoli but someone

06:00 found out that Albert Edward was only fifteen and they choofed him back to Egypt and home again and discharged through being too young, but he did eventually join up later again, and then he joined up in the Second World War and was up in Darwin.

06:30 That was Albert Edward, not Albert Arthur. My grandfather was in the First World War but he was only in home defence. He was actually in the 1912 mine disaster at Mount Lyle.

**Did he come out of that all right?**

Yeah.

**Right, so your dad was he then too old for Second World War?**

He was too old for the Second World War, too young for the First.

**What did he think of that, was he annoyed?**

He was a bit upset

07:00 over it but it's just one of the them things, just the way the cookie crumbles, part of life. You can't do anything about it. Another thing, he was working on the west coast road when the Second World War broke and it was classed as essential industry and they wouldn't give him a clearance anyway.

**So you were pretty much born at the beginning of a Depression and you lived through the Second World War as well, did you get a sense of, I mean**

07:30 **you were very young, did you get a sense of what was going on in the Second World War?**

Yeah, see a good part of it in the Second World War, from 1943 on, I worked at Mount Lyle and even at school we used to make camouflage nets and collect silver paper, which is an aluminium foil, papers, rubber and all like that

08:00 for the war effort and learned to make camouflage nets, stood me in great stead later in life because I used to be able to make my own fishing nets.

**Did you know many of the older boys or young men from the west coast who'd gone away?**

Yeah, I knew a few. I've still got one friend that went away from the west coast in the '39-'45 war, ex rat of Tobruk, lives down at

08:30 Midway Point, a bloke by the name of Don Koey.

**'Cause small towns like that were quite affected weren't they, I mean the labour shortage besides anything else?**

There was a big labour shortage on the west coast from blokes that went away into the, to fight the Second World War. In fact it was, tell you a little story about that. They joined up. The recruiting team went round the west coast once and I think they took about six or

09:00 seven three tonners around to fetch the blokes, transport the blokes back and there was one particular chap there who was a bit of a character, bloke by the name of Barry Bingham. Anyway he wanted to be in the first truck out of town and the blokes were already in the truck. They said, "No, you're getting the next one." He said, "No, I want to be in this one." And they said, "No, you're not getting in this one." And he said, "I am." And with that he put his hand down his shirt

09:30 and pulled out a sugar bag, tipped it in the back of the truck. There was a three foot snake in there. He had the truck to himself in the finish. That is true. This same bloke came over on leave once and went fishing down at Letts Bay in Strahan, pulled a Conga eel into the boat, pulled the thirty-eight out and shot it. That was all right except the bullets went through the bottom of the King Billy boat and by the time they got back

10:00 they had to swim ashore. He sank the boat. He shot the Conga eel but shot the boat. Poor old Barry never made it though. He finished up getting, was a casualty in the Second World War. He didn't make it back again but there was quite a few. I knew quite a few that left there.

**And you heard a few, you heard some bad**

10:30 **news too obviously, how did people hear about say when someone was killed or casualty, was that public knowledge in a small town like that?**

Yeah, it was. Casualties were published in the paper and also sometimes it was even on the news, on the radio but when VP [Victory in the Pacific] Day was, victory in the Pacific, I was working at the smelting plant and on normal times when we had to

11:00 bank the furnace for any reason used to take three weeks, or three weeks to get it banked properly. We banked it in six hours that day, went down to Queenstown and celebrated the end of the Pacific War. An instance in that was that there was six of us young blokes had a few beers and there was a policeman down there.

11:30 I don't know whether I should mention his name, but he had a little Austin Seven car and there's a laneway goes up off Stitch Street, goes up alongside the police station and the dental clinic and the doctor's surgery. The six of us carried the little Austin up there sideways. There was about four inches clearance either end of her. I don't know how they got it out but that was his problem, not ours. We carried it up there. He had to get it out.

12:00 **Had people come from all around to Queenstown to celebrate, what sort of night was it?**

Yes, at the end of the Pacific War, yes. There was big celebrations that, or lasted for about three days round there then.

**Do you know blokes whose brothers had been away, I mean what sort of mood was it, was it celebration or?**

Yeah, it was dinky-di celebration. It was a rip roaring time. There was dancing in the street and everything round there when

12:30 that happened but all we were interested in was having a good time. It wasn't long after that the blokes started coming home from the war and getting jobs back in the mine again, and they took a bit of getting back into stride again because they'd been used to an active life in the army and

13:00 reverting back to civilian life again is, it's a little bit traumatic. There was blokes round there out of Z Force, blokes there from the 2/2nd Commando Unit, blokes from 6th and 7th Divi [Division]. Tasmania as a whole, per capita of population, supplies more

13:30 people to the armed forces of Australia than any other state. We've got the smallest population but we, in Korea there was seventeen thousand, about seventeen thousand six hundred fought in Korea, army, navy and air force. There was over three hundred Tasmanians up there.

**It's a pretty good representation**

14:00 **isn't it?**

Yeah.

**Those blokes that came back, how would they be, how would they be unsettled, what sort of?**

Well it's hard to adjust from army life back to civilian life. For one thing there's things happen in the army, navy and air force that doesn't happen in civilian life and you've got to adjust from

- 14:30 service life back to civilian life, which is vastly different. Service life you get three meals a day supplied to you. You get a bed supplied to you. You get told what to do, when to do it, how to do it. Civilian life you've got to figure it out for yourself. It's a bit of an adjustment to make.

**Do you think there might have been some of those blokes who'd had a specially hard time, I mean and found it difficult?**

Yes, definitely

- 15:00 yeah.

**Did they talk about what they'd been up to or seen?**

No, very few. The blokes that talk about things that happened in the war was generally those blokes that wasn't in there, anywhere near it. They were mainly A Echelon, B Echelon, F Echelon blokes. They're the blokes that when you're in the frontline they don't want to know you but as soon as the fighting's over and everything, they're all frontline blokes.

- 15:30 They're blokes, they're mainly the blokes that talk about the war. You never get a bloke that's been in the frontline during hard times that will talk about their war experience, very few.

**Why do you think that is?**

You block it out of your mind. If you don't block it out of your mind, you finish up going troppo or going bonkers and finish up in a mental institution.

- 16:00 You remember the good times but you block out of your mind the bad times. You don't want to remember it. It's not good anyway, remembering seeing dead bodies laying all over the place. You don't want to think of that. That's stupid to go dwelling on things like that. You think of the fun times you had with your mates and there was some fun times and good times.

**Just thinking about those blokes who came back after**

- 16:30 **the Second World War, did they sort of band together, the ex servicemen, did you?**

A lot of them did, yeah. They'd band together, used to go up to the RSL [Returned and Services League] of a night and have a few beers, in main cases a few too many but that's life.

**Did most of those guys settle back on the coast or did they leave as well?**

No, a lot of them settled back on the coast. There's

- 17:00 some that didn't but a lot did and they were good chaps, a lot of good chaps were amongst them.

**I suppose in their case, like yourself, they were hoping to get off the coast and they might have used the war as a means to do that?**

Yeah, once they got off the coast and seen what life was like off the coast they didn't want to go back again, but they did because there was work back there, and believe it or not after the Second World War there wasn't all that many jobs around

- 17:30 for the amount of people that come back and discharged. You see at the end of the Second World War, Australia had, I think, from memory, the second largest air force in the world, or third largest air force in the world, third largest navy in the world and third largest army in the world. Well between 1945 and 1948

- 18:00 they've got rid of their armed forces. The armed forces was depleted, the same as when the Korean War broke out. You see the Australian government had trouble raising one full battalion and that's when they started recruiting K [Korea] Force, what they call K Force recruitment. That was people from the Second [World] War, infantrymen, that they were after

- 18:30 that were discharged from the Second World War that still hadn't settled back into civilian life, to re-enlist to help build the battalions up to get a battalion to fight in Korea and there was quite a lot. The first one that went over was full volunteers. That was mixed. That was permanent army and K Force blokes.

- 19:00 The second one that came up, that was the same but the permanent army blokes they equipped themselves pretty well in Korea as well.

**Just want to, how did the returned men from the Second World War, how did them coming back to the coast affect your working life, did people get bumped around or pushed down?**

No, there was, work was made. Jobs were found for a good portion of them because and in a lot of

cases, in my case where

19:30 I'd been working in a full labour market as an adult labourer; I was bumped back to a junior, so a chap from the army could take my place.

**Had they been promised their jobs back when they came back?**

Yes, in a lot of cases they had, yes.

**Did that cause a bit of tension?**

No.

20:00 It was their right to come back to a job and it didn't cause any ill feelings or anything like that. It just, a part of life, part of what was transpiring at the time and it made for, they didn't talk about their experiences. They come back and slotted back into the workforce pretty well. The only thing they had adjusting to was

20:30 a lot of them drank a bit too much, was to calm their nerves down and later on in life I found out why but that's a part of life, a part of growing up. It's a part of education.

**Do you think it affected a lot of families, did they have wives to come back to or...?**

Some of them did. Some of them didn't. Some of the single blokes come back. They

21:00 had arms missing, legs missing. They went back into office work and things like that that they could do. Some got pension and there was very few that dwelt on the fact that they were pensioners. I suppose some did but not many.

**How did you take it having all that competition for the females or the girls around?**

Didn't worry me.

21:30 I still had a girlfriend.

**Did you have a girlfriend through this period?**

Yeah, in fact that was one of the inducements to join the army, my girlfriend was talking about getting married. I said, "Not for me. I'm on for off out of here." And she was on for getting married. I said, "No, forget it. I'm off." So that's when I was very

22:00 pleased that I got a way of getting into the army and getting off, getting away from the coast because had I got married I'd have never left the coast but I had no intentions of staying on the coast.

**Was she keen to stay, she was keen to stay there do you reckon?**

Yeah, well she did. She married one of my mates and she stayed there.

**Had you been, did you follow much of the war from when you were at school and work?**

No.

22:30 We heard a bit about it. We knew where the blokes were and that, where a lot of our blokes were, but we didn't follow it. I s'pose you did in a certain amount. You read the papers and found out where the fighting was and that but mainly you were doing your own thing, getting into mischief, which was some of the things that the young blokes them days, we made our own fun.

23:00 We didn't rely on the government to supply all the fun to get up to do. One of the good things them days was you wasn't supposed to drink near dance halls. Well we used to delight in baiting the coppers. We'd have a few beers planted round the dance halls and wait for them to think they was onto us. No, we was always one

23:30 step in front. We knew where they were coming, when they were coming.

**Did you have much experience with guns when you were growing up?**

Yes, I had a couple of guns myself, used to go hunting and that. That was a part of life and I think that is one of the, look a gun won't kill anyone. I could have a gun in this room now. It wouldn't kill anyone. It's the flamin' stupid

24:00 nut that's behind the barrel, behind the trigger. That's one of the things I'm crooked on, when the government took all the guns and rifles. Admittedly you don't want automatics, well automatic rifles anyway, but I think it's a part of Australia's culture and a part of their right and a part of your right to own a gun, to be able to go hunting whenever you want to, and I think, look it

24:30 didn't stop the people, it stopped a legitimate gun owner from owning a gun. It did not stop the criminals from owning guns and I'd say there's more guns out there in criminal hands now than there ever was before and if the criminal wants a gun he'll get one but the gun won't, a gun is like a car. A car

won't kill anyone.

25:00 It's the nut behind the steering wheel that does the killing.

**Did any of the kids have accidents when you were younger because of being careless or being a nut?**

No, we never had any problems with shotgun or we had a few fights. I had a friend that used to stutter, a bloke by the name of Bill Dixon, and we used to go rabbiting out

25:30 from Queenstown out to Bronte, and I rode a motorbike out and we was out there one day and I borrowed a friend's gun. I'd loaned mine and I borrowed a gun belonging to a bloke called Jock Benny. It was a hammerless and I didn't know, he never told me, it had air trigger and the first time I, well I didn't know at that particular time

26:00 it was the air trigger that done the damage. But I had it on a sugarbag on my back and I'm sitting on the pillion seat and the bag worked down on my back and the butt went down and hit the mudguard and I didn't know it was. He didn't tell me it was loaded when he gave it to me, and I just put it in the sugarbag and put it on my back and the butt went down and hit the mudguard. Bang! Frightened the daylight out of us, didn't think any more about it, got out rabbiting out at Bronte. I jumped off a button grass

26:30 and blew a hole in the, right at my friend's feet where the gun went off. Poor old Bill stuttered around there pretty well for about five minutes, "G G G G God, you near, nearly, nearly, nearly, nearly shot me." That was some of the things that happened. As I said, that's a part of life. That's a part of growing up, part of education of

27:00 life.

**What were you shooting for, what were you hunting there?**

Rabbits. The old rabbit was a good meal before the myxomatosis, calicivirus got amongst them, braized rabbit or baked rabbit. It's very palatable, rabbit stew

**It's a staple of a Depression too isn't it, given your experience of it?**

It was. It saved a lot of people through the Depression. It saved a lot of families through the Depression because

27:30 I can remember, what would I be, I might be two and a half, three. There used to be a chap down here in Hobart. I can't remember his name, used to have a horse and cart, go around singing out, "Rabbitoh, rabbitoh, threepence a pair." And he'd have this cart with a box on it with a wet bag hanging over it, keep them cool. He'd go round Hobart buying bottles and bones and

28:00 bags and rags and selling rabbits, threepence a pair and it was, as I said before, it was the staple diet of a lot of people in those days.

**Did you grow up on rabbit, did you eat a lot of rabbit growing up?**

A fair bit, yeah, rabbit, wallaby, kangaroo. When we lived on the west coast road it was part of staple diet

28:30 because the only fresh meat you've got was corned, salt lamb, salt beef, salt pork. You very rarely got any real fresh meat because living out the west coast road we were what, about thirty mile out the west coast road and by the time you left

29:00 Queenstown or Gormanston butcher shops and got out to there, if it was a hot day the meat was rank anyway. You couldn't eat it, so it was all corned stuff that you got but you got fresh kangaroo or wallaby or a fresh pair of rabbits, fair enough. It was good. Chicken in them days was a luxury. Not any more it's not. Rabbit's

29:30 a luxury these days. You go into a butcher shop, a pair of rabbits, you'll see a pair of rabbits now, seven dollars each, fourteen dollars a pair and they're not the wild rabbit anyway. They're mainly New Zealand bred, I can't think of the name of them now but they're a cage variety. They breed them in cages, so it's

30:00 a luxury these days if you have a rabbit.

**How else did the Depression affect your family life, how else did your mum like, improvise?**

Well in a lot of cases used to open chaff bags up and die them to make curtains or blinds for a window. You had no lino or carpet on the floor. There'd be sack bags on the floor for mats.

30:30 In the places we boarded at down at Lymington there was only rough, the walls of the place weren't plaster. They were rough split paling and you had a chaff bag opened up and tacked onto the paling and pulled tight and paper, mainly newspapers on it. In fact in a lot of cases if you so wished you could sit down

31:00 and entertain yourself by reading the writing on the newspapers on the walls and that was that sort of thing, or a tablecloth on a table was a very rare occasion. It was mainly, it was a piece of newspaper put on the table to act as to keep the table clean, so you didn't spill anything on it.

**And in your case your family moved around where there was work as well?**

Yeah, that's right but

31:30 we never wanted for much. Well put it this way. You had a patch on the backside of your trousers and a knee out of your trousers but so what? So did everyone else. These days a hole in the backside of the jeans and a hole in the knee of the jeans is fashion. I've seen them advertised in the shop windows for seventy and eighty bucks a pair. There's more hole than what there is material. In

32:00 them days it was you always got a patch put on it or you'd have an elbow of your jumper. You'd wear a hole in it, put a patch on it. There was nothing wrong with wearing a patched pair of trousers.

**And your parents had a lot more kids after you too, how many of those were born on the west coast, or your parents stay there the whole time?**

There was only two that was born down, well I was born in Hobart and Geoff,

32:30 that's the other brother, he was born at Lymington. I think Gary was born in Hobart I think. Chancy might have been born in Hobart. The rest were all born on the west coast. See my father come from the west coast. He was actually born in Linda. There's an old derelict hotel there in Linda called the Royal Hotel.

33:00 Well alongside of it used to be a big hall, used to show pictures and motion pictures and dances used to be held in it. Dad was born in a house alongside of that, born in 1908. Two of his, a brother and a sister of his died and were buried in the cemetery that the west coast road goes through,

33:30 just this side of Linda. I don't know what it's called now. It used to be called Cemetery Creek and a bridge there and alongside of that was the cemetery. Well actually it was the cemetery. In fact in cases later on the west coast road where it was going through, if you had a big flood down there, on the peat where the graves were buried occasionally you'd get a

34:00 washout and you'd see a coffin, a part of a coffin on the sides of the road. They'd come and take it out and rebury it.

**Was his family, his parents still there then, had they moved on?**

No, Grandfather had left the west coast after a mine disaster, a North Lyle mine disaster in 1912. He went down to Margate. He had a farm down at Margate later.

34:30 Then him and Granny split up. She remarried and he went back to Rosegarland. He was actually living at Rosegarland up the Derwent Valley. Well he was living there but died in Hobart when he died in

35:00 1936.

**I was wondering if you remember hearing about the outbreak of the Second World War?**

Yes.

**Whereabouts were you?**

At school in Gormanston.

**How was it announced?**

The teacher just said there one day, one afternoon, "England's gone to war with Germany and Germany's invaded

35:30 Poland and England's gone to war." In them days there wasn't like there is now, a dozen teachers. There was two teachers in the Gormanston school. There was a male teacher had two, no, three, four, five, six and seven grades. There'd probably be only three people in grade seven, might be half a dozen in grade six

36:00 and then there was a female and a helper had the lower grades, grade 1B, 1A, grade one, grade two, grade two

Nowadays there's, they used to look after what, there'd be roughly about a hundred and fifty kids go to the Gormanston school when I was there and there was only two,

36:30 actual two teachers and a helper.

**Do you remember what you thought when they said that war had been declared?**

It didn't gel for quite a while what it was all about. You was only a kid going to school. What was I, twelve at that time. You didn't, "Well so what, what's it got to do with us?" You didn't

- 37:00 comprehend what war meant at that stage. In fact I s'pose it was about 1941, '42 when rationing came out and you started getting a bit of an idea what it was all about, before, when you had to save up your coupons to buy a pound of butter or a pound of tea, whatever you wanted, half a pound of tea.
- 37:30 That was the only thing that worried me really. Course when I started work, war was still on, 1943. I'd be eleven, 1943, and was getting a cigarette, even though I didn't smoke very much. I never smoked very much until I joined the army and that's when I really started to smoke.
- 38:00 **So you're saying it was hard to get a cigarette those years?**
- It was, yeah, during the war. Tobacco was rationed but, as I said, up until I joined the army when I was eighteen, well nineteen, I didn't smoke that much. A packet of cigarettes, twenty cigarettes, would probably last me a week, might have lasted me longer because you didn't smoke at work.
- 38:30 Strange as it may seem, you weren't allowed to smoke at Mount Lyle, even in the smelting plant, where there was fire all around you, you weren't allowed to smoke. It was against the company policy. It was, for some unknown reason it wasn't until, what, I think it was 1946 before Mount Lyle company allowed you to smoke on their lease. You weren't allowed to smoke anywhere on
- 39:00 Mount Lyle company's lease. It was against principles.
- Why is that do you reckon?**
- Well you stopped and wasted time while you rolled a cigarette didn't you? That was wasting company's time. That wasn't allowed, so that was, I think it was 1946 before they allowed you to smoke on their lease and that was a manager by the name of Malene
- 39:30 that first brought it in that you could smoke on the company's lease.

## Tape 3

- 00:32 **You were just showing us your tattoos in the break, so you got, can you tell us again whereabouts you got them?**
- Got them, many of them were done in Kure in Japan, a couple were done in Tokyo .As I said, that one there I was paralytic drunk when it started or when he started it, and I was cold sober when he finished. He said, "Come back tomorrow and I'll colour it." I said, "Yeah, that'll be the day, pigs arse I'll be back tomorrow."
- 01:00 **Can you describe that one to us or?**
- It's a sailing ship with two flags and there's supposed to be a big laurel wreath around it and it was all supposed to be coloured in. There's only the outline of it there because it was never ever finished because it hurt too much.
- And what's it say underneath?**
- It was supposed to say, "Homeward bound" underneath it but, as I said, that never ever got finished. That one, many of the others are finished. There's Hiawatha,
- 01:30 the sailing ship Margaret, one of the girlfriend's names.
- Could you hold that up there, looks like a Japanese woman there?**
- Yeah, Geisha girl.
- Yeah?**
- She's got part of her bun shaved off her head where the bullet went in, supposed to have a bun at the back of her head, see it, part of it missing.
- She was pretty lucky.**
- Same as the one up here, Madame Butterfly, she's got her feet amputated
- 02:00 and my bunch of roses, I've got one and there's a scroll underneath that with a bunch of three roses there with, "Mum" written underneath it. There's "U.M." on one side I think and, "M" on the other.
- Did many of the men get tattoos?**
- A few.
- Was that part of sort of army culture before Japan or was that a real Japanese influence do you think?**
- No, well it's not really

02:30 army culture. There was a few of us got tattooed but it's mainly navy who gets tattoos. It's a part of navy culture.

**Yeah I've heard that, I think you're the first army guy I've met who had tattoos on service.**

I got tattooed, as I said, in Kure and in Tokyo, we were on guard duty in Kure.

**Who by, was that a local?**

A Japanese artist, yeah.

03:00 Hand tattooed, the needles all tied to a bamboo stick.

**Did you get, was it infected, did you have a problem with infection at all?**

No, not if you looked after it. If you were stupid, yes, probably you did but if you looked after it, no. When it was finished there was a piece of rice paper put over it and it was sealed, and you didn't take the rice paper off for two days and you just took the rice paper off and put a bit of Vaseline on it.

03:30 **How was the guy's English, was he able to understand what you wanted?**

Yeah, they could understand. A lot of them could speak fairly good English and a lot of us could actually speak pretty much enough Japanese to make ourselves understood, can't speak much of it now but I did know a fair bit of it,

04:00 could make myself understood pretty well.

**You mentioned there's a girlfriend's name on that heart.**

Yeah.

**Have you got another heart underneath your watch there?**

Yeah, it's got, "Mum" in one, and girlfriend's name in the other.

**What was her name?**

Janice.

**Was she back here?**

Mm, she was an O'Brady.

**OK, it's fascinating, it's such an interesting cultural sort of exchange I s'pose or influence going over there getting tattoos in Japan, did you see it that way, I mean**

04:30 **is that just my perspective now?**

No, it was, you see there was one there. There's an American eagle on the Aussie flag. That was done in Sydney.

**OK.**

There's one there. There's American eagle and the Aussie flag. That was done in Sydney and that one there, dagger with a scroll around it, 'death before dishonour'.

**Where'd you get that one?**

05:00 Japan.

**That's fascinating. I think we'll just go back. You could tell us about how you found out about what's called BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] or the people in Japan, occupational force, how did you learn about that?**

Well actually it was advertised, the army used to advertise in the paper, in The Mercury. I suppose they advertised in all papers right round Australia

05:30 for people for the occupation forces in Japan, had to be eighteen years of age and medically fit.

**What did you know of what they were doing there?**

All I knew was what was in the paper, was the occupation forces were there to firstly disarm the Japanese and to more or less control the Japanese people

06:00 at the end of the Second World War and they started, that was started off in 1946, they started advertising and it was 1947 when I first tried to join but, no, it didn't transpire. And, as I said, I got in, I joined in August 1948, went to

06:30 Greta in New South Wales, did my training there, three months training, went on leave down into Newcastle and into Sydney a couple of times, up to Scone and Muswellbrook, different places up

country where different blokes come from. At Scone in New South Wales there was a chap by the name of Billy Winter in the army with me. He came from Scone, so we went up to Scone for a weekend.

07:00 Maitland, west Maitland, down around there, always catch the train back and jump off at a place. The train would slow down for us instead of going right into Greta and walking for miles to get back to camp. The train would slow down coming round a bend and we had about a mile walk, walk through the paddocks, a place called Plonky Joe's,

07:30 used to make this home brew wine, sampled it a few times.

**How were you transported to Greta, was there many Tasmanians going?**

I think there was about, out of the training battalion I was in up there I think there was about eight or nine Tasmanians.

08:00 You see each, it was permanent army then and you had the letter of your state and a P behind it. My first army number was TP376-48. Then they done away, the army done away with that numbering system and your state was numbered then and Tasmania was six and my army number for the first couple of, or last couple of years I was in the army

08:30 was 6 251 and that was a system they had then and transported to Greta. I went from here to Melbourne by plane, from here to Essendon and then out to Royal Park barracks in Melbourne and waited there till there was, I think there was about seventy or eighty of us that was new, West Australian,

09:00 South Australia and Victorian blokes and was all made up into there and then we went up by train, went per Spirit of Progress I think it was called, was a train from Melbourne to Albury. Changed trains at Albury and got on the New South Wales train and went from there to Sydney, out to Marrickville camp in Sydney and

09:30 the blokes from New South Wales joined up with us there and then we were taken into Central Station and put on a train then for Greta, and I think there was somewhere around about a hundred and fifty, a hundred and sixty and then the ones from Northern Territory and Queensland came down, and I think there was around about two hundred and fifty, three hundred of us was being trained there.

**It's just amazing in**

10:00 **those army stories how people from different areas and complete strangers come together?**

Yeah.

**Did you make friends pretty much straight away or...?**

Yeah, it doesn't take you long. You soon find out that you're part of the one unit. You've got to pull together. It's no good of trying to pull in different directions because you'll get nowhere. That's a part of army life to learn to pull together and help your mates, and it's part

10:30 of army culture, I think the same as the navy. I don't know about the air force much.

**How did you find the discipline and the routine of the training straight away?**

That took a bit of getting used to for the first fortnight or so. Another thing that took a bit of getting used to was doing your own washing and ironing. That took a bit of getting used to but you soon learnt, do your own washing, get it dry, and ironing

11:00 and that. They showed you how to iron your shirt, special way to iron your shirt and trousers and so forth, and I think the old army uniform looked fantastic.

**Did you ever run into the officers in that training period?**

No.

**Did many people?**

A couple got a bit nasty but as a whole the

11:30 NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] and officers that were there that were training, they were easy going. They were fairly strict disciplinarians. The first fortnight or three weeks they were easy going and as your training progressed, so the discipline progressed. You soon got to learn to live with it and you gradually got into the ways of the armed forces.

12:00 In Australia they put a place out of bounds, that's the first place you find a digger. There's wires are put out of bounds, so you go and have a look to find out why. I think that's a part of army culture too.

**At this stage were they telling you what sort of duties you'd be doing in Japan?**

Not when we were training, no because you didn't know where you were going to go.

12:30 You see they were training for transport, for water transport, for artillery, for ordinance, for ordinary

infantry work and all your, you all did basic training together. We even had a, we had two dentists and a doctor

13:00 do basic training with us and to finish in the three months they went out and I think one was, I think the doctor finished up a captain after his three months basic training with us, to learn how to march, learn how to dress. Just because a doctor is a doctor in the army doesn't mean to say that he knows how to present himself to start off with. He's got to get to

13:30 training and he trains just the same as what we did, same as the two dentists. They did exactly the same training as what we did. We had a librarian that was going into army records, done his training with us.

**What did you find hardest about training?**

Learning to march.

14:00 That was the hardest part but after a while it comes natural. The only thing is learning to keep pace because you get a tall feller. He's got to regulate his pace back to the short feller. Well that's why the army marches in a, used to be a thirty inch pace, and everyone learnt to march at a thirty inch

14:30 pace, so didn't matter whether you were six foot six tall or five foot six tall. You both stepped off and you both walked at exactly the same speed otherwise you'd have blokes kicking your feet from underneath you and everything. We had a couple of blokes that was with our blokes training with square gaiters and they're very hard to follow. They put their left arm and left leg to go together, instead of left arm and

15:00 right leg and they're a bit hard to march behind but they soon come into the party.

**Were you doing lots of route marches and physical training?**

We did a couple of route marches there but mainly you were on what they call the pace strip. There was a flat bit of an area I suppose about a hundred and fifty yards long, marked out in white with thirty inch paces marked out on it. You got up on that and

15:30 that's where you learnt to march. Then doing rifle drill and all the different movements in rifle drill and slow march, quick march, slow march for funeral ceremony or ceremonial marches and that and quick

16:00 marches different speeds because there's different bands work at a different pace. You see the average is, the Australian Army's a hundred and twenty paces to the minute. Well you get the light infantry units, which the English army have and the Canadian army. I don't know about, I don't think we've got any light infantry units in Australian Army or was none when I was in. They march at, they were a hundred

16:30 and forty paces to the minute, and they're more or less in a dogtrot all the time.

**Were your training officers returned from the Second World War?**

Pardon?

**Were your officers largely returned from the Second World War?**

Some of them were. Some of them were straight from Duntroon Military College.

**Did you notice a difference between those guys?**

A bit. The Duntroon blokes to start with

17:00 were more regimental but apart from that, no, training was both the same.

**Did you have a preference for where you'd like to end up at this period?**

Well before the Korean War broke out I would have liked to have gone into transport and there was talk of forming a parachute battalion. I would have liked

17:30 to have went into that but the Korean War broke, so decided to have a sticky beak and see what that was all about. We didn't like Communism, so we decided we'd try and put a stop to it.

**Was an education on Communism part of your training?**

No. You learnt enough about Communism by reading in the papers, listening to the news and different other aspects of life,

18:00 you found out what Communism was about and that was where it was found that, well formed an opinion and when we were asked to go to Korea, yes, we went and we all volunteered. I think we made a difference in the Korean War. I think it was a difference.

18:30 For one thing we stopped Communism and I don't think South Korea was the finish of what was in that agenda. I think there was a lot more to it. I think myself that, well it's not only my opinion either. There's a few others of the same opinion, that had they got South Korea in the time they'd allotted themselves they would have went through into Japan

19:00 and Japan had nothing at that particular time. They had no armed force. They had no navy, no air force, no army. All they had was a few occupation troops that was there and they weren't battle hardened, so Japan would have been a wash-over and I think they were on for coming down here.

**Let's talk about your posting to Japan. When did you get told you were going?**

19:30 When we finished training in Greta and you were asked to, there was career officers came up. I think there was about six of them come up and asked you what you would want to do now that you'd finished your training. You had transport. You'd go to Bandiana for transport. You'd go to Bandiana for ordnance.

20:00 You could go to Newcastle for water transport training. You'd go down to Liverpool or Ingleburn for infantry training. You could have went to one of, you could go to North Head for artillery if you wanted it, or those that wanted to go would volunteer for occupation force in Japan. I think

20:30 there was around about, out of the crowd that went through basic training with me, I think there was about forty volunteered for service in Japan.

**Out of about how many?**

Out of about two hundred and fifty, I think there was about forty volunteered.

**Was that an easy decision for you, was that a pretty straight forward decision for you?**

Yeah.

**Well how come, why did you want to go there for?**

Well a couple of us had talked about it.

21:00 You was going to see a bit of the world. If you went up to Japan you was going to see a different culture. You'd have a bit of a look around, not only just in Australia. You could always serve in Australia when you come back because you'd signed up for six years. You could always have a look around Australia, post to different barracks when you come back here, so naturally of the forty of us, a few of us were mates,

21:30 decided to go up and have a look up there. Our first duties we had up there after we got up there and got our battalion flashes and so forth, etcetera, was guard duty on the docks at Kure and the ordnance stores. That was the first six weeks and then guard on what they called the, well military headquarters in Japan,

22:00 was just down from 130th AGH on Anzac Parade, was what we used to call the White House and you would guard duty on the front of that and up into Tokyo onto Australia House and the Imperial Plaza.

**Those troop ships during the war were pretty rough,**

22:30 **what was it like for you getting over there?**

On the troop ship going up?

**Yeah.**

On the troop ship I went up on was a bit hazardous. We struck two typhoons and a hurricane. We had a bit of time in Moresby getting repaired in Port Moresby.

**So you saw Port Moresby as well?**

Yeah, I saw it. We were in Port Moresby, had six weeks I think it was in Port Moresby.

**What'd you do for that period?**

Route marches all over the flamin' place. They wasn't about

23:00 to let us have a holiday.

**What was it like, had it been rebuilt or?**

No, there were just, we were at the police barracks, stationed at the police barracks while they were doing repairs on the ship, seen some funny sights there. Saw a native woman walking down the street with a baby on one arm on the breast and a pig on the other one, looked a bit strange but when you found out

23:30 and was told and you learnt that the pig was more valuable than what the child was, well fair enough. Playing soccer with bare feet.

**How did you handle the climate change too, six weeks route marches, hot weather?**

A bit warm.

**Yeah.**

- But you could always, you always kept fairly cool. The barracks were
- 24:00 pretty well ventilated, the police barracks at Moresby.
- Did they do anything to keep you guys from going crazy or getting up to mischief?**
- Yeah, that's what I said, route marches around the place.
- Anything fun?**
- No, only play a bit of football with the natives and get the native boys to climb the trees and get the coconuts for you, had to learn a bit of Pidgin English to be able to do that.
- Do you remember any of that?**
- "Kitchim coolak
- 24:30 one farou pay." That's, "Go up and get me a coconut."
- Anything else?**
- No, I can't remember much else of it. That was the main one I learnt, get the coconut and then get the husk of it and get the coconut milk and eat the coconut, break the shell open and get the coconut from the inside.
- So so far it sounds a bit like a holiday doesn't it, six weeks on the way over?**
- On the way over, yeah.
- 25:00 Three days out of Japan I had about seven thousand pound in my pocket and arrived in Japan with sixpence, playing Crown and Anchor, was rather good I reckoned.
- You'd won all that money and then lost it all?**
- Well easy come, easy go.
- How long was that trip, between Moresby and Japan?**
- I think about fourteen, fifteen
- 25:30 days but I think, no it was, apart from the time we left Sydney till the time we hit Japan I think it was two months because, as I said, we were under repairs in Port Moresby for a while. I went up on an old tug called the Westralia, MV Westralia, ten and a half thousand ton.
- How many onboard do you reckon?**
- 26:00 I think there was about a hundred.
- Just army, just BCOF?**
- No, there was some nursing sisters aboard too. They come up too.
- Did they make life interesting?**
- No, not really. You were, you didn't go interfering with the, or messing around. It was strictly off limits. They were on one part of the ship and we were on the other.
- Tell us about that leg where you had the typhoon and the**
- 26:30 **hurricanes.**
- Well we were up off the Queensland coast. That's where I didn't think the ship was going to make it up the side of the wave. She was going up on one side and she started to lift her stern out of the water and her props thrashed and she give a bit of a rattle and shake and crashed down the other side of the wave. We had two killed I think and one washed overboard, with the watertight door slamming shut. The cook was killed,
- 27:00 one of our blokes, and we lost one overboard. She was a pretty hair-raising trip in the seas when you never, when you weren't navy and didn't know much about the sea.
- Can you explain about the watertight doors, did that close on someone, you said someone was killed?**
- Yeah, I don't know much about how it was but I know we had sixty-four portholes cave in, those glass about that thick
- 27:30 come crashing in. There wasn't very many ate breakfast next morning especially when it was curried sausages.
- Was it taking a lot of water through the portholes?**

Yes, they had the pumps going, taking the, she was an old riveted ship, an old plate ship. She had a few loose plates and loose scuttles.

28:00 **Did you have duties during that period or you just hold on, I mean what do you do?**

We had to, well during that period of time there wasn't much on except we had a bit of PT [Physical Training] work on deck and that like that but that was after the ship got out of the hurricane. It was in Torres Strait when we struck the typhoon. First hurricane we struck going up the Queensland coast we turned and run with it and nearly come back to Sydney.

28:30 Then turned and got out of that and went up and the next one hit us up off, round about Townsville I think, or Mackay, somewhere round about there and then we got out of that and going across the Torres Strait and got typhooned. She was, as I said, a bit of a hair-raising trip, especially when you weren't used to the

29:00 sea.

**Did you have a ceremony for those guys killed?**

I can't remember what happened there. I think they were both buried at sea. I can't remember.

**Did you know them?**

No. The cook we didn't know and the army bloke

29:30 was a transport bloke that was going up to join the transport in Japan.

**OK, so on your approach to Japan, what are your first impressions, what did you see first?**

Well going in through the inland sea into Kure was a bit strange. You can, going up past

30:00 Iwakuni and that, little islands and that and seeing the Japanese fishing boats, a bit different to ours, seeing the way they net and things like that was a lot different to ours. They used a lot of throw nets and...

**Can you explain that, so the guy's standing in these little boats throwing out the nets and pulling them in, yeah?**

30:30 You see them in Queensland. They use them in Queensland a lot, just grab the net and the way they throw it. It just spins out and it goes out and spins out and drops down and then they pull it up. All the outer edge of its all lead weighted, so that when they pull the middle of the net it closes in and they were using that a lot, which is a different method of fishing to ours and it was a bit strange to watch

31:00 for a while.

**And then when you arrived and you landed, what did you see, what did you think of the place?**

Was a bit strange seeing the different culture, seeing the women going along with these, what do they call them, ghetas? They're like a wooden platform with two bars across with the wood and they're about that far off the wharfname.

31:30 That was a bit strange, seeing them carrying children on their backs, strapped to their back, little babies. That was a bit strange to see for a starter but you soon got used to it. It became second nature, just no different. The language was a bit strange to start with but you soon got used to that.

**Did you get any training or did you have any education in Japanese or Japanese culture or anything like that?**

Yeah, you're given a book,

32:00 Japanese/English dictionary. It is a little bit strange to start with but you soon make yourself understood. You soon get to pick up a bit of language and stuff like that.

**Had you been told what to expect or anything about what you were going into?**

Just told a bit about what you'd be doing when you got there. I think that was about three or four days out of Japan. A couple of the NCOs that was with us on the way up told us

32:30 what to expect, doing guard duty on the docks, dock area. There was one wharf that was specifically for BCOF forces. No Japanese personnel were allowed there. A couple would get a bit cheeky and try to land but soon nicked them off.

**How would you do that?**

Just tell them to nick off out of it. You were armed. They weren't but they didn't

33:00 try to force the issue and from there up, as I said, guards around the wharf area and then back out and do a bit of route marches and so forth out at the camp, a bit of drill and then up into Tokyo, up to Ebisu for the guard up there,

33:30 which was interesting, guarding Australia House on the British Embassy, on the Imperial Plaza. I stood a couple of guards in the Imperial Plaza and that was interesting.

**Was it a pretty impressive sort of place?**

Yeah, a bit different marching with the Yanks too.

**Did you mix much with the Americans?**

34:00 Not a great deal, used to have a few beers downtown with them and that or go out to 1st Cav [Cavalry] camp or they'd come to our camp and have a meal and that. Apart from that, no, you didn't mix a lot. The Aussies more or less stuck to themselves, or stuck with themselves, do a bit of sightseeing, going around having a bit of a stickybeak around.

34:30 **I was about to ask you about that, what you did on your leave time, could you go drinking and...?**

Drinking and having a look around to see what was around, go down around Tokyo Bay and have a look when you were up north. Down south, go down into Hiroshima and have a look, at Kitachi, have a look at Kitachi, go out to the old water transport depot at Hiro, Eta Jima,

35:00 go and have a look at some of the temples and shrines around the place, very intriguing.

**What was Hiroshima like, Hiroshima?**

It was a bit funny to see a city that size obliterated with one bomb and all there was was twisted steel and busted concrete around the place. The building that the bomb exploded

35:30 above, it melted all the glass out of the dome and just left the steelwork there. On the T bridge on one particular place you could see the form of a man or a woman, I'm not too sure what it was, burnt into the concrete, but only when it was wet. Of a dry day you couldn't see it but when it was wet you could see the difference in the concrete.

**Was that an impression or it was a coloured?**

No, it was an impression burnt into the concrete

36:00 about so [thick].

**Had any rebuilding begun by then?**

No, there was no rebuilding of Hiroshima. Hiroshima is still a devastated area I think as far as I know. They've got a big museum there now that wasn't there when we were there but we used to drive through it to go to Iwakuni.

**Was radiation a problem?**

We didn't know nothing about radiation, never told us about any radiation,

36:30 never knew a thing about it. In fact we never knew a thing about radiation till what, about 1956, 1957, before radiation come on the market and that was when they were doing testing at Maralinga. No-one ever mentioned before.

**What did you think of, I mean 'cause you saw the after effects, what did you think of**

37:00 **them dropping the bomb?**

In what respect?

**Some people have mixed feelings about whether it was the right thing to do or the effect of nuclear?**

No, it was the right thing to do because it stopped the war. Otherwise the Japanese were brainwashed to an extent where what the emperor or what Hirohito or

37:30 Tojo, Tojo, or Toju, what he said, he was the prime minister, what he said, you see the emperor was supposed to be God and they swore allegiance to him and whatever Tojo said he wanted, the emperor wanted, that's what the Japanese people done. They were brainwashed to the fact that they thought it was an honour to die for the emperor

38:00 because you were dying for God, but he wasn't God. He was only an ordinary person the same as you and I and everyone else, and I don't think there's any honour in it, but that was their way. They were damn good soldiers.

**Did you mix much with the locals on your leave time?**

A bit here, there and everywhere.

38:30 **What do you think their attitude towards the BCOF was?**

Pretty good. There was no aggression shown when I was there, none whatsoever. They were getting on with trying to rebuild their place. When we were up there, they were some of the world's greatest copiers.

39:00 They'd only have to see something once and it was in the shop next day being sold.

**What sort of things?**

Well the old Zippo army lighter. You can get them in all shapes, sizes and forms up there. There was an American up there I was talking to once in Tokyo. He had a Buick car at that particular time,

39:30 a 1949 Buick car, "The only one in Japan," he said. About three days later you seen another one going around. It was the exact same copy of the bodywork but had a Toyota motor in it.

## Tape 4

00:31 **I'm going to ask you a few questions about Japan as well before we get onto Korea, what sort of rules were laid down for soldiers when they were in Japan in regard to fraternising with civilians?**

You weren't supposed to fraternise with civilians but, as I said before, when we were talking earlier, the best thing to get an Australian soldier to go somewhere is put an out of bounds sign up and they'll go and see why it's put out of bounds.

01:00 Well the Japanese people, nationals, were put out of bounds to us, so we went and investigated why. A lot of us had girlfriends up there. Why not, what difference?

**Did you?**

Yes.

**And her name?**

Hey?

**Description?**

She had a gift shop.

01:30 She was probably well educated, I don't know, but just, well I won't say I had one girlfriend. I had one I used to go and talk to a lot, Gichika, sit down and talk to her and that, and fill in time there. But I mean I was a funny bloke. I liked to have a look around. I like to see what's

02:00 about. I like to check the country out and this is what I did. Also I had an Australian girlfriend up there because there was, I can't think of the dependence area now. There was a lot of officers and their wives and family up there.

**Yeah there was an area set aside designated for them.**

Yeah.

02:30 **I've written it down somewhere. Anyway it's Niji Mura.**

Niji Mura?

**Niji Mura.**

No, could have been. Yeah, Niji Mura. One of the cooks up there had a daughter about seventeen I think she was,

03:00 Betty. I was only nineteen, so what's the difference. I used to fill in time with her too and that but it was all a part of life.

**And the Japanese girls, did they have much English?**

They could talk pretty good English but, as I said, we could all speak a fair amount of Japanese. I forget quite a lot of. About the only thing I can do now is count to ten

03:30 but, "O-hayo gozaimas" is, "Good morning," "Konichiwa" is, "Good day," "Sayonara" is, "Goodbye," "Musa mai" is "Girl."

**What's pretty girl?**

I can't think of that now and this is something like I was talking before when I called you darling out there. I've never

04:00 ever heard a pretty girl go crook about being told she was pretty, but I have heard an ugly girl go crook if she was told she was ugly, I can tell you that.

**Well you can never be too tall or too slim can you?**

No.

**You can always be a little bit tubby.**

Yeah.

**Did you notice among the women whether they were impressed by Australian soldiers by and large or whether there was any animosity about having**

04:30 **you there?**

No, there was none that we struck when we were up there. By the same token I'll tell you something. When Japan lost the war their prime minister told the girls that they were to fraternise with occupation troops to make it easy for the rest of the population. In other words the girls were to sell themselves to the occupation

05:00 troops to make it easy for the rest of the population.

**Did you hear that or read it or...?**

I read it and I was also told it in Japan by some Japanese people.

**So did you notice girls offering themselves for, you know, for sale?**

Yes, in Tokyo.

**And I don't just mean say professional prostitutes?**

In Tokyo

05:30 in certain areas you go there would be girls that would come up and ask, for a block of chocolate even because food was a bit on the scarce side in certain areas. Another thing, the black market was rampant at the time and you could, when I first went to Japan it was forty-eight yen to

06:00 the BAF [British Armed Forces] pound and that's a pound sterling, which was what, twenty-one shillings, and you could get for a quarter pound block of chocolate you could get two hundred and fifty yen, a quarter pound block of chocolate, Nestles or Cadbury's chocolate cost you one and threepence in a PX [Post Exchange - American canteen unit] or the canteen.

**How were you paid,**

06:30 **what notes?**

Paid in BAF, British occupation money, which was sterling rate, so we had to, for every pound BAF we got we lost one pound one, out of our pay book.

**Were you a bit sort of not very happy about that?**

Well there was nothing you could do about it, was it? As I said, that's a part of life, part of growing up, part of education.

**Gee I bet some of those**

07:00 **currency notes would be worth a bit now.**

Yes, I wished I'd had some of them. I wished I'd have brought some of them back. In fact I did fetch some Japanese occupation money back with me but I don't know what happened to it. I gave it away I think. I haven't got any now. I had Australian pound notes that was printed by the Japanese government in ready for the occupation of Australia.

**Well there's always that twenty/twenty in hindsight isn't there?**

Yeah.

**So did you see any evidence of**

07:30 **hungry starving families at that stage?**

No I didn't. They always had, you see the Japanese are much like the Korean people. Their staple diet back then was rice and fish. Rice and fish, seaweed and they had their little gardens where they grew shallots and things like that, eggs.

08:00 We used to go to Japanese houses and have a terrific feed.

**What did you eat there?**

Japanese food.

**So what you just described and...?**

Yeah.

**What about meals that they might have cooked for you, did they have names that you got to know?**

Yes, but I can't tell you what it was now but soya sauce a lot. They used to beat egg yolk and soya sauce together and you would cook the meat over the abachi and dip it in the

08:30 soya sauce and egg yolk, beautiful.

**Well that sounds quite yummy. Now did you see evidence of some of the modern Japanese food that we're aware of now, like sushi and sashimi?**

Yes, you did see some of it around up there but it was very, very high class and high class restaurants in Tokyo,

09:00 which was way out of the ordinary people's range. Now it would probably be run of the mill but them days, back in '49, '50, was out of a lot of people's range.

**What about alcohol, was that...?**

Alcohol, yes we had plenty of beer up there, saki and sorchu, rice wine, rice whiskey. That got me into trouble on my twenty

09:30 first birthday.

**And thus the story begins, what happened on your twenty first birthday?**

I'll only tell you part of it.

**Just the bit you remember.**

Hey?

**Just the bit you remember then.**

I went out and got drunk, a couple of mates and myself. We drank saki and sorchu all day and saki you drink it warm to get the alcoholic effect from it. If you drink it cold you can drink it like water until it

10:00 warms up the body temperature in your stomach and then it hits you in the forehead with a sledgehammer.

**Is that what you did?**

I can't remember anything after about three o'clock in the afternoon but I was told. I went back to barracks. I was supposed to go on guard that night at nine o'clock at night. I went back to barracks, had a shower, changed, got into my guard uniform, guard webbing and presented myself on guard with the rest of the troops. The guard commander, who was an officer

10:30 I didn't like and he didn't like me, it was a mutual agreement between us, he started to read the riot act to me. Apparently I told him his fortune from A to Z in both directions.

**Two questions?**

Yes, I did finish up in the stockade.

**How long did they put, was it still called boob then?**

Well we used to call it the 'hooch cow'.

**The what?**

The hooch cow.

**Was that just something your company**

11:00 **called it or was that general parlance?**

I think it was general knowledge through our blokes up there, or the boob, where I finished up for fourteen days.

**That's a bit stiff isn't it?**

No, not when you know what I done, but I'm not going to tell you. I'm going to keep it under my hat, that bit.

**Then I will think the worst.**

Well you'll have to I'm afraid.

**Well, question, if you deliberately**

11:30 **get drunk when you've got to do guard duty or something similar?**

Not normally. That was a special occasion. That was my twenty-first birthday and that was a celebration.

**So they'd turn a blind eye to something?**

Other than that, no, I never presented myself on guard drunk, never. In fact that was the only time ever. I prided myself in the way I presented myself and

12:00 the way I done guard because I done guard once with a Yank. He was one side of the gate, I was the other. Now we stood to attention with a rifle and everything and, for want of a better word and not knowing better, I'll call them tourists but they were American and Canadians and some Japanese, and pretty well high up Japanese

12:30 come and take our photo. Never ever took the photo of the Yank, and the Yank said to me, "God damn hell guy, why is it you always get your photo taken and we don't?" Well if you was to see the slovenly way he was dressed, the way rifle chucked in the back of the guard box, leaning up against the side of the guard box with a cigar stuck in his face and a ghetto blaster for want of a, well a radio. The ghetto blaster never come out for many years later

13:00 but a radio going in the background, which wasn't a soldierly way to be on guard anyway but it was the Yankee way and they complained because they didn't get their photo taken, part of life, part of growing up.

**I've often heard the expression, "I was read the Riot Act," have you ever had that read like word for word?**

Yes.

**And that's what that officer did to you that night?**

13:30 Yes.

**Did they actually go through the stipulations?**

Yeah. The rules and orders are contrary to good order and military conduct. That's what the Riot Act is.

**Is that something that you would know by rote anyway?**

Yes, you knew what it was and I knew what it was. I knew I'd done the wrong thing but I was drunk and I didn't care. In other words

14:00 I was full of Dutch courage, probably would have fought Joe Lewis that night if he'd have presented himself.

**In the lockup was that part of the Hiro base?**

No but I didn't actually get to the Hiro base. I didn't actually get to the lockup. I done parade ground drill, what we called CB, confined to barracks.

**So that's how you spent your fourteen days?**

14:30 Yes.

**OK and when you do that, does a staff sergeant oversee or do the provos [Provosts - Military Police] look after you?**

Well if you're in the lockup it's the provos but what I was, was just ordinary company sergeant but I got off pretty light I think because he didn't want to fill in his extra time and

15:00 neither did I.

**And does CB go on your record?**

Yes it does.

**Oops! I wanted to ask then about the provos in BCOF duty in Japan?**

Provosts that we had in Japan were mainly, well at one stage we had three different lots of provosts there. There was the Australian, the Yank and the Pommy.

15:30 The Australian provosts as a whole were not a bad bunch of guys. We had one that was a bit iffy and well he wasn't a bit iffy. He was a thorough mongrel. That's praising him. I won't mention names because the poor bugger might still be about although I doubt it, and I think to myself had he presented himself on the battlefield at Korea I think he might have presented with

16:00 a third eye. I'm not sure.

**A third eye [bullet in forehead]?**

Yeah.

**I'm sure that sort of stuff definitely went on, I'm sure the army had its internal way of dealing with people that caused more trouble than what they were worth.**

I never ever seen it although I have heard of it but I never seen it.

16:30 Not because 3 Battalion was my battalion, we had a pretty good bunch of officers except for one.

**And why was he such a?**

Well he was a Second World War officer. He was, what could I say? Well compared to us he was an old chap. He was a bit slow.

17:00 Where we would always go on our, well nine times out of ten with our fleet on a position, he'd try and find a Jeep to ride in but he wasn't my company. He was in a mate's company and he was an old man trying to do a young man's job. He did it pretty well. When I say an old man, we were on average twenty-one, twenty,

17:30 twenty-one. That would be the average age of the battalion. Arch would be probably in his forties.

**Could you tell the difference between a Duntroon trained officer and a World War II vet?**

Yes you could. We had a lot of Duntroon officers with us and they were a pretty good bunch. In fact, I'll say they were a terrific bunch as far as Duntroon was concerned.

18:00 We had General Bennett, Phil Bennett. We had Dave Butler. We had Ricky Charlesworth, Johnny Church, Alfie Argent, my platoon officer that got killed at the Battle of Pakchon, Eric Larsen. They were a good bunch.

18:30 They were a terrific bunch of blokes.

**And was there, how can I put this, did the World War II vets or the one that was part of your battalion, was there sort of constant anecdotal reference?**

No.

**So they didn't refer to what they used to do and...?**

No. You had one or two, yes, but on the whole the permanent army guys and the

19:00 K Force guys got in and got the job done. In fact when we were training at Haramura to go to Korea we changed COs and the battalion was taken off Lieutenant Colonel Walsh and give to Lieutenant Colonel Green, and we were just finished doing our fortnight training

19:30 and we were getting ready to come home back to Moorehead barracks in Hiro, and Charlie Green said that we were to march home twenty-six mile and it happened to be in the middle of a monsoon. We got back to barracks I think about one o'clock in the morning, a bit footsore and a bit soldier sore. We didn't have a very good opinion of Charlie Green

20:00 at that particular time but he turned out to be a champion.

**I read there's some conflicting reports about what people thought of him then and then what they thought of him during Korea?**

He was a fantastic commander. In Korea we got into positions and got into action and out of action with a minimal loss of life, where I think other officers would have probably taken us in and probably got us half wiped out, where

20:30 Charlie didn't and it was a big shock to the battalion when we lost him up at Hanchu [Chongju].

**Which we will definitely talk about in some detail in a bit, what happened to the Japanese soldiers do you know?**

Japanese soldiers were demobbed, unarmed and give civilian jobs and so forth etcetera in the occupation forces. Some of them in the early stage

21:00 in 1946 had a bit of a dim outlook towards the occupation forces but they soon changed their attitude. They learned too that what was there and for what reason the people were there and they learnt to accept it.

**Did you see evidence of ex Japanese soldiers with say missing**

21:30 **limbs or wounds?**

No I didn't. We had a few ex Japanese soldiers that were working in our battalion base at Hiro as mechanics and so forth and cleaners, boiler-men and so forth, and laundry-men and that and there was no animosity,

22:00 no nothing. In fact they could not do enough for you in the finish.

**What about, ok no, you've already answered that, what about any talk of war trials, was there any evidence of that?**

No, that was over and done with when I was up there. War trials had just about finished I think when I went to Japan. There could have probably

22:30 been one or two prisoners still in Sugamo prison, I don't know, but I never ever done guard on Sugamo prison. A couple of others did that I know but I didn't.

**In your notes you said something about Kure being the dry dock area?**

Yes, it was, no Kure was a naval town, a Japanese navy town.

23:00 There was shipbuilding facilities there. There was dry dock facilities there. I do have photos of the dry dock and areas and that here somewhere.

**Well from my limited high school learning, we learnt that the Japanese were prevented from building any arms or ordnance after the Second World War?**

Yes they were. That embargo

23:30 was lifted in 1951 when the Japanese were permitted to arm a self defence force of army, navy and air force. They were permitted to build a limited number of arms, military hardware and navy ships and I think they built a certain amount

24:00 of army planes or military planes but that embargo was lifted in 1951 and peace was signed I think it was April '52, between the Japanese and Australian governments. We were the last I think to sign peace with the Japanese.

**Well they certainly earned their reputation as an industrious nation.**

The Korean War made Japan because

24:30 Japan, the Korean War, America had Japan building armoured vehicles, transport vehicles, repairing armoured vehicles, repairing transport vehicles and doing supplies for the American army. They had a hell of a lot of Japanese mechanics in workshops that they moved from Japan into

25:00 Korea, into Pusan, Taegu, Kimpo areas.

**And among your men and especially among the K Force fellows, did you notice any animosity from World War II vets dealing with the Japanese?**

No, none.

**It's fascinating.**

In fact I know a couple of blokes that were actually prisoners of war in Japan that married Japanese girls.

25:30 There was no animosity whatsoever because, mainly the guards on the prisoner of war camps were North Korean and Korea was classed as a second class, well for want of a better word, neighbourhood and the Koreans that were conscripted into the Japanese army were considered

26:00 unfit for frontline service and they were considered only coolies or for transport work or prison guards.

**What about the Korean marines that were sent into places like Kokoda and Bougainville and Guadalcanal, I may be wrong, I just read that they were fit, fighting fit, tall, scary?**

I never knew of a fighting unit in those areas.

26:30 They could have been there, I don't know.

**All righty, no it's just interesting, it's fascinating that so few years after a war when there was so much hatred between the Japanese and the Australians that, you know, it all dissipated.**

You see there is still hatred amongst a lot of Australians and Japanese. A lot say they will forgive but they won't forget and according to what was done on the,

27:00 in Changi camp, on the Burma Railway, yes, I can agree but it was done mainly by Korean guards and they were looking, you've got to understand their point of view. They were put there as guards to get the best that they could out of the prisoners they had for the work that was designated.

27:30 Their Japanese officers would ride on them because they weren't getting the work done, so all right. They got a kick in the backside. They passed the kick in the backside on but there was no need to pass it on as heavy handedly as what they did.

**So when you, when 3rd Battalion was asked for volunteers, did you have much knowledge about what was going on in Korea?**

We had a fair,

28:00 well I won't say we had a lot of knowledge. We knew that North Korea was trying to invade the south. A lot of us had set ideas on communism and we didn't want it to take over a country that didn't want it. The South Koreans asked for assistance from United Nations. We were the first Australian troops to fight under United Nations flag. In

28:30 fact I think we were the only troops. There's since been Australians under the United Nation auspices but only as peacekeepers or like INTERFET [International Force in East Timor] was in Timor that were there as a, to try and help rebuild the country and to stop insurgents from the

29:00 Indonesian armed forces, but I don't think there's been any other troops that actually fought under United Nations banner since the Australians in Korea.

**That just made me think of something, did you see any Australian journalists or reporters floating around Japan before you were sent to Korea?**

Never seen any in Japan, seen a few in Korea wandering around.

**That would be**

29:30 **interesting 'cause film cameras are sort of becoming much more user friendly by then too than they were.**

We never had a film unit with us but the Americans had a huge unit that followed them everywhere.

**Well they wrote the book on that sort of stuff, didn't they?**

They had a huge unit. They had something like around about, in fact I've got a photo of an

30:00 American film unit. I think there's around about two or seven huge GMCs [General Motors Corporation trucks] with a crew in it going in at, we used to call it the Yankee propaganda unit.

**Yeah, they were pretty dab-hand [expert] at that sort of stuff by the looks of it.**

Well you see, I don't know whether I'm saying the wrong thing or the right thing here but we were always kept at the sharp end. We were the shock troops for the American army

30:30 and because they knew if they put the 27th Brigade in we'd go in and we'd get the job done, so therefore we got shuttled from unit to unit. When one unit was moving up we were the forward unit in that. That was either the 9th Corps, the 1st Division or the 24th Division.

31:00 **So original trouble-shooters.**

We were the original trouble-shooters, yes.

**You said earlier that the battalion had been depleted for obvious reasons, what was army strength then?**

Our strength I think at the time when the Korean War broke out I think would be about five and a half hundred men and officers, where the usual battalion strength is around about a thousand.

**Did it get up to a thousand**

31:30 **by the time you went over to Pusan?**

Yes, we took more than a thousand men I think because we took our four rifle companies. We took headquarter company. We took a platoon of machine gunners. We took an assault pioneer unit. We took an anti tank unit with us. We took a lot of our own transport with us, so I think roughly, I'm not too sure,

32:00 I think was around about twelve hundred strong when we went in.

**Did you notice that your training changed at the point of the 38th Parallel being crossed or just after that?**

No the training didn't change except that our role changed a bit. We changed from a search and destroy unit to a

32:30 frontline, well as I said before, shock troop unit where we were leading the 7th Cav Division or 1st Cav Division or one of them, we always seemed to be in the front and for some unknown reason, I don't know how, whether it was the luck of the draw or the drop of the card or the drop of the flag or whatever, 3 Battalion

33:00 always seemed to be in front when there was a sticky position.

**You said earlier though you were called old faithful, that was your company?**

Brigadier General Coad called us that, the Brigadier in charge of 27th Brigade. He christened us that because he reckoned we were like a faithful old dog. If there was a position to go in and take well he could always rely on us to do the job.

**So you were battle fit before you left for**

33:30 **Korea?**

Yeah, we were battle fit but I won't say we were battle trained but we soon got our act together and in the true Anzac spirit we showed what we were worth.

**What about leaving Japan, did you have mixed feelings about that?**

Well we knew the comfort zone was over.

34:00 We knew that for sure but it was also a new chapter in life. It was a new chapter in the history of the battalion. It was a part of a learning experience and it was a part of growing up.

**Did you join the army for say what you were able to do in BCOF or was it for what you were able to do in Korea?**

34:30 I joined the army for a means of getting off the west coast of Tasmania and for a look around. The experience in BCOF in Japan and the experience in Korea was all learning curve. It was all a bonus as far as I'm concerned and I think a lot of my mates thought the same thing. We knew what we were going there for.

35:00 We knew the inevitable outcome that if we got out of Korea in one piece was a bonus. I think we did the world a job. I hope we did but I know for sure we did the South Korean people a job and I know they're very, very proud of it.

35:30 They still teach all about the Korean War and what the Korean War meant to South Korea is still taught in schools up there.

**I'll have to ask you later about the World Cup last year and what you thought of that.**

I thought that was fantastic. I saw the place where that big demonstration was put on in Seoul. I've seen that. I've seen the World Cup stadium. It's a huge place

36:00 the World Cup stadium. I was told how many it held but I can't remember.

**I don't know but it was interesting to see.**

I was told how many it held. I know they could empty it in twenty five minutes. If an occasion arose where they had to get the people out of there in a hurry they reckon, I was told by our Korean guide when we went up there for the fiftieth

36:30 anniversary of signing or armistice, I was told by the guide that it was designed in such a way and the gates were in such a position where they could empty the crowd out in twenty-five minutes and which is a huge crowd by the look of the stadium.

**Sorry to jump subjects again but when you were about to be shipped out to Korea, did they give you any leave beforehand?**

37:00 No, but we took twenty-four hours on our own.

**I guess they would have expected that wouldn't they? So I'm curious of course to know if you got a chance to say goodbye to your girlfriends?**

Well at that particular stage I didn't have a set girlfriend but yes, we said goodbye. There was plenty

37:30 of Japanese girls on the wharf to see us off next morning and there was a lot of them there that were crying because, not only was there girlfriend but they were wife and family there, Japanese wife and family. Whether I'm saying the wrong thing or the right thing to me is immaterial.

**Sorry when you say, "Wife and family," do you mean a legitimate wife and family?**

Illegitimate wife and family.

38:00 **Any of your mates let you know that that's the souvenir that they'd left behind in Japan?**

Yes, there was some of them, yeah. Whether there was any of mine there I don't know and I'm not about to go back and find out either.

**OK I think I've got the picture there, and Janice at this stage,**

38:30 **she's still on your arm, do you think she knows much about that?**

I don't think she knew anything about it. I don't think you want to know any more. I think you've jumped the subject now.

**It's just getting personal isn't it? Ok, so did you take any souvenirs apart from, you know, literally, any souvenirs from Japan from you when you left for Korea?**

39:00 When I left for Korea, when we left for Korea we put all our excess equipment into storage to come home. Yes, I brought a few souvenirs home with me. I brought home a beautiful silk reversible lumber jacket, one had a, in fact I gave it to a lady that had the, her and her husband had the Queenstown Hotel and they were great Tiger [Richmond Football Club]

39:30 supporters. It was black and gold with a huge tiger's head on the back of it and I gave it to her and she was, she used to walk around Queenstown with this great flamin' tiger thing on her back and it was a beautiful thing. I brought a silk dressing gown home for my sister. I brought a bit of stuff back, the same as I brought a bit of stuff back when I went up to Korea in 2001 and

40:00 this time.

## Tape 5

00:32 **Su City Su.**

**I don't know that?**

That's an old country and western song. I can't remember who sang it.

**So was it a little soldier ditty sung in Japan or...?**

The army ditty or the soldier's ditty

01:00 followed the same tune as 'Su City Su' only it was called 'Suntori Su'. Any of the ex BCOF blokes if they happen to see this and hear 'Suntori Su' mentioned they'll know exactly what it was all about.

**And you couldn't give me a few bars, a few verses?**

No, except for one about, "When we're sailing away to sea, she had a baby on her back. The bastard looked like me."

01:30 **Yes I'm sure there's a few redhead Sino-Australians over there still.**

Well there's a possibility, a big possibility.

**Well that's the future of the world anyway isn't it, the whole Eurasian look?**

Well there was an old saying, "Trust me, I'm an infantryman. I'll populate the world after World War II."

02:00 **Who was the Australian CO [Commanding Officer] in charge of 3RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] at that stage?**

What, before we went to Korea?

**No, onto Korea?**

Into Korea was Charlie Green.

**It was Charlie Green, so let's talk about?**

Charlie Green took us a fortnight before we sailed for Korea. Charlie Green was the youngest Australian

02:30 soldier in World War II to be promoted to lieutenant colonel. He was only in his early twenties when he was promoted to a lieutenant colonel.

**He was tall and thin I believe.**

Yes.

**Not that that has anything to do with anything but?**

He was an

03:00 officer that I think was before his time. He was a bit like our, well not our second CO in Korea but our third CO was I.B. Ferguson, Bruce Ferguson. Now Bruce was years before his time when he took over the battalion. He was our 2IC. They brought Walsh back. I think Walsh had it for about three days

03:30 and I was very pleased to see the backside of him but Bruce Ferguson followed a lot of Charlie Green's

theories or ideas of looking after men. Although Bruce would not stipulate he wanted something done,

04:00 he would sort of show off in a way that would make you angry and follow suit and it was a great way of getting troops organised.

**So he'd sort of sting your ego a little bit?**

Yeah. We were very cold at one stage, or for a while and Bruce Ferguson had a knitted

04:30 scarf. It was about eight feet long, about a foot wide, wrapped around the neck three or four times and a knot tied in it and it used to hang down to his knees just about. He had enough scarf there that he could have give half a dozen troops a scarf, but no. He'd walk past you and he'd get the end of it and flip it over his shoulder in as much to say, "See what I've got?" It didn't take long and just about every bloke in the battalion had a scarf, whether it was made out of a sandbag

05:00 or what, as long as you could wrap it around the neck to keep you warm and that was one of the reasons I say he was a good officer. He didn't say he wanted something done but he'd sort of boost your ego when you needed it. Another time we were moving out of a position and there was not enough trucks.

05:30 There was only enough trucks for probably one company, so what he did, he got the trucks and the jeeps and that that was there that would go through them as fast as you can. That's what he did. The troops were actually buggered at this stage but it wasn't long and they picked themselves up and got themselves mobile. They got going

06:00 and it was a sort of a sarcastic attitude that was sent to needle you, that sort of give you a kick in the backside to move along and that was the general idea of what you needed at times.

**Yes, I guess there's any number of methods that officers could use on troops.**

There was but one of the best methods was not

06:30 a direct, "I want you to do this," or, "I want you to do that. Get this done, get that done." One of the best methods was to 'string the bow' a little bit. That got the men going quicker than anything else.

**It's funny, I'd say that's a similar tactic that football coaches use or...**

Yeah, it is. Charlie Green was a man that he wouldn't, if you went into a position he'd go round

07:00 and he'd check all his men. He mightn't have stopped and talked to you but he'd just walk past and say, "How are you going, everything all right?" And that gave you a great sense of, "Your officer cared about you." If you didn't see your officer for weeks at a time, "Oh bugger him." But when your commanding officer come around and showed himself among the troops that showed that he cared what you were doing.

07:30 **Did you need somebody to look up to?**

I don't know. I think everyone's got to have a role model. I don't give a care whether it's civilian life or army life. I think you need a role model at times and I think Charlie Green was a big role model.

08:00 He could sum a position up very, very quick, very quick and he always got the best out of his men very quick.

**Well, yet these days popularity amounts to a lot, but in a situation like that, popularity's one thing but a fellow who can keep you alive, would that be more important?**

Yes definitely but Charlie Green was popular with his men and he could also keep you alive,

08:30 so that made him doubly important.

**So the earlier business with disgruntled troops regarding Colonel Green, Lieutenant Colonel Green, was that kind of because you're all a bit naïve still about what was coming or...?**

A bit to a point but, well when the trucks come in, when we were marching down from Haramura in the middle of a typhoon,

09:00 sopping wet, wet water running out of the lace holes of our boots and that and the trucks come back to pick us up, Charlie Green said, "I told you I was marching back. Get your bloody self out of here." And when you saw empty trucks turn around and drive off and leave you it didn't do the ego much good I can tell you. It didn't do the ego a lot of good.

**No.**

But it served

09:30 a purpose, not to us it didn't. It did to Charlie Green. It showed Charlie Green what we were made of and that we could do the job we were sent to do. He wasn't so sure because he had permanent army troops mixed up with Second World War men. He didn't know whether there was going to be conflicting interests between the two lots of men.

- 10:00 He didn't know whether the two lots of men were going to get on together. He didn't know whether to amalgamate into a fighting unit. He had all this to learn because he only had the battalion a fortnight before we moved out but he took pride in the unit. I think a week after we landed, or a fortnight after we landed in
- 10:30 Korea he found that we had what it took as a fighting unit and that we'd stand up for ourselves, and we'd show ourselves in good stead and from then on I think he took a lot of pride in the unit. And it was just a case of being in the wrong
- 11:00 place at the wrong time for the wrong reason that Charlie got killed.
- Which again we'll talk too a bit later on, did you have any sort of HQ [Headquarters] set up for you in Pusan or were you just bivouacking in tents when you got there?**
- We never stayed in Pusan. We got off the ship onto an old rattler and moved up to Taegu and we bivouacked in a dry creek bed
- 11:30 and then we were on a search and destroy mission, patrolling anything up to fifty mile around Taegu, searching for remnants of the North Korean army.
- How soon after you landed in Korea were you straight into action?**
- Was only on patrol I suppose what, two days after we landed in Korea, patrol work
- 12:00 but we didn't go into action, we landed in Korea I reckon on about the what, about third week I think before we went into action. I think we'd been in Korea about three weeks before we actually saw much in the way of a decent bit of a stoush and that was at Chongchon pocket.
- So in those three**
- 12:30 **weeks that you're there, who else is there with you, there's Yank soldiers around, there's Scottish Highland?**
- No, you see the Argylls and the Middlesex, the Argyll Southern Highlanders, 1 Battalion of the Argyll and Southern Highlanders and 1 Battalion Middlesex, they went up from Hong Kong and they landed in Korea about three weeks before us. And then when we went up to Taegu that's when we went up and joined the
- 13:00 Argylls and the Middlesex and that's when we formed the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade and that's when we come under Brigadier General Coad.
- What was your uniform consisting of at the time?**
- SD uniform because it was just towards the end of summer and we're still in the early stages
- 13:30 of what, autumn if you like. We landed there in SD uniforms, which was the uniform at that time, was the old tunic and the trousers, khaki green, wool-worsted, the same as on the uniform in that photo out there on the wall.
- Did it feel adequate for the climate?**
- At that particular time, yes, but it didn't take long after we got up near the North Korean border that we
- 14:00 found out it wasn't.
- Footwear, had that improved much since World War II or was it surplus, your boots?**
- We still had the old hobnail boots and the hobnail boots got that cold that the hobnails fell out of the leather and then we got the American snow-packs as they called them.
- What was in that?**
- They were a rubber leather boot. They came up
- 14:30 to about four inches under the knee. You laced them up and then you had crossover laces that tied on eyelets, not eyelets, what do they call them, hooks, and then you crossed over and done them up and they were big enough in size that you could wear, you had a spare innersole and you could wear two pair of socks with them and they kept you fairly warm.
- What about stuff like thermal underwear, was that a possibility?**
- 15:00 Well it was a possibility but we never had any at that time. We weren't issued with it at that time. A lot of us scrounged a lot of gear that the Americans diced when they bugged out. We got a lot of equipment that way.
- Did you ever scrounge stuff off the dead or the wounded?**
- No, definitely not.

15:30 **Was it just?**

That was a no-no as far as we were concerned.

**Was it army regulation no-no or personal no-no?**

I think it was a personal no-no. I think it was army regulations also. That was one thing you didn't do was rob the dead and another thing you didn't do is rob your mates if they were wounded.

**Did that ever happen do you know?**

16:00 I think it did but not that I know of personally.

**No-one amongst your enclave?**

No, not that I know of.

**Ok, so you're three weeks over there, hard question to answer in retrospect, has it sunk in that you're about to face the enemy, is it possible that you understand what that means before it happens?**

Yes and no.

16:30 Yes, you knew you were there for a purpose. No, we hadn't the struck the enemy up to that day. The Argylls and the Middlesex had but we hadn't. Our first conflict with the enemy I think was, yes, it'd be in the Chongchon pocket I think.

**So what did you know about the North Koreans, you said earlier that you'd read or,**

17:00 **and you knew a fair bit about communism?**

Didn't know a lot about the North Koreans. In fact when we first got there you didn't know who was your friend and who was your foe because they were very similar in build, very similar in looks but

17:30 later on you could separate. Of course the North Korean's a bit darker than the south. They both speak the one language but knowing who was who was a bit difficult.

**That was a big issue in the entire fighting of the Korean War was it not that no-one really knew the enemy from the,**

18:00 **the foe from the friend?**

Yeah, that's right.

**And espionage was probably rife.**

That happened in a few cases where they didn't know who the enemy was for a while. You had to be careful with the Chinese too because when they come into the war they would drop their uniforms and get the old white peasants

18:30 clothing, put that on and hide their rifles and so forth underneath.

**Not an option for the Aussies.**

No, definitely not. For one thing we never had slanty eyes.

**Did they give you sort of any identification lectures on what to expect from North**

19:00 **Koreans?**

No. You soon learnt.

**In what sense?**

Well they were a dirty fighter, the North Korean. I won't say that our blokes weren't, or I won't say that not our blokes in particular, but others that were there under the United Nations flag, some of them were dirty fighters but on the whole the Chinese

19:30 were quite fair and quite good fighters and some of the North Koreans were but they had a very bad reputation as far as prisoners of war was concerned.

**Yes I believe they met very ordinary situations as POWs [Prisoners of War] there?**

Yeah.

**It's interesting, obviously Australian soldiers had a bit of a wake-up**

20:00 **when dealing with the Japanese during the Second World War.**

Yes. You see blokes in the Second World War was told that all Japanese were small and they were told that all Japanese were short sighted and couldn't see very far. They were all told that they were not

good soldiers

20:30 and they were told that they were poorly armed and they found out different, very smartly. The Japanese were very smart soldiers. They were pretty well armed and they were very aggressive

21:00 soldiers but by the same token I think had they had the right leadership in Singapore and not had the leadership they did have in Singapore, I think the Australians might have put on a bit better show than what they did because a lot of them did not want to be prisoners of war.

**But in regards to say dirty fighting,**

21:30 **I'm curious that the North Koreans had different tactics than say the Chinese?**

In a lot of cases yes they did. Whether it was because the Chinese were there fighting to assist someone to maintain their country and the North Koreans were fighting for their homeland, that I don't know,

22:00 but there was a difference. The North Koreans were fairly well armed because they had a lot of Russian equipment. The Chinese were poorly armed.

**They were kind of just cannon fodder weren't they?**

Mm?

**The Chinese were treated pretty much like cannon fodder?**

Yeah, well you see the Chinese, when they come in on an attack the first wave of the Chinese would be armed

22:30 pretty well. The second wave would be armed pretty well. The third wave would have some weapons but then they'd take weapons off of the dead blokes. The fourth row coming in would have nothing. They had to get their rifles or whatever off the dead that were laying around.

**Sounds a lot like the Russian front, listen there's the first patrols where you saw a bit of action, can you kind of give me a bit more insight**

23:00 **into what happened there?**

Well it was only just, you see the Americans have got the bright idea, I don't know if they've changed a lot, but to take a country you go straight up the roadway. What's out on the left or what's out on the right field doesn't count if you get the roadways and you get the towns. That's not the right way. You've got to clear the ground on either side of the road

23:30 because your enemy's dug in up on the slopes and that's got to be cleared to make sure there's no-one up there that's going to shoot down at you or sneak down at you and have a go at you when you're having a shower or something like that, and that was what our patrols were doing. We were going out and from Taegu we were going out around all the high ground and finding out what was loft there and what wasn't, in the way of guerrilla warfare.

24:00 **And what did you find?**

In a lot of cases we found nothing. It was travelled over a vast area for no results in a lot of cases. Occasionally we had a couple of shots, not much.

**Did they turn out to be furphies or...?**

A lot did yes.

**So how are you armed at the time?**

303 rifles, Owen machine carbines, Bren guns,

24:30 Lewis guns.

**Still using those things?**

Mm?

**I'm surprised that they were still trucking those things out.**

Yes. In fact believe it or believe it not they tell me the army's gone back to the old Bren gun again. They've re-barrelled them now with, instead of 303, they've re-barrelled them with seven point six two. Bren gun was one of the best light machineguns to come out of the Second World War.

25:00 In fact it was too good.

**How can a gun be too good?**

Because it put too many bullets in a very confined area. If you got a new barrel and fit it to a Bren gun, at a hundred yards, you had thirty-six bullets in a magazine, you could put every bullet through an area

like that. That's no good. You want them to spray, so what we used to get is get the armour to come up with a spike

25:30 and spike the end of the, spread the end of the barrel, so that the bullets would spray in a cone of fire. You don't want them all landing in one spot.

**What would that mean in terms of friendly fire then; did that make that more dangerous?**

Friendly fire is not really a big issue with the Australians.

**Unfortunately it was an issue with you.**

Yes with me it was,

26:00 yes but that was a case of panic. Probably if I'd have been in the same position I might have done the same thing. I don't know.

**Well in those early patrols you were doing would you describe yourself as feeling good about what you were doing or were you scared at that point, like was it new and fearful or was it new and exciting?**

I don't think we were scared at any time,

26:30 probably a bit apprehensive at times, but I don't think we were scared at any time.

**Sorry I didn't mean to offend at that point, I'm...**

No, I know what you mean. No, we knew what we were doing, mainly. Ninety-nine point nine per cent of the time we knew what we were doing. Occasionally we didn't. When we were in a position of a dark night

27:00 in the middle of the night it was a bit hard to find what you were doing but apart from that, no, I'll say ninety-nine per cent of the time we knew what we were doing.

**When you were sent out on those patrols were you told to, was it search and destroy or was it reconnaissance?**

No, search and destroy. There's a big difference between search and destroy and reconnaissance patrols but mainly what we were doing in the early stages was search and destroy.

27:30 **Ok, let's talk about the incident where the North Koreans confused you for the Russians, that's quite a famous event now, well as far as the reading I've done about it I guess, where were you on that night?**

In the middle of it.

**Were you having a snooze, were you eating, were you on guard duty?**

No, we'd just moved into the area.

28:00 We were just about to, we were trying to find out where to set up foxholes and so forth, etcetera.

**Well can you tell me the difference between a slit trench and a foxhole and a, anything else?**

Slit trenches are probably, a weapon pit is about what, about four foot long, five foot long, so wide, about two foot wide and down to so forth,

28:30 down around about three foot so you can get down and get the best part of you out of harms way. A foxhole's just a scratch in the ground that you can lay behind a few rocks or something.

**So were you under orders to create areas like little foxholes for yourself or were you, I mean were you still on the way to somewhere?**

We were, when this happened

29:00 this night it'd be around about what, half past ten, quarter to eleven, eleven o'clock, something like that. We'd just moved in because we wanted to be first cab off the rank next morning and move up in to try and get up as close as we could to the 187th Airborne. We had moved through the Argyll and Southern Highlanders. They were still back in Yongju. In fact they got

29:30 themselves a bit of a shock that night too because the North Koreans marched in amongst them and they had a bit of a set to in town. They took a few prisoners and knocked off about two or three hundred, never had any casualties themselves but then the American 1st Cav I think it was, I'm not real sure on this point.

30:00 They went up and went round on a different route up round and came down and come back towards us from Sariwon and they took around about seventeen or eighteen hundred prisoners too that night, so all told that night there was about, there could have been around about anything between four and a half to six thousand taken that particular night, but when they come in amongst, or

30:30 when they were coming up the road and Major Ferguson heard them coming and ordered the vehicle lights put on, it was a hell of a shock when you saw what was coming.

**Do you know from your experience how much time he had to think about the decision he made?**

He had none. For some unknown reason it just sprung into his mind. He jumped on the side of tank and grabbed the loud hailer and

31:00 through an interpreter screamed out to the North Koreans to surrender because they were surrounded by a superior force.

**So in your foxhole or wherever you were at the time, that was the first you knew of it as well, was this loud hailer?**

No, when we first knew of it was when all the vehicle lights all come on and showed them up. That was about half a minute before Ferguson come on with the interpreter telling them to surrender.

31:30 **So what do you do, just like that and get your rifle ready?**

Grab your rifle because half of us never had a rifle in our hand. Half of us had a shovel or an entrenching tool.

**What did you have?**

I think from memory I think I had an entrenching tool in my hand.

**Did you aim it?**

No, I dropped it and grabbed my rifle.

**Now no-one expected the Spanish inquisition, so what sort of a shock does that do to you?**

32:00 Gives you a bit of a shock to the system I s'pose, puts you on your toes very quick.

**Does your heart go in your mouth or your stomach drop or...?**

No, but by the same token, don't get me wrong on this, anyone that says they go into action that is not frightened is a bloody liar and you can take it from me but that only lasts

32:30 for a small second, like that.

**And there's a bit of energy that comes with that sort of fear too isn't there?**

You sort of, it's an adrenalin shot. Your heart gets going, jumps up about fifty or sixty revs a minute and the old adrenalin get going and your fear disappears for some unknown reason. Don't ask me why. I don't know.

33:00 **Do you get a kind of a supreme feeling after the fear's ebbed away and the adrenalin's still in your system?**

Well put it this way, you're twenty-one. You're full of life. You're seven foot bloody tall and invincible.

**And you're not going to die, are you?**

No, definitely not. That's not going to happen to me. You take the world on but

33:30 by the same token you can come down to earth with a very rude shock, the same as I did.

**That night?**

Yeah, the night I got wounded. I was not contemplating being wounded that night. I'd been in action all day and the bullet you hear you don't worry about. That's already gone. It's the one that goes

34:00 splat that you don't hear. That's the one you worry about.

**In this situation with Major Ferguson's bluff, what did you do immediately following his loud hailer?**

What we did was very smartly get ourselves into gear and confiscate as many weapons as we could and make sure we got the North Koreans away from their weapons.

**OK, can you just sort of run me through that with**

34:30 **a bit of a blow by blow description, did they immediately agree to surrender?**

Yes mainly. There was only about three I think that showed any aggression and they smartly got pulled into gear.

**By pulled into gear, does that mean that they were bludgeoned over the back of the head or shot or killed?**

From memory I think two of them were give a clout under the ear with the butt of a rifle and

35:00 I can't remember any shots being fired.

**That's remarkable, given how outnumbered you actually were?**

I think they got a bigger surprise than what we did and thank God they did. As I said, had they decided to put a show on it'd been a very sticky situation.

35:30 **They were calling out Russki, which assumingly there were Russian soldiers there on their side?**

They had, from what I can understand after the event, we didn't know there was Russians there but from that point on we found that they had Russian advisers and Russian troops organising their,

36:00 in defence and so forth, actually Russian trainers.

**And ordnance, weapons?**

Russian, mainly Russian weapons. A lot of stuff that we were getting thrown back at us though was American because in 1945 Roosevelt had shipped a hell of a lot of stuff into Vladivostok for the Russians to

36:30 come down into Korea and none of that was used but it was used when we were there.

**Gee they just never learn, do they, those Americans, they just do it over and over again, so you were collecting American rifles from them then?**

Well yes we did get American rifles but what was, the North Koreans were armed with a variety of weapons

37:00 the same as the Chinese. There was Japanese. There was Russian. There was German. There was French. There was Chinese and it was also American.

**So your job that night, was that to take weapons off them or herd the POWs or...?**

It was to collect up as much weapons as possible and to try and assist with

37:30 getting the POWs into line and guarding the POWs.

**Did the weapons then become property of the Australian Army?**

The weapons were then collected and destroyed.

**Now, being a bit of a scrounger and recycler, what's the point of that necessarily, why wouldn't they then become something that the 3RAR could use?**

For a starter is you've got to remember ordnance has got to come into this, so you want ammunition that's going to

38:00 suit the equipment you've got. It's not going to suit array of different equipment because that was a problem that the Chinese and North Koreans had, so we didn't want to inherit their problem. By the same token some of us finished up with M-1 carbines or forty-five calibre pistols, well automatics that we'd scrounged off the Yanks.

38:30 **Did you say anything to any of these soldiers, I mean apart from, you know, "Move over there" etcetera, orders and so on, but did you talk to them, engage them in any conversation?**

No. We were too busy trying to order them into some sort of order where they could be controlled.

**And what do you do when you're out in what is effectively the Korean scrub in a situation like that, how do you keep that many POWs**

39:00 **together, I know you're armed and they're not by now but how do you keep them together long enough to process them or...?**

Well we didn't. We herded them into an area. We kept them under guard. We had a few American tanks there that we spun round on them and what we did, we handed them over to I think it was American 1st Cav next day and let them tag them on with what they had and

39:30 hand them over to them. We didn't want them. They're only a flamin' nuisance.

**Well yeah, when you get that many POWs in one hit you're in a bit of a spot aren't you?**

Yeah, one or two's all right. You can send them back to I [Intelligence] section but when you get a heap like that they're a nuisance.

**Sounds like that was a busy day next day for the intelligence?**

For the Yanks, yes, but better them than us.

**Tape's about to finish but I bet they got a hell of a shock the next morning**

40:00 **when they realised the numbers?**

Yes, I don't think they were too happy when they finished up with what we had.

## Tape 6

00:32 Yes you can. You see Japan there's a hundred and forty different dialects in Japan, not as bad as China. There's seven hundred and fifty different dialects there.

**And in Korea it must have changed?**

Korea there's about seven.

**Seven different dialects and did you know any language before you got there, I heard you say a bit before but?**

01:00 No, the only word I knew in Korean was, "Idiwon," "Come here," "Idiba," "Come here." That's the only word I knew in Korean.

**Did any of the fellows in your company or unit learn any Korean?**

There was an odd one or two, yeah. A couple of the

01:30 blokes that were in I-section learnt a fair bit of Korean and there was an odd one or two that was part Chinese that picked up Korean pretty well. You see we had the Yeo brothers, they were there. They were part Chinese. There was Geoff Lee, L E E. I know it's an Australian name but it's also a Chinese name. We had one of them there.

02:00 My platoon sergeant was part Chinese, come from Newcastle, Larry Parks.

**Was there any subtle racism going on?**

No. Occasionally you'd have, there'd be a bit of friendly bantering going on.

**Like what would he be called for example?**

Who, Larry?

**Yeah, like?**

Don't know. Occasionally there was often something come up there like with,

02:30 I just told you about Joey Vescott and Peter Yeo. Joey didn't mind a bit.

**Just to explain, one was of Russian descent?**

One was a white Russian and the other one was a part Chinese, half Chinese and, as I said, we had Reg Saunders there with us. He was black. There was never ever rank mentioned while we were there because once you started

03:00 calling that person by rank you were designating them to get them wiped out, so if you didn't like a person you called him by his rank.

**What sort of nicknames were thrown around amongst your mates?**

There was a lot of nicknames that were used for different nicknames. A lot of your mates were by nickname and didn't know them by their right name.

03:30 My nickname was Pancho.

**Because?**

Because I had a drooping moustache. I had the first one before Merv Hughes.

**Is there any connection between a drooping moustache and sexual prowess that you're aware of?**

Not that I know of.

**Perhaps it's just a rumour from where I come from.**

Might be.

**I wanted to ask**

- 04:00 **about the morning after the apple orchard, not the apple orchard I'm sorry, the morning after...**
- Sariwon?
- Yes.**
- Yeah, morning after that happened the Middlesex took over and they went up through, they went up until they struck a bit of trouble and then when we went through them and then there was the battle of the apple orchard was not the next day but the next day.
- Wow, just two days after that.**
- Two days after we took
- 04:30 nearly two thousand prisoners was the apple orchard.
- So evidently you don't know the apple orchard's going to happen, so in the...?**
- No, you don't.
- Which is why it's a bit hard to talk about in hindsight I suppose because it's all compartmentalised by then?**
- It's just one of them things that drops on you out of the blue. We were, Middlesex went through us the day after Sariwon. Then we moved through them and
- 05:00 kept going. C Company was in the van. They were in forward company and that was just before we run into 187th Airborne or the Rakkasans as they were known.
- The Rakkasans?**
- Rakkasans. Don't ask me how you spell it but it's a Korean word. It's also a Japanese word and means umbrella men. Because they come down with the big parachutes,
- 05:30 the umbrella men.
- It's a beautiful image.**
- They are pretty good cobblers with three battalion because when we first went to Korea, I know I'm getting off the subject a bit. When we first went to Korea we were lied to very badly by our government because they, (1) reckoned the Americans were going to supply us with rations and then the Poms were going to supply us with rations, but nobody told the Yanks or the Poms.
- 06:00 So we were hard up for a bit of tucker when we first got there but after we got the Rakkasans out of trouble we were going well for tucker.
- What did you have then, up until that point?**
- A mixture of Australian Army battle rations, which is bully beef and hard biscuits. You can belt them with a flamin' sledgehammer and you won't even soften them.
- 06:30 Then American supplementary rations, which are frankfurts or sauerkraut or flamin' uncooked turnip in tins, pop turnip, sauerkraut cabbage, which I don't know whether ever you've opened a tin of that stuff but well,
- 07:00 they've got a smell much like a badly used saw or a rotten stable.
- Well it strikes me as not very sensible to give you, in as much as it's going to have a kind of an audio component the next day isn't it?**
- Well yes it does, same as after the battle of the apple orchard. That had a very bad effect too because we'd been running short of rations and got stuck into some nice golden delicious apple.
- Tummy aches?**
- 07:30 A very bad attack of diarrhoea or the flying axe handles, whichever you like to call them.
- The flying axe handles, thank you Len, that's a new one by me. I'm sure it's going to get some decent use.**
- No, well, as I said, in the battle of the apple orchard C Company was in the van.
- 08:00 They were leading. That's Archie Dennis's company, a friend of mine, he was in that company. In fact he's the bloke at Harden in New South Wales and 7 and 8 Platoons I think lined up, fixed bayonets and went in and the North Koreans they didn't go much on the look of the cold steel, so they up out of their
- 08:30 weapon pits and took off and it was more like a shooting gallery in a sideshow because they were easy

pickings. And then they started hiding behind stoops of rice straw and when the blokes got up close to them they'd take off and 9 Platoon, they went along and did the cleanup out the apple orchard. It only lasted about three and a half, four hours the battle

09:00 **Was there any overhead shelling?**

No, because we didn't know where the Rakkasans were. We didn't know what area they were in. As I said, C Company they were in front. They had 7 and 8 Platoons, 9 Platoon and that and then they started going that way out to the right and the left or east and west, and Charlie Green

09:30 put two companies out, one on each side. A and B Company I think went out to the sides, one each way and give them a bit of a peppering I think. There was about a hundred and seventy North Koreans killed and I think about two or three hundred taken prisoner again. I think we lost seven I think, and around about fourteen wounded.

**What time of day was it, the apple orchard battle?**

10:00 In the afternoon. I say the afternoon, about one o'clock or a bit better, somewhere around about then.

**Why do you think the North Koreans wouldn't have taken you on given the fact that they outnumbered you, four, five to one?**

Don't know. I think because we were unlike the Yanks. We didn't run and because of the frontal attack. They were

10:30 unused to a frontal attack, a straight out attack straight front on. They were unused to that. They hadn't been, the Russians hadn't trained them in anything like that and I can tell you what, eighteen inches of cold white steel coming at you is a bit frightening effect.

**What did they have, you mentioned before they had a mixture of American and Russian weapons?**

Yeah, they had, their bayonet was about so long but it was only about that thick and it was sort of

11:00 a four sided affair. Ours was about so wide, so deep the blade but only about that wide and a pretty sharp piece of equipment.

**So you're in B Company?**

Yeah.

**What does B Company do while A and C Company were out there with fixed bayonets?**

B Company was on one side. A Company was on the other and D Company was standing back to try to help, headquarter company got attacked at that

11:30 time, so it, D Company Platoon and D Company went back and cleared headquarter company, cleared the trouble back at headquarter company.

**So what are you doing in all of this for example?**

In B Company? We were out after the few stragglers who flew out to the side to see if we could stop some of the rout going.

**With fixed bayonets?**

Yeah.

**When your bayonet's fixed can you still fire?**

Yes.

**Is it less accurate?**

12:00 Depending on the bloke operating the rifle.

**So it shouldn't make any difference?**

Doesn't make that much difference because you're mainly firing from the hip anyway as you're walking forward.

**Is that right?**

Yeah.

**And what sort of a shot were you?**

I s'pose average, same as anyone else. I was reasonable at target practise but firing for it I think I'd be something the same as anyone else.

**So when you're firing**

12:30 **through using a gauge and your eyes...?**

When you're looking over the sights, yes.

**How do you work out say the trajectory or the distance if you're going to shoot from the hip then?**

If you're shooting from the hip you take it on guess work. The only time you use your open sights is when you've got a designated target when you can get a decent shot. Apart from that it's only firing from the hip as you're

13:00 going forward with a bayonet charge.

**So while you're roaming around, is it sloping undulating land?**

Yes, there's only two reasonably flat areas in Korea, taking North and South Korea together. There would only be thirty per cent of the total area of North and South Korea together, which would be decent arable farmland.

13:30 All the rest of it's mountainous.

**Pretty much scratched out a living everywhere didn't they?**

Yeah.

**So when you're walking along is the ground, like is it difficult to sort of manoeuvre around that sort of landscape?**

In some respects, yes, because you're walking over paddy fields nine times out of ten, which is rice fields.

**Sludgy?**

Yes, wet or they can be dry and hard but even so they're uneven. There's not, and another thing too

14:00 in that particular time when we're talking about in Korea, there was only billygoat tracks I'll call them, just wide enough to get a three ton truck on was their roads, so if you had two trucks trying to pass, one had to pull off on the side somewhere and let the other one pass or back up for a while. The Yanks went through with bulldozers and made a few decent roads, but nine times out of ten it wasn't.

14:30 **So I'm just thinking quite literally running along in that kind of an area under battle conditions, it'd be pretty easy to fall over wouldn't it?**

Yes it's quite easy to fall over if you're not looking what you're doing but you're pretty fit. You're pretty agile on your feet. You're more or less catlike on your feet at them stages, so yes, you can get tripped or can fall.

**And you said it was a bit of a shooting gallery, was that what it was like for you, were you kind of just picking off North Koreans**

15:00 **as they were fleeing?**

More or less, yes, but C Company had taken the cream of the cake anyway, so we were only getting stragglers.

**So were you in any danger at that point or was it pretty much the wind behind your back?**

No I don't think so. There was very little fire coming our way and they were too busy intent on getting their backside out of it because they were between two lots of fire at that stage.

**And what's the official order, like what is**

15:30 **the instruction that you receive under those circumstances?**

You follow orders from your CO or you follow orders from your company commander. They will designate two up and one back on your platoons because each company's got three platoons in it and each platoon's got three sections in it.

**Sorry what's two up, sorry what did you say, two up?**

Two up and one back is two platoons forward and one back in reserve, so as if either one of the forward

16:00 platoons look like getting a bit of a pounding, you've got a reserve platoon to take up into their position to help.

**So, yes, you said the orders come from either your company commander or someone but what's the actual wording of the order under a situation like that?**

Well I think Archie's orders were, "7 and 8 Platoon line up

16:30 in extended file, straight up the guts." I think that'd be more or less Archie Dennis's words.

**Is there a difference between being told to disperse the enemy, shoot to kill, take no prisoners, see what I'm kind of getting at, I'm wondering if there are subtle differences in what you're told to do?**

No, there is no, when you're in action like that it's, "Shoot to kill."

17:00 You take prisoners if you can provided you know what prisoners you're taking are safe because there was some shonky moves pulled off up there at Korea at that stage. They'd come in under a white flag, but not at this particular stage, but when the Chinese came into it later on a bit they'd come in under a white flag and there'd be one directly behind the front bloke, and the front bloke would have a light machinegun strapped to his back and he would drop forward in a crouch

17:30 and the bloke from behind would grab the trigger.

**Given that those tactics were employed by the Chinese later on and probably similar treacherous aspects to the North Korean tactics, what did the Australian troops to counter attack that?**

Generally shoot the bloke in front with the white flag or with his hands up,

18:00 so if you were a pretty good centre shot with the, take the first bloke out, nine times out of ten you took his mate behind as well.

**And what would be the circumstance in reverse for example if an Australian soldier was surrendering?**

They didn't go much of it because it was contrary to Geneva Convention but they soon learnt that it was, discretion was a better part of valour.

18:30 **So, you were never in this position, but if you were, had you surrendered, would you have your knees knocking wondering whether they'd shoot you or would you think that you'd probably be taken POW?**

Having not been in that position I didn't dwell on the situation but our blokes didn't like being in the position where they'd be taken POW. I think we had twenty four POWs, I'm not sure, I think twenty-four blokes

19:00 that were POWs.

**Fair enough, it was an impossible question to answer anyway, injuries amongst the Australians at the apple orchard battle?**

I think I said there was, I think roughly about seven killed I think and about fourteen wounded, twenty-four wounded, something like that. It may not have been that figure but I think it was somewhere around about that.

**It's not a test anyway, no I should prefix those questions by saying my line**

19:30 **of inquiries about what you witnessed or what you experienced, did any of your mates go down?**

No I don't think I lost any out of B Company at that stage. In fact I'm sure we didn't. I think they were only out of Archie's company. I might be a bit high on the casualties that day too.

**That's all right, you said before it's a shoot to kill order, so taking POWs is,**

20:00 **not to put too fine a point on it, probably more trouble than it's worth?**

It is, yes.

**What happens when you've half killed somebody, do you have to go up and put them out of their misery?**

No, that's not an Aussie's option. Kick their weapon away from them so they can't use it, make sure that they've got no grenades handy where they can get hold of them, leave them for the stretcher bearers. Our stretcher bearers take care of ours and theirs as well.

**So our field ambulance guys would come in**

20:30 **soon after?**

Yeah. No, not field ambulance. They're a different unit.

**Beg your pardon?**

Stretcher bearers, they're your own medics. They're a different unit altogether. Your battalion stretcher bearers render basic first aid. Then you go back to a field ambulance unit and from there back onto a MASH unit.

**So would the stretcher bearers be part of the Red Cross or would they be part of?**

No, they're a part of your battalion. No, our stretcher bearers were originally

21:00 bandsmen. They were our band. 3 Battalion band became our stretcher bearers, a non combatant unit.

**Non combatants, would they ever be in a situation to have to take up arms and...?**

Yes, a couple of times I think they were in the position where they had to be at arms but not normally. They were normally unarmed.

**That particular battle only went for a few hours you said?**

Yeah, about three to four hours.

**How far away**

21:30 **were the 187th Airborne?**

I think they showed up around about an hour after the situation was over.

**And what happens at that point, I'm not suggesting there's great separations or anything, but are you immediately told to stand down and take a rest or do you?**

No, you just file through. You continue on with what you're doing, so we just let the 187th Airborne,

22:00 we said, "Hello." We talked to a couple of them for a few minutes. I think about twenty minutes and we were on our way again, let them go back and get first aid or whatever they want, get ammunition because they were very low on ammo. I fact I don't think they had much in the way at all. They had a few wounded. They'd wounded a few of their own I think, in their eagerness to

22:30 quieten the situation down when they found what they were in and we kept going, kept going forward. Then we come up onto, I think two days later we were into the Battle of the Broken Bridge and that lasted a couple of days.

23:00 **Just before we get off that, when you say you'd have a chat to the 187th Airborne, do you mean you personally would have a bit of a chat to any of the Americans?**

Well I had a chat to a couple of Americans as I was coming back, as I was walking back.

**And what sort of discussion would that be?**

Just ask them how they were going, you know, "Are you all right, how are you going?" Knowing the Yanks there was a bit of bravado about but

23:30 I don't think it lasted long.

**You said after that that rations improved commensurately?**

Yeah.

**What other sort of trading went on between the Americans and the Australians, and I know that wasn't trading, rations wasn't trading, but?**

There wasn't a great deal of trading going on because we didn't have much that they wanted but they had a lot that we wanted, so it was a matter of a bit of a barter system at times

24:00 if you could get out of it or first one to get their claws on it.

**One of the bones of contention in the Second World War was the variance in pay that the Americans got compared to the Australians, was that a problem in Korea as well?**

No, it was mainly between Australians and the Poms in Korea at that time because we were getting, I think we were getting seven and six a day I think and the Poms were getting one and threepence.

24:30 **So you were in the Americans position in this instance, and did you rub their noses in it?**

Not really, just told them they were in the wrong bloody army. That was all. Inevitably a few of them come out here and joined our army.

**Well that's interesting isn't it, a lot of, at the beginning of the Second World War a lot of fellows joined up in defence of the realm, for the British Empire**

25:00 **for king and country and so on, it kind of changed for a fair few people after the war I guess. Where did you stand in terms of your relations with Britain and the Commonwealth?**

We got on pretty well with the Poms. Well I say we got on pretty well with them, we took the Mickey out of them whenever we could, which I think is a common pastime between Aussies and Poms.

**Can you give me an example?**

25:30 Not really.

**Put you on the spot there a little bit, I know what you mean.**

No, I just can't think of what was said at the time.

**That's all right. Did you think you were fully Australian citizen at the time or were you still part of the British Empire and...?**

No, Aussie.

**And what about the Americans, you're not beholden to the Yanks in the way that a lot of Second World War fellows**

26:00 **sort of were?**

I don't think they were in the Second World War either. I don't think ever the Australian Army has felt beholden to the Yanks. I think really and truly it's the boot on the other bloody foot because we finished up, as I said, shock troops for the American

26:30 IX Corps, 24th Division, 2nd Division. We never had much to do with the 1st Marine Division but apart from that we consider ourselves as good or better than the Yanks in armed forces.

**In between the Battle of the Apple**

27:00 **Orchard and a bit of time spent with the flying axe handles, the next thing you said was Broken Bridge, where do you stay in between those events, do you bivouac in tents?**

No. The only time I saw a tent all the time I was in Korea was at Uijongbu at Christmastime and then they weren't tents. They were, the Australian soldier

27:30 carries a poncho with him. Two ponchos form together and form a two-man tent and there's only just room to sleep in them I'll tell you.

**So you'd wear the poncho in the rain?**

Yeah.

**Sorry, was it a raincoat poncho or a?**

Yeah.

**That's very clever.**

That forms part of a two-man tent. You chuck your sleeping bag in there on the ground or get a bit of straw or something and chuck underneath it.

28:00 At Uijongbu we had it a little bit more sophisticated but not for long. It was a two-man tent made out of your hoochie. I've got a photo of it somewhere, Uijongbu.

**What about groundsheets, did you have those in your pack?**

Well your poncho was your groundsheet. It's your poncho, your groundsheet, your two-man tent. It works as all.

**But if you're using it as a tent what do you have underneath you?**

A bit of straw and the sleeping bags we were

28:30 issued up there was Arctic outer and blanket liner and you could actually sleep on top of the snow with them and not get wet because they were waterproof.

**Pretty cold though?**

Well, as I say, we slept wet and cold main of the time.

**So you said you went north to, I hope I get my pronunciation right,**

29:00 **Sinanju and Anju, is that right?**

Yes, it's S I A N G U, Sinangu [Sinanju] and A N G U, Angu [Anju].

**Anju?**

They're about five mile apart. I think we went a little bit north of Anju up onto the Chongchon River

29:30 base.

**So you're up really close to the Chinese border by this stage?**

About forty K [kilometres] away.

**And this is what got the Chinese annoyed that MacArthur had moved past the 38th Parallel?**

Yeah.

**Did you have any knowledge of that or is that...?**

No.

**You wouldn't have known where you were really would you?**

No.

**So it's a long way north and then the Chinese are in your face?**

The Chinese were behind us.

**Ah.**

They went down the spine. You see straight

30:00 down through the middle of Korea, down through here, is a mountain range, goes right through.

**Sobaek Mountains?**

Yeah they come across here and they went down through into the mountains and they actually went down the mountain ridges heat of the daytime when the aeroplanes were up and moved of a night.

**Is it fair to say night fighting is a fairly**

30:30 **new preoccupation for the Australian Army?**

No, we did a bit of night fighting in Korea.

**No, you guys did a lot of night fighting but prior to the Korean War, it wasn't so common as far as I can understand.**

No, night fighting went on in New Guinea. Unlike the First World War we didn't call a truce at five o'clock and start up at half past six the next morning.

**It sounds very proper doesn't it?**

31:00 **So how do you not shoot your own under those circumstances?**

Because you know anything out in front of you, nine times out of ten anything out in front of you is the enemy.

**But you could get cut off or mixed up or...?**

Well in that case you be careful what you're doing but nine times out of ten, when you're in a forward position like that and the way you've got your front set up, the way your companies are set out, the way your battalion

31:30 commander sets his companies out, what's in front is enemy.

**Is there any technology at the time, I'm not suggesting night vision glasses, but anything like that?**

We had night vision as far as binoculars were concerned or some rifle scopes were night visioned but we never had the night equipment that they've got now. That never come out till Vietnam.

**What was the night vision binoculars?**

They were pretty good.

**What were they, red tinted glass**

32:00 **or...?**

No, an orange tint and they sort of enhanced the light. The Americans had night vision scopes, telescopes, for rifles, some rifles. They were good but nowhere near as good as the equipment that's out nowadays and by the same token had we ever had a lot of equipment that the Yanks had in Korea, and had the Yanks known how to use the equipment they had

32:30 it would have been a different kettle of fish I think because some of the equipment they had up there was fantastic equipment.

**What do you mean, "They didn't know how to use it"?**

Well they don't know how to use half their bloody equipment they've got.

**In the night fighting do you have mini**

33:00 **reconnaissance troops out and about constantly sending back info?**

No. The only time you use that night fighting is, well in the case of the Broken Bridge it was a bit of night fighting that went on there. We went across the bridge and set up, or actually we went across the bridge, came back and got sent back again and we set up a deployment

33:30 on the ridges left and right of the bridge, of the road and we were there keeping an eye on things so as the enemy couldn't set up a position where they could fire down on top of us across the river. But they come in with a couple of tanks and a company of infantry that night and started spraying bullets around like they didn't belong to them. But a couple decided to put a couple of hand grenades

34:00 in a couple of T-34s. Bazooka didn't work so well, the blokes that had the Bazooka, because they hadn't been told that you had to wash the grease out of the firing mechanism.

**Between every round?**

No, they didn't fire a round with the Bazookas that night because they didn't fire. You see the Bazooka or 'stove pipe' as we used to call them, they fire electrically operated rocket and

34:30 when they had the Bazookas issued to them from Yankee stores they were still in storage mode, and there was a grease between the firing mechanism and no-one had told them that they were grease-packed and they had to be washed out with petrol, so when they connected a round up it wouldn't fire.

**Were you near these fellows when their Bazookas wouldn't work?**

No, well I was near them but not in contact.

35:00 I was on the ridge about probably from here to the corner away.

**And close enough to hear them cursing?**

No, because you couldn't hear much for the chatter of machineguns that was going on.

**Did the North Koreans or the Chinese machineguns have a very distinctive sound that you got used to?**

They had some, they had a lot of their heavy machineguns was the

35:30 German Mauser or Spandau that they'd captured German stuff that the Russians had give to the North Koreans and that. And the old Spandau had a very distinctive sound. It was very slow firing and where ours has got a rate of about three thousand rounds a minute. That's if you can pump them through, if you can line them up, the bullets up

36:00 that way. The Spandau's got a fire rate of about fifteen hundred a minute. There's a very distinct sound between them.

**Was it called Broken Bridge before the battle or did the bridge get broken during the battle?**

No, the bridge was broke before the battle. The reason it was called the Battle of the Broken Bridge was the same reason more or less it was called the Battle of the Apple Orchard. The battle took place in the apple orchard, therefore it became known to our blokes

36:30 as the Battle of the Apple Orchard.

**We're a bit of a prosaic lot aren't we?**

And the Broken Bridge, the North Koreans had tried to demolish the bridge but all they managed to do was collapse one span and one span dropped down from being vertical as a roadway, dropped down like that, so our engineers put a ladder up and we went up the ladder

37:00 and the river was very cold. The water in the river was very cold that time and a couple of wounded got tipped off the stretchers into the water, and Tommy Murray dived in and got them out. I reckon Tommy Murray should have got the VC out of that lot but he got a George Medal or a George Cross, I'm not sure.

**Australian injured I'm assuming?**

Yeah, Australian wounded got tipped into the river, flamin' cold water.

**Into fresh wounds too.**

37:30 Yeah.

**Were you aware that the Chinese Communist force had entered, did you know that suddenly your enemy had changed a little bit?**

No, we didn't know till the Yanks started bugging out and that's when I said they got a bad attack of bug-out disease and they started leaving equipment right, left and centre, heavy equipment, guns. You name it they left it, trucks.

38:00 **So you couldn't tell that the uniforms, you know, it was too dark or it wasn't possible to tell that the uniforms looked different or...?**

Uniforms were the same more or less. It was only quilted white fabric, quilted into winter gear. They were better equipped than what we were actually as far as cold weather gear.

**And at the time were you**

38:30 **pretty much just plugging away firing rounds?**

When required, yes.

**When Australians aim to shoot, are they vocal, like were you encouraged to yell and make a noise?**

No. We're the Australian Army, not the Yanks.

**So the Yanks made a lot of noise did they?**

Yeah. When the Australians go out on a patrol you can't hear a pin drop. You don't speak even. You use hand signals, like that's to go forward or down,

39:00 come to me, hurry. The Yanks holler. I think the Yanks are under the premonition that like wild animals you make a sound the wild animal will run away, and I think they think the enemy will do the same thing but it works the other way. They don't run away. They set up ambushes for them and that's where they lose a lot of men.

**Did the enemy make noise when they were firing?**

Yes, whistles and bugles and

39:30 drums and so forth but they don't, they're, the Chinese and the North Korean are guided by whistles or bugle blasts or drums, and if you can take the bugler out or the whistler out they lose their confidence because they don't know what to do.

## Tape 7

00:33 **Now just looking at the dates you seeing a fair bit of action in quick succession.**

Yes but nothing, we saw a fair bit of action, well I won't say a fair bit of action. We saw a normal amount of action I think for the logistics of what we were doing,

01:00 like forward company, forward battalion or whatever. Yes, it did come at regular intervals because, as I said, whenever 3 Battalion was out in the van that's when it inevitably took place. I don't know why. Whether it was just the turn up of the cards or the flip up of the coin or what I don't know but there seemed to be more about when we were out in front than when the Argylls or the Middlesex were out.

**Trouble magnets?**

01:30 Well the Aussie's been known for that hasn't he?

**The outcome of Broken Bridge, was that not so good for the Australians?**

It come out all right for the Australians. We won it.

**No it was a genuine question sorry, I actually don't know what happened.**

Yeah, we won the battle. There wasn't, that lasted two days I think that battle. Yeah, went roughly about two days.

**When a stoush goes**

02:00 **on that long do you actually get time to take a piss, have some food, get something to drink?**

No. When it finishes is when you have a feed or answer the call of nature if you can. One of the first things you do is make a brew if you get time. That used to be our first attitude. If we got into an area and we had five minutes we'd generally always make a brew.

**A cup of tea you mean?**

Yeah. Then if we had time

02:30 we'd have a smoke but nine times out of ten it was a cup of tea, make a cup of tea.

**Well you can go without sleep and food but the body isn't going to let you not go without doing what it needs to do, so what do you do in those circumstances then, I guess you just?**

Well, as I said before, you can delay nature quite a bit.

**Yeah?**

And that's what you do.

**So you can psychologically stop yourself from having to do?**

Yeah.

**How long can you do that for?**

03:00 Depending on how long you're in action, probably a couple of hours.

**Gee you'd do some damage to your kidneys wouldn't you?**

Well it's a matter of which is the most important, saving your hide or easing your kidneys. In my book it's saving the hide. The kidneys look after themselves later.

**What stage after the Battle of Broken Bridge**

03:30 **did this tragedy with Colonel Green happen, I've got a date down, October 30th and I'm trying to work out, that was only eight days after the apple orchard?**

Yeah, well it was the Broken Bridge. Then there was the, we moved up through Pakchon. Then there was the battle, tank battle at Sinanju.

04:00 Then we went up through Anju and there was a rest area I think. We were supposed to go into a rest area and that's where we were supposed to have three days rest when Colonel Green got killed. We'd been on the move for twenty-four hours, hang on, forty-eight hours non stop. He hadn't had sleep for forty-eight hours and we moved into this quiet little

04:30 gully or, yeah, little gully and North Koreans were throwing an odd shell or two around but it was nothing to worry us because it was hitting the forward slope of the mountain all the time, or the hill. Charlie come around and had a talk to make sure his companies were all right, seeing they were getting rations and so forth, which was his problem. Well it wasn't his problem

05:00 but he made it his problem and he decided he was going to have a rest. There was one tree in this area and they set up Fergie's tent under the tree, and they set up the COs tent up the draw a bit, and when he come back he found his tent was in full sun and he wanted to know why his tent was in full sun, and Fergie's was in the

05:30 shade. So he took Fergie's tent and went and bunked down. He'd only been there about an hour and a shell came over and I don't know whether it was a, well I don't know why but it skipped off the top of the hill and landed in a tree and exploded. Poor old Charlie copped it. The only one wounded, the only one hurt that particular day was Charlie.

06:00 **What happens to morale when your CO goes like that?**

Morale dropped a bit for a while but we didn't have long to dwell on the situation because they got him back to Pusan to a Yankee hospital there and they operated on him. He lasted two days

06:30 but the day after, the morning after the Americans started flashing past us going south and we found out that the Chinese had come into the war and that the Yanks had developed bug-out fever and were going hell for leather, and we were designated to set up a rearguard action. And then it was the usual thing then from then till we got back to Uijongbu that we thought

07:00 the rearguard action was, we were in the van going up but we were Tail End Charlie coming back, yet one stage was about forty-eight mile in front of everyone else north because we were waiting for the 2nd Division to come back through us and they'd found an easier way out and a quicker way out, so they took off on their route and left us where we were, up the middle of nowhere. We were the most forward troops of the United Nations troops.

**So you had about a day or less than a day to deal with the news that your**

07:30 **CO was dead, or sorry, that your CO was mortally wounded and gone?**

Less than a day.

**So what happens amongst your men there, what do you actually do, do you talk about it or do you...?**

We talk about it a bit, just talk about it among yourselves, how unlucky he was and all the rest of it and what a shame it was and hope he'd get all right but he didn't get all right. It's one of those things that you don't have time to dwell on. The morale dropped a bit but it soon picked up again and

08:00 Fergie did a good job. Fergie took over while they were waiting to get a new CO and...

**Does he make a little speech?**

No, all the word was passed around that the CO was wounded. We didn't know how bad it was. It just

said that it was, then we got word that it was a bad wound. Next thing we know we're back in action again trying to organise a

08:30 rearguard action to let the Yanks go back, and then next day we received word that he'd passed on and that Fergie was going to look after the battalion until the new CO was appointed, so we just carried on as normal.

**So you're, I imagine, you know, while you're supposed to be having rest, you're probably in small clumps of...?**

No, we were busy setting up an area. You've got

09:00 a lot to do to set up these areas. You just don't park there.

**What do you do then?**

You've got latrine trenches to dig. You've got rubbish pits to dig. You've got pits to dig for the rubbish coming from the mobile kitchens. You've got your foxhole to dig, set up a two-man tent so that you've got somewhere to get out of the elements, be it sun or cold. Well cold you can't get

09:30 away from, get your sleeping bag or whatever organised, patrols to organise. Even though you're in rest area you don't stop looking after your front. You still send out patrols. You've got pickets to place and look after. You're still in battle conditions. You're still under battle orders but just that you're not on the move.

10:00 You're in one area to have a little bit of a rest, to have a decent sleep of a night. As I said, we'd been in bed about forty-eight hours without sleep or very much bloody sleep.

**What's happening to you physically as a consequence of that, do you have sort of jangly nerves or are you pumped up on adrenalin?**

Mainly pumped up on adrenalin because by the time you go from one action to the next you haven't got time to hype down. You're

10:30 pretty hyped up all the time.

**Does that make the conversation kind of very peppy and full of verve and vim, you know what I mean, does it make, do you all have a lot of bravado amongst each other?**

I don't think so. I can't remember ever boasting about anything like that.

**I don't mean so much boasting, I mean are you charged in the way that you deal with each other?**

11:00 No, unless it's a Pom or a Yank comes on the scene.

**What happens then?**

Probably take the Mickey out of them. No, you've got your own section you're with all the time. You're going for stores, for rations, for water. You're trying to get a bit of water to have a wash with. You see I can remember going for

11:30 seven weeks without a shower. I'll tell you what, you're on the bugle a bit but so's everyone else, so you don't notice it.

**That's a long time without water?**

Hey? And what you do when you can, when you can get the opportunity, is try and get a bit of hot water or warm water and try and have a wash and chuck your singlet and underpants away, and put something clean on. Even if you

12:00 can just wash your private parts and under your arms and around your throat and chest it makes a big difference. But, as I said, I can remember going six weeks there once without a wash or shower or anything and, as I said, you're on the nose a bit but so's everyone else, so you don't notice it.

**I wanted to ask you, when**

12:30 **the Yanks bugged out, what is the difference between withdrawal and retreat?**

A lot and something we didn't do was retreat, organised withdrawal. The Yanks retreated. We didn't. The Yanks just drop everything and go. We took our stuff with us. That's the difference. We set up a withdrawal and when we moved out was one company

13:00 back through company, move back so far, set up an area, let forward company come back through you again and set up behind until you get, you're right to get right away from the enemy, hop into trucks and move back to where you've got to go and set up an area back there.

**During a situation like that, did you run into or see or encounter many of the Korean civilians?**

Yes, quite a lot.

- 13:30 You'd get the refugees going back and you'd get some of the stable population there as well. When we were going up they were all yahooing and waving and carrying on but they were a bit stoned faced when we were pulling back. I think they thought we were going to unite the country again when we were going forward, but they knew that it was not going to happen when we were on the way back.

**Did they call out for food and...?**

On the south some of the kiddies did

- 14:00 and if we had food we gave it to the kiddies, not so much the adults but kiddies, yes. When I went up to Korea in 2-0-1 [2001], I know this is diverting from the subject but to prove a point in what we were talking about, we went down and were looking for, Bill and myself, we were looking for a bit of jewellery for Bill's wife, and during the course I decided to get myself a tie

- 14:30 bar and cufflinks and we called into this jeweller shop and were having a look at the gear there and I said to the young lady behind the counter, I said, "Is this the best you've got, haven't you got anything else?" And she looked at me, she said, "You're not American?" I said, "No, definitely not." I said, "Not Canadian either?" And she said, "English?" I said, "Not bloody English either, what about trying Aussie." And she raced around the counter and gave me a great big cuddle and a kiss. She said, "My mama love

- 15:00 Australians." She said, "When she was a little girl," she said, "They give her food." I said, "Yes we did in a lot of cases give them food, because we went without ourselves to give it to the kiddies." It was a shame seeing them poor little buggers starve when they had nothing to do with it.

**I wondered if you could describe also the methods that the civilians used when they were either fleeing or in refugee mode or how they were surviving?**

- 15:30 To use an old terminology, by the bones of their arse. They were the worst hit. I saw time and time again little kiddies from probably a couple of days old up, froze to death, not by one and two but by dozens. They carried all their possessions on

- 16:00 their back and the civilians were the worst ones of the lot. They suffered more than anyone else but having said that I think civilians suffer in any war and I think they realised in the finish that they were going to suffer if we were going to save their way of life for them,

- 16:30 and I think they accepted it.

**Now I don't mean to be at all political here, I'm interested to know how a soldier sorts himself when he's in another person's country and you said earlier that you were there to sort out the business for the South Koreans, how does a soldier choose between South Koreans and North Koreans in terms of who they're there to serve?**

When you're in a situation like we were, who's top of the 38th Parallel is

- 17:00 north, who's below the 38th Parallel was south and it's the only way you can go about it but by the same token having said that when we were moving back there was a hell of a lot of North Koreans move back too and moved into South Korea, and a lot of civilians that were south orientated

- 17:30 were murdered by their own people, by the north. I told you earlier I had a lot of photos confiscated. We went into a place in Suncheon. There was a Catholic church there. I s'pose it would have held about four or five hundred people.

- 18:00 To look at it from the doorway going in you'd think they were all there praying. Go up to the altar and turn and walk out, they'd all been machine gunned because they were south orientated or had south sympathies they were no good to the north and they got rid of them.

- 18:30 **And they're photos that you took that you...?**

They were photos I had that I shouldn't have had.

**Did that happen in the reverse as well, did the South Koreans?**

No, I never saw it. If it did I didn't see it.

**And again I'm not trying to be a smart Alec here, I'm just wondering were you there fighting the North Korean Army or were you fighting the North Koreans?**

Fighting the North Korean and Chinese army. We did not fight civilians, felt like it a few times when they got in our bloody way

- 19:00 but no, you didn't fight the Korean, you didn't fight the Korean population. They did nothing to you. They didn't upset you. Well they did upset you when they got in your way but they were not there, they thought you were going to unite their country for them and nine times out of ten they'd wave and sing out to you and throw flowers to you, and all sorts of things. You didn't fight the

19:30 civilian population.

**What do you mean by, "Them getting in your way"?**

Well when you were trying to organise a rearguard action, you're trying to organise a rearguard action and move vehicles around the road and the civilian population's getting in the road bugging out going south, not by ones and twos, but by hundreds and thousands.

20:00 A friend of mine, there was this old chap was moving back and there's this old North Korean, this was a set-up though I'm sure of it, had an ox cart with a load of wood on it and a bit of furniture. He'd let a truck go past on this narrow road, let a truck go past and pulled back on. You'd move him off, or my friend moved him off. He'd get back on the road again as soon as that truck

20:30 went past, move him off. He'd get back on the road again as soon as that truck went past. Someone sung out, "Isn't anyone game enough to do anything about that bloody ox?" Bang, Bill, down over the bank he went. Archie Dennis was going to charge him. He was going to do this, he was going to do that, "You've gone too bloody far this time, I'll fix it for you." And this Yank walked back, the Yankee officer walked back. He said, "Thank God, some of your men know how to bloody handle a situation," so Bill went from villain to angel in nothing

21:00 flat. This is why I say they get in your way. When you've only got a very narrow road that's only about the width of an ox cart and you're trying to move every transport out of the way, and try and get your transport moving to get your troops out of the way, yes, they get in your way. But I suppose in a situation like that they're just as much entitled, or more entitled, to the bloody road than what you are.

**Did you ever have**

21:30 **incidents of civilian or perhaps North Korean soldiers in civilian clothing infiltrate your areas?**

Yes, we did but that was the usual normal, you sort it out in the finish.

**What do you mean?**

Someone gives them away.

**Tell me what happens in a situation like that or give me an example?**

Well you don't know really. I wasn't in it. I was in a situation where it happened but I don't know what the aftermath

22:00 was. I think they just bug out and get to the sides, try and get behind you and get organised again but we very rarely got caught in that situation.

**And did you ever have a situation where you were, where you suspected say somebody who was?**

Yes we were quite often in a situation where you suspected that there could be army personnel in amongst the civilians but you couldn't prove it.

22:30 **What would you do if you suspected that?**

Search them if you could and find out if they had weapons. If they had weapons, yes, you'd take the weapon and put them to one side with their hands on top of their head.

**Did that ever happen literally to you?**

Not with me, no.

**And do you know for example whether they would be dispatched, whether they were proven?**

No, they were not dispatched. I know for a fact that they were taken back to

23:00 prisoner of war camps.

**OK, moving along in the chronology of things, how far, you went down to, I've written down Wagsan, is that right?**

Back to Wonsan, yeah. It's back down here. It's in here somewhere.

**OK, which is a fair hike from where you've been?**

Yes.

**And mountain range?**

23:30 Yes we went over the mountain range at that place, yeah.

**And it's winter now?**

Yeah, winter into Anju.

**You showed me photographs of icicles falling off.**

Yeah, that's right. That was on the Chongchon River.

**Was that your first experience, no you're from south west Tasmania, you've known cold weather before?**

Not as cold as that.

**How did that effect you, just morale and**

24:00 **also...?**

Yes, it affected the morale, affected the morale a lot. You went crook about your politicians sending you into an area without the right equipment but the cold had two effects. It was the clothing

24:30 and your rifle. You finished up instead of taking your girlfriend to bed you had to take your bloody rifle to bed.

**Well she's never going to cheat on you is she?**

The only reason she cheated on you is if she didn't fire properly.

**So would it have to get below zero for your rifle to start playing up, just to keep the pun going?**

No, I don't think it had to quite get to zero although we were

25:00 in zero temperatures up there, below zero temperatures. Couple of places I was in up there I see snow flying horizontal to the ground and the snowflakes frozen like little steel blades. When they flew past you if they hit you they'd cut you.

**Well they're ice aren't they, just, tell me though what physically happens to a gun in cold weather?**

It seizes up. You can't operate it.

25:30 **What's in it that causes it to seize up?**

The oil to keep the moving parts moving, freezes and when it freezes it jams the mechanism, so you just had to do what you could do to get it to operate again.

**Was the enemy under similar...?**

The enemy was under similar strain as well, although they were better equipped clothe-wise but some of the main things too was you couldn't touch the

26:00 metal parts on your equipment. Until we got gloves, special gloves, you touch the metal part of any equipment you took your skin off when you pulled your hand away.

**Did that ever happen to anybody?**

I think two or three that happened to. I've heard of a couple of blokes shooting themselves in the foot. They were treated, classed as cowards in face

26:30 of the enemy. I think this is the wrong terminology. I don't think they should have been classed, because I think they had more guts than I had. I stayed there and put up with the cold. They shot themselves in the bloody foot to get out, didn't they? It took more guts to shoot yourself in the foot than it did to put up with the cold, so I don't think they should have been classed as cowards.

**Well that's an argument people use with suicide as well I suppose.**

No, I think it's a different set-up.

27:00 I can't say as I've ever wanted to commit suicide, but I think that's when you give up on life altogether and I don't think, I've never ever been in a position, as I said, but I think it's a lot different situation. A person who commits suicide gives up on life altogether and they can't see any way of getting themselves out of what they're in.

**Did you see any,**

27:30 **were men sort of driven to other desperate means like shooting themselves in the foot to get out of the situation?**

As I said, I only knew of a couple that did it. Me, I never had enough guts to do it. It wasn't wanting guts to do it or wanting guts to stay there. It was for the want of guts to shoot myself in the foot and I never had enough.

**But were things getting so tough that you would rather have been anywhere but there?**

Yeah.

28:00 You often thought of sitting back by a nice log fire with a beer in the hand but didn't happen. We got the beer at Christmastime but then you couldn't get it, you had to be careful 'cause as soon as you took the bottle out of the straw it froze and busted and you lost it, two and a half seconds from liquid to ice and break the bottle.

**So around Christmas time do you get any extra rations, provisions, conditions?**

Yes we were in a rest area

28:30 then. Yes, we got Christmas dinner. We had turkey for Christmas dinner and that. We had a beer ration, couple of bottles of VB [Victoria Bitter], I think a couple of bottles of Fosters but we had trouble getting it out of the, drinking it because it froze before we could drink it.

**What else did you get in terms of food?**

A hot

29:00 meal, against tinned stuff. We did have, you could eat your sea rations up. That was our American rations you got in the finish but it wasn't like a decent hot feed. You were only eating baked beans or meatballs in baked beans in a little four hundred and fifty gram tin over a bit of warmth to warm it up.

29:30 **In the First World War when it was Christmas the troops would have an armistice for the day and sometimes have?**

Yeah, but we didn't do that. I told you, we didn't fight a nine to five war.

**No you're also fighting people who basically had given up any religious belief too, a Communist?**

Yeah.

**Was there any ritual activity that you noticed in Korea or amongst the enemy?**

No,

30:00 just that they were hell bent on getting what they wanted and didn't always succeed.

**And I believe also you said that you were shelled around about that time too, around about Christmas time?**

That's right, yeah.

**A nice gift?**

That's when the Chinese decided we'd had enough rest and dropped a few four point two mortars in amongst us, I think four point twos. That's where I lost my camera.

**Lost or is that a euphemism?**

30:30 That's what I mean. I don't mean by lost it that way. Someone dropped a shell in amongst it and blew it to pieces.

**Blew it up?**

Yeah.

**How far away were you at the time, like how close did they get to you?**

Probably four or five hundred metres.

**Bet you were cursing the loss of your camera?**

Well the Chinese army didn't drop dead. We wished them to but they didn't

31:00 cause I had a good camera at that stage.

**Any of your friends injured or?**

We had a few injured then but not many. We got ourselves out of it and moved back further on.

**OK.**

We went back down through Seoul, formed a rearguard action for the Yanks again until they moved through us and then we moved over the river,

31:30 over the bridge, over the railway bridge and out but the bridge, it didn't matter about the bridge because the river was frozen anyway, so they come straight across the river anyway, didn't make any difference.

**You said that you and General Mark Ridgeway stopped the withdrawal?**

Yeah.

**Was he an American or a British?**

American, yeah. He took over the American Eighth Army when they sent, recalled MacArthur, when they took the command off MacArthur.

32:00 They give it to Mark Ridgeway and Ridgeway was give total command. Whereas MacArthur had 10 Corps on the east coast of Korea, was a command unto themselves and General Armand was their commander and he had a, he was personal friend of MacArthur's and he had command of 10

32:30 Corps. And 10 Corps was a corps under their own command, was nothing to do with the rest of us, where when Mark Ridgeway took over, Mark Ridgeway took over total command and General Armand come under him. He had to answer to Ridgeway the same as anyone else.

**How did that affect you and your men?**

It didn't affect us much with 10 Corps having their own agenda, didn't worry us. The only thing is that

33:00 what it did stop is when Mark Ridgeway said, "We've gone back far enough." And the American army learned now to go forwards instead of backwards. It upset the Yanks I think for a while but once they got the idea of winning or got the taste of winning again and found out that they weren't allowed to pull out when they wanted to,

33:30 that they had to ask permission instead of being on their own and just taking off, it changed the whole complexity of the war.

**Well just to deviate for a second, I was wondering how you celebrate a New Year's Eve under those sorts of conditions?**

We had a few beers and a bit bleary-eyed the next morning.

**So pretty low key really.**

Yeah, pretty low key, nothing boisterous,

34:00 no fireworks or rockets.

**What did you do for that month of January and half of February leading up to the place you went to called The Doctor?**

Patrols. We patrolled, we did patrols probably a hundred and twenty mile, a hundred and thirty mile, a hundred and forty mile, mobile patrols. We also did

34:30 close quarter patrols. You don't get into an area and sit down and do nothing. You've got to protect your front all the time, so therefore you patrol all the time. You don't lay back spinebashing and reading a book.

**Spinebashing?**

Yeah.

**Taking it easy?**

Yeah. You don't do that. You patrol and keep your front clear,

35:00 make sure there's no-one in the front. If the enemy's in the front of you, give them a little bit of a curry up, stir up.

**So that's to say that wherever you are the enemy's very, very close most of the time?**

Most of the time. I think the furthest the enemy was away from us would be when we went back to Wonsan or Wonju, when we were back on D Line

35:30 and we were patrolling up as far as Inchon, Ichon, sorry. That's another one of them two places the same but they're a fair way apart. There's I N C H O N and there's I C H O N, Inchon and Ichon. We were patrolling up to Ichon, which was about a hundred and thirty mile.

**Did you have a**

36:00 **favourite position when you were patrolling?**

Generally when I was on patrol I was generally always forward scout and I was one of the lucky forward scouts. I lived to come out of it.

**Well they're usually the first to get picked off are they not?**

Yeah.

**How did you sort of steel yourself to go out and do that time and time again?**

Just as I told you before,

36:30 thought I was seven foot tall and undestroyable, indestructible.

**So you had no idea?**

Bullets are going to go around me, not going to go through me.

**Did you have any kind of lucky charm or superstition?**

No I don't think so, can't remember if I did.

**Did you have any ritual before you went out on patrol that you went through?**

Yes, get back.

**You didn't kind of, "Spectacles, testicles"?**

No.

37:00 I lost faith in that when I was in Korea when I saw some of the things that happened up there. That went out the window as far as I was concerned and it's still out the window.

**How would you describe your faith before you went there then?**

I was probably average Australian as far as going to church was concerned, the Church of England. I suppose I attended church the same as anyone else

37:30 until that happened, and some of the things I saw there that I didn't think was right, and it just flew out the window and it's stayed out the window.

**Did you see anything worse than those machine gunned churchgoers?**

Yes I did.

**And among your friends, did they feel similar to you as far as you know in terms of their faith?**

I think there's a few of them that religion went out the window at the

38:00 same time.

**What about your chaplains or your padres?**

Yeah, we had one, a couple of there. Old Padre Joe Phillips, I think he had the, he was a Catholic padre. I think he had the big church going. We went to church a couple of times but it wasn't for the sermon. Joe could get the football results and cricket results. I don't know how he got them but he did. He'd preach you a fine bit of sermon and then he'd give you all the football results and cricket results and horse racing results.

38:30 How he got them I don't know but he had them every time.

**Gee he's no fool is he, he can pack a house?**

He had a way of packing them in but Joe was a funny feller. He was a padre, yes. He preached religion. Joe would also grab onto the end of a stretcher and go out with the stretcher bearers and help them fetch the wounded in.

**Did he have access to church wine?**

Could have done, I never noticed any.

**Well evidently you never got any then?**

No.

## Tape 8

00:33 **I wanted to talk about The Doctor and why that area was called that?**

Well that's a funny thing. I don't know but we give features different names and why that happened to be called The Doctor I wouldn't have a clue but it just did and that was in between Chipyeong-ni and Chuam-ni.

01:00 **Chipyeong-ni for example is an opportunity for Australian's to have a bit of fun with that word, you know, it sounds like?**

Chip on knee, yeah.

**Chip on knee, exactly. How did a bunch of blokes from Australia sort of cope with such an exotic and foreign language as Korean, did you play around with it?**

Yeah, a little bit, swapped the words around. Now 'Saul' [Seoul]

01:30 we was always told it was called Saul and I've continued to call it Saul but in 2-0-1 when I was up there and a couple of months ago when I was up there, called 'Sole', don't know why, still spelt the bloody same but they changed the pronunciation.

02:00 **So you did kind of play around with the words a little bit?**

Some of them, yes.

**And what about the locals, did they have nicknames that you gave them?**

Yeah, Wogs, Ching Chongs, you name it. The Chinese generally always got called Charlie, why he got Charlie I'm bugged if I know, unless it was after the bloke that used to fly the little chopper around, little spotter around of a night.

02:30 When the South Koreans pulled out the first time from Ipo they left behind four little artillery spotters, a little bi-plane and I think it sounded very much like a sick lawnmower, the engine, but of a night

03:00 he'd come over just after last light and he'd come over flying over the area, and he'd only be about fifty, sixty feet in the air and he'd be trying to find out where you were camped, where you were and he'd drop a couple of three inch mortars or something down every now and again. We christened him 'Bed Check Charlie'. We wanted to shoot him down a few times but they wouldn't let us, could have shot him out of the sky any time. But they reckoned while he was flying around looking for us he didn't know where we were, therefore he couldn't tell the

03:30 artillery where we were, but if we started shooting at him he'd have time to radio back where we were, what our coordinates were to fetch the artillery in. While he's doing that he's looking for you. He doesn't know where you are but no sooner you start shooting at him he knows where you are.

**So if the Chinese were Charlie, what were the North Koreans called?**

Bloody Wogs.

**Any idea if they had**

04:00 **names for you?**

Yes, they were pretty well conversed, used to tell us, "To go home, get home, that someone was looking after our girlfriends and misses back here and get out of Korea. It was no place for us. It wasn't our war. We weren't invited there, so we should nick off."

**And did they call you Aussies or did they call you...?**

Sometimes

04:30 call you Aussies, sometimes call you bloody idiots.

**And I'm sure they didn't use the expression, "Someone's looking after your girlfriend"?**

Well they did and they used other expletives there, euphemisms too.

**All righty, the ROK [Republic of Korea], were they much of an army?**

That particular time, no

05:00 because they'd been belted to buggery when the North Koreans come down through the first time. They were very, very poorly equipped. They were very poorly trained. Their officers never had much noose. They were very poorly led and they were mainly conscripts, so

05:30 no. They were not very good and the Chinese used to love to get stuck into them first and the Chinese and North Koreans would get stuck into them. When they got them to break and nick off then they'd put them in on the flanks of either the Americans or Canadians or us.

**Did you have much to do with them on a one to one basis?**

What, the ROK? No, I didn't but after I

06:00 come out, after Kapyong, yes they started putting some ROK blokes in with our blokes and I think it was about a week after Kapyong they started putting about five to six hundred South Koreans with 3 Battalion and they were farmed out to different companies

06:30 for training purposes and so forth and I think that give the South Koreans a lot of confidence. I think that helped them a lot.

**Did you have any chance to get to know any of the local villagers and so on, in between them moving their villages?**

No you didn't. You were never in one spot long enough.

**And what, the Koreans were**

07:00 **Buddhist weren't they?**

They're a mixture. There's Buddhism, predominantly Buddhism but also there is some Shinto amongst them and there is quite a few Catholics and

07:30 Baptists, quite a few Catholics and Baptists amongst them.

**Was that evident from the outside what religion or faith they maintained?**

No, not really. You got to learn a little bit about it later. Well say there's

08:00 two types of Buddhism. There was what is called traditional Buddhism and there is another one. I can't think of what it is but it's something that it's a little bit different to the traditional Buddhism.

**Yeah, I'm trying to think of the word and it keeps, like Animus keeps coming to me but I know that's not right, it doesn't matter. What I'm wondering is if you ever saw any religious or faith inspired**

08:30 **rituals amongst the locals?**

No you didn't. We saw a few temples and so forth and prayer palaces and so forth, etcetera. We saw a few churches and that but no, you didn't see, there was no prayer meetings or anything like that amongst them that I never witnessed anyway.

**Now before you said you lost your faith owing to a number of the things that**

09:00 **you saw. Could you elaborate a little bit on that?**

Well I'd rather not, not for the reason you might think.

**Which is? I just like to know what I'm thinking.**

Well not because I don't want to upset anyone.

09:30 It's just that I prefer to leave it where it is, buried.

**Ok, let's talk then if we could about the business of you going to get rations as forward scout on that fateful evening?**

Yes, just as I said, we'd been in action all day and we didn't achieve our objective properly,

10:00 so we pulled back to regroup and we moved to our new location, and we went in after dark into this position and I.B. [Ferguson] wasn't about to let every company go and get rations. We'd been without tucker all day and he wasn't about to let us all march down and leave the area vacant, so he said, "Designate one company to go and fetch up rations for the whole battalion." And

10:30 my company, B Company, drew the short straw.

**Now I have to interrupt for one moment too in case I've got something wrong. Did your wound put you out from fighting in the Battle of Kapyong?**

Yes, I got wounded at half past seven at night on the sixteenth of February 1951.

**Ok.**

And Kapyong was the twenty-second, twenty-third and twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of April.

**Right, so it was quite some time later.**

11:00 **I just wanted to check in case I'd totally made a mock of my notes. So you'd gone down to get rations, was there amongst the men at the time was this sort of lack of food and rations causing any internal argy-bargy?**

No, but we'd been without rations all day and the belly thought the throat was cut and we were just, one company was designated to go down and

11:30 pick up rations. It was down about a mile down the road from where we were. You couldn't just charge off. You had to pick your way down and pick your way back, so we went down a water wash, which kept us a little bit out of the general viewing area and got rations and was fetching them back. I was doing what I normally did, forward scout.

**Well you said you'd been in action**

12:00 **that day?**

Yeah.

**Was that kind of a typical stoush?**

Just a typical stoush. We were after a position or we were after a feature to get the Chinese of A Company's back. We succeeded in doing that much but we didn't succeed in getting the feature and getting the Chinese out of it. It still left them with a controlling feature and we

12:30 wanted it, so we decided, the CO decided to pull us out, move us back, let us have a rest and go in fresh again next morning.

**It's interesting 'cause so much of the Korean War seems to be about these victories over virtually in the scheme of things, tiny bits of land.**

It is, for the simple reason why is if you've got the dominant feature you've got control

13:00 and you've got to get that dominant feature to get control of the area you want to be in. We are different to the Americans in that we don't just occupy the road. We want both sides of the road as well and there was a section at the particular time we were about when this particular action was going on.

13:30 There was a part of 2nd Division went up to Chuam-ni and there was enemy between us and them and 24th Divi wanted contact with Chuam-ni. We didn't know how much damage was being done to the Yanks. We found out after. Was L Company

14:00 of the 2nd Division reconnaissance group, so we were trying to clear our way through to help them out. We didn't but in the meantime the Yanks got through them anyway and we wanted both sides of the road, not just the road

14:30 because if you just go straight up the guts and take the road and don't take both sides you'd have left yourself open, both flanks, for casualties and it's not the Aussie way to get a lot of casualties if you can get out of it. So therefore you take both sides of the road as well as the road, and you've got to get the dominant feature in that area to get the control and we didn't get the dominant feature that day. They got it next day.

15:00 **Is that something that you talk about amongst your mates at the end of the day then, in as, and this is a bad example, but in the way that you might finish a game of sport that you haven't won and talk about it afterwards why you didn't win, what you should have done etcetera?**

Sometimes, not all the time. Sometimes you talk about it, talk about different ways you could have went about it but then again you only go about it the way your CO wants you to go about it.

**Were there fellers there**

15:30 **who thought they'd do a better job than the officers if they got a chance?**

No, that never happened in my book. No, that never happened while I was there. You might have an officer you didn't agree with and you'd have wished him to buggery but you didn't try to, there's an old saying,

16:00 "Don't teach grandma to suck eggs." You get yourself into trouble.

**So on this evening you're down getting your supplies, how far a walk back was it?**

About a mile, up through a water wash. The water wash was around about five foot deep and gradually going up to the top of the ridge. I was only about

16:30 sixty yards from being back in my own lines but I was lucky in one respect. I had a RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] doctor right behind me. Our doctor's, Fred, was doctor of 77 Squadron and whenever he got leave he'd come over to the battalion to get with his mate and he used to get out amongst the, I could have thought of lot better ways of taking leave than getting amongst a rifle company

17:00 while it's in action. But this RAAF doctor used to love getting over here amongst our blokes and get into, and he'd tack himself onto a rifle battalion and get in behind it with the action and he was right behind me the night I got wounded.

**So you described it in fair detail before, as you were walking back up and this sentry, did you get at least a chance to call out to him?**

Yeah, I sung out to him. I called out to him, "Don't shoot."

**Was he?**

17:30 "It's Aussies, B Company." Bang.

**Can you remember it or was it too fast?**

How do you mean remember it?

**Can you remember it going into your arm and feeling that pain?**

No, you didn't feel it. I got threw head over heels. I lost my rifle. I lost my hat and

18:00 a couple of seconds after I felt it, hit in the shoulder.

**Is it like a really big stinging punch or...?**

I got hit with about four hundred ton and if you'd like to consider that hitting you on the shoulder, yes it was a heavy punch, a bloody heavy punch when I'm sitting, what, about sixty yards off the end of a 303. That packs an awful wallop.

**Does it hurt more**

18:30 **on impact or does it hurt more afterwards when it begins to throb?**

You don't feel the impact. You feel it after, a couple of seconds after. When I picked myself up off the ground my arm and shoulder stayed behind. I put my arm over.

**Did you start to worry?**

No good of worrying. It's too late.

**But did you, when you see blood do you start going, "Oh no, this is like really serious,**

19:00 **I could be dying"?**

No, I knew I wasn't going to die. I knew it wasn't in the right area to die but what I was worried about was I thought I might lose my arm, well not actually then but a little bit later when I got back to the MASH unit I thought I was going to lose my arm.

**What was the reputation about the local hospitals, the MASH units and the surgery?**

Well I don't know what the reputation was but there was an artillery observer

19:30 was wounded the same time as I was. He went back. I don't know where he came from but he went back and the artillery blokes used to stick a little windsock on that finger and point it up to get the direction of the wind to call the artillery in. If they knew the direction of the wind they could give a counteract so that the wind wouldn't put the shell too far off from where they wanted it, and he got hit through there and it took the bone and that [middle] finger out.

20:00 Now to explain what I'm going to talk about I've got to go back a few years to a sawmill in Princes River at the west coast. Used to be a bloke there, Albert Grining, was the header in and he pushed a Fritz in onto the main saw and it went a bit quick, and the main saw picked up his finger and it's back down to about here before we grabbed him by the feet and pulled him off. We took him to hospital and there was a doctor there by the name of Parkinson, Doctor Parkinson.

20:30 He operated and opened that back down there and back down there, cleaned that all up and took the sinew and tied it off down here, and took the rest of the bones out of that finger, and cleaned it up down there and down there, and closed the hand up and you'd swear he was only born with those three fingers. Now when I seen this young Yank that was wounded the same time as I was in the

21:00 bunk alongside of me at this MASH unit, and I saw it, saw where he was wounded because it wasn't covered up and I said to him, "Oh yeah." And he said, "Yeah." And he told me what he'd done. Well the Yanks come and got him and took him into the theatre. Now I thought they were going to do the same thing but when he come out his bloody hand's off there [at the wrist]. I was a damn sight frightened of them than what I was of Charlie. I thought, "My arm smashed the way it is, where are they going to take that off?"

21:30 So he come out and he said, "I want you to sign this paper so as I can treat you." I went, "Na-ah. I'll wait, get back to my own hospital, my own lines." I said, "And if they take my arm off I know it's got to come off, but you blokes are only doing it for bloody practise." I said, "You want a striped apron. You ain't going to practise on me."

**Can you recall what the piece of paper stipulated?**

Yes, giving them permission to operate on my arm

22:00 or operate on me and do what they thought deemed fit to treat the wound. But after seeing the young Yank lieutenant it worried me a bit as to what was going to happen, so I wouldn't sign the paper.

**How soon after you were hit and the RAAF doctor must have done a bit of patching up on you?**

Yes he did and then I went back to 60th Indian Field Ambulance Unit

22:30 and at the 60th Field Ambulance Unit I got told off there and a needle in the toe because I was sitting

up in a bunk rolling a cigarette and this Indian doctor come out and he said, "What you are doing?" "What do you mean what am I doing?" He said, "What you are doing?" I said, "I'm rolling a bloody cigarette." He said, "But you can't." He said, "You're arm here is broke." I said, "Well my arm might be broken but my fingers ain't." He said the way the bone broke,

23:00 might damage the nerves, so he come out and he jammed a needle in between the big toe and the one next to it. I reckon three seconds flat all my right side of my body, I started wondering what he was doing to start with, why he was, I was hit on the right side not the left, so I wondered why he was putting the needle in there. But I found out. About three seconds flat all my right side's paralysed and he brought me some cigarettes in, "Here's a tailor made one. You haven't

23:30 got to roll one."

**Do you think he did you a favour or was it...?**

Well I think he could have done.

**Before you got to the Indian field army hospital what procedure happened, like do your mates run around and sort it out?**

No, the RAAF doctor got me, took me down to casualty, our own lines. They put a field dressing on it, strapped my arm to my

24:00 body so as it wouldn't move, loaded me on a stretcher and put me on the front of a jeep and I went back on a jeep back to the 60th Indian Field Ambulance.

**Look tell me if I'm asking too many questions but about how long would that journey be from the jeep to the field army hospital?**

From where I was wounded back to the Indian field hospital was around about, what, a mile, mile and a half, probably around about

24:30 ten minutes.

**OK, so not so bad really I suppose, a bit bumpy but?**

A bit bumpy, a bit noisy because I went through underneath the guns of the New Zealand artillery.

**Well that's what I wanted to ask, you know, in an area like that you're not really safe anywhere are you?**

No.

**So did you have a sense of feeling twice as vulnerable now that your arm's strapped and you can't pick up your rifle or you've lost your rifle?**

Well the rifle was no good anyway because the

25:00 bullet hit that before it hit me.

**Well just as well by the sounds of it.**

It hit the forward, what it did, I had the rifle, the barrel of the rifle or the foresights of the rifle shoved through the band wrap on a box of sea rations and slung over my shoulder and my arm was out like that holding the butt of the rifle. It hit the forward sling swivel and then went up my arm you see and that's where it was aimed for [the heart], supposed to be, but it didn't get there.

25:30 **So you're driving under New Zealand artillery, at this stage are you feeling, if you can recall, a bit fatalistic, you know, you've already been hit, maybe you don't care if anything else happens, what sort of...?**

No, the thought never entered my head. No, all I was thinking about was I didn't think it was going to be that bad. I didn't know how bad it was till I actually got back to the MASH unit.

**Well how do you get to the field army hospital,**

26:00 **to the MASH unit?**

Go down in ambulance, into an ambulance, and that was around about an hour and a half, two hour trip.

**All right, the whole world has seen at least one episode of MASH [TV program] according to statistics, how?**

The MASH that you've seen on TV is nothing like the MASH unit itself.

**How does it differ?**

Well there's not the comics that carried on there for a starter.

26:30 What MASH stands for is Mobile Army Surgical Unit and it's a surgical hospital, just straight out for patch up to do the best they can, and nine times out of ten they do a good job.

27:00 I say the Indians and the Canadians were the best, well no, the Norwegians and the Danes had one there too, I think. It's all rush, rush, rush, rush, rush in the Yankee MASH units. There's none of this carry on like Radar Riley and all the rest of it, that I saw anyway.

**No, well it is a TV show, but does it look something like that?**

27:30 No, not really because you've got your, what, five hospital tents or operating theatre tents. You've got a couple of big generators going there clattering away. You've got a kitchen unit there. You've got a dining tent and you've got the COs tent. The casualty tent is only one tent that caters for around about forty

28:00 stretchers and the stretchers are on the ground. There's no bunks, no nothing. You're laying on a stretcher on the ground and they take you out and put you in an ambulance and load you on a train if they can and in our case I went from the MASH unit, I think it was the 15th Cavalry MASH unit, down to Pusan to the hospital,

28:30 American hospital.

**At the MASH unit are you treated as a serious casualty or are you in a sort of a state where you're just waiting to get the surgery you need?**

Well, I was just laying there on the stretcher. He took me in, knocked me out, cleaned my arm up, seeing he couldn't do much with it put it in a plaster

29:00 up across my shoulder or chest like that, fingers were taped to my shoulder and I was on a big plaster cast covering it all in with just this arm out and a gusset around my stomach where the plaster fitted in so that it was, just drained away into the bottom of the plaster.

**Did they talk to you much?**

Not after I wouldn't sign the paper, no.

**Did they give you any painkillers?**

Yes,

29:30 a couple of Aspros, something like that.

**That's it?**

Yeah.

**They didn't have anything like morphia or...?**

No, they give me morphine down at Pusan, but they wouldn't give you much morphine anyway because they're habit forming. From there I went back to 130th AGH in Kure from Pusan.

**When you wouldn't sign the paper, if you had have signed the paper**

30:00 **would you have been sent down to that other hospital or would you...?**

No, I'd have been sent to the other hospital anyway, but he may have taken my arm off. That's what worried me.

**In retrospect do you think you made the right call?**

I'm sure I made the right call.

**Did the fellow who had his hand amputated, did you get a chance to talk to him after his operation?**

He was out when I saw him, just saw his hand just laying across his body on the stretcher.

**Could you see much while you were there**

30:30 **at the MASH unit?**

No, not a lot. I was the only Aussie in there at that particular stage.

**And the nursing staff, what were they like?**

They were all male nurses. There were no females there. They were all male orderlies.

**What were they like?**

Pleasant enough to get on with, give you a cigarette. I never struck American females until I got

31:00 down to Pusan hospital. Then they robbed me blind.

**What?**

Then they robbed me blind. They took all my badges off my uniform, everything.

**The nursing orderlies?**

Nurses at Pusan, souvenirs because I was an Aussie.

**While you were asleep or unconscious?**

No, I was conscious, "You don't want this any more. You're going home. You don't want this."

**What did you say to them?**

31:30 What could I say? They would have took it anyway, so why not say, "Yes"?

**Well a little bit of protestation maybe, like, "Get your cotton picking hands off them"? Tell me a little bit about the Pusan hospital then, how much did it differ from a MASH hospital?**

A lot. I think it was in the old Pusan University. You could still smell Pusan anyway, I can tell you that much because Pusan

32:00 in the early days was a fishing port and it stunk to the bloody high heavens. You could smell it about three mile out to sea and you could smell it about three or four mile inland if the wind was blowing the right way. Man it was rotten.

**How did that go down then trying to recuperate in a stinky smelly fishy?**

Well, didn't make much difference. You couldn't do anything about it, so

32:30 why worry about it? One of the great traits of the Aussie soldier, if you can't do nothing about it why worry about it?

**How big for example would Pusan be in terms of the amount of patients it can attend to?**

There was probably about, I think there was probably about a hundred and twenty, a hundred and thirty patients

33:00 but there was two hospital ships sitting out in the bay. They could probably carry a thousand each or something, probably more.

**And staffing, was it pretty busy with doctors?**

Yes it was a pretty busy staff. You had a couple of operating theatres working there also I think. I think they were doing the operations ashore as did them on the ships. They were

33:30 running a fairly tight turnaround on ships. I think there was two out in the bay and probably two or three on the way to America and probably two or three on the way back.

**And this is where they operated on you?**

They only did a minor cleanup on me at Pusan because I wouldn't sign any papers to let them work on me.

**So sorry, I'm confused now?**

So I went back to...

**Did you not sign the papers at the MASH unit and also at the Pusan unit?**

No, I only had to sign one paper. That was at the MASH unit and they didn't ask me at Pusan

34:00 **OK, so you did or you didn't have an operation at Pusan?**

No, never had, just a cleanup, into the operating theatre for about half hour I think and just cleaned it up a little bit, cut some of the dead flesh away and put it back into plaster again.

**By this stage are you starting to get a bit worried that your arm's a lot more banged up than you first thought?**

No, I knew it was. I knew it was banged up pretty well

34:30 by this stage, and I was heading off then to, they told me that I'd be going to 130th AGH in Kure.

**So you said you saw female nursing staff at Pusan?**

Yes.

**And were they American?**

Yeah, American nurses, both black and white.

35:00 **Was that the first time you'd seen a black American?**

No, 3rd Division up on the frontline they were nearly all black. They had blacks with white officers and they were a funny bunch of fellers.

**Why is that?**

Always acting the fool, always happy, always laughing.

**At the hospital did you get a chance to sort of take in the kind of equipment**

35:30 **that they had available to them, was it sophisticated?**

Yes, it was fairly modern for them times what I saw of it in the operating theatre. The hospital itself was fairly modern, the same as, almost identical to what we had in Kure. It would be almost identical equipment.

36:00 **And what sort of food did they give you there?**

Reasonable sort of food but all meat and potatoes and things like that. Meat would be cut up for you. One of the nurses would come and cut the meat up because I only had one hand.

**And are you looking down the barrel of**

36:30 **the fact that your career in Korea is pretty much over?**

Well I knew it was over at that stage.

**So what was that like to deal with?**

Well for one thing I was pleased because I'd got out of Korea and got out of the cold, but I didn't think it was to the extent, the damage was done to the extent of what it was. I didn't know that till I got back to Kure and a Pommy

37:00 surgeon come up and talked to me in the ward and told me about my arm. He said that he didn't think I'd save it and that I had to get back. He asked me who the orthopaedic man was back in Aussie here and asked me what my state was. I told him Tassie. "Get back there quick," he said, "Because I know the orthopaedic in Tassie." He said, "If anyone can save your arm he can." He said, "Him and I did our training together," he said, "But he left me for dead." And that was

37:30 Doug Parker, Sir Douglas Parker.

**So look I'm just trying to take into account what that must have been like then sort of from the frontline in a jeep to a field ambulance and so on to the MASH to Pusan, you know, you're moving and moving and moving and no-one's actually doing anything to fix your arm at this point?**

No, that's right because I think they knew it was too big a job for any of them. They didn't even attempt to fix it in Japan.

38:00 When they had a look at it, put it back into plaster again.

**Have you had any contact with your unit at this stage, has anyone sent any note to you or is that possible?**

No, one of the chaps from the infantry training school in Japan, he came in and seen me but no, no-one from the unit saw me and the

38:30 funny part about it was I had a North Korean flag, a huge silk flag that I'd purloined in Seoul and I'd carried it halfway over Korea and back and they purloined it out of my kitbag, out of my pack, and I think everyone in the battalion signed it and it's in the War Museum in Canberra. After me carrying it all over bloody Korea, I lost it.

39:00 **Well I'm glad you said that, for a moment I thought you said they were going to nick it and you would never see it again but...**

Well I didn't see it either, did I?

**Well no but at least it ended up somewhere I guess. Just to finish off on this tape, how did you purloin the flag from Seoul?**

Well it was up the flagpole and the lanyard had broke on it and so the North Koreans left it there, this big silk flag about thirty foot long, and about fifteen feet deep, and when I spotted it I said I wanted it

39:30 and then I thought, "Well how am I going to get it when it's up that flagpole and there's no lanyard?" And I saw a three ton truck. I backed the three ton truck over and hooked on the winch onto it.

00:32 **How was the trip to Kure for your arm?**

Went across from Pusan to Korea to Japan in a, I think a Hercules transporter plane and from then from there up to

01:00 Kure by road ambulance. The trip didn't worry me at all. I was getting out of Korea. I was getting back into civilisation. It didn't worry me. I thought I was going to get my arm fixed in Japan but I didn't

01:30 and they found out they couldn't do anything for it anyway.

**I think you mentioned on the first tape that heading back to Australia you'd fly up and then the gas gangrene would be such a problem?**

Yeah, that was on a different plane.

**Coming back?**

That was on a DC-10.

**Now would they know as you're going that you could only go a short distance or would it be, once you'd get up it'd just be so painful that you'd have to, they'd put you down?**

No, there was a nursing staff on the plane coming back and they kept check on the what's a name,

02:00 on my arm and when we got to, I think the first trip I got from Japan to Guam, from Guam to Manila, Manila to Manus, Manus to Darwin, Darwin in like that and I had a blood transfusion everywhere I went, or wasn't one. It was three or four bottles of blood.

**Can you describe what exactly happens when you get up in the air with gas gangrene?**

02:30 You don't feel too crash hot. Your health seems to deteriorate a bit. You feel crook, worse than what you are. They're feeding dope into you all the time but no, it's just that the gangrene eats the blood, that's all, and you're sort of,

03:00 feel a little bit worse in yourself than what you originally were.

**Is there a particular sensation in the arm itself?**

No. The only thing you know when you've got gas gangrene is, mate, you can't stand yourself. You don't know how anyone else can stand you either.

**Do you mean the smell?**

The smell, that's dead right.

**Is it like anything?**

If ever you've smelt a rotten animal carcass or anything like that,

03:30 well about ten times worse. Screw your nose up! I had to live with it.

**It must have been such an ordeal getting back, and so they'd take you to the nearest hospital every time you landed I suppose?**

Yeah, they'd race me to the nearest military hospital and I'd only be in there in a matter of seconds and they'd have a blood transfusion drip onto me.

**And would you stay overnight or a couple of days?**

04:00 Couple of days. Pick the next plane up two or three days later and go on a bit further.

**Wasn't worth their while sending you back by boat, was it quicker that way do you think?**

Well it was quicker coming by boat but they hadn't learnt by then. I think there was only about four or five arm casualties come back before me. I was the first Tasmanian back, not that I want that privilege. I don't.

04:30 I could have done without it. I was the first Tassie back into Tasmania, who was wounded and come back into Tassie.

**How did you get back from Darwin down, is that over land or...?**

No, plane, plane into Brisbane. I had three days in Brisbane, down to Concord. I had a week in Concord, had three different lots of transfusions there and the

05:00 orthopaedic bloke at Concord opened it up and had a look at it and cleaned it up, put it back in plaster again. I come from Concord down to Heidelberg. I had a week in Heidelberg and then they took me from Heidelberg out to Essendon, loaded me on a plane and I come over to Cambridge, by ambulance up to what's a name, Hobart. There was an

05:30 argument because repat didn't want me and Royal didn't want me either.

**Why not?**

Well repat didn't want me because I was a policeman, supposedly, because it was called the United Nations police action [Korean War], and Royal didn't want me because I was an army patient. But the doctor, Sir Douglas Parker, or he was then Mr Parker, he sent me from repat down to Royal and Royal sent me back to repat

06:00 and I had two and a half hours shuffling between the two of them and no-one wanted me, until Parker went down and raised the roof. And when he spoke everyone jumped, the only difference was they didn't say how high. They just jumped. He said, "I sent this man down here. I want this man down here and this man will stay here. That's all there is to it."

**And how soon after that were you actually treated, operated on?**

06:30 I was up in ward four on the fourth floor for about an hour and they took me down to the operating theatre and opened the plaster up, and Doug Parker was there and everyone in the operating theatre chucked except Parker. And then he went away and he had a look at my arm, a good look at my arm and he said, "Go down to a laboratory," he said, "And fetch up some blowflies.

07:00 I want some blowflies." And they put my arm in a net and they put the blowflies in there to blow it and the maggots eat the dead flesh out.

**Were you sedated for that?**

No.

**What does that feel like?**

Very bloody funny when you get maggots crawling around your arm and you can feel them and you can't do anything to get at them.

**Is it painful, did you have?**

No, not painful at all. You can't feel it.

07:30 **That's amazing, I had no idea they used that, and how long did it last that treatment in the...?**

About three weeks.

**And for how long at a time would you have the maggots on?**

Put them in there and left them there.

**For three weeks?**

They were like that [long] and they eat all the dead flesh out. There's no back muscle in my arm.

**They ate that out?**

08:00 Yeah, because they ate all the rotten flesh away. I think I had thirty-two operations on it all told.

**Over what sort of length of time?**

About eight months I think. I think I had thirty-two blood transfusions.

**Did you stay at the Royal the whole time?**

No. I stayed at the Royal until he killed the gangrene. I'm not too sure which was worse, the complaint or the cure.

08:30 They tell me gangrene will kill you and the cure nearly killed you too.

**How do you mean?**

I had two places I could get, or three places I'd get needles, was there [upper inner leg], there [backside] and there [shoulder] and they were as black as your boots in all three places. I was getting needles every hour on the hour.

**What were they injecting you with?**

Penicillin, morphine,

09:00 cocaine, you name it. I was getting two or three different types of penicillin; penicillin, streptomycin and something else and then one time they'd give me a needle of morphine. In four hours they'd give me a needle of cocaine. They alternated

09:30 so as I wouldn't form a habit to each one.

**Did that work?**

Yeah, well I didn't see any rats crawling up the wall or anything when they stopped.

**Were you very conscious for much of that or was it heavy sedation?**

No, about the first fortnight or three weeks there I didn't take much notice of anyone. Then it gradually picked up. I was coming right and then when they killed, fingers were

10:00 the sorest because he kept driving his fingernail in there and pulling the quick down to see if the new fingernails were growing because all your fingernails drop out by gangrene, or they did with gangrene and when he saw the new fingernails growing he said, "I've saved your arm for you. Whether it's going to be any bloody good or not I don't know, but I've saved it."

**That is an amazing story.**

This arm was up until twelve months ago two inches shorter than this one

10:30 but now it's only an inch shorter because I've got a metal shoulder in now, and when he put it in I had a double bow in this arm. It's got a bow that way. Yeah, well it used to have a bow that way as well but when he cut the top of the humerus bone here, to put the metal shoulder in he gave it a half turn back that way and sort of lengthened the arm at the same time. I'm only an inch shorter now. If you put your thumbs together and hold your hands straight out in front of your nose

11:00 they'll line up. See where mine are?

**When did he put the metal shoulder in?**

Only about twelve months ago.

**OK, sorry I didn't get it.**

Yeah, I kept spilling a cup of hot tea on my legs, kept dropping out of joint. It wasn't put back together really properly when it happened and it wore the shoulder away and the shoulder kept dropping out of joint.

**Now during the**

11:30 **blowfly treatment was there much contention, did other people have different opinions, it sounds pretty radical?**

No, he was the boss. He knew what he was doing.

**And it sounds like he did too.**

Yes, he knew what he was doing all right.

**And on your trip down from Darwin when you stopped over at these places, did any of those places suggest that they could treat you or want to do anything about it?**

No, they didn't want to do anything about it. They wanted to get me back to Doug Parker as quick as possible because

12:00 he was, actually he was the leading orthopaedic surgeon in Australia at that particular time and he was years and years and years and years... They've only just started doing operations now that he did back in 1950.

**Well you're lucky you're a Tasmanian then.**

That's right. I was. That's one of the first times I've ever, ever tossed my hat in the air and cooed that I was a Tasmanian.

12:30 **And after, well actually during that period, did you get news of Kapyong, did you find out?**

Yes, Kapyong was fought before I left Kure.

**And you were able to find out what had happened and...?**

A few of the mates were back in Kure Hospital, flesh wounds and things like that but Kapyong happened before I left Kure. I left Kure about a week after.

**How did you feel about missing that?**

13:00 In one way I was sorry that I missed it but in another way I was happy, because I might have got killed there.

**This is a pretty broad question, how, talking about physically you've been affected by the war, how else do you think you've been affected by the war?**

Well now I'm ok but at the first stage

13:30 it was, when I first got out of hospital and got out of the army and that, it was nerves. Nerves weren't

too crash hot.

**How would that play out, how would that affect you?**

Well I was drinking pretty heavy and things like that, a few nightmares. Don't worry, the plant won't attack you. It's not a man eater.

**14:00 In the nightmares what would happen?**

A few nightmares seeing different actions I'd been in in Korea, of a night and that, seeing different things I'd seen in Korea of a night, but I got over that. I decided to put that out of my mind and get over it. It was no good to you.

**Was it that easy just making that decision?**

No, actually Doug Parker made it for me because my arm was going rotten again after I got out of repat as an out patient

14:30 because I was drinking too heavy and the alcohol was going straight to the open wound, and it went rotten again. And he said, "I'll give you six weeks to get every trace of alcohol out of your body or I'll take your arm off." And he didn't make idle threats either, so the first fortnight I waved goodbye to everyone I'd seen in Hobart and I went up to see him. He give me a blood test there and then on the spot

15:00 and he said, "You're lucky. Now," he said, "I want you to keep off the beer," he said, "For at least three years." And from the time I was wounded to the time it healed up was three and a half years.

**Was that really hard?**

No. You got used to it. You got used to taking the bandage off it every morning and putting a clean bandage on it of a morning, going to work, coming back and

15:30 coming home of a night, take the bandage off, put a bit of Vaseline gauze over it and put a new bandage on it.

**How would you describe the army's treatment of you during your period back...?**

I think they treated me all right. I don't think they ill treated me.

16:00 I wanted to go back to my own unit again and they wouldn't let me at that stage, so I said to them I didn't want to soldier on here in Australia, and they offered me a job out at Brighton, transport, but I wanted out. If I couldn't go back to my own unit again I wanted out, and then they give me a medical and they said, "You're not fit for armed services anyway." I joined up in 1948 and I was A1 and I come out in 1952

16:30 B4. I'd dropped down a hell of a way in health standards.

**So what happened in terms of leaving the army, being discharged?**

Just had to wait for my discharge on medical grounds and then get myself back into civilian life and get myself a job.

**Did the army give you a hand doing that?**

Yes. I was on a pension for

17:00 about seven years after I left the army. What do they call it? Regiment pension, regimental pension and then I got myself a girlfriend and got married and that was it. I was happy then.

**When did you stop getting the nightmares?**

17:30 About two years after I think or three years after I got out of the army. I decided that I didn't want the nightmares. I wanted a more stable life and I used to work myself till I was nearly exhausted before I went to bed. I'd go into a dead sleep and I was right, and over a period of time they gradually disappeared. I got them back here about four year ago

18:00 when I had a big operation. I got them back again for a while but they went again, so I was happy.

**Before now have you found you've talked much about your war experience?**

No.

**With your girlfriend, then wife or...?**

No, I didn't talk about it then.

**Did she ask and you didn't want to talk about it or?**

She asked but I didn't want to talk about it and that was a closed chapter as far as I'm concerned, and this is the first, this is the longest I've

18:30 ever talked about it, used to often talk about BCOF because you had a lot of fun there. You didn't do anything stupid but this is the first time I've talked about Korea.

**Did you have many reunions or did you see many of your unit fellows?**

I never had a thing to do with the Returned Service League till 1999.

19:00 When my wife died she asked me, well she said to me, "Will you make me a promise?" When she was dying. "You name it, I'll do it." She said, "I want the house done up and done up properly." I went, "Right, you've got it." So I was going merrily on my way and doing the house up and getting it all painted and done up nice, a new front door, screen door out there, a security door, get the drive done, get the front lawns done up different,

19:30 and I happened to be walking across, I went down to K and D for something one day and see this bloke walking across the yard towards me, and it was a bloke I hadn't seen since 1952 and this is '99, and I looked at him. I thought, "God, this has got to be Arthur Stag." And then I wasn't sure and anyway when he got up level with me I said, "Hey, Staggie?" "Yeah what?" he said. I said, "Got you," and

20:00 he said, "You're not a member of the Korean Veterans Association are you?" I said, "No." "Well you'd better join up." And this was just before Christmas 1999. Anyway I went over to Lindisfarne RSL [Returned and Services League] for Christmas dinner with them and he said to me, "You'd better join the league. Come along, take you out and meet our treasurer." And that was a bloke I hadn't seen for years either and that was Sandy Powell. He died here a couple of years ago with

20:30 a brain tumour and since then I've met up with a couple of other old mates and that, and I've been up to Canberra for the dedication of the Korean War Memorial. I've been back to Korea in 2-0-1 for the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong and I went back in July this year for the fiftieth anniversary of signing of armistice. As I said before, I hope we did the world a favour in 1950-'53

21:00 when we stopped Communism from going berserk, but I know for bloody sure we did the Korean people a service because they're the happiest little people on earth. When I was up there in '50, '51 the average height of a Korean male would be five-five one. Now they're five-eight, five-ten. They're heavier built, more robust. Korean women would be before four-eight, four-ten. They're about five-five, five-six, five-seven

21:30 and they're more robust.

**What did it mean to you to go back?**

When I went back in 2-0-1 I was a bit apprehensive but after being there for a while and after going to Kapyong to the memorial service at Kapyong, going down to Pusan to the United Nations War Cemetery, and seeing the graves of some of my mates and that

22:00 it sort of lifted a, well I don't know, sort of as though a shadow lifted off my life and I was quite happy. This time when I went back in July this year it was different.

**Better, worse?**

Better because I saw, I had a better look around Korea and I didn't have

22:30 like a shadow on my life. There was no anxiety, no nothing. That all went after the memorial service at Kapyong Battle, even though I wasn't a part of Kapyong.

**Did you find going back brought back a lot of memories?**

It did back in 2-0-1 but this time it didn't make any difference.

23:00 It was just good to get back and have a look at the place again and with a few mates have a bit of fun, stir a few people up.

**You mentioned before the RSL didn't recognise you or other Korean veterans?**

No.

**How did you feel about that in those first years you returned?**

Well at the time I didn't go, I wasn't too crash hot with it but

23:30 after a while it didn't worry me but I realised that the Vietnam blokes had the same treatment. The '39-'45 blokes had the same treatment from the First World War blokes. It's all a part of life I suppose, all a part of growing up, part of education.

**I was wondering, you mentioned going back and seeing the graves of**

24:00 **those who were lost, when did you reflect on those that were lost?**

That was back in 2-0-1 when I went back, when we went back to the Pusan war cemetery. I had a little mate killed alongside me at the Battle of the Broken Bridge. I went back and found his grave and said,

"Hi," more or less. I found Charlie Green's grave. This time when we went up there Bill and I put a wreath on Charlie's grave.

24:30 He was our first commanding officer. He was the only commanding officer killed in Korea, so we thought it was fitting to put the wreath on his grave at the anniversary of signing of the armistice, and I've got a photo out there of the wreath we laid and a photo of Bill and I standing alongside the grave with the wreath,

25:00 so that's good. Saw a few other blokes up there that I knew, had a look at their graves again but the children from the schools at Pusan they keep the Pusan War Cemetery in tip top order, the colleges at Pusan. They go out and put a fresh wreath on the UN [United Nations] memorial every week

25:30 of every year, and they've done that since 1950. It's still taught all about in Korean schools, what the Korean War meant to the Korean people. I think that's fantastic and an Aussie can walk down the streets in Korea and walk proud because all the people recognise you and they all think you're top.

**How about back in Australia, what do you think**

26:00 **the general public thinks of that war?**

The general public couldn't give a stuff about you. That's being honest.

**How have Anzac days been for you?**

Well, as I said, I went in what, 2000 was the first Anzac Day I've been to. That was after 1953 when I went to the one in Queenstown and they told me to nick off. But I

26:30 went to an Anzac Day memorial up in Korea in 2-0-1. I went to an Anzac Day parade up there and I reckon that's one of the best Anzac Days I've had.

**Can you explain exactly what happened in '53, did you turn up on the day and...?**

I turned up for the dawn service and was I was told to POQ [piss off quick], that I wasn't a returned soldier, I was a bloody policeman. And that's the reason they wouldn't let you in the RSL because of police action.

27:00 And I told them where to put their RSL and I didn't worry about it after that. I joined up down here, I think it was in 1970 something. A brother-in-law asked me to join the RSL, so as he could go in and have a beer down here. He was a returned bloke and I joined the RSL down here again and they seemed all right.

**And do you march now?**

27:30 Yeah, go to the Anzac service now. I go the day before Anzac and put a wreath on the cenotaph and one on the memorial because Kapyong day's the day before Anzac Day, put a wreath on the cenotaph out here for my mates from 3 Battalion.

**Do you have much contact with the men from your unit now, 'cause they'd be from all across Australia I s'pose?**

28:00 3 Battalion's spread right throughout Australia. You can go to just about any place in Australia and if there's a bloke from 3 Battalion there you've got mates.

**Have you caught up with many of them?**

Caught up with a few of them, yeah, caught up with a few of them in Canberra when I went up in 2-0-1.

28:30 **Stella's [Interviewer] asked me to ask you about some communists at the airport when you were flown home.**

No, they were at the front gate of Concord Hospital in Sydney. There was about six hundred there demonstrating when I came back to Concord Hospital and they had to take us in the ambulance in the back gate because they were frightened there'd be a scene if they tried to take the ambulance in the front gate, so they took us in the back gate of the Concord Hospital, so as

29:00 not to upset the Communists 'cause we were classed as murderers.

**How did that make you feel?**

It made me feel all right but it didn't make them feel too good.

**Did you encounter any other opposition to what you did and where you served?**

A bit in Melbourne but didn't take any notice of it. That was their beef. That was their thoughts. Let them keep them.

29:30 **And how about in the years afterwards?**

It wasn't long, well I think about 1958 or '59 or something, Communists were outlawed and they got rid

of them, so I think that was the best thing they could have done is outlaw Communism because what they were trying to preach here was something entirely different to what they did up there.

30:00 **You also mentioned having your photos confiscated, where exactly did that happen?**

At the airport in Sydney.

**Can you tell us, so they went through your stuff, is that how it?**

Well customs went through all our gear because you were coming back from overseas, and they had to go through and see you weren't fetching any firearms in or anything like that, or how many cigarettes you had, how much tobacco you had, how much alcohol you had and all the rest of it. And

30:30 the Federal police were there to see that you weren't fetching any contraband in, such as propaganda stuff against Communism and all the rest of it that could have stirred up. And I had some photos there that I shouldn't have had. Well they thought I shouldn't have had them but under my way of thinking it didn't matter. Well I say some photos. I had about three hundred I think, photos of different things that I saw in Korea.

31:00 And they took them and destroyed them because they thought that it might cause a national incident if I handed them over to the newspaper and they were published, they'd stir the Commos up and cause a riot.

**What did they object to?**

To the photos I had.

**What about the photos, what particular images do you think?**

Well one of the massacre at Samichon,

31:30 a few others. I'm not going to tell you what they were. I think that's best kept to myself but they didn't agree with what I had, so they took them. That was their prerogative. I wished they hadn't have done but they did but it hasn't worried me.

**Did that make you want to do the opposite and actually go to the media?**

No. I didn't want to stir up strife back here.

32:00 There was enough opposition to us as it was, so why stir up more?

**Did you feel, you've mentioned that you didn't talk about your experiences, but did you sometimes feel that people should know more and that they were really in the dark?**

No. They didn't want to know about it, so why should I try and stuff it down their throats? No.

**Has that been hard to keep those things to yourself?**

No, you get used to it.

32:30 You keep quiet. You don't go bragging about what you've done or what you haven't done. For a starter that's not the Aussie way. Only time you brag is when you're taking the Mickey out of the Poms, about the cricket and so forth.

**I was just about to say I don't think that's going to stop for a while yet.**

33:00 Don't think it'll ever stop.

**Do you have any regrets?**

None whatsoever. If I was young enough and the same thing happened again I'd do the same thing again. I think I've had a fantastic life and I wouldn't change a bloody thing in it.

**I'm also wondering about your thoughts on the recent**

33:30 **North Korea situation?**

That's only a bit of sabre rattling. You see North Korea's got the third largest army in the world. They've got twenty-two million people in North Korea and they've got over one and a half million in the armed forces, so they're not productive. Another thing they haven't reafforested their country to the same extent

34:00 that South Korea have. They've just let it grow back naturally. South Korea gets plenty of rain. North Korea hardly gets any, because trees and vegetation draw rain. Well South Korea's a thriving country. North Korea's starving because they can't grow, corn in South Korea grow here [high]. In North Korea it's down here.

34:30 Wheat in South Korea's up here [high]. Wheat in North Korea is down here.

**Do you think from perhaps what you've seen that the North Korea now is similar to what you**

**fought against?**

I think it's still very much similar to what we fought against. Their ideology's exactly the same, so therefore what they're trying to do is they want to get foreign aid to

35:00 feed their people. Another thing is South Korea are not worried about it. They say, "If they want to party they'll party with them." And another thing China's got the Olympic Games in 2-0-8 [2008] and China is not about to let the North Koreans play up, because if they step out of line China will be down their throat like a ton of bricks because no sooner North Korea step out of line

35:30 China's lost the 2-0-8 Olympic Games and that ain't about to happen and if North Korea does play up and China steps in from Manchuria, South Korea will go straight up from underneath. That'll be the end of north.

**I'm also wondering how it felt to be a part of the first major war after a nuclear strike, did the presence of nuclear weapons play on your mind very often?**

36:00 No, didn't play on our minds for the simple reason why there was no thought of them using nuclear, well there was. MacArthur talked about using nuclear weapons but there was no talk of that for the simple reason why it wasn't serious. I don't think it would have been serious unless Russian brought it in but China never had nuclear weapons at that stage.

36:30 I think if we'd have had the troops into South Korea that China had in there we could have went through China and another thing, had the United Nations attacked China, Chiang Kai-shek would have come back in 'cause he's got a fairly big armed force in Formosa, or Taiwan as it is now.

**Part of the idea of, well what the idea of nuclear**

37:00 **weapons became was to prevent wars, did you sometimes think, you know, people beside me are getting killed when they could stop this war quickly?**

No.

**Didn't occur to you?**

No. I saw what nuclear weapons did in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and that ground is poisoned forever. Perhaps in two hundred and fifty million years time you'll be able to go back there and build there and grow food there again, but not until then

37:30 because that ground's sterile. Nothing can grow there. You can't move in there and build houses there because of radiation sickness and that will be there for the next hundred and fifty thousand years. That's why I'm a bit crooked on the Australian government for letting the Poms test the atomic bomb in Woomera, at Maralinga. You see that place up there in Maralinga, that's rotten. You can't

38:00 go in there. You can't walk through the place, animals go through it they die. You can't do a thing with it, so North Korea's not about dropping the atomic bomb for a starter because they're going to poison their own country, and even though he's as stupid as a rabbit I don't think he's that stupid.

**Well thanks for that, Len.**

**INTERVIEW ENDS**