Australians at War Film Archive

Cyril Gilbert (Gilly) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:33 **Could you start by telling us where you were born and how you grew up?**

I was born in Brisbane here on the twentieth of June 1920 and grew up in Amamoor

01:00 on the Mary Valley line [highway] outside Gympie. My father was working up there and we lived up there till the end of 1925 when I would have had to start school and would've had to cross about eight creeks to get to school. So if the creeks went up when you were at school you didn't get home kind of business. So they came to Brisbane and lived in what, it used to be Thompson Estate in those days.

01:30 And went to the Buranda Boys State School over at Stones Corner and continued on there, we shifted from Thompson Estate, sorry we lived in Bowen Street, Annerley and there and moved to Coorparoo, Ashton Street then back to Marquis Street,

02:00 Thompson Estate. And after the scholarship examination 1933 I went to school there from 1926 till 1933, passed my scholarship examination, then went to Churchland Grammar School for two years, '34-'35. And I wasn't going on to university so there was no need for me to go onto Grade Eleven or Twelve so I left school then and went down to the State Commercial High School,

02:30 down there for about three months, learning shorthand and typewriting. Don't know much about shorthand now, I can't do shorthand and I can only type one finger, two fingers. So then I got a job and started with Hobbs Cain McDonald, they were solicitors in Queen Street opposite the Post Office. And then found out that if you weren't an articled clerk

03:00 you weren't required after you were seventeen, so I left there and went to the Alliance Assurance Company down in Eagle Street, 70 Eagle Street. And then unfortunately I had to pass a medical down there and in 1935 just after I passed the Junior [school certificate] I had an operation for interception of the bowel, where the

03:30 bowel gets locked like that. So they wouldn't give me an A-Class Pass because they had a Widows' & Orphans' Fund and a Pension Scheme so they said, "Oh you can stop on for another twelve months but you'll have to find another job." So I went down to Malleys Limited then and they were manufacturers and engineers down in Water Street, The Valley and stopped down there till 1939, the beginning of '39.

04:00 And they closed their plant up and transferred it back to Sydney so I went down to Ford Motor Company then, down at Eagle Farm, and stopped there right through to the outbreak of war, then I went in to, I enlisted in the militia in 1939. And because I didn't want to get put in any infantry, if the war

04:30 came, like if we had to go to war, so I joined the army service corps in the militia and did a month's camp in November 1939 and then went into the three months' camp in January 1940. And at the end of that three months' camp went back to Ford Motor Company and then the plant was on four days a week so I only worked four days a week. When they went on three days a week, I only

05:00 worked three days a week so it was no good to me so I left there and started the Brisbane City Council then in April 1940. And down at Main Depot, down at Saint Paul's Terrace and went there and worked there until I decided to enlist. And then two mates and I decided, I took the papers home, the day I turned twenty,

05:30 for my mother, father to sign, they reluctantly signed it. So I enlisted on the twenty-first of June, I went back to the Water Street Drill Hall and enlisted and decided to go into camp on the ninth of July. So the three of us went into camp on the same day, the ninth of July, 1940. Then we were at Fraser's Paddock for one night then out to Grovely. E Company was the training company, then we

06:00 went over to our unit, a div [divisional] ammunition company on the other side of the railway line. And we were there till November 1940 and then we went back to Fraser's Paddock, our unit. Because the other people, the 2/10th Field Regiment and the 6th Battalion that were in Grovely, both went back to

Redbank Camp, training there. So it was a long way from Redbank to

06:30 Brisbane so our CO [commanding officer] said, “No, we won’t go there, we’ll go to Fraser’s Paddock.” So went to Fraser’s Paddock until the, oh where the 8th Div Ammo [ammunition] Company. And then I did an NCO [non-commissioned officer] School and topped the schools so they offered me three stripes [sergeant] to stop in the 8th Division, whereas the rest of my section all went over to the 9th Division ASC [Army Service Corps]. So I had a yarn with the two mates and they were going to the Middle East in the end of

07:00 1940 and then we were supposed to go to the Middle East in 1941. So I said, “Oh well, I’ll go into the 8th Divvy [Division] and then when we go over there, I’ll transfer back into my old unit, the 9th Div.” like with them. So unfortunately then of course we, that’s right well April 1941 we went to Bathurst, we

07:30 transferred down to Bathurst. We got on the train in shorts and shirts here and got off at Kelso two days later, half past three in the morning, nearly froze to death. So we spent the end of April, May, June and July down in that cold country. Blayney, the town next to Bathurst is recognised as the coldest town in Australia. And the Victorians are up with us, as I

08:00 said earlier, our unit then became a brigade ASC, with an ammunition section from Queensland, the supply New South Wales and petrol from Victoria. And we were the 27th Brigade ASC. The 22nd Brigade ASC, which was one of our sections, had gone over to Singapore on the Queen Mary in February 1941 and the 23rd Brigade went to Darwin. So we’re down in Bathurst

08:30 in the middle of winter and did our training there and then we went from there by train, oh, after our pre-embarkation leave and that, we went by train right over to Northam Camp in West Australia. By train, right through over there and stopped there for five or six days waiting for the convoy to come round; the other units of the 27th Brigade caught the boats at Sydney or Melbourne.

09:00 So we went over and waited for them to come round, we got on the boat at Fremantle. And then went up to Singapore then, and we got there about August fifteenth, 1941 and that was about the, four years later the war finished of course. We went up to Malacca then and we camped in Malacca and we

09:30 had quite a good time there, played football, best football field I’ve ever played on, Kubu Park, Malacca. Then when the war was imminent we were at our action stations three weeks before the war started and the war started in Malaya. The Japanese landed at Kota Bharu, a couple of hours before they bombed Singapore that Sunday

10:00 night, and with the time difference it was a couple of hours before they bombed Pearl Harbor. So Singapore was bombed a couple of hours before Pearl Harbor and they landed on Malaya. So we were at our action stations at Kluang and the Japanese come over and blew the flying airport apart, there was no planes, they only had a couple of planes there.

10:30 Then we came down and our first action was at the Muar show [battle]. I had an ammunition point of about eight or nine trucks there, picking up ammunition from the base ordnance depot, storing it there in the trucks and then taking it up to the front line. To the 2/19th Battalion from New South Wales, the 2/29th from Victoria and the 2/15th Field

11:00 Regiment Artillery was in that action at Muar and that’s where we lost our first casualty, our unit. One of our drivers went up with a load of ammunition and on his way back he went over a bridge and they blew the bridge up, so he was blown up. And then the Japs encircled those troops and they had to retire and we got out, then we had the same thing all the way down the mainland. The Japs used to come in behind our troops and encircle them and they’d

11:30 have to fight their way out. And we went back over the causeway on Singapore Island in the beginning of February ‘42. And then there was so much transport on the road, the Indians used to drive down the middle of the road, there’s no room for trucks to go either side, so they relieved our

12:00 unit, they formed two rifle companies with our unit. And one rifle company, the Number One Rifle Company were ambushed and lost a lot of ours and we were at Tanglin Barracks outside the headquarters. We had our trenches out in front of the Tanglin Barracks and we had to defend the Headquarters, and there I remember the Friday night and the Saturday night

12:30 they sent mortars over. And you could hear them, pop, pop, pop, when they loaded them and then you’re just waiting for the bang when they come. And never more frightened in all my life, I hugged that ground like anything, shaking like anything, expecting one to come in the trench. One of the chaps in the next trench had his rifle up beside the trench like that and it cut the rifle clean in two, the mortar went right through. So if he had of had his head

13:00 up, it would’ve gone too. So next morning on the Saturday morning down went that trench another two feet and on Sunday morning it went down another two feet. I reckon if we had of been there another week we would have got home to Australia, we would have dug right down through the ground. But anyhow, then on the Sunday, fifteenth of February, no firing at all. And we heard on the grapevine that they reckoned that we had

13:30 surrendered, we’d capitulated, we didn’t know anything at all about it. So there was no firing by the

Japs, there's no artillery or anything. And we thought well, either it's true or it's the lull before the storm and we're gonna cop everything that night. But then about eight o'clock that night they come and told us that we had surrendered, don't do anything at all, leave your rifles there, don't let any Japs come in to your hut. And someone

14:00 said, "Who won the war, us or the Japs? What, are we stopping them from coming in there?" They had rifles and everything like that so. Anyhow we were there and on the Monday and the Tuesday we then marched out to Selerang Barracks, right out the other end of Singapore Island. And that's when we started living in the quarters out there, the married quarters, the English battalion that were out there.

14:30 And it was funny out there, there was no Japs in the camp at all, the camp was run by our own officers and everything like that. Then we went on a working party into Singapore, Adam Park and Thompson Road working parties, forming a road up to a memorial that they were going to put up. Then

15:00 I was one of the first lot to get bashed up there, five of us got bashed up and then sent back to Changi [Gaol] before Black Jack Galleghan [commanding officer of the Australians], they wanted him to try us and he wouldn't try us until he heard from his officers in Singapore. And then when he did find out he said, "Oh, as far as the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] is concerned, you can forget all about it, as far as the Japs are concerned, you've been severely punished." So went back to our lines and then we went in on another working

15:30 party in Havelock Road with trucks. The trucks were going to all the various stores and godowns [warehouses] and loading the trucks up and taking them down to the wharves and putting them on the boats to go back to Japan. And we're on that and then we come back to Singapore, got back to Selerang and then there was the F Force then that was going to a convalescent camp up in

16:00 Thailand somewhere, so we got a train in the big rice trucks and went from Singapore to Ban Pong in Thailand. And we got off the train there and spent one night there then we started to march. We marched a hundred and ninety-eight miles right up to She-no-sonka-eye [phonetic], which was just this side of the Three Pagoda Pass, on the Burma border.

16:30 And then we started working there on the railway and cholera broke out in the camp and then the two months we were there we lost seven hundred with cholera and other diseases. We went to the next camp then, an English camp and had to clean up the camp when we got in there, they had no hygiene or anything there at all. And from there I went to Burma in the

17:00 hospital up there, Thanbyuzayat, at what they called the Fifty-Five Kilo [camp]. Major Hunt was the senior officer of F Force and he started this hospital up there. Went up to the hospital and that was, I was up there from July August '43 until October '43, so I was, sixty years ago today I was up at that hospital. And then came back on the railway, back when the railway was completed

17:30 they put us on the train to take us back to Kanchanabur, we called it Kanburi in those days, it's Kanchanabur now. And course when the train went up a hill we had to all hop out and walk up the hill, because the train wouldn't take us up the hill there on the lines because the lines that we built weren't very safe anyhow. We didn't like getting on a train going over those lines. But anyhow we stopped at Kanchanabur for a couple of weeks and then we

18:00 went back to Singapore and went into Changi Gaol in the end of '43, beginning of '44 and we stopped in there all of 1944 and worked on the aerodrome, started work on the Changi Aerodrome. And then the beginning of 1945 we were moved out behind the jail and then we were preparing the defences of Singapore then, digging tunnels into the

18:30 hills and machine gun nests and everything around the place. And then the war finished, we didn't believe it of course. We come home on the Wednesday night which was the thirteenth of August and those chaps who were in camp, they heard from the secret radios that they had there, that the war was over. They said the war was over. We didn't believe them. We said, "If we don't go out to work tomorrow, then the war's over." but we still went out to work on the

19:00 Thursday the fourteenth of February and no, no, the sixteenth of February that's right [actually August]. The fifteenth of February when the war was supposed to be finished, and they signed the treaty was the Wednesday the fifteenth of Feb, ah, of August 1945. And we still went out to work on the sixteenth of August and that night we come home and they said, "I bet you any money you like the war's over, put your money down, we'll cover it." and everything like that.

19:30 "If we don't go out to work tomorrow, we'll believe you." And we still went out to work on Friday the eighteenth of August. And about eleven o'clock, it was raining, and in those days the officers didn't go out on working parties, so the sergeant or a warrant officer used to take the working party out and argue the point with the Japs all day long and try and get the best for the section you had. So then, a

20:00 runner come out, a Jap runner come out from Changi somewhere and all I could hear was, "Jalan, Changi," which meant, 'March Changi.' So they marched us back, and all the other working parties were coming back so the Japs told the officers that, "Oh you've been working pretty hard now, you can have a couple of day's holiday." So we knew then that the war was over, they still didn't tell us, they were still on guard over us. So if you walked outside

20:30 the jail, which we did, to get some food and that, you had to bypass their camp where they were because they still had their guns, we didn't have any guns at all. So we remained in Singapore, then the occupation force came in and Lord Mountbatten was there, and we used to say, "When are we going home?" "Just a little bit longer and you'll go home." So we christened him 'Linger Longer Louis',

21:00 that was Louis Mountbatten, so we christened him 'Linger Longer Louis'. And then we sailed from Singapore at the end of September 1945 on the Duntroon, we went as far as Darwin and that ship was going to Sydney and there was an Arrow in Darwin port. They'd got in the day before us and had leave for twenty-four hours whereas we didn't get any leave, we went onto their ship and we were going to go

21:30 straight home that next morning. So we bunged on a turn then [caused a fuss] and we got leave that night and went to a dance in Darwin. First time we ever heard of the Hokey Pokey or saw the Hokey Pokey dance. And then we went back on the boat that night and we sailed next morning and got into Brisbane here on the fourth of October 1945,

22:00 minus quite a few of our mates. So that was home, we went out by car out to Greenslopes Hospital, that's where we met our parents and relations and had leave that night to go home I think, from memory, then we went back into hospital, we were in there for about a month. Then I went down to Burleigh Convalescent Depot then. I was down there and I thought to myself , "Well,

22:30 I'll get out of the army and go down to the coast for a holiday." Then I thought it over and I thought, "No, I'll stop in the army and go down and have my holiday down there and let them pay me for the holiday down there." Which I did and I stopped down there till February 1946 and then got my discharge and went down to Sydney and Melbourne for a holiday and met up with all my mates down there, and course all you did was drink.

23:00 And then I come back in May and I said to me mother, "I'm going back to Melbourne now" because I had met a little girlfriend down in Melbourne. So I said, "I'm going back to Melbourne." She said, "No you're not, you're starting work." So in those days, you did what your mother and father told you, so I started work then back at the Brisbane City Council where I left. Is that all you want or what?

Oh just, we'll briefly go over

23:30 **the next...**

Yeah, oh well I stopped at the Brisbane City Council, down at the main depot, Saint Paul's Terrace where I left from and then went out to Tennyson Power House, and did the day labour job out there. No, we went from Saint Paul's Terrace to Northey Street to Tennyson Power House and back in the City Hall. And then I

24:00 tried to get a promotion in the Planning & Building Department, so I couldn't get a promotion there so I got a promotion to the Works Department and went over the South Brisbane Depot which was in Stanley Street. And then they called applications for the high position in the Planning & Building Department which I applied for and I got that back, which is what I wanted before I had to move to the Works Department. So the last day I was in South Brisbane was the

24:30 last day of the tied Test between West Indies and Australia and, saw the last day and that last over that Wes Hall bowled. And then I went back in the City Hall and I worked in City Hall right through to 1965. In 1964 I applied for the job of Secretary of the Services Canteen Trust Fund up in Victoria Barracks, no, it was Assistant Secretary.

25:00 I didn't get the job because another chap wanted a job, he was totally and permanently incapacitated pensioner, he wanted to work again so he got the job. And I was still with the City Council and the Secretary died in the October so he was put straight into Acting Secretary and he was confirmed as the Secretary. And then the Chairman of the Committee asked me did I still want the job of Assistant Secretary.

25:30 I said, "Yes" so I left the City Council and I started up there on the fourteenth of February. And the Secretary on the Monday, I think it was the fourteenth, he had a stroke, I started work at nine o'clock, the Secretary had a stroke at eleven, went to Greenslopes Hospital and he died the next afternoon. So I was Acting Secretary of that department, then I stopped there.

26:00 There was two secretaries had died within three months or four months of one another and everyone was backing oh, everything happens in threes, and I made sure it didn't happen to me anyhow. So I stopped there until the Canteen Trust Fund, we did education and welfare work for ex-service men and women from Second World War and education of the children. And the job also entailed Secretary of the Australian Military

26:30 Forces Relief Trust Fund, and that was interest free loans to serving soldiers. So I stopped there till 1986 when the Canteen Trust Fund money ran out then and then I finished work, paid work that was. By that time I was also State Vice President of the RSL [Returned and Services League], had a stint as Secretary of the ex-POW [Prisoner of War] Association, so I've been working in

27:00 those voluntary jobs ever since.

Good, alright.

That's a long history. Some parts I get emotional, I start to cry, I get emotional easily.

That's okay, that's fine, it's understandable. We'll go right back to the beginning when you're a child to start off with and we'll go into some more detail now.

27:30 **You ready? You told us a bit about where you grew up, with, tell us about your father, what he did?**

Oh my father served in World War I, he got wounded a couple of times and then as a matter of fact, two years ago, I went back, I went to France and Belgium and was able to visit the places where he was wounded

28:00 in March 1918 and August 1918. So I visited both of those places, that's another story, I'll come to that later on I think too, the trip over there. But, when I was a child he worked in the Forestry up at Amamoor where he was down the nursery, looking after all the pine trees and everything like that. Until we

28:30 came to Brisbane end of 1925, beginning of '26 and then he had jobs, he worked at the Brisbane City Council as a miner, some carpentering, everything like that. And then, he worked right through and then he used to go up to Ayr to do cane cutting. During the Depression when there was

29:00 no work in Brisbane, he'd go up to the cane cutting up in Ayr. Was good wages up there so he'd be up there for six months and then he'd come back to Brisbane home again. And then he'd try and get a job here and in those Depression days it was pretty tough. I can remember going to the BCC Stores, Brisbane Cash & Carry it was, with a chit [voucher] for seventeen and six or

29:30 something like that, going round and getting all the groceries for the week for that amount of money and then you'd go to the butcher with a chit for four or five shillings to get the meat for the whole week, something like that, when he was on the unemployment benefits.

What's a chit?

A piece of paper, chit, you know, write it out on there, what you were entitled to, C-H-I-T, a chit.

30:00 **I've never heard of it.**

Haven't ya? Yeah, so when I went to the war he was working on the wharf, he was a wharf labourer here.

Did he ever tell you about his wartime experiences?

Oh yes he told us a bit about it. He was wounded twice and he went to England and he met up with his cousins over there. And then

30:30 he came back to France again and he's only back three days and he got wounded again so he went back there and he was back in England when the war finished. And as my nephew who did a lot of research into the family history and also my father's war record and all that, he said, "If he spent more time in Blighty," in England as they called it, Blighty, in those days "than he did over in France" he said.

31:00 We were lucky otherwise we mightn't have been here now like, you know, if he had of stopped. But my uncle was there too, he was in France and he had his twenty-first birthday on the way home, paralysed all down the right side, he got hit in the head with a shell, there was a hole in his head and he was paralysed all down the right side. And he was on, and my grandfather was over there too, he was in World War I too. So the three of them

31:30 spent time in World War I.

Did they fight together at all?

No, no, no, all in different units. My father was in the 4th Pioneers, my uncle was in the 25th Battalion and my grandfather was in the engineers.

Would they ever tell you about the bad stuff of war?

Oh well when he got hit the last time he told us about that. When they, see he was in the 4th Pioneers, so used to have to dig the trenches and

32:00 cart stuff up and that. They were billeted in this hut this night and then the Germans started to shell the place and they went to race out the door and one shell lobbed outside the door. And his mate got hit in the stomach and he died later on. But my father had a piece of shell which was taken out of his rump and with it was a splinter of the

32:30 wood where it hit the door and come in, about that square it was, of solid steel. And that's when the last time, and first time he got hit in the head but the last time he got hit in the rump. So that was, oh, but he never, they used to say well war, you know, it wasn't all a picnic and everything like that; but course, when you're young you don't think of those things at all, you know, you just think of

33:00 going away and enlisting and going overseas, you know. You didn't think of fighting or getting killed or

getting taken prisoner or anything at all like that see.

And what about your mother, what was she like?

Well my mother was a funny woman; she was very domineering. My mother-in-law was better to me than my mother was, years to come. But no,

33:30 she ruled my brother and I with an iron hand kind of business and we had problems and there's oh, lot of things that happened that I would never say about anyhow, on the air anyhow.

That's fine, you don't have to. And tell us, you mentioned you grew up near Gympie?

Yeah Amamoor, we lived, when I was born, my mother came down to Brisbane to have me, it was in

34:00 Tottenham Street, Annerley or South Brisbane, right opposite the Princess Alexandra Hospital, which is, now, where Target and the shopping centre is. Well there was a nursing home down in that street and that's where I was born there in 1920. And then they were living in Mary Street, Gympie at the time, my father was a miner up there and then he went out to Amamoor out in the Forestry,

34:30 and that's where we lived in a house out there till 1920, end of '25-'26 when I had to start school.

And what was this area like as a kid?

Up there?

Yeah.

Oh, well I didn't, you know, when you're two and three and four you didn't know much about it. I have been back there, later on holidays, back to Amamoor and everything like that. It was a country town, a very country

35:00 town, you'd go into the township of Amamoor, we were outside Amamoor, quite some miles outside Amamoor. But the township was only one street and the railway station there and that's about all it was in the township there.

And you've talked a little bit about your family dealing with the Depression, the chit, but tell us more,

35:30 **how was your family coping?**

How tough it was? Oh well it was tough, I remember my father, he used to walk. We were living in Thompson Estate, in the street opposite the PA [Princess Alexandra] Hospital, up there in Cahill Street it was. And he used to walk there right through into the city and right out the other side of Brisbane, every day, looking

36:00 for work everywhere. And then of course, very little work around the place and he always used to tell us when, they were lined up looking for a job. And the unemployment office might send fifteen chaps out for a job and they might only want three. So course my father had a head on his shoulder and his brother, my uncle was there too,

36:30 not the one that was in the war but the other one, Uncle Fred he was there. And my father said, "When they point anywhere in your direction, you go straight out." You know, they might say, "Oh, you, you, you, you, for a job" see. So he said, "If his hands come down anywhere around there, you're first out, go out." That's me father used to do, by the time he dropped his hand he'd be right out in front of him. So even though he hadn't pointed to him,

37:00 he wouldn't send him back. He said, "I pointed to the cove next to you." But my uncle wasn't like that, he wouldn't get a job because he wouldn't move at all but my father was a go-getter like that. I mean if he pointed anywhere in his direction he'd be out there for the job, because he had to get a job. But anyhow and then he used to walk all the time, and he used to go down of a Saturday morning, I remember going down from our place down to the Five Ways, Wooloongabba, Andersons and meat shop there.

37:30 They used to have specials on every, like, Saturday morning and he'd walk all the way down. It was only about a penny or tuppence in the tram but you couldn't afford that going down and back. So he walked down, this morning down there and got the meat, my mother had written down on the piece of paper for him. And come back and she's unwrapping it, she said, "This meat smells, it's bad." He said, "Oh it can't be bad." So

38:00 she brought it over to him and showed him, it was, it was off anyhow. So he said, "Give it to me." So he walked all the way back down to the Gabba [Wooloongabba, Brisbane] again, walked into the shop. The cove come over and he said, "This meat's bad." "Oh, it looks alright to me." he said. And then my father said, "Well shove your bloody nose in it and smell it then." And so the boss come over, "Oh, don't do anything, give him what he wants or anything at all." because the

38:30 shop was full you know, they didn't want any bad publicity. But then he had to walk like, one, two, three, four times he had to walk down and back down to the Gabba. So those are the things that, and as I

mentioned, going to the grocer's shop with a piece of paper for seventeen and six on it, like a chit they used to call it. And then you'd go in to get all the groceries there to add up

39:00 to seventeen and six. You couldn't get any more because you didn't have any extra money to, paper money like, and meat, the same way.

Tape 2

00:36 **Okay so tell me the story about having to register with the police?**

Yeah well, all the unemployed people had to, and it was at the local Police Station and there's this chap in Brisbane here, the sergeant of police, a real old Irishman. And then any of the chaps that came in and he'd say, "What's your name,

01:00 son?" It's, "Joe Blow" or whatever their name was. "Where do you come from?" "Thargomindah." "Oh no son, you come from Dubbo, D-U-B-B-O, Dubbo. So everybody was from Dubbo because he couldn't spell anything more than half a dozen letters. But everybody was from Dubbo, D-U-B-B-O, Dubbo. So that's a family joke now, whenever we go through Dubbo in New South Wales, it's always reminiscing of that, what my father

01:30 used to say.

Tell me about how the unemployment benefits worked?

Well if you couldn't get a job you had to go to the Police Station then you got so much money. I don't know whether it was, say it was twenty-two and sixpence, well you'd have to work out what you wanted for groceries and what you wanted for meat. So it was seventeen and six for the groceries and five shillings for meat, something like that, to add up

02:00 to the amount which was the unemployment benefit for a family.

Did you have to work for this, like they have these days?

Well no they used to send them out on the road but then you'd be looking for a job all the time see. Nowadays, I don't agree with that, this 'working for the unemployment benefit' because while you're working there, you can't get a

02:30 full time job. And I know as I mentioned before I think, my father used to walk everywhere, all over Brisbane looking for a job, every day he'd be out. So if he was on a job doing something or other like that, he wouldn't be able to look for a permanent job. But they did have, some people were put on various jobs like that but I can't remember very much about that part of it,

03:00 like the working of it like that. But that was a very tough time and it was about the end of our school year too 1932, '33, '34 and '35. In '33 I was at the Buranda Boys' State School right up until I passed the scholarship there in 1933. And of course those days we walked to school, you didn't have any,

03:30 there was no going by bus to school, you'd go by tram to the Gabba then a tram out to Stones Corner. So you'd walk, I used to walk right past the Princess Alexandra Hospital all the way over to Stones Corner. You'd walk there every morning, you'd walk home of a night, in sandshoes or bare feet; so you didn't have shoes or socks at all, there were no shoes or socks in those days, unfortunately.

04:00 So we were, went to Buranda State School till 1933 then I went to Churchland Grammar School.

Did you enjoy Buranda State School?

Oh yes I liked it, we played sport there, we played football, running, the athletic sports. In 1930 I think it was we got the, second,

04:30 never ever got first, we got second in the relay team of Queensland at the Exhibition Ground so I still got a, well no, I've given it to my grandson now, a little medal that we got for coming second. And then we played football, played cricket. In those days my nickname was Eddie because Eddie Gilbert, the Aboriginal fast bowler,

05:00 he got Bradman for a duck; caught Waterman the wicketkeeper, bowled Gilbert for a duck. So I used to bowl fast at school and I got christened Eddie, you know, Eddie Gilbert after the Aboriginal fast bowler. But we played cricket there and I've been to the Gabba ground, we used to go to the Gabba there for all the Shield matches [Sheffield Shield cricket competition]. I saw

05:30 Don Bradman play there many times and all those old, Victor Richardson from South Australia and Woodfull. And I was there for the 1932 Bodyline Series, down at the Gabba; I saw that, when Harold Larwood was the English fast bowler, bowling bodyline, right at the body or on the leg stump. And Bradman and

06:00 McCabe, and Fingleton, and Oldfield the wicketkeeper and all those people. Oh, we used to love going down to the cricket ground, you know, down there of a Saturday afternoon and watch the cricket down there. And see Bradman, he was the greatest batsman I've ever seen. And I've seen some like, you know, all those years and ever since, but he was absolutely perfect,

06:30 he could put the ball where he wanted to, anywhere at all. But it was good going down the Gabba. It's nothing like it is now, I was down there, when'd I go down, Tuesday for lunch at the Cricketers' Club with one of the chaps from work. And looking out over the ground now and thinking back what it was like in those days.

What was it like?

It was, well it was wooden seats, tiered

07:00 seats right up and if you went to a Shield match or a test match you wouldn't leave your seat otherwise somebody'd come up and sit in it. There was no reserved seats in those days, you'd have to grab a seat and you stopped there. And the young kids then used to come round with the soft drinks in little trays selling soft drinks, but they'd never get half way up the tiers of the seats. And those that did buy the bottles of soft drinks, they'd just

07:30 throw the bottles down on the ground, and the other kids used to come around, pick them up, then go to the taps, fill 'em up with water and come round and sell bottles of water, because you weren't game to leave your seat to go and get any water or anything at all. So, oh some of them were enterprising kids in those days, I can tell you.

Was there the section, like they used to have at the Gabba, like the Hill, which was a bit of a rowdy area?

Well,

08:00 no there wasn't a rowdy area in those days. There was, I can remember we used to sit down on the ground when we went down, we never went up the stands or anything, we used to sit on the ground. And there's a white picket fence that was right round. And I remember this day, somebody couldn't see something at all and they knocked one of the pickets off so they could see through it. You know within an hour there was hardly any pickets around the whole ground,

08:30 everybody had knocked 'em down. So after that they wired them on so you couldn't knock them down at all. But that's what you'd be down there looking through the fence like that at the cricket ground there.

And was it licensed?

Mmm?

Was it licensed?

I wouldn't have a clue, I was only eight or nine or ten in those days or eleven, I didn't drink, meant nothing to me at all. I presume there was places where you could buy a beer there, I don't know at all.

09:00 I didn't, I never into that at those days at all.

And at Buranda State School, and then I'm supposing at the Grammar School, they were boys' schools?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, the Buranda Boys' State School, when we went to Buranda first, you'd go into the girls' school, combined boys and girls, only for a couple of classes, about eighteen months. Then you'd either move to the girls' school

09:30 or the boys' school. The boys' school, at Buranda Boys we had boys there all the time right through and then the Churchland Grammar School was a boys' school too.

So how did you meet girls?

Well we used to go to dances round the place, down to the 4QG [a radio station] dances down Downey Street and the Blind Institution, down to Jazzland, no,

10:00 no the Trocadero that's right, down on South Brisbane and the one over in, all round the place we used to go to dances, about three or four mates. And this was after we left school we'd go to dances like, you know. But then oh yeah, we used to play tennis of a weekend at tennis courts and have our own clubs and that and

10:30 girls and boys in the team. And then oh, what, do you want on that part, further on or what?

No, no I was just wondering in the school days…?

Yeah well, we met girls and used to when we were living in Cahill, in Bowen Street, most of the girls and boys round that area

11:00 used to go to Junction Park School which was a co-ed, like boys and girls see. So it was quite a few of the girls we used to know around our area would go to Junction Park School see, so. And then we used

to go to the Boomerang Picture Show, which was just down beside Julia Street on Ipswich Road, it's gone now anyhow, they've pulled that down too. So we used to go down there for, I can remember going down there and the matinee,

11:30 in the old silent pictures and course we couldn't read everything, my brother and I. My mother or father'd be there and they'd be reading it out to us, what was on the screen. And then the talkies [movies with sound] started and we used to go down there of a Saturday night or Friday nights and get the passes out [intermission passes]. And most probably wouldn't come back in after half time or we'd come back after the lights went out, when they weren't on the door and you'd keep your pass.

12:00 So next Friday night we'd go down and we'd go at half time to see what colour the passes were anyhow, and come in half time without paying for the next week or something like that. Oh yeah, we used to have good times when we were young.

And what sort of things would you do, for example on school holidays?

Well during school holidays mainly, my aunt and uncle had hotels, they were down at Urbenville, New South Wales, down by

12:30 Woodenbong, Kyogle, down around there and up in Pittsworth, up outside Toowoomba. And my brother and I used to go there for the whole six weeks holiday.

What sort of hotels?

Licensed hotels, you know the hotels, they had accommodation in those days. All the country hotels had accommodation as well as the bar

13:00 trade. And of course in New South Wales the bar trade used to be six to six in those days, it opened at six o'clock and closed at six o'clock at night, when we went down to Urbenville to the hotel down there, the Crown Hotel Urbenville. There wasn't another hotel, Woolbuyers'. Woodenbong was about seven miles away; that had no hotel. And they were putting a new main road through there and of course my uncle used to be in that pub all

13:30 night long. I mean they'd be in there drinking all night long, you know, right through until about three or four o'clock in the morning, then get up and start again, open up at six o'clock. Or my aunt used to open up at six o'clock and he'd have a sleep then until late in the morning. But they took the leasehold of it, they had it paid off in three years because of the trade that they were getting from this roadworks through there. But that was our holidays but we didn't have a car, our family never had a car, so we never went on

14:00 holidays down the seaside or anything at all like that.

What sort of things would you do when you were staying at the hotel?

Oh we'd get to know people in the area and lads who lived in the town and we'd play cricket or you know, go out, walking round the town, go down the butter factory to look at the butter factory or stop in the hotel or listen to the radio. Because in, when we were up in

14:30 Urbenville, was it Urbenville or Pittsworth I think, it was around about the Bodyline Series [famous cricket series], when the Bodyline Series was on and you'd be listening to the radio of the matches and everything like that. Of course there's no television or anything at all like that in those days, at all. So you, it was only on radio that you could hear anything at all. The wireless as we used to call it, not radio, it wasn't radios it was

15:00 the wireless.

And after you left school, you mentioned that you did some courses in shorthand...?

Oh yeah, that was at near, well I left the, I passed the Junior at Churchland Grammar School and then rather than stay home and look

15:30 for work, going in every day, I went down to this school to learn, whether it was maths, but shorthand, typing and bookkeeping down there. Although I did bookkeeping at the Churchy [Grammar School] and I passed that in the Junior so I knew a bit about that. Then the shorthand, typewriting in case the, needed it in a job. Then you'd look the paper up in the morning and you'd see jobs and then you'd tell the teacher, "I've

16:00 gotta go for a job at such and such a time." or something like that. And half the time you didn't have to go for a job, you went up town kind of business, out of the classroom. But then, at that time it was hard to get a job. Everywhere, you'd write out all your references that you had, you'd have to write them out all or in, with carbon paper to get duplicates of it. Then when you applied for a position,

16:30 you'd put in your copies of your references. And you'd apply for positions, every day there'd be jobs in the paper that you'd apply for it, but of course there'd be hundreds applying for jobs. And when you went in for a job, you'd have to go in for interviews and one of the things, I'll digress back a bit. When I was living at Amamoor, on the Merryvale line, my father

17:00 used to work down the Forestry and he'd come in the back gate. And there was a verandah and we used to lean, or, get up on the side of the verandah and wave to him as he come in. And I overbalanced and fell oh, about ten, fifteen feet it was, down and broke my arm. Up until then I could talk, I used to say, "Mummy shoots magpie

17:30 off the tree." and everything like that. When I broke me arm I couldn't speak again. I had to learn to speak again and I stuttered and stammered, all the way through school, I stuttered.

Why?

Oh I don't know, nervous system at all, but I broke me arm and I don't know what it was but I just couldn't talk, so I had to learn to talk again and all my life I stuttered and stammered. And that was one of the

18:00 drawbacks I had when I was going for a job because I'd be outside waiting to go in and I had butterflies in my stomach; and I knew that I'm gonna stutter and stammer when I went in there and I couldn't get the words out of my throat, I'd ah, ah, ah, ah. You might have seen already a few times I've stammered here now, not very much nowadays but I did a course with Philip O'Brien Hall, which is a speech therapist.

18:30 Cause one of the jobs I got was down at Ford Motor Company, I had to show visitors over the plant, the whole workings of the plant where the chassis starts and how it goes, the engine goes on and before goes out. So they told me then, "You can't stop in this job unless you do something about your speech." So I did that, so I learned to eradicate it quite a bit but when I was first in the army here,

19:00 when I was an NCO and I'd be giving orders, I couldn't give an order, starting with a vowel. I'd be, "Slope a-a-a-a-arms!" it used to get caught in my throat. "Stand at e-e-e-ease!" I couldn't do that, while they were facing me, but if they were marching I could give the orders. I don't know, it was funny, even after the war when I come home and I was working at the Brisbane City Council

19:30 we used to have an adding machine, you'd be calling out a lot of figures for a cove [bloke] to add up and that, I used to stammer and that like that. And after I got married, my wife helped me a lot and since then I've been on TV and spoke at reunions, a thousand men and everything like that. Course I always got the idea into me head that when you're on

20:00 your feet, you're the number one person, everybody's listening to you, no matter who your audience is. They don't buy your food, they don't buy your clothes, to hell with what they think about it, while you're on your feet, you're the number one person. But that was, I lost a lot of good jobs, I went for Qantas. If I had of got that job I would have been up high in Qantas by now, or retired now but I would have done well in those. Commonwealth Bank,

20:30 unless you knew the Prime Minister's cousin or something, you never got a job in the Commonwealth Bank. All those good jobs I went for, oil companies and that, I missed out on a lot of them because of my speech, is what I felt anyhow.

This course that you did, the, you said a...?

Oh the State Commercial High?

No the Peter O'Brien...

Oh Philip O'Brien Hall.

Philip O'Brien Hall. Can you tell me what that course involved?

Well it was learning to

21:00 speak. You'd have to speak slowly or look into a mirror and speak like that, and see how your face was and everything like that. But it was learning to break up the words into syllables and everything like that and to speak slowly, positively and everything like that. But it's alright in theory but when it comes to

21:30 there, but that was, as I said, and then when I was going for the scholarship, our teacher, Leslie Kadczucski was his name, he reckoned he was a Russian Polish Jew, that's what he used to tell us. But when you'd be asked anything and I'd stutter, "Spit it out Gilbert, if it's only a brick it'll relieve ya." Oh gee I used to boil you know, you'd boil inside, that's what he used to say. "Spit it out

22:00 Gilbert, if it's only a brick, it'll relieve ya." You know, some people are, were, you know, I don't suppose he thought of what he said, how it would affect you at all like that. But I can remember that at the State School in the scholarship examinations when he pushed us through. Well he got the whole classroom a scholarship and he got the Lily Medal [school prize] out of our class that year too, at Buranda School.

22:30 But he worked us, we were, what, Monday to Thursday, you'd be there until at least five o'clock at night before you left to go home, then you'd have homework. Then Friday you'd knock everybody off at two o'clock and put on a tennis tournament if they played tennis, and prizes and everything like that. But he was a hard man but he was a good teacher.

This Philip O'Brien-Hall course,

23:00 **the things that they taught you in it, when you think back, did they stay with you?**

Oh well, I think it was more of an inferiority complex, stammering and stuttering like that. You thought more of what people are going to think of you and that was worse, than all the time like that. And stuttering at school, I mean b-b-b-b-b, you couldn't get the words out, like that.

23:30 I mean, I've seen people now in public life, one of the heads in the Department of Veterans' Affairs, when I used to go down to Canberra for workshops down there. He still, and he's a grown man and he stutters like anything, he can't get the words out, he goes, "B-b-b-b," he'll go on for quite a few minutes before he can get the word out like that.

24:00 So I don't know whether he's ever had any tuition or anything at all but that did help me because otherwise I still stopped at the Ford Motor Company so I must have improved quite a bit down there for them to keep me on there. But it was just, and it cost money for that course, which we didn't have very much in those days either,

24:30 1936-'37 that was.

What was your family's reaction to how, were they tolerant, were they kind about...?

Stuttering? Yeah, well they didn't mention it at all you know, it was the kids at school would mock you. And I had more fights at school about that than anything at all. But that's what it is you know, they'd mock

25:00 you and you'd blow your top you know, and you'd, whack, you know, and you'd be into a fight. That's what all my fights at school were about that.

How about after school?

Oh no, I didn't get into any, where'd I get into a fight? The Churchland Grammar School I got into one fight with this cove, I see him occasionally now, but no I never got into fights about it

25:30 although, you were self-conscious with it. I used to think well I'm gonna stutter, I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna not be able to talk. And then you wouldn't be able to talk; I mean you'd really talk yourself into that you're not going to be able to talk. And you were thinking what the other person was thinking, inferiority complex. But as I said, once you got, once I got it into my mind that I don't give a continental [damn] what you think about me at all, or how I speak,

26:00 you know, while I'm standing. And of course since the war, while I've been State Vice President of the RSL [Returned and Services League], I've been, for the last twenty-three years I was Chairman of the Girl in a Million Quest, the RSL Girl in a Million Quest which raises funds for War Veterans' Home and the veterans. And even those girls that have to speak in the public and everything like that,

26:30 that's what I always tell them all the time, when you're on your feet lassie, you're the number one person. Don't worry what anybody thinks or anything at all, whether the Queen's there or the Governor's there or anything at all, you're the number one person. So, over there I got a photo there, behind you, the one up there of all the different Girls in a Million. The first one, 1960 and '61 and everything like that, we had our fortieth anniversary of that in 19-

27:00 '98 was our fortieth anniversary. And we had about, practically all of them came to it, either on the Thursday night or the Friday night from all over Australia and one from England come out and everything like that. But that's what I used to tell all the girls, while you're on your feet; you're the number one person there. Don't worry about what anybody else and to get that superior

27:30 complex, not an inferiority complex.

That's interesting.

So, it is, it's true. I mean, when I was National President of POWs here, I went to New Zealand for their National Conference and Reunion, and had to address about a thousand of those people there, speak. When I used to be on the radio at one time, I used would

28:00 be a bit hesitant and that but I've been on TV and spoke on TV. And now I go out to some of the schools, back to the Churchland Grammar School to Year Two and then all the primary school up there and give them talks on Anzac and everything like that. And went out to Shailer Park the other month and gave the Year Six and Seven out there on prisoner of war days you know and various things that happened there.

28:30 Oh some, lot of funny things which I'll, if I can remember them like that. See, just a few of them came to me there what happened while we were prisoners of war, humorous things. If you didn't have a sense of humour you didn't get back, you had to have a sense of humour while you were a prisoner of war. But anyhow we were speaking about before the war weren't we?

Actually just in relation to the war, do you remember where you were, or where were you

29:00 **when you heard that war was declared?**

No, wouldn't have a clue, wouldn't have a clue. On the third of September 1939, I wouldn't have a clue where I was, I can't remember.

What are your first memories of hearing about the war?

Well the war was, when it was declared and that, I was only nineteen at the time, I'd just turned nineteen, so I thought oh,

29:30 I'll be going to the war, we'll go to the war, everybody's going to the war you know. And then I'll go to the war but as I mentioned before, briefly at the start I wasn't gonna join no infantry battalion and walk everywhere. So I joined the army service corps in the CMF [Citizens' Military Force], like it was CMF or militia in those days.

I guess, just interested the way

30:00 **sort of when war was first declared or just beginning the way it affected or changed your life at all before joining up?**

Well no I made, no it was the September the war started. Well as soon as I could after that, I joined the militia; down to join what unit I wanted to go in. Some of them were in the artillery, wanted to go in artillery, others wanted to go in the infantry see.

Did you talk to your father about

30:30 **the outbreak of war?**

Oh not much, he said, "War's not fun." I mean he told you that because you didn't listen to him anyhow, you didn't listen to the older people telling you about war, you wanted to experience it yourself, that's what it was.

What did you want to experience about it?

Well no, you wanted to join up and go overseas, that's it, away from the country. You wanted to get a trip overseas, that's what you thought about more than anything. I don't think, I

31:00 don't know whether I should say this or not, but I don't think very many people enlisted for patriotic reasons, for King and Country. I don't think very many, some might have when Europe fell, like over there, Dunkirk and that, they joined up, but not too many joined up for patriotic reasons. I think they, well a lot of them joined up because they were out of work, and to get paid

31:30 work in the army, they were unemployed, and others just joined up for the excitement and the experience of going overseas and everything like that. You didn't think of the consequences, you just felt that; think of going overseas or something like that, outside Australia. Because they went overseas in World War I, they went over to the Palestine then over to France, everything like that. Of course we thought we'd be going over there

32:00 the same way, Hitler started the war, so we'd be going over there too see. The 6th Division went over to Africa and North Africa and that, so that's where you wanted to go, you'd be going over there, so that's the main reason.

You mentioned King and Country, what was your attitude towards the 'King' part of that at the time, the Empire, what did you feel…?

No, no, you never ever thought of it, well I didn't think of that, anything at all. You only, we used to have

32:30 our Sunday School picnic on the King's Birthday, it used to be carried on the third of June I think it was in the old days, when we were kids. You'd have your Sunday School picnic on the King's Birthday, but that's about all. We didn't think of the King, King George V it was, think, was it King George V, or King George VI, no, it was King George VI. No, King George V died,

33:00 Edward VIII, Edward VIII come on, Edward, Teddy, and he wanted to marry Mrs Simpson, and he married Mrs Simpson so they didn't want her as Queen. So he abdicated in favour of his brother King George VI so he was the King. I mean, that Teddy was well liked in Australia anyhow but...

What sort of allegiance did you feel to England, to the Empire, at all?

33:30 Oh no, none, well I didn't feel any allegiance to anything at all, you just went over to fight. You just went over to join the army and go overseas, not to save England or anything at all like that, or to save Australia I didn't think, either.

Who did you expect to be fighting?

In the Middle East.

And who?

Oh the Germans, they were fighting over there and the Italians, they were fighting over there. But then of course we got side-tracked and we went off to Malaya to fight

34:00 the Nippon as we had to call them. They weren't Japanese, they were Nippon soldiers and it was the Land of Nippon, so we had to fight those yellow so-and-sos.

You mentioned that you joined the militia first…

Yeah I joined the militia in 19-.....39, in September October, 1939.

How do you join up, where did you go, what did you have to, what procedures…?

I

34:30 went into, well I joined up and they were having monthly camps. And there's an October camp I missed out on that, I joined up in October like and then I went in the November camp out at Enoggera, and...

What did you do at the camp?

Oh, we were trained; we had our uniforms and went out on

35:00 trucks out in the bush out at Ferny Grove and all those places in the army trucks and everything like that. And learned, see with the army service corps you learned, we supplied the food to the various other units and when we went up to Redbank in the three months' camp in January, we were in the supply section of the food. So we used to have to issue the food out to all the different units,

35:30 which were militia units, the 61st the Cameron Highlanders and the AIF were there too at the same time too, so we'd issue the food out to the camp see.

And what were your first impressions of army life?

Army life, well out at Enoggera our first impression in the militia was in tents out there. Oh, it

36:00 was enjoyable being with a whole group of other chaps. Like, you know, you got to know quite a few of them and made your mates up and everything like that. But it was camaraderie amongst them all like that.

What sort of developed that you know…?

Oh mateship, well when you, I mean it's a bit different from school days.

36:30 Although you had your mates at school and that, it's a bit different. But when you go in the army, you're oh, I suppose we met coves we didn't like too and you met the coves that you did like and hung round with them, you'd go everywhere with them to dances and different things like that. Oh no, it was just army life,

37:00 it was quite good in those days.

How did you find the introduction to discipline?

Well in the militia there wasn't that much, in our army service corps we didn't have that discipline, we did go out on, oh, we did go out on parades at Enoggera there and have to drill and that. But it was mainly when I joined the AIF that you had the discipline, that

37:30 you know, you had to do this and do that, and weren't allowed to do that, weren't allowed to do something else until you become an NCO. Then you had to instruct discipline then too, you had to tell them what they couldn't do, everything like that too see.

How did you find being told what you could and couldn't do?

Oh well you knew that things were like that, you had to be in at a certain time. In camp you only had a leave pass for certain

38:00 times, and other times when you didn't get a leave pass, when we were out at Grovely, we used to sneak out through the wire and go into the local dances around the place.

Was that adhering to discipline?

No it wasn't adhering to discipline but that's what you did. I mean if you had to do things, like on drilling and everything like that, you'd do that, but when you weren't on duty, well you either stopped in

38:30 camp or you went out through the wire and didn't have a leave pass so you didn't come through the gateway. Although I remember once when we're out there, the two mates and I, we all went out without our leave passes anyhow and we were in the city. And one of them got a nosebleed, Charlie Smith. Oh, it bled; we couldn't stop his nose bleeding so we had to take him back to camp.

39:00 And we had to go through the gate then and look for the RAP, the Regimental Aid Post they call, where the medical people were. So course we had to go the gateway and none of us had passes so we bluffed our way in, said we, you know, had to bring him in here, this way and that and we got through it alright. But that was one time we came through the gate to come home, otherwise you'd go back through the wire and crawl into your tents. And then they used to put on

39:30 counts, they'd come around to the tents after 'lights out' to check how many were in the tent, if there was any missing from the tents. Like they have a roll call like but they'd come round to the tent. If there was six of you in a tent they'd come in and expect to see six bodies in the tent, like that. So sometimes you knew what time they'd be coming round, you'd have to be back in by that time and after they'd been, then you'd go out, something like that. Or you might wait for

40:00 the roll call then you'd go out after the roll call, something like that. But anyhow...

Tape 3

00:39 **So, yeah, so, this time in the militia, was this when you met your...?**

Ah, well, hang on, hang on, that was 1939, no I knew her before that and then I... Well I mean she wasn't my girlfriend, she was knocking round with a whole crowd of us used to knock round together.

01:00 And then it wasn't till 1940 then and when I was in the AIF and then 1941 we got engaged. And then she wanted to get married before I went and I said, "No." I didn't know how I was going to come home, whether you know, whether I came home or not, or without legs, without arms

01:30 or blind, any way at all, so I didn't.

You didn't want to marry for your own reasons?

Well I didn't want to marry, not for my own reasons, but for how I'd come home, like that, you know, and then have to live all the rest of your life kind of business.

And what happened after the war?

Well during the war she joined the

02:00 AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service], I think it was the AWAS, one of the women's. Cause, when we went, enlisted, there was no women in the forces at all when we enlisted; it was only men. And the nurses of course because they were out of bounds to the soldiers, they were only there for officers, for the nurses, because they were all officers. But oh,

02:30 I lose track, what were we...?

We're talking about the woman you're engaged to...?

Oh yeah, well then we got engaged in March, and then course I went away down south, I was here for my twenty-first birthday that's right and then I went away then in the August. And then we used to write all the time right through until we were taken prisoner and then course no write,

03:00 we couldn't write letters from over there, all we were able was sixteen word post card like, you know. And they'd put, 'Am safe and well, please don't worry, birthday greetings for September.' My mother's birthday, my father's birthday and her birthday were all in September so I used to address it, 'Dear Mum & Belle,' like her included. And she was a bit crooked that she didn't get a letter, well, we couldn't write letters, I don't think they realised

03:30 at all. And then so, I don't know how it come about, but she had words with my mother, I know that much, or something like that, her mother. She felt that she was being pushed to one side, that she wasn't included in the family kind of business, and when she was gonna marry me, who she would've been in the family. So anyhow I don't know how it happened but then she got, then I didn't know she was married

04:00 until I got home. And then when I got home I saw her sister in the street and then I went over to her place anyhow, over here to see her mother and father, anyhow, because I used to know them quite well. And then went over to Dover Street, Hawthorn just up around the corner here and she was there. Anyhow she had a husband and I didn't have a wife at that time so

04:30 I just went out and enjoyed myself. Went down to, as I said to my mates now, they always have a go at me. I went down to Burleigh convalescent depot, spent time down there, went to Sydney and Melbourne and it was, drink, no, ah, wine, women and song and I didn't sing a note. Used to say that, I still say that to my mates

05:00 now and they have a go at me all the time. "Oh yes, I remember you, you went down there, wine, women and song and you never sang." So they're the, but no I enjoyed myself when I came back, I had a wonderful time down the coast and then went to Sydney and Melbourne and enjoyed meself before I had to start work again.

Was it hard to hear the news that she'd married someone else?

Well that was when I come home, oh well it was hard. I thought, even though she'd returned the ring, I thought oh well

05:30 when I did come home, I'd, you know, start it all over again, kind of business, you know. But it wasn't, she was married when I got home so that knocked that out. And then she divorced him I think and then she married somebody else again then, a second time. And now she's crippled up with arthritis, she can hardly walk, so I believe. I saw her one time in town not so long ago. Her

06:00 cousin who I met through her, he was in the war too, we were both in the war but he wasn't a prisoner of war, he's with me at the RSL and I often see him over at Coorparoo and everything like that. So he tells me a bit about her but I haven't seen her since me wife died anyhow, I haven't gone to see her anyhow. Anyhow she wouldn't be able to keep up with me walking along the footpath even,

06:30 now. So anyhow that's that part of it there.

And just one question on that too, how'd you hear the news that she was sending back the ring when you were in...?

Mum. I got that, I was one of the lucky ones; I got a hundred and six letters while I was a prisoner. Some of them never got a letter. The families were allowed to write one letter, or one member of the

07:00 family, your next of kin was allowed to write one letter per month. Well my mother used to write one a month, my father used to write one a month, my grandmother used to write one a month, my aunts all used to write one a month, so I used to get all these letters, like that and I was lucky I got all these letters. And then one of the letters that came through, "Don't worry son she returned your ring." and all this business, from my mother. So that's how I knew, I knew over there that she'd returned the ring, which

07:30 hit hard of course but then I think, "Oh when I come home we'll, I'll get her back anyhow." you know. So that was my attitude.

Just while we're on that, how important was it to receive letters when you were in...?

Oh it was good, it was good, if you got letters you were lucky. And of course the envelopes they came in, I smoked all the envelopes because they were cigarette paper, and I cut

08:00 off all the margins of the letters, all around, or tore 'em off, used that for cigarette paper too. So I've still got the letters inside that I got over there, all the letters, but. Oh yes, it was good to hear news, and my brother then, he joined the air force, well he was over in the armoured division over in West Australia, came back from there. And course my mother in a letter mentioned about the Americans being in the

08:30 Yeronga Park camps. She used to put, "In the camp just up the road, you know, in the park just up the road from our place." like that. Because if they put Yeronga Park, they'd, it would have been censored you know, they'd cut that piece out or something like that, you know. You'd get letters sometimes with bits and pieces cut out, the censor went through all the letters before they went.

The Japanese often didn't pass on the letters, how did you manage to...?

Well

09:00 some of them, they dumped a lot of our mail. I don't know how, I was lucky, I think I got more letters than anybody around that I know of. But some of my mates never got a letter the whole time.

Alright we better go back to...

Yeah, go back, yeah.

we're back to Enoggera.

Yeah Enoggera, yeah, yeah.

Tell us about why you started to think that you'd change from

09:30 **the militia?**

Oh yeah, well what it was, when I was in the militia, I did the November camp at Enoggera, then I did the three months camp up at Redbank. And when I went back to work and then I left the Ford Motor Company and started at Brisbane City Council, I got a letter saying to select where I wanted to go in the militia, Port Moresby

10:00 or Darwin. So I said, "I don't want to go either of those places." Port Moresby's up in New Guinea, it's almost Queensland, and Darwin's in Australia. I wanted to go overseas see. So I said, "No, I'll scrub that and I'll join the AIF." And that's when I decided I was gonna join the AIF. I wanted to join at that time but my mother wouldn't let me, otherwise I would've went to England in the, with

10:30 one of my mates who I worked with in the 6th Division Ammunition Company. He went over to England so I wanted to go that time but I was underage so the only way you could get in is if you put your age up, then they're likely to, your family'd be likely to pull you out. Because we had one chap when we were at Fraser's Paddock, he was only about seventeen and he joined up. His mother come out and

pulled him out of the camp and he had to

11:00 leave the camp and go home. So...

Do you remember seeing this?

Eh? Oh I remember seeing that, he cried like mad you know, having to leave everyone and go home. So you could have put your age up but no I didn't put me age up, as you know, when you're twenty you could go, that's when I, that was allowable. If you're twenty-one you could enlist whenever you like, if you were under age you had to be twenty before you could enlist. I took the papers home on the day I turned twenty

11:30 and they signed and then I went up the next day and enlisted. I'd already made up our mind with the mates that we'd go in on the ninth of July. Actually why I picked that is because I started the Brisbane City Council on the thirtieth of June, was the end of the financial year and we had lot of work to do, so once the return was in so then I could go in. So I decided to go in on the ninth of July 1940 the day the three of us went in. Funny thing, with that

12:00 one of the chaps, Charlie Smith, his number was QX14368, mine was QX14369 and Jack Maynham was QX14370. Years later my stepson enlisted, that's his photo over there with the medals on, and his number was one oblique [1/] - they used to have one oblique for Queensland, New South [Wales] was two - 1/4371. So they cut out the oblique later on,

12:30 so his number carried on from our numbers. My mates was 14368, mine was 69, Jack Maynham's was 70 and he was 14371. You wouldn't read about it that it happened like that but his just happened like that. Yes.

And so were you prepared to go to war?

Oh yeah, we wanted to go to the war, we wanted to go over and fight. I don't know

13:00 why but still we wanted to go over and fight. Wanted to go overseas, that was the idea of it, going away from Australia. When they said Port Moresby or Darwin, I didn't want to go there at all, I wanted to go away overseas.

What were you expecting of overseas?

I don't know at all. You weren't looking that far ahead. We knew we were in the transport and we'd be transporting ammunition, something like that, up to the lines

13:30 but we weren't gonna get up there with the rifle and fire ourselves. That's why I joined the ASC so we wouldn't have to fight in the infantry or anything at all like that. So that's what it was and we thought we were going to the Middle East, and we'd be over there. Like the 6th Division were over there already, like, and we'd be going over there to fight.

What kind of place did you think you were going to, what did you think the Middle East would be like?

14:00 Oh well yeah, to go here and go there, Jerusalem, see the Sphinx and all those things, the pyramids and Cairo and all those places. It was something out of a fairy book you know, to be able to go over there and see those places you know, or to go over to France to see France. You weren't thinking about fighting and getting killed or anything at all

14:30 like that. That'd just come later on kind of business like that, you know, but no you felt of going overseas, that was the thing.

Okay so tell us, after you joined the AIF, where did you go from there for your training and...?

Well we went to Grovely, we did our training out at Grovely, until November 1940 we, our unit went to Fraser's Paddock, on our own at Fraser's Paddock. And we

15:00 trained there, we used to go out on route marches around the place and go out in the trucks out in the bush and do map reading and all those kind of things like that.

And you mentioned that you would go to Bathurst?

Oh yeah well then we were, we were at Fraser's Paddock and we went back to Grovely again. When out unit, when the others, see, we were split up into three Brigades, the 22nd Brigade, 23rd Brigade

15:30 and the 27th Brigade, they were the three brigades in the 8th Division. The 22nd Brigade was formed up of one of our sections of ammo, one section of supply and one section of petrol with a composite workshops, they went over to Singapore in the February 1941 on the [Queen] Mary. The 23rd Brigade, they went to Darwin and then we went down to Bathurst then, we were the 27th

16:00 Brigade. So we went down to Bathurst and we did our training down there then, during the winter months, cold country. And then we went from there over to Northam camp in West Australia and stopped there for five or six days and then went down to catch the boat at Fremantle.

Tell us about going to Bathurst on the train?

Oh yeah well we got on the train

16:30 here in shorts and shirts because it was April, but April in Queensland is quite good weather. And then we got off the train at Kelso, which is the siding outside Bathurst, about half past three in the morning a couple of days later. Oh God we nearly died, nearly died. It was freezing cold so we went into the camp; we were in galvanised iron huts at Bathurst camp. And

17:00 we used to sleep on the palliasses with, they have the big long sack, a hessian sack, and you'd put straw in it like, that was there to sleep on that. And course when we went down there first, we never used to use straw up here, you'd just on the bare boards with these palliasses see. But when we went down there, "We don't need straw." But gee the first night we nearly oh, we shivered all night. So next day we went down and packed

17:30 that palliasse with straw, so much that you fell off it, all night you couldn't lay on it, you're falling over. But where, I was in the sergeants' hut, and we used to get four blankets, was the issue. And a mate and I used to put our palliasses side by side like that, put two blankets over there like that, six blankets on top of us, two greatcoats, two groundsheets. Then you get dressed

18:00 up to go to bed, you'd have your long johns [long underwear] on, you'd have the long trousers on, pullovers, beanie on your head, everything, to go to bed. Oh, shiver, never shivered so much in all my life as down there. Then you'd wake up in the middle of the night and want to go to the latrines and they were over the blooming parade ground. You'd hang on as long as you could and you'd go out and you'd hit the ground about three times

18:30 and you'd be in the latrines, come back and you'd shiver then there. We'd all have, we used to hire radios from Bathurst and you'd have 'em up on the top of the bunks up on the shelves. And of course the lights went out at ten o'clock, the radios were all on and that and the lights went out, they'd switch all the power off too like. You know, there'd be no lights on so in the morning when they'd switch 'em on again at six o'clock, blared,

19:00 the radios'd be blaring out like mad. But oh it was cold down there. That's why I still hate the cold weather; I can't stand the cold weather.

And how long did you stay there for?

April, May, June, July we come out back on pre-em [pre-embarkation] leave and we left there about the end, mid-July it might have been, late July. I remember I trained then from there, right down through Young, right

19:30 over to South Australia, right over the Nullarbor Plain right over to Northam camp. And the troop train was you know, you'd sleep in the passageway or if you get the long seat you'd sleep there or sleep up in the rack up on top which was where the luggage had to go. And you'd sleep up there; sleep anywhere you could.

How long was this trip, this train trip?

Oh I don't know

20:00 it took us about oh it would have taken about five or six days to go over there. By the time we had stops here and then we changed in Adelaide then because of the gauge of the railway, used to do another troop train over to West Australia then.

And what was this Northam camp like?

Northam camp, oh it was alright. The only thing, problem there was, oh, we did training in the camp, Northam camp

20:30 but mumps broke out in the camp and you'd be going up every morning to have a look to see whether you got a lump in your throat or not. Because you didn't want to get mumps, because if you were mumps you'd be taken off the draft see and you wouldn't go away with the unit then if you went sick. Some that did get mumps, their neck was swollen up like that, so they were taken off the draft. But even if you had it you'd try to conceal it as much as

21:00 possible. But I was lucky I didn't get the mumps at all, but you were afraid of that. And they took us one day down to Perth on the trip on the Sunday down to Perth and round there, on buses so we could see the whole place like that.

So tell us about leaving Australia then?

Well we left Australia then, we left Australia then from Fremantle on

21:30 there were three Dutch ships in the convoy, the Sibajak, the Johan [Johan van Oldenbarnevelt] and the Marnix [Marnix van St. Aldegonde], and we were on the Sibajak. And all the food, was Dutch ship, it was all oily. One morning we thought oh boiled eggs, that'll be good, but they're preserved in bloody oil. The mate and I had about; on seven days it took us to go over there and three meals a day, twenty-one

meals,

22:00 I reckon we'd have six meals down in the mess. We wouldn't eat the stuff; it was terrible. They made beautiful bread and we'd go down and get you know, slices of bread, as many as we could then we'd go to the canteen and buy a tin of salmon or something like that and put salmon on the bread and made salmon sandwiches. But we couldn't eat the food on that blooming ship going over there, terrible.

22:30 **Are there any other memories you have from the ship, the trip?**

One very, very strange memory: Dutch people and on Dutch ships, they don't have toilet paper. Even the Dutchmen in the army never used toilet paper, they used bottles of water. And when you're on the ship there, the first time we ever went in there's knobs here and everything

23:00 like that. And you'd press a knob and there'd spout of water'd go right like that in the toilet bowl, see. And that's how; there was no paper there to wash yourself or anything at all like that. That's what they did, and even when we were prisoner of war, you'd see the Dutch coves, the army coves walking round with bottles of water, to go to the toilet with. And that was another first that we ever encountered going over there.

Were there any comments

23:30 **or jokes you'd say about the Dutch?**

The Dutch, well, my opinion of the Dutch is the same as most prisoners of war, they're almost as low as the Japanese. They informed on us to the Japs over there, where we hid secret radios. And if they were in the know, the radio, the next day the

24:00 Japs would come to look where it was yesterday, you'd have to move it each day. And they all had wedding rings, in those days, in Australia before the war, men never wore wedding rings, there was only women wore the wedding rings. But the Dutch all had wedding rings on, gold wedding rings and they sold, you know, sold it on the black market to the Chinese. And the Chinese were printing more Japanese money

24:30 than the Japs were printing, they had printing presses round there and they'd give you forty thousand, sixty thousand dollars for a watch or a ring or something like that. And of course when the food came into the canteen in the jail, we're in the jail and the canteen was stocked, they'd go up and buy everything they could with all their money, then they'd sell it to you for their price. So oh, they were hated by the Australians, the Dutch.

25:00 Oh they were, we hated them.

Why do you think they acted like this?

Oh that's, I don't know why they would do it but they did it. They weren't liked by the Australians, you ask any prisoner of war, if you had of asked Herb Trackson [another interviewee] the other day what he thought of the Dutch, he would have said the same thing, he would have told you the same thing.

Would you have you know, nicknames or bad names for the Dutch that you comment, like…?

Ah,

25:30 'Gottverdom' [God damn] we used to say, I don't know what the hell it meant now. Oh yeah, we, see the chap next door to me, lives next door, he's a Dutchman too. I've told him about the Dutch over there, you know, that we hated them like that. They'd inform on us and they'd buy anything they could up the canteen and then sell it to you at their price,

26:00 make money on it. So we didn't like them very much at all.

And tell us about arriving in Singapore, like what did you see, what was the place like?

Oh the wharf, we got off the wharf and went to on a train then over to Johor Bharu, which was over the causeway, and that was our camp over there. We got one day's leave to come into Singapore.

26:30 A few of us came down there and our section sergeant, he was an Englishman he'd been out in Australia for years. And we asked one of the English soldiers where was the Union Jack Club. Well he told us about five times. We said, "Thank you very much." but we didn't understand a word he said. You know, with their broad accents, some of these Englishmen and that, we didn't understand a word. But we had a day down in there,

27:00 just looking round and then we went back to Johor Bharu and from there we had no more leave in Singapore then we went up to Malacca. And we were up on the west coast and that was quite a good place there. We used to go in on day leave into town, there was old oh, dated back to the Spanish and everything like that, Portuguese and that.

27:30 They had a Capitol Picture Show there and there's a Capitol Cabaret where we used to go in of a night. My mate and I used to go in, they used to have taxi dancers over there, the girls, the Chinese, Eurasian,

they'd sit there and you'd have to go and buy tickets. And then you'd go over to have a dance, you'd go over to the girl and give her a ticket, then she'd get up and have a dance with you, like that. But the mate and I never danced while I was over

28:00 there at all with them. But the manager of that Capitol Cabaret, chap by the name of Lee, when I got bashed up in Singapore for the first time, he was the Japanese interpreter. He was a major in the Japanese Army and he had been the manager of the Capitol Cabaret in Malacca where the troops were there before we got there, the 22nd Brigade were there. And he was there and he

28:30 was a major in the Japanese Army. So they had their Fifth Column [subversive element] there and they're got their Fifth Column here in Australia still too, I reckon. And I see in the paper something come up in the last few days, Robert Hill [Minister of Defence] made a speech over in Japan about co-operation between Japan and Australia to ward off terrorism and all this business. And the

29:00 exchange of students, they call 'em students, in our Army Academy here. And we were asked about it, the president was asked about it, what we thought of Australia and the Japanese exchanging troops coming in and training in Australia. I hope they never ask me because

29:30 I'll just say what I think about 'em.

Which is?

I still hate the bastards and I'll hate 'em till I die, and a leopard never changes its spots. The younger generation in my opinion, same as their grandfathers. If they went to war they'd act same as their grandfathers and that, it's in their culture. They only recognise one thing and that's strength.

30:00 You got more out of a Jap, if you were in charge of a work party, you got more out of the Jap if you stood up to him. Well Black Jack Galleghan, he was a Lieutenant Colonel, F.G. Galleghan who was the 2/30th Battalion CO, when he was in Singapore at our Thompson Road camp, he used to inspect the Jap guard before it went on guard over us. And if they

30:30 had a button off he'd say, "Go up to the AIF tailor and get that button on." And then the Japs used to bring him presents and everything; they thought he was wonderful. Because, I don't know because of his strength, but on that working party, he come upon one of our chaps getting bashed up on the road. And he used to have a walking stick, and he shook it over the Jap's head and he said, "Don't you hit

31:00 one of my men." He went back to see the Japanese Commander he said, "If you want 'em punished, hand 'em to me and I'll punish them but don't you lay a finger on any one of my men." And while we were there all the senior officers, the brigadiers and everything went over to North Korea, and he was appointed Commander of the AIF in Malaya so he went back to Selarang then. And Cranston McEachern a chap,

31:30 Lieutenant Colonel Cranston McEachern from Brisbane he was. He was the anti tank and he came in and course they stood up to him and said, "The morale is very lax and everything like that, we're going to institute our own punishment." and I was one of the first five that got bashed up. We were working on the road, and in those days you had a certain amount of work to do.

32:00 Course you could finish it early, but if you finished it early, next day you got twice as much to do. So you just pushed the stones off the road and brought 'em back off the road and everything like that, and just lazed around but did what you had to do. And they used to pass the red light [warning] along, whenever there was a Jap coming along to look at the work, red light, so by the time he got there everybody was working, you know, picks and shovel and

32:30 chunkles [heavy hoes], and carrying stuff off the road and putting it back and everything like that. But this day they missed out passing the red light and there was about five of us there having a, well one cove was sitting on the side of the road emptying his boot out with dirt in it, the rest were talking about which was the best camp in Australia and that. And this big, Hiramoto, was his name, he come over the top of the hill and came down. And with only a bayonet,

33:00 waved it round in the air and marched the five of us up and stood us up beside a drain and he started from down here, whack! Hit me in the jaw, he must have had a ring or something, I had a scar on me jaw for a month, anyhow, and the little cove on the end he lifted him off his feet into the drain behind. Then we had to stand up with our arms stretched out like that, while a Jap stood there with a big

33:30 wooden stick. You try that and see how long your arms stop there before they start going down like that. And he'd whack 'em under me and you'd go up, right up the top and you'd start right up the top then and you'd come down slowly. Well that went on for an hour then it started to rain so they brought us into the tent then. And there was a 2/30th Battalion sergeant up

34:00 before the Japs, he was accused of marching his men home early. So he said, and they said, "Why did you march your men home early?" "The Nippon soldier said when we finish that, we go home." So they asked the Jap soldier, but he said, "No." he didn't say that. So they bashed hell out of this chap, not for marching his men home but for telling lies. They said, "No Nippon soldier tells lies."

34:30 So they bashed him up then we were to be tried next. And this Major Lee was the interpreter there, the major in the army. So when we went up before him we didn't say anything at all. No matter what we

said they'd reckon we were telling lies and you get a hiding for telling lies. So they let the three privates off and the corporal and I were the two then that were sent back to Singapore in their truck and up before the Jap Commander. And that's when he said, he's

35:00 going to institute his own punishment now right throughout. And there's the other Jap, Toyama, I think his name was Toyama. He used to carry a walking stick with a handle on it and inside there's a long stiletto blade. And he was standing there and he was watching us and he'd open this out and push it back every time. So we didn't know what was gonna happen but anyhow they put us in the guardhouse,

35:30 wouldn't let us go back to our lines and then they allowed our food to be brought down to us that night, the evening meal from our cookhouse. And we had the best meal we ever had in the whole three and a half years we were there, because we got more meat in that stew that night than we ever saw before because they didn't know what was gonna happen to us at all see. So they were giving us a last meal kind of business. So they allowed a few of the

36:00 boys to come in and speak to us that night, a mate of mine who lives at Camp Hill, he came in that night. And then they went then we spent the night on the floor in the Jap guardhouse. Next morning we got the AIF truck came to take us back to Changi but they wouldn't allow that, they brought the Jap truck and we were in the back with about four Japs with rifles and bayonets in there.

36:30 Then we went out to, supposed to go to Changi, we went out to their administration, which was outside the jail in a street we used to call Half Moon Street. So there they asked us our names, our next of kin in Australia, where we lived, everything like that. So I said to my mate, I said, "They're gonna knock us off and reckon we're trying to escape." So we were there for about an hour then we went out on, into the Jap truck

37:00 again and back down the main road. And we both had the same idea, if we turned right and went to Selerang we were alright, but if we turned left, we wouldn't have known where we were going at all, we would have been taken out and shot most probably, that's what was in our mind. But luckily we turned right and we went over to Selerang; and up before Black Jack Galleghan. And they brought him presents, they wanted him to try us, he wouldn't try us

37:30 until he heard word from his officers. So they marched us over into our boob, our jail, within the jail, which was run by the provos [provost, military police], Australian Provos. So the sergeant escorted, marched us right through the camp over, and we were in a solitary confinement cell all night and that's where we got pretty close to Jack Gilding, was his name. Then we went up before Black Jack next morning

38:00 and we told him about his own battalion sergeant getting a hiding and everything like that. So he said, "Oh as far as the Japs are concerned, you've been severely punished. As far as the AIF is concerned, go back to your lines and forget all about it." So we went back to our lines then.

At what stage was all these, this event, at what stage, like what year and...?

1942, it was when Thompson Road, we went into Thompson Road

38:30 about April May, about April May 1942 so it would have been roughly around about July I think '42, then we got brought back to Changi. Then I went back in on another working party into Havelock Road, which would have been about October November 1942.

Tape 4

00:39 **So you said the camp in Malacca was great?**

Oh it was a good camp, it was real good huts. When we first went in there, the army had the dhobi [laundry] contract which meant you put your clothes in and had 'em washed and everything like that. But you'd come back with

01:00 no buttons on 'em, because these Chinese, they washed and everything like that by flogging them on the ground like that, you know, clothes and that, that's how they washed their clothes over there, they flogged them on the ground or on stone or something like that. Course the buttons all gone, so we used to pay to send our own uniforms in, the shirts and shorts and long trousers and everything like that into there. But we used to play football as I said, it was the

01:30 best football field I've ever played on in my whole life. Beautiful Kubu Park the ground there, and we played against 2/15th Field Regiment. And the chap who wrote [The] Naked Island, Russell Braddon, he came up; he was playing the 2/15th. And I was mentioned in Naked Island, not by name but he said, "We went up to Malacca to play the ASC and I played against a big winger." "And," he said, "I got the ball

02:00 and started to run and he came at me and flattened me." So I was there, because I was the winger that played opposite Russell Braddon. But we used to go into town; we used to go into the cabaret there, the Malacca...

What was the cabaret like?

The Capitol Cabaret. Well it was a cabaret, you sat down, you drank in there, they had drinks round the place. The taxi dancers,

02:30 the girls used to sit on the side.

How did they work?

Well you went over and bought your tickets, so many tickets for a dollar or something like that, and then you'd go over to the girl and put one ticket to her and she'd get up and have a dance with you.

Were they good dancers?

I don't know, I never had a dance with them. I never danced with them.

Why not?

Well I was engaged to be married when I went away. So I didn't do any, no I never

03:00 I wasn't gonna dance with the Chinese girls or anything at all like that, so I didn't have a dance at all. And my mate and I, Jackie Peterson, we used to sit there and have orange crush, I didn't drink before the war. I might have had a few beers before I left Australia in the sergeants' mess, one or two. And even the sergeants' mess over in Malacca I never used to drink there. And then we'd go into the cabaret there and we'd

03:30 sit there. Music, we were real interested in the music, with the band, they had a full band there. And I tried to get 'em to play, Begin the Beguine. Have you ever heard that? Haven't you ever heard it?

How does it go?

Oh, I've got it on the tape there, Joe Loss's Orchestra, Chick Henderson singing Begin the Beguine.

What are the words?

Oh, I can't remember the words, I know what it's

04:00 like, I can play it for you later on anyhow. I have it there. It's a, but now I hear some, what's his name, 'Ocker Lewis' or some name, on the radio now, he sings Begin the Beguine but the only words he says are Begin the Beguine, the rest is in oh, some foreign language anyhow. 'Galiscious' [Julio Iglesias], a name some like that?

04:30 'Igilea' or some name.

Christine Aguilera?

Who?

Aguilera?

Oh I don't know what he's saying, some name like that, but he sings it, Begin the Beguine all the time and it's always in this, you can't understand it, only Begin the Beguine. And I rang up 4BH one morning and I said, "What about putting Begin the Beguine on in English so we can understand it?" "Oh this is only record we got on it." I said, "Oh but Joe Loss's Orchestra used to play it." "Oh," he said, "but many people

05:00 composed it and played it too." like that, you know. So that was one of my favourite songs, and my fiancé, we used to love that song, we used to hear it all the time. And so I asked 'em to play those things, play the tunes that you asked to play and everything like that. But we used to go down there quite a few nights in the nightclub down there. Never had a dance, either of us didn't have a dance and we used to drink orange crush each and then listen

05:30 to music.

You'll have to play it for me; I'll have to see if I can…?

Yeah, yeah, I've got it on there, Joe Loss's, a selection of Joe Loss's tunes; oh he's good. Chick Henderson sang it, he was killed, he was a fairy [homosexual], you know one of these fairy, you know what a fairy is don't ya, gay. Gay they call them now but he would have been that but he had a beautiful voice. And he got killed in an air crash in about 1941 I think,

06:00 he was killed over in England. But he had a beautiful voice. I think so anyhow. So we'd go down there and then you'd go in and out of Malacca by rickshaw, you know, get the rickshaw. Hop in one and the other cove'd get in the other and you'd, "Come on, beat him!" And you'd have a race into town; get the cove's running like mad. You know, the Chinese how they used to get in the shafts

06:30 and they'd run like that, and you'd be sitting up in the back like that, rickshaws. And now they got, then the last time I went over there, the first time I went back in '92, they had tricycles you know, they're on

the bikes now and you hop in beside ‘em and they push around the bikes.

How much did you get to see I guess of the local lifestyle and the way people lived in Malacca?

Well I didn’t go to any private homes, some of them went to private homes there, but I didn’t go into

07:00 any private homes. We didn’t see much of the lifestyle there other than walking round the streets. You’d see the funerals with all the mourners, they used to pay, the richer you were the more mourners you had. See they used to pay mourners and I think they still do, at a Chinese funeral. They’d have the people wailing in front, mourning; they used to have to pay them. They mightn’t know anybody at all

07:30 but they’d have professional mourners like you know. And if you were a rich person you could have a couple of hundred, if you were poor you might have only one or two there, see like that. But you’d go round the shops and send home doilies for, you know, cushion covers all embroidered and everything like that. And

08:00 kimono for my fiancé, and one of those wrap-arounds that they used to do around the waist [sarong] and all those things. You’d send home parcels like that while we were up in Malacca. But that was about the, going along the shops. And it was old Portuguese port and the history of the place was, well it still is, Malacca, Chinese and Portuguese

08:30 churches and everything like that.

And what about sort of the kids or anything, the local kids did they, I guess how did they react to the troops?

Well we had one, little Steven Ngooi, N-G-O-O-I, he used to be in the camp and he used to come up to our hut and everything like that. And he broke

09:00 my tooth. I had the, years ago, transgress back years ago this, to when I was a kid and my brother and I used to wash up and wipe up at home like that see. And then, my mum, this would be, that’s right and then we’d most probably be fooling around with the plates. And this day there was an enamel plate and we’re shooting it over to one another and catching

09:30 it and shooting it back to one another, enamel plate. And then he went like that and I went down to catch it and he shot it up like that and shot over and broke my tooth in half there and that one too see. And I had a pivot on it and everything like that. And when we were over there in Malacca, he was standing, this Steven Ngooi, this Chinese lad, was standing on the running board and you know I was fighting him like that. And he

10:00 put out his fist and just hit that and knocked it off, so all the while I was there, I had half a tooth. I got a photo here now outside of four of us who come back, at the Silver Hut gave us a welcome back and you can see only half a tooth there like that.

What was this little boy’s reaction when he broke your tooth?

Oh nothing much, he was a bit perturbed but I said, “Oh it didn’t worry me at all.” like that,

10:30 you know. But he was about the only local that we ever had anything to do with. After the war I tried to find out what happened to him. I had Red Cross looking for him or anything like that. I don't think he survived; I think would have got killed during the war like when the Japs took over.

Why was he hanging around the camp?

I don't know, he used to run errands for us and everything like that and get money you know. He,

11:00 he would have made a lot of money out of the troops you know, slinging him dollars. See when we went over there, one pound Australian, one pound and five pence was seven Singapore dollars, it was worth about two and sixpence ha’penny was a dollar over there, the Singapore dollar.

11:30 Course when we went over there and compared to buying smokes here, you get a packet of Craven A’s for ten cents, which was about threepence or something like that. And you’d get a packet of Flag cigarettes for five cents, that’s a penny three farthings. So you’d get a round tin of fifty Craven A for about fifty cents, which was about one and threepence in Australia. So we smoked big you know, you’d be almost

12:00 chain smoking, and guys who never smoked started smoking when they went over there because the cigarettes were so cheap see. So that’s, and up there of course, they would have made more money out of us, the locals than they made themselves like that see. Even the laundry people used to do our laundry and everything like that. But he was about the only of the local that I ever got into contact with.

And during the time at the

12:30 **camp there, aside from sort of playing football and this sort of thing, what general training or…?**

Oh, we’d go out on our trucks in the jungle and map reading and different things like that. But we didn’t do the drill like, you know, the drill with blooming rifles or bayonets or anything at all, never had a

bayonet on my rifle until Singapore Island. When we were put in the rifle company we got issued with bayonets and we had

13:00 to practise bayonet training and all that business, just before the Japs arrived on the island. But we only just trained and where you learned more about where you had to go to pick up the ammunition and where you had to deliver it then to the troops. And we went down to the base depot and got ammunition and went over the 2/26th Battalion who were at Gemas and the 2/15th Field

13:30 Regiment, and we'd take ammunition down to them for their training and everything like that. So it was just training, transporting and where you picked up and, we didn't do any drills of anything at all. We'd go on route marches down the road or something like that, but that's about all the training we did over there.

Can you just tell me exactly what your job was, I guess detail it for me?

Well I was a sergeant

14:00 and I was just in charge of the loaders, the loaders used to have to load the trucks so I was in charge of them. Then we had sergeants in charge of a group of trucks to deliver ammunition and everything like that. But I was, when we left there and went into war, when the war was on; I was the first one to go into a ammunition point

14:30 and to supply the ammunition to the troops who were fighting the Japanese. Because that was at the Muar show, so I had an ammunition point of about seven trucks there. Well no I had five trucks first for the 15th Field Regiment and the 29th Battalion, they were 27th Brigade. Then they brought in the 2/19th Battalion whose CO won the Victoria Cross there,

15:00 Colonel Anderson. They brought the 2/19th Battalion in so then I had another couple of trucks come in from the other, our Number One Company. So I had the trucks going down and getting the ammunition from the ordnance depot and bringing it back into our point and then sending up to the battalion and to the field regiment, the various ammunition up to them as they wanted

15:30 it, then the trucks'd come back empty then we'd send another trucks up then like that.

And how were these trucks protected at ammunition points from things like air raids or anything?

We were underneath the rubber [trees]; we used to go in underneath the rubber in the rubber plantations see. We couldn't be seen from air like that cause it was only out on the road that you could be seen by air when they used to strafe the roads.

And what, just for the record, what kinds of ammunition

16:00 **were you supplying?**

Oh well there was the twenty-five pounders for the artillery guns, the shells for that and the 303 bullets and everything like that. And they used to come in crates like that about there: about that long, that wide and about that deep, used to be full of ammunition. So you'd load these on to the trucks and then take them up. Mortar shells,

16:30 all the different ammunition that was required by an army battalion which was mortar, Vickers gun [machine gun], rifle bullets and all those things. And then the artillery they had mortars and they had twenty-five pounders and shells and everything like that. So, all the different ones it was, it was all different kinds of ammunition that you'd get and

17:00 have them there on the trucks and then the truck to go up. You'd have to load it on the truck, from the trucks that you had in, at the ammunition point, you'd have them full of say twenty-five pounders, full of this, full of that, full of something else. So you'd, there would be one going up the 19th Battalion and they'd send down their requisition of what they wanted kind of business, so you'd have to fill out that requisition and send it up to them.

17:30 **Up to?**

Up to the where they were fighting, right up to the front line, just about.

So the battalion would fill in a…?

Well a requisition for munitions what they'd want and then you'd have that all the time, so you'd have a standard requisition from them, that what they'd require all the time. Because by the time that truck got up, unloaded it, come back, they would have expended most of what they had

18:00 there and you'd have another truck up. And if they hadn't expended well he'd stop on site until they were ready to use it and unload it, then he'd come back and another one'd go up like that. So it was, but they were the ones that, we were underneath the rubber, but they had to go out on the road and up to where they were fighting, and that's where I said we lost our first casualty, Len Byng, B-Y-N-G, he was our first

18:30 casualty there, he didn't get back. His truck, I believe was going over a bridge and they blew the bridge

up, the Japs, and his truck went up and he went up too.

When were you at Malacca, before the war started?

War broke?

Yeah. Were the Japanese in the picture at all, in your mind?

19:00 No. We always thought when we were up there: we'll be returned soldiers from Malaya without a shot being fired. We didn't think there's gonna be a war. We were up there for, what, we got up there in August, at the end of August, September, October, November, that's four months there, we were doing nothing, there was no war on, we weren't at war at all. We were up there just driving around and going out and playing

19:30 football and doing all this and having a whale of a time kind of business, and there was no war at all. Until the Japs, then, we were at action stations three weeks before we knew there was a war on and they were coming at all.

What news would you hear about the Japanese at all before...?

Well before that we heard, well no we didn't hear anything about the Japanese at all before we left Australia, years before the war

20:00 when we, no, yeah, yeah, yeah, 'Pig Iron Bob', Bob Menzies, they called him 'Pig Iron Bob', he was the Prime Minister of Australia, he was selling the pig iron to the Japanese. And oh there was a heck of an uproar about that before the war ever started, the Australians were exporting pig iron to...

Sorry, what...?

Oh I don't know, iron, any iron, which they used for

20:30 munitions anyhow. It went to Japan and that was a hue and cry that 'Pig Iron Bob' they called him, that's how he got his nick name, Bob Menzies, 'Pig Iron Bob'. So he was the Prime Minister and he was allowing this to go over and then they said then, that it'd come back (UNCLEAR), they'd make it into munitions and shoot it back at us. Because Professor W.G. Goddard, he used to be on 4BC of a Sunday night for years

21:00 and years about the imminent trouble we're going to have with the Asians from the north and everything like that. And that's where for years they reckoned that the Japs were gonna come at Australia and everything like that. But then, when we went over there, we were over in Malaya but we didn't know the Japs were gonna come down or anything at all like that, we never heard anything at all about that.

Was there any news about movement that the Japanese were making...?

21:30 We didn't know anything at all about it anyhow. I believe after the war we found out that the Japanese convoy that come down the coast of Indo-China, coming down to, landed in Malaya. Our air force planes followed them down but they couldn't attack them because we weren't at war with Japan. That was only when they landed on Kota [Bharu] on Malaya and bombed Singapore

22:00 that we declared war on them. And when they bombed Pearl Harbour the next morning, that the Yanks, I mean the Yanks wouldn't have come into the war anyhow, only for Pearl Harbour. They called 'em the 'Doughboys' in World War I you know, the Yanks: they were needed in 1914 but they didn't rise till 1917. That's what they [were] called in World War I and

22:30 World War II they didn't come in until 1942; 1939 the war started, '40, '41, '42, only Pearl Harbour, that was the only way.

What were you hearing about, sorry, news from the rest of, I guess, were you hearing any news from North Africa?

About the Middle East? Yeah, oh well, yeah, well we used to hear a bit of - it's raining - yeah, we used to hear a bit of

23:00 news.

So we were talking about what were you hearing about Middle East?

Oh yes the Middle East, well while we were in Malacca you didn't hear much about it only what the newspapers come out that they were fighting over there

24:00 and you didn't hear that much about it, you didn't read newspapers that much anyhow, when you're over there.

Can you tell me about when you got the news that you had to go to action stations?

Well we went to action stations, well we drove out of Malacca, we left the camp, we left the

24:30 camp and we all drove down to Kluang it was and we were there in the rubber and everything like that but nothing happened.

What were you feeling at this time?

Well we didn't know what was gonna happen at all, we were there, no war on as far as we knew, wasn't any war on. But we were out there for three weeks I think it was before the blue [war] actually broke like. And Singapore was bombed that night well we didn't know Singapore was bombed

25:00 until we were told about it and that we were at war with the Japanese. And then the Kluang airport, the aerodrome there, they were expecting some new planes in, so these planes, "Oh, our planes have arrived," according to them. But they weren't, they were Japanese planes, they just blew everything that was off of the Kluang Aerodrome. They just bombed down there and all the planes were

25:30 shot up and everything like that.

When did they tell you that it was the Japanese that you were…?

Oh it would have roughly about the seventh of December when they bombed Singapore.

What was your reaction to this?

Nothing, we still didn't see any Japs, there weren't any Japs anywhere near us at all, nothing

26:00 was happening.

I guess you hadn't heard anything about the Japanese before this, so what was your reaction to suddenly…?

Well we were told that they all wear glasses, they're all short sighted, they can't shoot straight and they wear rubber boots. See they had their boots with the toe out like that for their

26:30 big toe then the other part like that. They rode bicycles, which they did; their infantry when they come along, they had the pushbikes. But oh that they were cross-eyed and they couldn't fire straight and everything like that, that's what we heard about that, that's all we heard about 'em anyhow. They were all short, but that's about all you heard so nobody knew anything and

27:00 nobody had seen a Japanese. The only Japanese we'd seen were the ones in the laundries in Australia, Japanese laundry, they ran all the laundries in Australia. You'd put your clothes or any clothes had to go to the laundry, you went to the Japanese laundry.

And so what was your first experience with action?

Well when I was given these, so many

27:30 trucks to go up and man this ammunition point.

How's an ammunition point set up?

Well it's not set up at all, you just go somewhere and you got to find a way in the rubber up off the road and in the rubber there. And you'd put this one truck here and another truck there, set 'em out all the way around the place not in a line, like all in a line. You'd have 'em individually, ones there so that you'd,

28:00 you know, start. We were right next door to the 45th Indian Brigade Headquarters, that's where we used to eat down there because we didn't have any cooks with us so we had to just eat at the closest unit, we had the Indian brigade.

What was the food like there?

Oh, very hot, blooming chilli sauces and all, that they have like that. What,

28:30 the Indian chapattis [bread], they used to make these chapattis, they were very good. They used to cook, course the Indians smoking, they don't put the cigarette in their mouth. They have it in there and they 'whoo' like that. They

29:00 would have it through their fingers like that, out there like that, and they used to be like this 'whoo whoo'. They'd breathe the smoke in but then they wouldn't, their lips wouldn't touch the cigarette.

Why?

I don't know why, it might have been their religion or something or other. But these were the ones that we encountered over there in Malaya and they used to 'whoo whoo' smoke like that with the cigarette hanging out there like that, but then they'd have

29:30 it there like that and they'd just 'whoo' and breathe in. That's something that just come back to me now you know. I hadn't thought about that in sixty years, I hadn't thought about that.

Did you think this was…?

It just hit me there that that's how they used to smoke, when we were with them.

Did you think this was strange?

Oh yeah. It was strange as far as we were concerned, it was, you know,

30:00 you'd look at them and think gee, you know, fancy smoking like that. We used to smoke the normal way, just put it in your mouth like that. But they, their lips didn't touch the cigarette.

Did you every try it?

We did try it a few times but it was oh, I mean you'd 'whoo', you'd be blowing you know 'whoo', trying to puff away like that. It was no, no, so you'd give that away.

What was your relationship with the Indian soldiers like?

30:30 We used to go down there mainly for meals like you know, and there like that. And they used to yabber away in their own lingo, in their own language like that. They had British officers but we weren't that close to them, you only met 'em for meals like, that's about all. But they weren't good soldiers

31:00 in my opinion.

Why not?

They weren't good soldiers, well those that we met there, they weren't good soldiers. I don't know what unit these were from, the 40th Indian Brigade, but they turned on their heels and ran more than they were ran forward, they ran backwards. And course when you start talking about Indians,

31:30 the Sikhs went over to the Japanese and we had the Japanese Army, and we had the IJA, which was the Indian Japanese Army. The Sikhs went over and they were over us with rifles and bayonets and they used to whack us in the head with a rifle, that's the Sikhs, ones with the turbans, they went over to the Japanese, the Indian Japanese Army.

Why?

32:00 Well I suppose they got more food or something like that, offered them food and money. And the Ghurkhas [Nepalese troops in British service], they reckoned that was gonna be open war on the Sikhs when the war was finished, when they got back, they were loyal as anything the Ghurkhas. But they, even on the wharves, when we were working on the wharves in Singapore, they'd be

32:30 up on the stack and there'd be a crate'd go over on top of a Japanese down below and then they might take three Ghurkhas out and shoot them for that. The next day another Jap'd be killed, they'd go on doing it all the time. But they were loyal but the Sikhs went over to the Japs and they were what we call the IJA, Indian Japanese

33:00 Army. Then of course, we also reckoned we had the AJA, the Australian Japanese Army, our officers, some of the officers. One officer told a Japanese, "I enlisted to fight the Germans, I didn't enlist to fight the Japanese. I had no trouble with you, I enlisted to fight the Germans." Some of the officers, if you speak, well, I don't know, our majority of

33:30 POWs would tell you there was some good officers but there were a hell of a lot that weren't good. To save their own souls, they couldn't give any consideration for the troops. So we classed them as the AJA.

What sort of things would they do?

Well

34:00 they had the food, they had the money, they got paid much more than we got paid by the Japs. See the Japs'd pay you say, ten cents or fifteen cents a day, if you were out on a working party, with Japanese money. But the officers used to get about, oh, they'd get forty or fifty cents a day and they didn't work, half of 'em. They never went to work, a lot of them never worked on the railways or never worked

34:30 on the working parties at all. And if the Jap said he wanted them to do something like that, he'd say, "Righto boys, you do that." like that. You wouldn't argue with, some of them wouldn't argue with the Japs, whatever the Japs said they'd do it. We didn't have a very high opinion of some of them, I can tell you that much.

Did you ever, understand why they did it?

35:00 Oh, self-preservation that's all.

I mean understand on a personal level?

No, our officer that I had, CO, he died not so long ago down at New South Wales. He wasn't so good in action, but as a POW officer he was alright. He would only keep the same amount

35:30 of money that the private got, the rest he would distribute amongst his men. When we were in the jail in the end of '44, he said in a word to me, he said, "How many of our unit is still in there?" And I'd let him

know how many we had there so he'd give me five dollars for every man that was in there for Christmas you know, for them to buy extra things from the canteen and everything like that.

36:00 Some of them were like that, others fought for their men, stood up for their men. Colonel Jack Williams who used to be President of the New South Wales Ex-POW Association, he was up on Williams Force up in Burma, yes, that's right, he was in Burma. And they stood him up and belted him many times and belted him like that because he wouldn't give in to them and he wouldn't give their orders

36:30 over to his men.

I guess you having been, you know, living through the same hardship as everyone else and brutality and this sort of thing, was there ever a point where you kind of understood why some of the officers behaved this way?

No, I couldn't understand it, they did, some of them did, others didn't.

What was it that made you, I guess what's the division, you know, what makes someone...?

37:00 I don't know, I don't know, we had some ORs [other ranks] the same way. We had a cove, one of the six people that got out of Sandakan. There was only six survived out of two thousand five hundred and the last one died a couple of months ago, Owen Campbell, he died down in Adelaide. But there's another one in there, he was from our own unit, and even

37:30 over in Borneo, they used to call him 'the White Jap'. He used to curry favour with the Japs and I think that's what saved his life because the Japs said, "You better go, because otherwise you're not gonna live. You better escape, if you stop here, you're gonna die." So he got out of it but well in my opinion he was a mongrel.

I

38:00 **guess, I'm trying to find out, must have been, some of the things are incredibly hard, what is it where you make the decision not to do that, for you?**

Oh what, like, act like they did? Oh, well, it wasn't in your make up to do those things. I've stood up; I'll mention another point too, when we were up on the railway.

38:30 We haven't got the railway yet anyhow, have we? Well we won't go into it then, I'll wait till we get to the railway then.

Oh, well...

Righto, righto. I was up on the railway and, when an elephant wouldn't pull the log out from the jungle, we, Australians or the Pommies or whatever, we used to have to go in, you'd get a log like that to come out. And you'd put one piece of bamboo

39:00 underneath it there and the other piece of bamboo up at there, and you'd hop on, like four, one on either, pick it up and carry it out. And if somebody stumbled over it, you know, in a hole on uneven ground, I mean the whole lot of you'd go down like that. This time we couldn't carry this, with four men, we couldn't even lift it so we had six men on it. And I was a sergeant and so the Jap got me

39:30 out. Said, "Four men, four men." I said "No. Six men." "No." So we had a big argument. So he said, "Righto." My hands went down on the log like that and he raised his sword above his head. Why he didn't drop it on my hands, I don't know. Whether he was trying to bluff me into it, that, but he put my hands on the log and then he raised

40:00 his sword above his head, and I thought, any moment those hands are gone. That was one of the other most terrifying moments that I've ever had over there, that and when we left Half Moon Street and went out to go to Selerang or the other place, that was another worrying time for me. I thought, this is the end, if we turn left it's the end, I'm gone.

40:30 And this was other time when he swung his sword above his head.

Tape 5

00:34 **Right if you could just take us through those first couple of weeks when you, when the Japanese attacked?**

Yeah well as I said the action that I was in was the Muar action. And we had this ammunition point there and the rubber just the other side of the Parit Sulong Bridge. And

01:00 we were providing the ammunition for the 2/15th Field Regiment, the 2/29th Battalion and the 2/19th Battalion. We were in the rubber and then sent up quite a few trucks and the one truck didn't get back, Lenny Byng, he was our first casualty. And when the orders came to move out, we saw Wavell there at that time, I saw General Wavell was in the convoy, coming through there.

01:30 And then he went off, naturally, and then we were told there was no good sending any more ammunition up because the lines had been broken and some of the stragglers were coming through see. So we went back to our unit then, back at Kluang, and then we moved down further south, and south and south and south until we got over the causeway, on the island then.

What was it like with the Japanese, were they attacking you at any time when you were retreating?

No, no, no,

02:00 I never ever got attacked. When we were in front of them, the other units were fighting them, 2/30th fought them at Gemas and they ambushed the Japanese there and created quite a lot of havoc. They were on either side of the road and waited till all the pushbikes had come through and their infantry and then they opened fire on them and killed quite a lot there. But

02:30 then the others were fighting on the way down but we just went straight down over the causeway and then took up positions in the north-western part of the island we were.

What about from the Japanese planes, as a driver?

Well while we're on the road, we didn't get strafed by any of their planes. I wasn't strafed or none of our trucks when we were retreating were

03:00 strafed by the Jap planes. But when we got on the island of course the 2/15th Field Regiment, the Japs had Johor Bharu and they had an OP as they called it, Operation Point [actually Observation Post] from the Sultan of Johor's palace. And our artillery weren't allowed to fire on the palace, yet that's where the Japs were but they weren't allowed to fire on the Sultan's palace,

03:30 for political reasons I think you know. The British and the Sultan of Johor and everything like that, they wanted him back on side if we ever won the war kind of. So they weren't allowed to fire on the Sultan of Johor's Palace, yet the Japs were up there with their binoculars and everything like that and could see what was going on, they had a good view of the island like. But that's the way it was and then we were put into the rifle company then, because of the amount of transport on the roads.

04:00 And there's Number One Rifle Company, they were ambushed and they got cut to pieces, and we were up at Tanglin Barracks, there until the finish of the war for us, fifteenth of February 1942.

And what orders were you given at Tanglin Barracks?

What, on the fifteenth of February?

No, no, before that?

Oh well we were in trenches outside to stop any Japanese that came through, but we didn't see them,

04:30 all we heard and felt was the mortars they threw at us like, all along the perimeter and that.

Describe that feeling?

Well I think the other day, I said, on the Friday, which was the thirteenth of February, they hit us with the mortars, you could hear them pop, pop, pop. You could count them as they were being fired and then just waited for them to explode all around you, expecting

05:00 one to lob in the trench with you. Never been, as I said, I've never been more frightened in all my life as that night. And the next morning, we went down, that trench went down another two feet, at least. And that Saturday night the fourteenth they did the same thing again, and they hit us with the mortars again and blasted all along. Sunday morning the trench went down another two feet. As I said, if we had of stopped there another week or fortnight, we would have got home to Australia.

05:30 straight down through the earth.

What do you say to your mates when you were in this situation?

Well you're only in a trench on your own, you were in a little trench on our own see and nobody in the trench but me. And I mean there's others in the next trench and all along, we had the whole line of the section of us all in front of the barracks. But I was frightened; I was down there shivering like mad. Anybody that goes through war and says they've never been frightened, they've never been in

06:00 a war, that's my attitude. So that was it and that was the end of the war for us, fifteenth of February.

How did you hear the news that…?

I don't know, we were told that, word came down that we'd capitulated and course we didn't know whether it was true or not. And there was no sound that Sunday afternoon, a lull, nothing, no guns firing or anything. And we thought well, either it's true, we have

06:30 capitulated, we have surrendered, or it's the lull before the storm and they're gonna hit us with everything tonight.

What did you think of this situation at the time?

Your heart went out of you, I mean, you didn't know what happened at all. You're prisoners, you didn't know what was gonna happen, you had no idea what was gonna happen at all. Whether you were going to live or whether you were going to be shot or whether you were going to,

07:00 how you were gonna do, or what they were going to do to you at all. They were the victors and you were the prisoners, so you didn't know what was going to happen.

Did you have any thoughts about those in command of you?

No, no, no. We believed that it was true that the English General Percival surrendered. Apparently they'd

07:30 captured the reservoir and there was no water for the civilian population of Singapore if they didn't surrender, so that was it so they surrendered. So, we didn't know that at the time, all we knew that we'd surrendered and that was it, so you didn't know what was going to happen to you.

At the time, without this knowledge of the reservoir, were there

08:00 **any thoughts of whether or not they should have done this or…?**

Well you wondered why, I mean the idea is in the why. Wondered why and of course as we said then we ran out of land, it was too far to swim home, we couldn't swim home. But it was, there's some chaps caught ships and went out, the nurses got away, the nurses were put on the Vyner Brooke, one of the ships

08:30 there, which was sunk later on. And others went on ships, only got as far as Java and they were captured in Java then, they fought on in Java and a few of them escaped from Java home to Australia and then they served in the army here. But no we didn't know what was gonna happen, we didn't know why or who or what it was. Although we knew we'd been retreating all the way down there and they were on the island, they were fighting on the island.

09:00 They blew the causeway but they repaired what was blown pretty quickly and they came of course. So they were on the island and we had nowhere to go.

What was your first time that you saw the Japanese in control?

When we saw the Japanese was when they were marching us out to Selarang.

09:30 And one of the points we saw that every house had a Jap flag up outside. They had the British flag the previous week and this week they had the Japanese flag. But we went out there and course on the march out, if you had a watch you kept it out of sight otherwise they just yanked it off and if you didn't give it to them, you got a rifle butt across your face or something like that.

10:00 And they just took what they wanted to and marching out you'd see the holes in the road, the dead laying around the place. And we marched, oh I forget how many miles it was out to Selarang and we were housed out there and our unit was all in one house. It was a large house but maybe

10:30 thirty or forty sleeping in the lounge there and others sleeping on the floor in the bedrooms and dining room down stairs and everything like that with what gear we had.

Apart from the night of mortars, had you seen any of the fighting directly from where you were?

No, no, no, I hadn't seen any of the fighting at all. See we were a unit that supplied the ammunition up to them and we even unloaded

11:00 beside the guns. There was times when we unloaded right beside the guns and then we'd move out and go back for others. So we didn't see any hand-to-hand fighting or anything at all like that. That was not our idea of what our unit was there for, wasn't to fight the Japanese, we were there to bring up the munitions and everything like that. And the other part to the food and then the petrol for their vehicles and everything like that. So that was our

11:30 role in the war.

And can you remember at the time any of the words the Japanese were ordering you with?

No, no. You soon had to learn their lingo. One of the things we used to say was this, "Morta koi." And when they did that first to you, you said, "Alright" walk away. That means, "Come here." Oh you soon found out that, whack, whack, whack.

12:00 "Morta Koi," they used to wave like that, that meant, "Come here." So the first time we got it we said, "Hooray," and we walked away, you soon stopped in your tracks then. And you had to learn what the word for shovels or picks or chunkles otherwise if you said the wrong thing you'd get it at your head, kind of business. And certain times then we used to have to number off in Japanese and

12:30 give the ‘eyes right’ or the ‘eyes left’ in Japanese as we were marching out. But that all happened while we were on their working parties mainly

So that first march to Selarang, how was that organised?

Oh well you lined up at the time then you were straggling all along the line you know, it wasn’t a march like the, like you saw them marching on The Bridge over the River Kwai, like this you know, the Pommies marching like that, it was nothing like that at all. You just marched off and you,

13:00 not, ‘left right, left right, left right’ or anything at all like that, you just strolled along kind of business.

And how were the Japanese controlling…?

Oh on either side of us like, you know, on the march, so you couldn’t have gone off the beaten track and gone into one of the houses or anything at all like that, cause they were there with their rifles right beside you see. Some in the front and along each side of the sections that were going and

13:30 everything like that.

So take us through maybe the first day or couple of days?

Oh it’s hard to remember, hard to remember the first few days out at Selarang. We were in the houses there and the cooks had to get all the foodstuffs to cook and they knew nothing about cooking rice in bulk. It was a

14:00 sticky mess, that’s all you could call it. But there was plenty of rice but they didn’t know how to cook it at that. When they learned how to cook it, the amount decreased rapidly. But that was it, we were just in this new environment, we were there. The food there was rice and whatever else they gave you. It affected

14:30 us differently. We had to dig, the latrines were bore holes into the ground like, you know, you’d put down so many feet and when we went on this food, the new rations, it affected everybody differently. Some had to sleep beside the bore holes all night long, otherwise they wouldn’t have been able to get back from where they were sleeping and to go down to the bore holes like that,

15:00 they wouldn’t have had time see. Some had dysentery very bad: others didn’t have it. I didn’t go to the toilet for about sixteen days; I was the opposite. They said, “Oh there’s no worries about that.” you know, some were twenty days, thirty, forty days, without going to the toilet. But it was the different kind of rations that you were on. And then of course they started to get thin, malnutrition and everything like that. But there’s

15:30 no ulcers down there, that came when we were up in the railway.

So what were you saying to each other in these first few weeks or what kind of comments would you say about your situation?

Well we didn’t know what was gonna happen, I mean you’re in the camp there and our own officers were controlling the camp and they issued routine orders, what you’d do and what you wouldn’t do. And you wouldn’t go near the wire, you wouldn’t go outside the gate and all this business, you were

16:00 lost really, lost, nonplussed, you didn’t know what was gonna happen. I mean, there was no work for you to do, I mean you weren’t doing any work at that time until later on you started to work round the camp. But in the first week or so you know, you were just lost, you didn’t know what was gonna happen.

Did you talk to each other about how long you’d be in there?

No, nobody knew, nobody knew whether you gonna be there one year, oh well after,

16:30 after we were there a while, the rumours went out, “The Yanks are landing at Penang.” you know, “we’ll be home by Easter.” Then Easter came, “We’ll be home by Christmas, then, “We’ll be home by the next Easter.” then “We’ll be home by the next Christmas.” After that you gave it away and said, “We, we…” you know. We gave the British away, we gave the Australians away and we gave the Yanks away. They were still fighting in New Guinea in 1945

17:00 so how the hell they were gonna get us out. All we were waiting for was Uncle Joe [Stalin] to come ‘round through Siberia, Joe Stalin, the Russian. So that’s what we were waiting for, Uncle Joe to come around through Siberia and to hit the Japanese from that angle, because the Yanks and the Australians and the Poms weren’t going to get up there because they were still fighting in New Guinea. So, I mean, you were lost in a way, you didn’t, well this was right through the war when we heard the news that

17:30 things were going over the side, how they were going over there. And the war finished over there in May ‘45 but we were still going, so we never knew what was gonna happen at all.

How would you get your news about…?

Oh they had secret radios, which they used to hide and one person used to be detailed to listen to the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] and get all the news and write it down. And then it was put on the notice boards

18:00 or it was put around the camp by mouth. But then of course if they caught you with the radios, your head was on the line and this is when I mentioned before that the Dutch that were working in the same places, they used to inform the Japs where the radio was a day. And if you had left it there they found it, but you had to hide it. But I didn't have anything to do with radios, I wasn't in that part of it, I just got the news outside kind of business.

18:30 **Even though you weren't, just quickly, what kind of places would they hide the radios?**

I wouldn't have a clue; I never ever saw a radio. I never ever saw it so I wouldn't know at all. They had 'em hidden, the only thing I knew, the brooms that they used to make, they used to hollow out the bottom part and they had a radio in there. And they'd, you know, be sweeping the floors with a normal broom; there was a radio in it. But some of them were ingenious

19:00 what they could put their hands to and make over there out of what we had. You know, made artificial legs and they made practically everything.

So in this, before you went up to work, what kind of, maybe take us through what an average day to day kind of day would be for you?

What, in Selarang or when we were on a working party?

Before the working parties yeah.

19:30 Oh before the working party, oh well you'd get up and you'd have your breakfast, whatever it was, sloppy rice or rice and corn, sloppy corn or something like that and then that was all you'd get for breakfast. Lunch, you might get rice and maybe some watery stew with greens,

20:00 leaves off the trees or something. And then evening meal'd be just the same as that. So only that, until they learned how to cook, they used to grind the rice then, get the rice flour, get rice flour and mix it with the tapioca root and make a pastry. So they could make pasties then and inside was oh, greens, something like that, very

20:30 little meat, we never ever saw much meat at all. And then they'd make the rice rissoles and dip them in the oil that they had there and fry them and that was later on when they got to know how to cook rice you know and what to do with it. But at the start it was just a gluey mass.

And how would you entertain yourselves through a day?

No entertainment, oh, they

21:00 started language classes and all that business, and arts classes and all that but I never ever went into any of those classes at all. I might play cards or something like that, that's about all you had to do.

And would you slip under the wire?

No, no, no, never slipped under the wire. Then of course we had the trailer parties, we used to have to go and get wood into the camp. And there was the

21:30 chassis of an old truck with the steering wheel and one cove sat up on the steering wheel and the rest were horses out the front. Like you know, the long rope or wire up the centre with the piece of timber either side and you'd grab behind them and you'd have to haul the logs in. They'd go out where they were cutting down the logs and they'd pile logs onto the chassis, the truck chassis and then you'd haul 'em into camp.

22:00 So that happened then and well that was some working parties we went in, within the camp that was or you'd have to go down to the ocean and bring up water for that, you know, the salt water because there wasn't any salt around the place.

And your quarters where you slept, what were they like?

Well they were like just a house

22:30 like this and they'd be sleeping on the floor, no furniture in the place, that'd all gone, you'd just sleep on the floor like that.

Take us through what happened to you from Selarang?

Well in Selerang in about May they started working parties into Singapore. First one was Adam Park and Thompson Road camp where we

23:00 were building this road up to the memorial the Japs were putting up for the Japanese dead, and there was this big wooden thing. So the coves used to take white ants and termites out from the camp and sprinkle them all around the bottom of this big wooden pole. Whether it did any good or not, but they used to take white ants and anything they could get around the camp, the termites, take out and put 'em round the

23:30 base of that. And that was where, Charlie Hutchison it was, I've trying to think of his name for a long

while, it's just come out like that, he was one of our sergeants, staff sergeant that's right, and he was driving a steamroller for the Japs at Adam Park. So every morning he used to go up and line up and get his four-gallon tin of petrol to start his steamroller. So he'd go out and sell it to the

24:00 Japanese then; not to the Japanese, to the Chinese.

How did that work exactly?

What, how did what work?

He got his petrol, like…?

Well I mean a steamroller runs on steam, water, boiled up in there and it runs on steam. So you didn't need petrol for a steamroller. So he'd sell that to the Chinese cause they didn't have any petrol so they'd buy all the petrol they could get. And even in that early stage they were printing more Japanese money than the

24:30 Japs were printing so they had thousands of dollars. So that was their, you know, whoever was in their Q Store [Quartermaster's Store] didn't know the difference between a blooming steamroller and a motor car kind of business, you know. So he thought, they all had to have petrol. But that was early in the piece; that was at Adam Park and Thompson Road. And then, well we were at Thompson Road I was in the

25:00 Chief Justice of Singapore's house, that was the house right up on the top of the hill, we were all in that, quartered in that one there. Then, while we're…

Just quickly on the steamroller, how did you get an opportunity to trade with the Chinese?

Oh the Chinese were always around outside the camp there and everywhere like that. Their own, see the Chinese were still living in the place, and they were in and out the, well outside the camp. But then you'd soon

25:30 make contact with them if you had anything to sell or something like that.

And what could you buy off them?

What could…?

What could you purchase from the Chinese, like trade…?

Oh we wouldn't purchase anything from the, oh well there's only the foodstuffs, you might be able to get, buy foodstuffs or something like that. And then whenever there was a canteen in the camp, you could buy the foodstuffs and various other things like that see.

Didn't they ever

26:00 **question at the canteen where the money came from?**

Well it was run by, not in that camp, I don't know that there's a canteen in that camp. But later on when we're in the jail, the Japs were very worried. There was so many million dollars more going through the canteen than they paid us in wages. See, you get forty, fifty thousand dollars for an Omega watch or a gold watch or a Seiko watch or something like that

26:30 and even later on you get more than that see. And the coves that went out through the wire, they might get sixty thousand for instance if you gave the, they'd give you thirty thousand and they'd keep the other thirty thousand themselves, for the risk of going out through the wire see. While we were in that Thompson Road camp, one of the funniest things that you'd ever hear in a prisoner of war camp happened. The administration

27:00 of us ended their contract or their period expired. And the new administration hadn't taken over yet, and there's one week our chaps were walking into Singapore, sitting down in a restaurant at a table, there'd be Japs at that table, Japs at that table, they wouldn't say anything to them at all because they weren't in

27:30 control of anybody at all. One lot had handed over and the other lot hadn't taken over so they had no responsibility. The Chinese used to give them bread rolls and they'd bring 'em back to camp. I was unfortunately acting sergeant major and [Lieutenant Colonel Frederick] 'Black Jack' Galleghan was in charge of the camp. And he said, "No man will go into Singapore, you'll stop inside your barracks, and there'll be roll calls, so many roll calls a day." so we had to put on roll calls and mark 'em 'present' or something like that you know, but they'd go in there. I never got into Singapore

28:00 in that time, I was the sergeant major of the blooming hut that we were in, so I had to stop in there. But they used to bring all the food home; that went right through to the Sunday afternoon, the new crowd took over. And on various occasions, well they went and grabbed coves walking out of Singapore. And in many instances the Jap must have been told to go in and bring four men escaping, well

28:30 they said they were escaping. And there might be six men there. He'd just be, "ichi, ni, san, shi, [one, two, three, four]" he'd only march off four men; he wouldn't worry about the other two. They could go and escape, he was only told to bring in four men, so he only brought in four men. That was their

mentality like that, if they were searching you for rice, coming into the camp, you could have anything else at all, they wouldn't worry, but if you had any rice you copped it. Next night they might be looking

29:00 for tapioca root, and you could be carting in rice and they wouldn't touch ya. So those are the things, they just, whatever they were told, they just did that exactly, they didn't deviate one iota from it.

Interesting . You raised that you were sergeant major of your…?

Oh well acting sergeant-major, I was only a sergeant, I was acting sergeant major of the hut, of the house, like.

29:30 **How does that work, being sergeant major of the house in a camp?**

Oh well, the early morning roll call and different things like that. But nothing, you're in, there weren't any officers in that house, they were somewhere else, so somebody was in charge, so I was only a sergeant. There was a staff sergeant from South Australia in it, he was in there [UNCLEAR]. And then there was our supply and there's

30:00 2.3rd Motor Ambulance Convoy, MAC, chaps there and there's 4th Motor Transport and others and our own crowd. So, you just were in charge of the whole thing, you had to make sure that the sergeant who was in charge of the cook house got the meals out on time and everything like that.

What if the rules were broken, if there wasn't someone to

30:30 **roll call or…?**

Well there'd be strife because there was always; everybody was there. Well the numbers went in okay, and nobody came to look to see whether we were wrong or not, but everything was right.

Did you ever manage to have anything, make your own alcohol, or have anything that…?

No, well we didn't worry about alcohol.

31:00 Used to see the Chinese or the Malaysians used to get out on the toddy, they used to get toddy issues of a Friday. That was even before we were taken prisoners, you'd see them around the camps there and they'd be drinking this toddy, it was fermented coconut juice and everything like that and some other additives and they used to get as full as boots on

31:30 that toddy. But we didn't get anything in the camp and you didn't look for it. Later on, all you thought about was food.

What happened next after…?

Well I went into Thompson Road camp and that was when Black Jack stood over the Japs and said, "No man 'll be hit of mine in this camp, hand 'em over to me and I'll

32:00 punish them." And of course when he went back to Changi as Commander AIF Malaya, McEachern took over and course he was weaker than Black Jack was. He was nowhere near Black Jack's strength or anything at all so the Japs did their own punishments then and I was one of the five that got bashed up for not working on the road, they used to pass the red light along.

Yeah, you were talking about that and I forgot to ask you about the red light, that's…?

Well that meant the

32:30 Jap was coming, the red light.

What was the red light?

No, no red light at all; there wasn't any light at all, but when they said, "red light" you'd know the Jap was coming. And if they didn't say anything well you knew there was no Jap coming. As soon as a Jap was walking along towards you, "red light", so you'd know there was a Jap, that was just the word that they had for the Jap coming towards you. So this day they didn't pass the red light on and this Hiramoto come over the top of the hill and came

33:00 down and got five or us up there and bashed us first and then had us with our arms out in front there for an hour. Then they tried us and took us back to Selarang via Half Moon Street outside the jail.

Take us through going to the working party in the first place?

Oh we were just on trucks, we went in on trucks into town, and just in Thompson Road we went in there and we were quartered in the various

33:30 huts and houses around the place. Then we used to go out each day, so many used to have to go out on the road and have to line them up and they'd march them off out onto the working parties then, out to do the road work.

And take us through exactly what kind of work you were doing?

Well it was making roads, right, if any roads that were damaged, digging the roads and putting the soil and everything from the side of the roads or rocks

34:00 or anything into the roads. And to replenish what was broken up and knocked out, or to make another road through what was jungle or something like that or not jungle, just bush on Singapore island and there, so we just have to make the roads up to this shrine.

And how hard was this work?

Oh wasn't hard at all. You could have finished what they gave you, one metre per man,

34:30 at lunchtime. But if you finished it at lunchtime, the next day you'd have to do two metres per man, then three metres per man see. So you have to wake up to yourself and just coast along and when they weren't coming well you didn't work but when the red light was coming, then you'd be working on the roadway see.

And what would you talk about with the blokes that you were with?

Oh everything, about camps in Australia, and that was what we were

35:00 discussing when, the South Australians reckoned that Alice Springs was the best camp they ever was in Australia, they reckon it was the best camp in Australia. So you just talk about camps, things back home or different things like that, where you went to and what you did and having a go at the Victorians, having a go at the New South Welshmen, you know.

What would you say to Victorians?

Oh well you know, the Yarra Rats and different things like that you'd call them and everything like that, having a go at them about this and

35:30 that and everything like that. And 'Aerial Ping Pong', which was Aussie Rules, we used to call it 'Aerial Ping Pong' or 'Big Ring', like that, we used to give 'em hell about that. And the Crow-eaters from South Australia and the Sandgropers from West Australia, had names for them all like that.

What were you called?

Oh we, I don't know, the Banana Benders from Queensland, that's what we were always called, Banana Benders.

36:00 **And did you work with any other nationalities on these roads?**

Not on that, we had the Australians in there with us there. When we did go, even up on the railway, when we went out on our working parties, the British and the Australians. The British would work on the roadworks and we'd work on another part of the roadworks. That's as far as I ever; I never ever worked with any Englishmen or anything at all like we're working

36:30 side by side at all, we only working with our own crowd.

And you talked about it before where you were punished this time by holding out your arms; do you remember the Japanese guard?

The one that come over and grabbed us and took us over? Yeah, he couldn't have been a Jap, I think he was more of a Korean, he's about six foot, big

37:00 one this cove, Hiramoto, I think that was his name, Hiramoto. And he started down here, swung his hand and whacked, right across the jaw and then they made us stand with our arms out in front of us like that. And that hurt, oh, your shoulders were just, the only other similar thing I had was when we were in the jail, I got grabbed there one time. There was a Jap plane

37:30 landing, and course, "Crash you bastard, crash." And they wanted to know what we said, so we had to make up something and they didn't believe us so they put me over in the toolshed and you were sitting there, squatting down to the knees, half bent position like that, with a Jap sitting there, has all implements and shovels and chunkles and everything like around him. So if you

38:00 went down too far or tried to get up he'd whack you, so you stopped there. Then they brought you something, and from having your hands on your hips all the time, you couldn't even hold a spoon in your hand, kind of business, like that. So that was my last day on the aerodrome, after that they said, "No you don't go down anymore because he'll only target you all the time." like, you know, so I didn't go back there again.

So

38:30 **it was organised, who organised the working parties who would go on them?**

Well the Japs'd say, "We want X number of people," and then you had to have X number of people out there. See up on the railways the same, the Japs used to come in and say, "We want X number of people." Well you didn't have X number of fit men. And sometimes they used to come to the hospitals and drag 'em out of the beds in the hospital to go out on the working parties.

39:00 The medical officers used to stand up to them and say, “No.” And half of them got whacked, got a hiding for refusing to send the men out. But, that’s the way it was, they wanted so many men on a job, they got so many men on a job, well they wouldn’t get fit men anyhow.

Tape 6

00:48 Ah, yeah well, that was when we were expelled back to Changi, Jack Gilding and I, and they put us in the Jap truck and with Jap guards in the back

01:00 and went out and on the way to Selarang they pulled into this Half Moon Street we used to call it, it was down in front of the jail, they had administration offices there the Japs. And...

Why was it called Half Moon Street?

I don't know, I don't know what it’s called now even. I think the street’s gone, everything’s gone now, it’s all different now. And then but that’s what it was called then, Half Moon Street, I don't know. And then we went down there and they had us in a room and asked us questions, “Who,”

01:30 ah, our names, where we come from, our next of kin, all that business. And then we didn’t know what was gonna happen at all, asking us all those questions, we thought they might just knock us off and say we were trying to escape. And then they put us out in the truck again and then we drove out to the...

What was the set up when they were asking you all these questions?

Oh in a room, in a big room like that, with just chairs in the room and everything like that.

And where were you standing?

02:00 I don't know whether we were standing or sitting down on the chairs in there. But it was in a big room, and they were asking us these questions.

Can you give me some examples of the questions?

Well that’s what I said, name, next of kin, where we come from in Australia, those sort of questions.

No sort of questions about, more interrogation sort of?

No, no, no. This was at the, what, been

02:30 July, August ‘42 so they’d know everything about us anyhow by that time. There was nothing they were, no it was only just personal questions they wanted to know. Then that’s why I thought they were gonna knock us off and say we’d try to escape so that they had our next of kin and everything like that. But they didn’t and they marched us up to the truck again, outside the jail, we got in the truck outside the jail, the Jap truck. And headed out, and if we turned right and went to Selarang we were right, if we turned left,

03:00 it was who knows where we were going to go at all. But we went to Selarang and they brought us up before Black Jack Galleghan.

Can you just tell me how you were feeling in the back of the truck?

Oh we were, well going to that main road; we didn’t know what was gonna happen, your heart’s in your mouth you know.

Were you talking to Jackie?

No, I don't think we said anything along that stretch of the road from here to the main gate. We both had the same thoughts, that if we turned right,

03:30 we’re right, we’re going to Selarang but if we turned left, well, you never knew where you were going at all or what was gonna happen. So we just didn’t say anything at all, I can’t remember speaking at all on that, I don't know how long it was now, about eight hundred yards, it might have been more, I don't know but it was out to the main road. Luckily then we turned right and went to Selarang. So we both heaved a sigh of relief I’m sure

04:00 when we went out to Selarang. And they went up before Black Jack’s office and brought him presents out and wanted him to try us. And so he said, “No, wait.” until he gets word from his officers in Singapore. And word come out then we went up before him the next morning and explained to him. We dramatically told him about his own 2/30th sergeant being bashed up for telling lies, see that was when we were waiting to get tried

04:30 ourselves. They were trying this 2/30th Battalion sergeant, and he marched his men home and they asked him why and he said the Nippon soldier told him. And they asked the Jap and he said, “No.” he didn’t tell him so they bashed hell out of him for telling lies, not for marching his men home but for telling lies. So when we went up before them and this Major Lee the interpreter who used to be the

manager of the Capitol Cabaret in Malacca,

05:00 we didn't say anything at all then. And so they said, "Oh well, let the three privates off." and the two of us sent back to Changi. That's what they said then but we didn't know, how we gonna get there and when we went on that trip down from Half Moon Street down to the main road, it was just up in the air whether we were going to turn left or right. So then we went back to Selerang and after we'd spent the night in the guardhouse, up in solitary confinement, meet (UNCLEAR) Black Jack and he said, "As far as the AIF's concerned,

05:30 forget about it, as far as the Jap's concerned, you've been severely punished."

Tell me about the guardhouse?

That was the jail, inside; it was the AIF guardhouse, their jail. The provos were over and if anybody did anything wrong in camp, you could get twenty-four days rice and water, that's all you got in there.

What sort of things would be considered things that you were doing wrong?

06:00 Oh well if you were insubordinate to one of your officers, if you told them off and told them they were mongrels or something like that, you could be up on a charge sheet and go up there and spend seven days up in the cooler as they call it you know, the jail.

Did this happen to many people?

Oh there was quite a few in there all the time, there was somebody in there all the time.

How badly were they treated in there?

06:30 Well I don't know at all, but being provos running the boob they weren't easy on whoever was in there. But they didn't touch us anyhow because we were just sent over from Black Jack, remanded until the next morning and so they didn't come any strong hand with us.

Was it a strange concept of to be a prisoner within a prison?

It is, very, very strange. But see it was run like an Australian camp.

07:00 The Japs just issued orders to our officers and the officers carried out those orders. Otherwise it was just the same as a normal camp. Those people that remained in Singapore, in Selerang, for the whole three and half years, they were on clover. They didn't know what it was like to be a prisoner, that's what I reckon. And I said that in one of our last magazines, I wrote to the Minister about the same thing. We're trying to get

07:30 compensation for our European POWs and the ones from Korea. They gave the Japanese POWs twenty-five thousand but they won't give the European POWs anything at all, nor the Koreans. So I wrote to the Minister and I said that the majority of the European POWs or the POWs in the Europe theatre suffered much more that those who spent their three and half years on Singapore

08:00 Island at Selarang. Oh and I got some back slap from some of the coves from around, down in Victoria and up here in Queensland, the coves that spent all their time in Selarang. But when we were on the railway, we used to say, "We'll never whinge again if we can get home to Singapore." because that was almost like going home, because you didn't see a Jap. You weren't working all day for them and them standing over you or anything at all. And you got three meals a day down there, whereas

08:30 up there sometimes you only get two meals a day, and then it'd be very small, but if you could get back to Singapore it's like going home. And these coves were in there the whole three and half years some of them and of course there was a lot of the Europeans suffered a lot, much more than them.

How did you, why did some people stay in there for three and half years?

Oh well, no, it's working parties, there was a hospital there so those people that were looking after the hospital and the

09:00 CCS [Casualty Clearing Station] and the Medical Corps they were there at the hospital, others were in there to look after other parts. There was only so many people go on each working party, see they might have wanted, there was seven thousand went on F Force, there was about four thousand Englishmen and three thousand Australians. I mean they wouldn't take the whole camp up, there's seven thousand went on that force, so many thousand went on this force, so many thousand, well those that were left, remained there.

09:30 **So how was it decided that you would go on F Force?**

Well it was just so many from our unit had to go, there's so many to go, there's three thousand Australians, so they'd have so many from the 2/30th , so many from this unit, so many from that unit, so many from that, so many from that, all the way along the line. When I went in on the first working party with my mate Jackie Peterson, he had boils all over his back and he didn't

10:00 go in on the working party, and he would have come in on the working party if he hadn't of been sick like with the boils. So in the meantime before I got back then he went to Borneo on B Force, on the

same force as Herb Trackson went and E Force, then C Force went to Japan, Don Force went up on the railway, then E Force was going and the rumour was that they were going to

10:30 Borneo. So I thought oh I'll volunteer for this, and I'll go over and be with my mate you know, Jackie Peterson. And then I thought twice about it and, "No, don't volunteer Gilbert, you never volunteer, let them send you where they want to send you." So I didn't go on E Force. Then I went on the next force, F Force and when I was up on the railway I thought, "Oh God, why didn't I volunteer for that? That's worse than this." because it was hell up on that railway.

How did they take you

11:00 **up there?**

How did they take us up? We were in big steel rice vans, big steel with sliding door either side and that's all.

Trucks?

Trucks, yeah, they're railway trucks, sliding big van on the railway. We went from Singapore railway, all the way up through over the causeway, Johor Bharu up through

11:30 Yong Peng, right up through KL [Kuala Lumpur] to Ban Pong in Thailand. You were put in this big place about thirty of you in there with what gear you had, slam the door shut then and you're in there. Then if you wanted to go to the toilet you'd have to open, slide open the door and just stand there, that's all you could do. And then maybe in there for a day and a half and then they'd stop, watering

12:00 stop like to take on water for the engine, something like that. And everybody'd get out and go outside and have a walk around and do what they wanna do then you'd back in again. And when they fed you there'd just be a big tub of rice and then some yakka, dried meat like that. And then they'd close the doors and you'd have to,

12:30 you'd shell it out in the dark or half dark, no lights on or anything at all like that.

Did you know where you were going?

No, they said we were going to a convalescent camp, that's what they reckoned. "Oh be much better up there." you know, "More food and you'll be having this and that." It was up the railway...

Who said this?

Oh the Japs said that. And then when, course we got to Yong Peng, not Yong Peng, Ban Pong. We got out there and the other mob had just

13:00 moved out, that was the other train load, you went into the huts. And they warned us all, when you go in, you put down your gear then they march you out then they search your gear. So there was a well inside the ground...

So where was this?

Ban Pong in Thailand. And see when we left Singapore

13:30 we thought there's a chance of escaping, of going up there and getting over to India, over through Burma. And what chaps had, they had revolvers, they had everything underneath the sun, knives and everything. And course they put on this search so everything went down that well, oh it was amazing what would've went down the bottom of that well, see because we were warned by the party the previous day. As they were marching out, they said now, "Don't have anything

14:00 in your gear when you go into the hut, get rid of it down the well because they'll put on a search see." Very funny thing, at that time there was eight of us used to mess in together. Dave McDougall, I showed you his photo out there and six others from Victoria, so there was eight of us. So, this night, see we used to always have water points, we had

14:30 boiling water going all night long for in the morning when you came out, for your food you'd have to put your dixies through the boiling water to kill any germs or anything at all like that. And I was on duty on the water point all night, like to keep the fires going, with the few coves. And the coves were sneaking out of their huts with all the gear, our chaps were sneaking out of their huts with all the

15:00 extra gear they brought up and taking it out to sell it to the Thais. And the Japs were there and they were catching them one after another. And taking them over and making them put all the clothing that they were trying to sell into the corner of the Jap guardhouse. And in the morning the Jap sergeant, "Morta koy," come over here, "Presento", all this

15:30 clothing, "presento" to me. So I got word back to the other seven chaps, come and get this stuff and get out and sell it. So we sold it all ourselves then.

Why did he give it to you?

I don't know, he was a sergeant of the guardhouse there and I was sergeant in charge of the water point

but he, “Presento.” I mean they do silly things those Japs, you never know what they’re gonna do, but that’s what he did. And he gave me that so I got the other boys out and they went and sold it,

16:00 so we had all that money there, what money we had, I don't know how much it was. Then we were able to buy eggs and various other things on the way up too see. And then...

Just tell me about this mess group, this, that you, the seven or eight of you...?

Oh the eight of us messed in together. Whatever we had or whatever we could sell we put all our money in together so we

16:30 just pooled all our money. So that whatever we bought, it was amongst us all like, myself and another Queenslander and the other six Victorians. That was the one that when we were up on the railway was on my birthday, my twenty-third birthday, when we had the tin of herrings we happened to buy from, I don't know where we got it, but we had a tin of herrings, and there’s nine herrings in a tin and there was eight of us.

17:00 So the eight, one herring each and that ninth herring, it was only about that long you know what a herring is and about that wide, had to be split up into eight equal parts. “Hey, there’s a bit more on that one than that one.” And you, well, what it would be, there wouldn’t have been half a mouthful or a quarter of a mouthful, or anything like, only be one little bit. But you were so starved of food that three grains

17:30 of rice more on his plate than your plate you’d, you know, you had to have an argument with him, you know, why did you get more than me kind of business.

How did those herrings taste?

Real good with rice, with the rice, we had the rice and the stew, we had the rice and the herrings and then we had rice and banana, so I had a three course meal on me birthday. That was in 1943.

How close were you with these

18:00 **men?**

Oh Dave McDougall I’m still pretty close to him now, I go over and see him quite often, the other six are all dead, the Victorians.

But at the time?

Ah well we were all in the same unit, Ralph Jones, one of the other sergeants from down Victoria, we were pretty close with him. But the others were, I didn’t know them that much but he was with them so we all teamed ourselves together. There’s a sergeant cook,

18:30 Teddy Geller and his brother; and Teddy Geller committed suicide up in Burma, he lost both his legs.

How?

Oh with the ulcers and that, he lost both his legs, he had his legs amputated and he committed suicide, that’s the official what’s a name, committed suicide.

The official...?

The official notification of his death and everything like that you know.

Is that what happened?

Well yes, yes, yes, he would have. He didn’t want to

19:00 come home. So how he committed suicide I don't know, but it was in Burma, the same hospital that I was in but I didn’t know that at all at the time. But I then found out later when we got back to Changi that he had committed suicide. How he did it I don't know but he did. So he died over there, all the others came back home to Australia and all the Victorians have since died, there’s only the two Queenslanders left.

19:30 That shows how tough we are.

And how important was it to have a group of...?

Oh well it was your mates, if you didn’t have a mate you died, there you are. If you didn’t have somebody to look after you or you look after them. I know when you got malaria, and I got malaria, I’d had working on the railway, I thought, “Oh no I’m not working on the railway any more.” So I volunteered to work on

20:00 Cholera Hill, that was the little medical section that those with cholera went in there. And I used to have to take who they were, as they come in, their names and that and put on a clip around their wrist with bamboo written on, their name and everything like that. So when they died you knew who it was that died. And on the

20:30 first night there I got malaria, so I only lasted one night on the job and I got malaria. But when you had malaria and you had the rigours, as we call it, it could be as hot as anything and you shivering like anything with malaria, and it was always at lunchtime you'd most probably cop it. And the thought of food made you sick, you couldn't look at food. And then the other coves'd come up,

21:00 "I'll get your meal if you want it, Gilly." they used to call me. "No, oh you can have it, I don't want it, take it away, I don't want to see it." But course in about half an hour's time, an hour's time you'd get over that, you'd be hungry then. And you didn't have enough brains to say, "No, get it and put it there and I'll have it later." because at that time the thought of food made you worse kind of business. But then when you were sick and you didn't feel like eating, if you had a mate, he'd force you to eat, he'd feed you

21:30 like, you know, make you eat it all, because if you didn't eat, you died.

Did you do this for anyone?

Yes, yes, I had mates there that we used to do the same thing when they were crook, and they wouldn't eat at all, you'd have to bully them into eating like. I mean when we went into the next camp, the Number Two Camp, Sonkurai, it was a British camp.

22:00 And they were dying like flies there, they wouldn't have any hygiene at all, they didn't dig boreholes for latrines or anything at all. They used to do their business wherever they just felt like it see and disease was rife. When we came in and we had to clean up the camp and dig latrines and everything, they were coming in from working parties too and we'd go down beside them when they come in and said, "Oh, I'll have your rice if you don't want it chum." "You can have it Aussie." They wouldn't

22:30 eat the rice, they'd only eat the bit of stew with it.

Why?

Most of them would, some of them did but a lot of them wouldn't eat the rice, well they didn't like it so they didn't eat it. Well they died. We used to go down and we'd get our dixie full of their rice and take it up and by morning it'd be a bit sour but you'd heat it up and eat it, eat as much as you could.

23:00 **You said if you didn't have a mate you died…?**

Well that's right, they never died alone. No chap that was there died on his own, he always had somebody beside him.

What would they do?

Well you'd talk to him; you'd do everything you could for him, even though you knew you couldn't do any more for him. But you'd talk

23:30 to try and comfort him and everything like that.

What kind of things do you say?

Oh, you'd talk about what you're gonna do when you get home. "You'll be right mate, don't worry about it, you'll be right, you'll be right." You know, even though you knew they weren't gonna be right, you'd say, most probably they knew themselves they weren't gonna be right. But, you know, "We'll be doing this, we'll be doing that when we go home, we'll be able to do this, we'll be able to do that."

Would they respond?

Well in a way, in a way

24:00 but it was hard, it were hard. When you woke up in the morning and went to speak to the cove beside you and he'd gone through the night; shake him, he's dead. You know, because when you went to sleep of a night, closed your eyes, you didn't know whether you were gonna open them in the morning.

How do you deal with that?

You just did, you just have to carry on. It was hard.

What makes you want to carry on?

24:30 Well life's sweet, no matter how crook it was then, it's sweet. As I say now, I wouldn't be dead for quids [pounds]. But over there as I used to say, "No little Jap so-and-so's gonna keep me over here, I'm gonna get home, I'm gonna get home, I'm gonna get home." I used to always say that, "I'm gonna get home." And I got home but I mean it was more willpower yourself, to pushing yourself along. But

25:00 some of the coves got cholera, no, even before they got cholera, some of them had amputations, and then their immune system was so low they'd get some other thing. They'd get bronchitis, they'd get diarrhoea or something like that and they'd just go (UNCLEAR). But try and comfort them as much as you could you know, tell them lies, "We're gonna do this, we gonna do this when we get home." and everything like that.

What sort of things would you tell them you were gonna do when you get home?

Oh well, we'll go out, we'll go

25:30 to the, if he was a Queenslander from Brisbane here, we'd go here, we'd go to the Troc [Trocadero dance hall], we'd go to the Troc down there and by Victoria Bridge down there, the Trocadero. And go here and we'd go there and we'd down to that pub down the Valley, the Waterloo and all this kind of business. You know, you'd try and say some things that they knew about and that they'd try and ease their pain or well they knew they

26:00 were gonna die.

Would you ever talk to them about things like family and…?

Yeah well if you knew them that well, if they were married like. If they weren't

26:30 married, you know, you'd say' "We'll go out on the town and we'll do this and we'll do that. We'll, with our girlfriends." and everything like that. But as we always said, "You'd never leave a cove die on his own." you'd be with him all the time or somebody'd be with him. Even on Cholera Hill when they were dying, the orderly'd go along and speak to them and everything like that. Even though they couldn't speak themselves in some cases, you know,

27:00 they couldn't speak or anything at all, they were so low. But somebody else'd be trying to comfort them and everything like that.

When someone died was there ever any sort of ritual or would people say a few words, how did that…?

Oh yeah well there'd be a funeral, but you got so callous there, you'd be eating your rice there and there'd be somebody getting carted out. "Who's that?" "Oh so-and-so, he died this afternoon." "Oh." Go straight on with your rice.

27:30 Death was so prevalent that it meant nothing at all, although they used to take them out and those that died of cholera used to be burned, their bodies used to be burned on the big log fires because of the disease and contamination, everything like that, they wouldn't bury them. The only ones that got buried were those that died of other than cholera. So they'd throw them on the

28:00 log fires. And well the padre was always there to say a few words and everything like that.

What would the padre say?

Oh I don't know, I never attended one of the (UNCLEAR) up. Oh he had most probably 'The Lord's Prayer' or something like that, you know, "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust," something like that.

Why did you never…?

I don't know, I never went to one of the

28:30 funerals, putting the cove in the ground or another cove thrown on the fire. It was always when I wasn't there or whoever was being taken out I didn't know, or anything at all like that. You'd only go to those if you knew the cove himself, like, you know, you'd go there, you'd know who he was or something like that.

You mentioned that

29:00 **death, you became jaded, but what had death started to mean to you personally?**

What, them dying, or you not dying?

I guess, you think about your own…

Well as I said, when you went to bed of a night you went to sleep, you didn't know whether you were gonna open your eyes in the morning because there's so many who didn't open their eyes.

But

29:30 **what did that feeling mean to you?**

Oh I don't know it made me more determined in meself that no yellow so-and-so's gonna keep me over here. I had that determination all the time that I wasn't gonna be kept over there. I was lucky, I didn't get cholera, I got dysentery many times and I got ulcers on me legs and everything like that.

30:00 But none of my ulcers grew in any size; they went down, straight down into my leg. But those coves that had ulcers, you could see their whole leg was exposed, the bone exposed like that. They were much worse off and then they had to have their legs amputated. But no I copped diseases up there, I got malaria, and I got dysentery and beriberi.

30:30 I mean you just poke your fingers in your legs like that and the holes there like that; this was fluid

underneath the skin. I've seen 'em out like this and blow up and burst, their skin eventually bursts. So it's hideous what happens, but still all that happened over there and I was lucky I didn't get any of those real bad like that. I had

31:00 beriberi in the legs and that, but as I said I was just one of the lucky ones I think.

With so much death around you, you must have thought about it a lot?

Oh you tried not to think of yourself dying. I didn't think of myself stopping over there dying. I wouldn't let that enter my head. I, as I said, was gonna make sure I was gonna get home.

31:30 I wasn't gonna die and I didn't, luckily. But I mean, those are the things, some of them used to have that idea then they'd get cholera and they'd get so weak. And there's a lot of the Englishmen said, "Oh, I'll never go home, I'll never get home." And they wouldn't get home, because they used to throw in the towel beforehand. "I'll never get home, I'll never see England again." And some of the Australians used to say, "I'll never see Australia again." you know. But it was yourself I think,

32:00 the determination and the luck that you didn't get these very crippling diseases like cholera very bad. A few of my mates had cholera and they got over it, one of the eight of us, Ralph Jones from Victoria, he had cholera but his wasn't very bad attack so he got over it. But, see I've seen 'em, working with 'em on the railway, a cove I played football with from New South Wales.

32:30 And he went off crook with diarrhoea and then they took him back to camp and when I went in that night I asked about him, "Oh he was burned this afternoon." That's how fast it hits ya, you'd be vomiting and diarrhoea, both ends'd be going, and you'd just waste away to practically nothing at all. And he was burned that same afternoon even before I got back from work.

33:00 And he would have been about three or four stone when he died. Like, you know, everything goes out of you like that. So that's what you had, that hit the camp and then we got injections, inoculations for it up there and they used to give us, I think I mentioned this somewhere there, the glass rod. You'd have to touch your toes and this glass rod and they'd

33:30 put it in your backside like that, and to see whether there was any disease on it there. And then the glass rod and then we had the bamboo, a piece of bamboo stick, up on the railway, and once we had even wire. So we used to always say, "The only thing they couldn't do is to make us love the baby." They did everything else to us but make us love the baby. That's what we used to always sling them off and

34:00 say that with a laugh. But those are the things.

Were there ever things that you'd sort of fantasise about, like you know, you'd said you'd talk about say oh, you know, when we get home we're gonna do this or that, was there something that you always thought about?

Food. We're always writing recipes out, if we had paper or if we had a bamboo and a pencil or something like that, write a recipe.

34:30 One of my mates, Ronnie Ferguson, he used to work at R.M. Gow here, they used to do all tinned stuff, supplied all tinned stuff. They had their office and factory down at Little Roma Street, down there where this new magistrate's building is going up there. Along that, there used to be the Roma Street Markets, there too in those offices. He said, "When we go home, I'll work overtime one night and we'll go in there. And I'll let you

35:00 in and we go round and we'll get all the tins we want, you know, off the shelves, get whatever tin we like and we'll have a feast." He never come back, he died on Christmas Day 1943, up on the railway. But these are the things that you planned and what you're going to eat and what you're going to do and what you're going to have when you got home. I mean you thought of that all the time.

35:30 We didn't think of women, women were the furthest from our thoughts. If you said, "Do you want Betty Grable?" she was the pin up girl in those days "Or a bowl of rice?" "I'll have the bowl of rice." You wouldn't worry about a woman, the jokes you told weren't about women like they are here and everything like that. It was about food, everything was food. So that's what happened over there.

What kind of recipes would you

36:00 **write down?**

Oh I don't know, everything now, I can't remember them now but what you're gonna eat, some of them used to write out a lot of recipes. I didn't, we used to talk about the recipes and what we're gonna eat and everything like that. Course my mother and father had a fowl house always having a fowl house, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [fowls] in there. I knew I was gonna have WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK , plenty of WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK when I got home, which I did have too, they had laid on left, right and centre when I got home. But oh, you know, you do this,

36:30 steak and eggs and go down to that, when we got back, when we're coming on our pre-em leave, that's right, Jackie Peterson, Chadwick and myself got off the train and we went down to a Nick's Cafe I think, Nick's Cafe down in Albert Street, I'm sure it's down Albert Street. Went down there and big steak and

eggs there and all the trimmings. And

37:00 then Jackie went up to wait for Palings to open, he wanted to buy some records, he was always buying records like all the latest music, so he went up to buy the records. And I think he only played them the once when he was home on pre-em leave and then I went home and Chaddy went home. Chaddy, the day I got engaged, he got married

37:30 the same day, he got married in March 1941, well he had to get married, the baby was born in June so he had to get married. So that was old Chaddy, he was married in the crypt underneath where the old hurdy-gurdies used to be, it's now the big apartment buildings down the Valley there, you know the Cathedral place there. There was a

38:00 crypt in there, that's where he got married, old Chaddy. So he's gone, his wife's gone too now. So that was it, that's all you thought of was food. And if you had a smoke, something to take the edge off your appetite, if you could breathe in smoke, whether it was leaves off the trees or that, you'd wrap 'em up. You could get ninety-six cigarette papers out of a sheet of

38:30 Los Angeles Times or the New York Herald, cutting out, it was one dollar a sheet. Or the Bible, it was a dollar a sheet too, those beautiful rice papers in a Bible, beautiful rice paper, so, you know, very fine. But then other than that you'd have the newspaper like and you'd have to chew it along there to lick it to make it stick together. But if you had smoke in your lungs, no matter what it was, it took that edge off your appetite.

39:00 You didn't think of food so much, but if you didn't have a smoke, all you could think of was food, all the time.

Was there ever, when you thought about going home, or Australia, was there a particular one image that you always thought about in relation to home or Australia?

No I thought, I always reckoned I'd get home, I wanted to get home, I was trying to make sure I got home.

I guess when you thought of…

But I never pictured

39:30 myself getting off the boat or flying home or anything at all like that.

But when you thought of home…?

Oh yes I thought of the house where I lived in, I thought of where my fiancé lived up here too. And then I used to think of the times I took her out of a Saturday night and have to walk home right out to Moorooka, from here right out to Moorooka, about half past two in the morning because you didn't have enough money to buy a cab and there's no trams at that time,

40:00 so you had to walk. So you'd think about all those times and the dances we used to go to and parties we had and everything like that. That's what you had in your mind all the time, thinking that well those days will come again.

Tape 7

00:35 **Well tell us about the…?**

Yeah, right. Well when we got money, everybody sold, we knew we were on, have to march then. This is when we found out that we…

Where from again, just for…?

From Ban Pong, we knew we were gonna go out to march; how far we didn't know how far we were gonna march. But we couldn't carry all the blooming…; some coves had overcoats

01:00 and this and that and everything so they sold everything and they had money. So they were buying eggs, at ten cents each for an egg you'd get ten for a dollar, and bananas and everything, food you could buy from the Thais. So everybody was eating eggs and everything like that. And course on the first day we went out to march, the next morning we went out to march and they're marching along and oh God, it was terrible. Everybody

01:30 up above you was breaking wind kind of business and you were copping it all down there, oh the rotten, oh it was terrible, rotten eggs. But anyhow we marched off, we marched on that night, we marched a hundred and ninety-eight miles then.

What was that like, marching that far?

Well it was crook. We were marched at night; two nights then we'd have the third night off. It was monsoon, the roads was tracks through the jungle, part of the time.

02:00 Once we got past Kanburi [Kanchanaburi] and going up through the jungle tracks, you'd be slipping and sliding and everything like that, your clothing was wet through. You're carrying your gear, sometimes you're not only carrying yours, you're carrying half your mate's gear too, he was crook and he couldn't carry anything at all. And certain times you'd have to hold on to one another like that, because there's ravines down either side.

02:30 And if you stumbled over you'd go right down the bottom, you'd be lost. Then, well, it was crook, marching all night. You'd start off marching in, say, sixes like that and every hour they'd have ten minute break. But the time you got up there, they'd already moved on, so you wouldn't get any breaks at all. And the Japs all along and when

03:00 you did get a break for the lunch at night, like an hour like, the Japs'd make you light fires around the place, they were frightened of the tigers up there, and the Japs were there and then they'd be marching with us also. And then the Thais used to come along with yak carts and the Japs would arrange for you to put your gear on them. If you did, you never saw your gear again, so you hung on to your gear as much as possible.

03:30 Some of them said, "Oh here, here's my gear, you take it and give it next stop." But the Thais'd go off with it, so you'd never see that again; so that went on and as I said a hundred and ninety-eight miles.

Why'd they make you march at night?

Well it'd be too hot during the day for a start and they didn't want to march during the day. Then you'd stop at the next camp or you stopped at and tried to clean yourself up or wash your clothes and dry

04:00 them during the day and have a lay down, have a rest or something. Then you'd start off about five o'clock again then march the next night then the third night you'd have off. So it took about a fortnight to march that. We were marching up on Mother's Day 1943, the second Sunday in May, cause somebody said, "Oh, it's Mother's Day today!" "So what." That's what ya thought about it, couldn't care less whether it was Christmas Day, Mothers Day or Anzac Day or what it was.

Did you think of your mother

04:30 **at the time?**

No, not at that time, you didn't think of anything at all, you were only just marching up and someone said, "Mother's Day." "So what," you know.

What about the landscape, what were you, what was it like?

Jungle, just jungle. It's alright now, I go up there now, right up that same track that we marched up, it's a roadway now, through the Pagoda Pass, right up past the camp I was in. I went back to the camp last February, I

05:00 was in that camp again, Shi-no-Sonkurai. Went up onto Cholera Hill and saw where that was.

What's it like to return?

Oh well, the only thing you can remember about it is the creek where we used to go down to wash ourselves and they had big logs across the creek, the logs are still there across the creek, but Cholera Hill where I worked, that's only paw-paw trees

05:30 on that at the moment. Then the cemetery where you can see impressions in the ground where they've exhumed the bodies and took 'em up to Tambasa [Tambaya?] in Burma, where I went back to in May, I went back to Burma there. But we got up that camp after marching all that time and went in and there was huts there and no roofs on the huts. Oh there was some roof on a few of the huts,

06:00 and the officers took them straight away and we were in the ones with no roof on it, so we had to put roofs on then.

How did you feel about the officers…?

Oh well, same as we thought about them anytime. If there was any good thing going they got it, kind of thing, you know. But anyhow then we had to finish the huts off or try and finish the huts off and put a roof on 'em and then

06:30 we had to start working on the railway then.

And what was, going through this kind of condition and no roofs, I mean what was the chances of catching, I don't know, sickness and disease?

Oh yeah well as I said we hit that camp and cholera broke out in the camp, it's in the water. You see beautiful crystal clear water and home in Australia you see a creek through the mountains you know,

07:00 you can drink it straight away you know. Some drank it and course it had the disease in it, cholera germs in the water. You had to boil all the water you drank there; you couldn't have anything without it being boiled. And have to sterilise your dixies in boiling water, that's why we had the water points going

all night long with the boiling water there all the time. But some of them would drink the water and anything like that, others with the disease,

07:30 they got it most probably without drinking the water, I don't know how they'd get it. But there's quite a lot got the disease there and the most we burned was about thirty in the one day. We lost seven hundred there, mostly through cholera, the Australians, in the two months we were there.

How was it doing this job, was it difficult?

What,

08:00 well we were going out to work, down to on the railway.

No, I meant...

We were going out working on the railway and dragging logs in from the...

I meant actually working in Cholera Hill?

Oh Cholera Hill, I only lasted one night. I volunteered for it, I wasn't gonna work on the railway anymore, I said, "Bugger the railway, I'll volunteer for Cholera Hill and be a medical orderly up there." So I went up

08:30 there the first night and I got malaria so that was the end of me on that job.

Well I might talk about the logs and...

Oh the logs yeah, yeah, the logs. We used to carry the logs out from the jungle, four men or six men or whatever we could lift 'em up and with one chap stumbling, of course everybody... and they wonder why we got crook backs now you know. But those things you jarred a whole blooming... big logs were about that round of course.

09:00 And I suppose they'd be here to the door out the back there and you'd have to pick them up and carry 'em out of the jungle to the roadway, and it was tough work, it was heavy work. And then this day this Nip, jumped up and down at me because we were carrying them out six men to a log, when us told me four men to a log. And I said, "We

09:30 can't lift 'em." So that's when immediately he made me put my arms on a log, like that, and he raised his sword. I didn't know why he didn't; most probably it was bluff. It must have been, the only reason I can think of it now, it must have been trying to bluff me into doing it four men to a log, and we couldn't.

What was going through your mind?

Well I didn't know, I was just waiting for the sword to come down on my hands. I

10:00 thought there goes my hands, you know. I didn't know what to think, just waiting, waiting, waiting, and it didn't come down. But we still had to carry 'em six men to a log and he was like a rabbit beside us there, because he was the one that's gonna get any back slap from his superiors for allowing us to carry 'em six men to a log, when they said, "Four men to a log." So that was it.

How could you manage this

10:30 **in your condition at the time?**

Well you had to do it; you had to lift it up. I mean we were all thin, I was, I went down to six stone on the railway, or just on six stone, that's about forty-five k [kilograms] I think it was, something like that, forty to forty-five k. And how I know that, when I got back to Singapore the officer said, "Oh you're not looking too robust." or something "Sergeant." And I said, "Well I'm not carrying any excess weight

11:00 if that's what you mean." He said, "I think we'll put you on the wood heap." Well if you worked on the wood heap you ate in the kitchen, so therefore you got as much food as you wanted to. And after three weeks on that I got on the big scales they had there and I went to one hundred pounds, that was seven stone two, so that was after three weeks eating what you could. So up on the railway, well I wasn't weighed on the railways, I must have been about six, or six and a half stone up there on the railway.

And so, I'm just curious

11:30 **to know if you remember kind of, the feeling in your body when you've got your arms on the log and the man's holding the sword...?**

On that one, well no, I don't know whether I had any feeling in me body at all, I just, like that you know, just waiting, waiting, you know, like really, holding your breath or waiting for something to happen like that you know. Your hands were there and you just

12:00 waiting, not knowing when it was gonna come down on me. Because you're not watching him up there or anything at all, you just had your hands there just waiting for the sword to come down. But he didn't do it, but why he didn't, most probably as I thought later and I've thought since, it must have been trying to bluff me out and saying, like, you know, "You'll carry them what I say," you know, "Not what

you want."

In a moment like that, is there, do you ever think of running away, even though that might prove pointless?

Well you couldn't run, I mean it was only

12:30 jungle there. I mean you wouldn't have got ten yards, there's other Japs around the place too, they would have shot you like that so, you couldn't run anywhere at all. You were a white man in a black man's country, kind of business, because they were all Thais and you couldn't hide. In one of the camps there, the commander of the camp, the colonel plus his doctors plus his interpreters plus the supply officer with all the food they wanted to and all the medical supplies,

13:00 they escaped. But they only got as far as the Burma border and they were given up by the natives there and they were executed. So I mean there was nowhere to go in those things, you just had to cop it sweet. And then of course when a cove was trying to swing their punch to hit you, you'd ease back like that they'd miss you every time and then you'd have to bend over like that so they could reach

13:30 up and whack you across your face. Oh, your blood'd boil up inside you, you know, feel like whacking them. But of course if you whacked them that'd be the end of you kind of business. One of our chaps did in Borneo in Sandakan, he was working in the kitchen there and he whacked the Jap. The Jap used to come up and wash his dirty handkerchiefs or clothes in the blooming clean water this chap had dragged up from the creek. So he threatened him about three or four times

14:00 and he didn't do so he just hauled off and whacked him, broke the Jap's jaw. Well they got him and they broke both his arms, set them back to front so he'd never hit another Nippon soldier, tied him up with barbed wire during the night. It was only our officer got out and gave him morphine injection, that carried him through. They tried him and sent him to Outram Road Jail, back in, which most probably saved his life too. Because had he stopped there

14:30 he would've died there. But Len Darlington was his name from New South Wales; he came back. He won the Heavyweight Championship on the Queen Mary going over, as a boxer and he had a fight in the ring when he got home too, down in Sydney, after all that. So those are the things that if you did hit back, well you could be shot, you could be executed yourself, you didn't know what to do. So, life is

15:00 sweet, so you had to cop a lot and just swallow it down like that. But it was hard I can tell you.

Do you remember your feeling when he didn't cut off your arms?

No, it was a feeling of relief I suppose that, you know, and I thought then you know, "Well, he hasn't done it; it's something he's trying to bluff me into

15:30 carrying them four men to a log." which we still didn't do, we still put up six men to a log. Because you couldn't lift it with four men, it was impossible.

Did the Japanese use any other people or machinery or anything?

Only the elephants that dragged the logs out, and they're the laziest things in the world. If they don't want to do any work, they won't do, they'll grunt and grunt and grunt and grunt, push around, but

16:00 they won't move it if they don't want to move it. But that's the only other thing that they had there on the part of the road that I was on.

What did you think about the elephants refusing when you had to...?

Oh they're the laziest things in the world. I saw a few of them go down and push and push and grunt and move back. They could have moved it if they wanted to, just lazy things.

Did you resent the elephants?

16:30 No, no, we didn't resent the elephants at all, they were there, we just had to cop it like that you know, if they didn't do it we had to do it, or else even though they were doing it and they wanted more, you'd have to carry them out from the jungle. Oh we had a lot of that, carrying logs out from the jungle.

And what other work did you have to do on the railway apart from the logs?

Oh, there was the cuttings, you were

17:00 putting the line through the jungle and you had to, out the earth out and carry it and dump it over the side and digging cuttings down, both sides of the earth, way down and they used to blast them down. And you'd have to cart all the stuff off the other side of the road. But I wasn't in those like Hellfire Pass, that was eighty feet down, that was there. Then the Wampo Viaduct going

17:30 round the side of a, the river down below and they were putting the viaduct round there, that was another hell of a job there but I was lucky I wasn't on that, we were on the other part up there, but that was bad enough where we were anyhow.

And were you working with other nationalities on the railway?

Only the bridge, but in our working party we were all Australians. The Brits might have been working up on that part or down that part and the Dutch would have been working down there

18:00 and the coolies were working on different parts of the place too see, but where we worked, we were all Australians.

And so, you changed jobs just for the day at Cholera Hill?

Oh well I didn't change it, I got malaria that night, so then I didn't even finish. And up there you got, the coffee was burned rice coffee.

18:30 They used to make coffee out of burned rice, and we had gula malacca, which is a sweetening to go with it, you didn't have that outside but you got it on Cholera Hill. And so, oh yes, I was having a beautiful cup of coffee there and I finished up with malaria so I didn't even finish the shift out, I got shifted back to the hospital then, I didn't get back up there again.

Describe the hospital for us?

Which?

At the camp?

Well the hospital was just

19:00 a few huts, segregated from our living quarters with the medical staff and different things in there like that.

How did they treat you?

Well they treated you with whatever they had like the medical orderlies. The doctors were saints there to us, you know, I know Bruce Hunt saved many lives. He used to

19:30 stand over them too. "You'll eat that." And the coves'd say, "I can't, I'll bring it up." He said, "I don't care how many times you bring it up, if you bring it up twenty times, each time you leave something down your stomach, and you'll eat it." He stood up, well if you didn't eat you died as I said before, so you had to eat. Even though you didn't feel like it, somebody'd push it down your throat. That was your mates'd have to do that,

20:00 feed you or try and make you eat the food, and you'd look at it and you'd say, "Oh gee, that's terrible stuff."

And what was this doctor again, Doctor…?

Bruce Hunt.

Bruce Hunt. And what…?

Major Bruce Hunt, he was from Perth. He was our saint up there, he saved our lives and he started this Tambaya Hospital up in Burma, the one I was transferred up to.

20:30 He started that and he used to go from camp to camp and everything like that but the medical, the administration officer in charge of the camp, Colonel Cappy, 8th Div Sigs [Signals], he was the CO of the camp, and he went into hospital, he wouldn't talk to the Japs. Bruce Hunt used to have to go out and do the administration of the camp as well as the medical side of the camp. And Cappy to us was nothing at

21:00 all, he was the one he had a big chest full of food and the boys knocked it off and did he go mad. And he had 'em out on parade at one time there and he said, "I've been saving that food for you, for the sick." Like hell, he was saving it for himself, he wasn't saving it for anybody else at all. Colonel Cappy, he wasn't very well liked, you'd talk to anybody, all the POWs say, "What'd you think of Colonel Cappy?"

21:30 "That bastard!" you know, that's what they'd say straight away. But that was him and then Bruce Hunt, when we were up at Number One Camp, She-no-sonker-eye [phonetic], the coves would get issued with blankets, we got a blanket issue. And they'd sell the blankets to the Thais to get some money. And then they'd, the

22:00 canvas in the few of the tents around, they'd sell, if they had a pair of shorts, they'd sell them and they'd cut out the canvas and make shorts out of the canvas see. So the Japs used to put on, not roll calls, ah, you know, when they check all the items there and they found all these

22:30 blankets missing and then half of the marquees were gone too like, you know. So they threatened they'd make him stand in the fire, if it ever happened again. He said, "Oh well when a chap dies of cholera, we gotta burn the blanket with him, otherwise for the contamination of the disease." "If you continue burning Japanese Nippon property, we will make you stand in the fire."

23:00 So he stood up to them very much, and got a lot more out of it than anybody else would like that. But he did a mighty job and well, all the medical officers up there, he was a major in charge, but Captain Frank

Cahill and Lloyd Cahill, Roy Mills, he died not so long ago and Pete Hendry, who's still alive, he was 2/10th Field Ambulance, he's still alive. They were all wonderful people, saints to us.

23:30 **And do you remember your initial kind of, what you went through with the malaria at first?**

Oh you had this rigors like that, you know, shaking like mad, you were cold and shivery. It's as hot as hell day and you'd be shivering like mad underneath blanket like that, trying to get under the blankets to get warm and it was as hot as anything. And the thought of food made you sick, you didn't want to see any food, while you were like that.

24:00 **How long were you at this state for?**

Oh you were, you had the rigors for a few hours, only a few hours then it would stop and they might start the next day too, about the same time. They might start for one or two days sometimes three days, but then you'd be out at work then so you didn't have time to recover or anything at all. And why I've never had a Vincent or a Bex [pain relief powders] since I come home, when we were in

24:30 Singapore the coves used to sell the quinine tablets to the Chinese. So they used to then, our mob used to grind 'em up and make the quinine powder and put it in a piece of paper like a Vincent powder. And you had to have that, and oh, there's nothing worse than a blooming powdered quinine, God, it's terrible. Since then I've never had a Bex or a Vincent ever since

25:00 then.

What's so bad about it?

Well it would remind me of that straight away, you know. We used to mix it with water to try and swallow it down but oh, it was terrible.

What, the taste or...?

The taste of it yeah. You try it, you get a quinine tablet and then powder it up and see, put it on your tongue and see like that, ooh, terrible.

And so you,

25:30 **you recovered from this and they sent you back to work?**

Yeah, yeah, back to work and then I got sick again with dysentery. And, no, that was Number One Camp, then we went to Number Two Camp with the Englishmen, then I got dysentery there and I went from there to the Tambaya Hospital.

Why did they send you to Number Two Camp?

Well our part of the line had finished like that,

26:00 where we were doing from that end there down, we were done. So then we had to go on to the next camp to work down to there and up to there. So that was an English camp, they were working and they weren't doing enough work there and we had to... Then there was another, a third camp was 'Cammie-sonker-eye' [phoenetic] which is Number Three Camp. There's Number One, Number Two and Number Three.

You mentioned earlier that Number Two was...

English camp.

dirtier?

Oh dirty, yeah, well they had no hygiene at all, they didn't bother

26:30 with hygiene at all so we had to clean up the camp and we had to dig latrines and everything.

What did you tell the English about their camp?

Oh we didn't tell them anything at all; we just ate their rice if they didn't want it. As they come in from the working party we said, "I'll have your rice chum if you don't want it." "You can have it Aussie." They wouldn't eat the rice, and they died course, if you didn't, some of them did eat their rice but others just

27:00 didn't eat their rice at all.

Did you ever tell them that they should eat or they should clean up the place?

Oh well, we cleaned it up because they were too bloody lazy to clean it up. They didn't bother about cleaning it up; they were too lazy to clean it up. So we had to clean it up and then we had to go ahead with the work then, we went out on the working parties then.

How did you get along in this situation with the English?

Well we didn't, we didn't get along with them at all because we didn't

27:30 mix with them or anything at all like that.

And you mentioned you got dysentery, tell us about that?

Oh I got dysentery there, there's nothing to tell about that, either you got dysentery or you haven't got dysentery like, it goes right through you kind of business. And then I finished up going up in the hospital up to Burma to Tambaya Hospital.

Describe that place for us?

28:00 Well it was out in the bush, out in the open, everywhere just jungle and they put up huts and cleared the place. Going there, never forget it, I had the best rice I've ever eaten in my whole life. I don't know whether it's, I was starved, and the rice was there and it was beautiful tasting rice, the Burmese cooked it, but it was beautiful rice, and I've always reckoned it was the best rice I've ever tasted in my

28:30 whole life. It was probably because I was so hungry, starved, that anything would've tasted good at all. But that was on the way to this hospital camp, we stayed there and a lot of coves lost their legs there and had to have amputations. They used to have to wait for the working parties to come in with, the Japs with the saws, so that they could borrow the saw, which was cutting down trees and that, and amputate the cove's legs.

What would they have to

29:00 **amputate for?**

Well they had ulcers and gangrene had set in and everything like that, so they'd have to have, because we didn't have the medical supplies at all. On all of my ulcers we had a weak Eusol dressing, and that was just a bit stronger than water I suppose, but that's about all that I ever had to do mine. But some of them they used to have to scoop the flesh out with a spoon, like that, they used to have this spoon

29:30 sharpened up, and then they used to have to scoop. Of course the orderlies used to have to hold the coves down because there was no anaesthetic or anything at all like that, they just scoop the bad flesh out like that.

You said you had ulcers?

Oh yeah I had ulcers but mine didn't spread, mine, I was lucky; mine went down like that, down in a hole in me leg like that. But others you know, they spread the whole leg like that, the whole

30:00 bone was exposed and I've seen them on their back, half their back was gone. And that Number One Camp when I used to go up to visit this Teddy Galvin, one of our eight that was there, he was our sergeant cook. Used to have to hold your breath when you walked into the ulcer ward. Oh the stench was terrible, like, you know, rotten flesh, that's what it, oh, the smell was terrible. I mean you couldn't go in and hold your nose; you just have to

30:30 go in and talk to them for a while and try and hold your breath as much as you possibly could, because of the stench of the ward. So, and then those coves...

Did you, would you have fear of your ulcers spreading...?

Oh well, always when you got an ulcer, spread, you tried to look at it, but I was lucky mine didn't spread, mine went down into my leg, not very far but they went down, they didn't spread on the surface.

Was there anything you could do to help

31:00 **them?**

Nothing much only keep them clean as much as you possibly could. See you'd go out in the jungle and you might get a scratch with a bit of bamboo there. And by that night there'd be a sore there, by next morning it could be that size. Within days it could be that size, that's how it spreads. Only a bit of

31:30 a scratch on your arm or on your leg or something like that, and that's what happens.

So you describe the hospital a bit more for me, it was huts...?

Oh well just normal huts, the same as we used to sleep in with the platform for the beds, along the platform there, to sleep on there. Exactly the same as the normal huts only was medical orderlies and doctors there. Then they had their

32:00 operating theatres, just ordinary bits of shelter over a place where they used to lay them on.

Who were the doctors at this place?

Well Lloyd Cahill, Frank Cahill, Bruce Hunt was the Medical Officer in Charge, Roy Mills wasn't there. There was a Captain Stevens there, Frank Cahill and Lloyd Cahill, two brothers; I think they were brothers, those three I knew anyhow

32:30 plus Bruce Hunt of course, the boss.

And what would you talk about in hospital to keep up your spirits?

Oh I was never in hospital that long, only for this blooming malaria and then you were in a day or something like that, you were trying to get out the place. Or you had dysentery, when I did have dysentery; you were too worried about yourself to talk to anybody else kind of business. You couldn't be bothered talking to

33:00 anyone at all. There was times there that you couldn't be bothered speaking to anybody at all. You just shut up and just thought of home or something like that to try and keep your spirits up, that's what you tried to do.

And what about Burma, were you noticing anything new about Burma?

We went into Burma to the hospital there, this hospital that was built, but it was just another hospital, it was out in the bush.

33:30 From A Force came down to that hospital, all of our chaps went up to that hospital that were crook [ill] like. And we were there, well I was there until the line was completed in October 1943 then I came back to Kanburi then. And the mate and I we went into partnership, we went into business. We bought bananas and we made banana fritters

34:00 with the oil, put 'em in the oil. And I'd be out selling 'em around to the other tents. And I always have a go at him now, I said, "You ate 'em, you sat there and ate 'em while I'm trying to sell the others." Oh dear me, that was David McDougall the chap that had to cut up that last herring. Yeah.

How do you run a

34:30 **business, banana fritters?**

Well we'd buy the bananas or we'd pinch the bananas from somewhere and then you'd buy some oil to heat them up in that, boil them there, and you'd go out and sell them for twenty cents each or something like that you know. So you sold 'em for what more it cost you anyhow.

And where would the money come from that would pay for them?

Well we had some money left over from our, we couldn't spend

35:00 it all when we got that. We split up, the eight of us we split up, we went different ways, because a few of them went to Number Three Camp and I went to the Burma hospital. So we each had a little bit of money left there, not much, but we could buy few bananas and everything like that. But that's what happened anyhow, then from there we were down there, then we went back to Singapore. I was lucky, I went back to Singapore, some of the others went from there to Bangkok and onto the boats, then went to

35:30 Japan.

And so what was it like to return to Singapore after all this time?

Coming home, that was coming home. We used to reckon if we ever get back to Singapore again, we'll never whinge again, after being up there. Course we come back on the train and we had scabies too. You'd be scratching yourself like mad like that. You'd elbow this cove, "Watch it, mate!" You'd almost bloody fight in the blooming

36:00 big rice wagons that we come back on, the same as we went up on, we come back on them. And then we all got back to Singapore anyhow, those that come back. Some of them on the other force, Don Force, came back to Singapore and then went on the ships over to Japan, on the Ryoki Maru, which was sunk by the American submarines. And that was that, I don't know whether I mentioned about that one but two of our chaps were on it, Tommy Aitkin and Tommy Bowden.

36:30 The twins we used to call them, they'd be always together, and they both went down, they were on this ship Ryoki Maru. And after the war, I went back to see Tommy Bowden's sister in Brisbane, I knew her address. And about the time that he went down she had a dream this night that he came and was knocking on the door. So she went out and there he was standing there, water running all off him, and she said, "Come in and dry off." He said, "I can't come in, I've just

37:00 come to say goodbye." And that was about the time then, she didn't connect it with anything at all until after the war when she found out that he'd drowned on that ship. And the date of the drowning was about the same time that she had this dream. So he was in the water drowning and his thoughts must have been on her.

What did you think

37:30 **about when she told you this?**

Well, you know, it was a shock, you'd think of that. There was another case, one of the chaps was in the water for six days before he got rescued and his fiancé down in Melbourne had nightmares for six nights. And when he got picked up her nightmares finished. You can't understand it, mental telepathy or whatever it is at all.

38:00 Their thoughts were on one another. So...

And in this dream he was...?

He was wet, he was, if he'd been, like, you know, in the water and just come out of water and his clothes were all wet, everything was wet, there's water was running all over him. And she said, "Come in and dry off." He said, "I can't come in, I've just come to say goodbye." So she wondered at that time and

38:30 what the dream meant or anything, and she didn't know that he was on a ship or anything at all that just got sunk.

Did you ever experience kind of eerie dreams like this while you were...?

No, no, no, never. I've had nightmares since the war, of thinking there are me mates there and being with them and everything like that. But no I didn't have any while I was over there at all.

Tape 8

00:38 **How long did it take for you to get back to Singapore?**

Oh most probably about the same time it took us to go up, I don't know how many days it took us really now, I can't remember how many days. Had I known you were going to interview me I would have put all this down on there. No, I don't know how long it took us to come back at all. But the trip

01:00 back was worse than the trip going up because you're all emaciated, see when we went up we were reasonable in fitness, coming back we're all thin and streaks and they reckoned I looked like a greyhound dog, my mates you know, all ribs you know, and that's all they could see was ribs. When you lay down you looked down at your stomach

01:30 and you'd see it and there'd be the hole like that, and you'd see your two hip bones sitting up on either side and the stomach'd be down like that. But we all had scabies coming back and you'd be scratching and you'd be elbowing somebody and they'd be threatening to knock your head off and everything like that. The tension was rife all the way you know, in the confined spaces and moving sideways and... Ooh yes, there's nearly some big

02:00 fights coming back there on the train trip back. So we got back then to Singapore and then we went out to Selarang, what we used to call the G&W area, Garden &, I don't know what the hell 'W' stand for, I knew it was a garden. We used to go down to look after the gardens to get the paw-paws and everything like that, up for the kitchen. Then there was salt-water parties, they used to

02:30 go down to the ocean to get the salt water up so they could cook the rice in that with the salt in it.

Would people at Selerang ask you where you'd been and what it had been like?

Oh no they knew what we had been, when we got back, they were all shocked at all the coves coming back, you know, how they knew them when they went away and now they see them coming back.

What was their reaction?

Oh, disbelief, horror I

03:00 suppose. But then we were all quartered together, we didn't go in and mix with them, we weren't quartered in where they were, we were all quartered together, those that come back off the F Force. And then we worked there then after a while we went into the jail, transferred in. In the jail, Changi Jail, there's civilian internees had been in there the whole war. So they moved them out to Syme Road and they moved us into the jail then.

03:30 **Why into the jail?**

I don't know why, out of the area, out of the G&W, confined us all in the one space I suppose. So we were in there and hungry and everything like that and we used to work down in the aerodrome then.

Tell me about the aerodrome?

Yeah, oh well, have you seen it now, that's the start of it. Have you ever seen Changi airport; haven't you been over there? It's an eye opener now but this was,

04:00 it was just, we used to you know, flatten it all and everything like that. We worked down there and various chaps, one Jap there they used to call 'the ice cream man', he used to wear a white coat and they christened him 'the ice cream man'. And it must have been a very low profession in Japan because as soon as he heard the word 'ice cream' he'd go berserk with his golf club. So I don't know why but anyhow I got knocked there and

04:30 with knees half bent with my hands on hips, because I told him what I said, but it wasn't what I said at all, when the plane went off I said, "Crash you bastard, crash." So he wanted to know what I said and I

said, “Oh I said, ‘that’s a good plane’ ”, something like that. But so he didn’t believe me so he put me in here.

How long can you stand like that?

Oh well I did an hour and then I did another half an hour on it like that.

What does your body feel like?

Oh I don't know,

05:00 then when a meal come in and they gave me a spoon to eat it with, I couldn’t hold the spoon, you know, my hands were stiff, like that, my knees were stiff. So that’s the last time I worked on the drome, they said, “We won’t send you down the drome anymore because they’ll only pick on you again.” like, you know.

What work were you doing at the aerodrome?

Oh we were making the runways, like, you know, clearing

05:30 the jungle and the swamp, and then the earth onto the, there to make a runway for the planes to come in.

What tools did you have to clear it with?

Chunkles - you don’t know what a chunkle is - like a hoe, you know what a hoe is, the wooden handle down there and the hoe is like that. Like a square nosed shovel but it was a chunkle

06:00 that you hit into the, like that, you hit in like that, like a hoe, you’d hit into the earth and drag it out like that. So you’d have to clear the jungle first then you’d have to get all the earth out and everything like that, all by hand.

Was there any, obviously there were people supervising the work…

The Japs were there.

anyone who knew…

06:30 How to…?

how to make a runway?

How to make an airport? No, I don't think so, they just told what they wanted us to do is to make this straight or something, or to take that out and to move it further over and put earth over into there and everything like that. Since then, they’ve brought in millions of square metres of earth from overseas, reclaimed all land over there, they’ve widened it out now, it’s about twenty times the size it was when we were there. All

07:00 with earth in, brought in from overseas, they’ve reclaimed a lot of the land and made Singapore Island much bigger than it ever was when we were there. So when I went back there in February, last time in February went out, no, it was last year I went back for the Sixtieth Anniversary, went into Kranji Cemetery and we went to, over on Sentosa Island which was Blakang Mati when we were there, Sentosa Island. Used to have to go over on the

07:30 sky train, like you know, like over the little carriages there, they all go by launch now. They got bridges across the water now right over to Sentosa Island. And then this year when I went round the only thing I could remember, the only place I can remember in the whole city is that Changi Jail. Everything has changed, there’s no kampongs [villages]

08:00 now, they’re all five, six storey flats, for all the natives there and there’s nothing there, the jail is the only thing. The roads are still there: Seremban Road, Bukit Tima Road, Havelock Road, Thompson Road, they’re there. But you go along there, there’s nothing that you can recall or see, it’s all housing estates or something like that, hotels or something like that gone up you know. There’s nothing the same now, well it wouldn’t be

08:30 I suppose from when we were there in 1945 anyhow, that’s fifty-eight years ago.

During this time when you were working on the aerodrome, did you see anything of the local people?

Not down there, we were on our own down there, they didn’t work down there. But the Chinese people in Singapore were mighty for us. They used to, even then early in the piece in ‘42, they used to

09:00 smuggle us food and everything like that. And if they were caught, you’d see Chinese heads on poles all around Singapore. They’d execute them and put their heads up on poles to warn the other people not to do it, like that. They’d still collaborate with us and give us food and that, tell us news and different things like that.

What sort of thing would they tell you?

Oh about the war, you know, they had radios themselves at that

09:30 time, they used to tell us what was happening outside.

On the working, on the aerodrome as an example or any others that you can think of, was there any sorts of, would people I guess sing songs or, to keep...

No, no, no,

I mean, to keep working?

No, we didn't sing songs while we were working. Even when we were marching home, they might whistle

10:00 sometimes and we were told not to whistle, but we never sang songs. You're thinking of The Bridge over River Kwai where they used to come in, did you see that picture, The Bridge on the River Kwai? Yeah, well you know when the Pommies used to march home and whistle and sing and you know, all those things, we never did that.

I was just wondering, I didn't mean songs specifically, but anything that you'd sort of say to each other or any

10:30 **specific jokes you'd tell to keep the motivation to keep going sort of thing?**

Oh no I don't think there's anything we said to one another to do that. No, we used to try and make fun of the Japs all the time, they used to come out and one time and say, "Yeah, they'd bomb-bomb Sydney." "Oh yeah, bomb-bomb Sydney?" "Yeah, yeah, bomb-bomb Sydney." "Swan River?" "Bomb-bomb Swan River yeah." "Bomb-bomb Alice Springs?" "Bomb-bomb Alice Springs." Anywhere you

11:00 said, they'd bomb-bombed. "Luna Park?" "Bomb-bomb Luna Park." You know, they wouldn't have a clue what you were talking about but then some of our coves used to, stupid and teach them our swear words. And then course you'd abuse a Japs and call him all the so-and-so's in the world. "Bakayaro", whack, whack, whack, whack across the face he'd go then you know. He understood some of them anyhow, so he knew you were swearing at him, like that. But anyhow...

Were there any

11:30 **Japanese that...**

Were a good Japanese, no. Other people might say yes. I met a cove down in Adelaide he reckons, "Oh yes, you meet good Japanese." I've never met a good Japanese yet and I always maintain the only good Jap is a dead one, in my opinion. We even had this Yank at one of the working parties in Singapore in '42; they were in the hut playing

12:00 cards this night. I don't know what they were playing but anyhow this Jap sentry walked in with his rifle and he's standing there. And they were playing and one of the coves said, "Who's your mate?" He looked around, "That so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so." you know, f... and f...'s going, swear words for heck of a while, "He's no mate of mine, so-and-so and so-and-so." Jap didn't move an eyelid. After a while he

12:30 said, "Say guy, I would have thrown that ace if I'd been you." He knew every word they said. He'd been living in America, right up, and he'd just gone back to Japan on a holiday, course straight in the army, they grabbed him in the army. But if he was told to go out and shoot five of us, he would have gone out and shot five of us. Wouldn't have been anything.

And yet he didn't do anything to the American?

What?

The one who was swearing, even though he'd understood him?

13:00 Oh yes he understood, no he didn't hit him at all like that, anything like that for abusing him, but no he didn't do anything like that to our coves who swore at him like that. But he was a cove, they got talking, I don't know whether at that night or at other times but that's what it was, that he'd been living in America. And then he used to say, "When the Yanks are coming this way, the Japs are going that way,

13:30 I'll be going this way." He reckoned he wasn't gonna stop with them but course that was what he said. But as I said, if he was told to go out and knock you off, he'd go out and knock you off without any hesitation or anything at all, if he was told to do it.

I guess I was kind of asking whether there were any moments of maybe out of character kindness that you saw, or...?

No, I never saw, I saw Japs who had a heavy night out

14:00 and come in getting over a hangover the next day and this was when we were digging tunnels into the hills and they had to work with us. And they'd come along and give me all their cigarettes to spread around so we'd do the work so he didn't have to work. But it wasn't for kindness to us, he was crook

himself and he didn't want to work see.

14:30 But that's, no I never ever found a good Jap, there you are. I've never ever found, some of them might have found a Nip that was humane but I didn't see any of them.

And the aerodrome, how long did you spend on that?

Oh it would have been just about all of 1944

15:00 there, 1944 I went into the jail then we were working on the aerodrome then.

Just on being in jail...

In the jail.

was there any difference in the way you were living?

Oh yes, there were some of them were in huts out in the courtyard; others were in the solitary confinement cells. And there wasn't one to a solitary confinement cell, there was up to eight in a solitary confinement cell.

15:30 And while we were there, they wouldn't let me sleep in the solitary confinement cell, I used to sleep outside. Because there for a while, I was playing poker, three sessions a day, morning, afternoon and night and I won every session for a fortnight, I was winning every session. So I'd go to the canteen and buy garlic and gula malacca and everything like that. And I was chopping up the garlic in my

16:00 rice see, and that comes out of your pores of your skin, and they'd, "You bastard, get outside, you're not sleeping in here." So they put me outside, they wouldn't let me sleep in the blooming room at all, you know, so I had to sleep outside.

What's it like sharing a space like that with eight other men?

Crowded. Well I was outside most of the time like, because I wasn't allowed inside. But now they've only got two in one of those same cells. I went back there in '95

16:30 when we went to Sandakan and we went over to Singapore with Con Sciacca [former Minister for Veterans' Affairs] and the Australia Remembers trip. And we went in the jail, on the itinerary there wasn't a visit to the jail. So I spoke to a few of the DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] people down in Sydney when went down there about getting it altered to allow us to go in the jail. And then everybody promised then and so I went to Con Sciacca then and I said, "What about letting us

17:00 go in the jail Con, can you arrange it?" So he got on to the High Commissioner over in Singapore and they arranged it, when we got over there, we went out the jail. We all went into the chapel inside the jail and only the POWs who were in the jail were supposed to go round there. So we went round to all the cells upstairs and everything. So he said, "Which was your cell sir?" And I said, "Wouldn't have a clue, Con, but I know the cement's still as hard as it was

17:30 in 1944." Cement, course it never gets soft, that's what I said, and "The cement's still as hard as it was then." But oh no, it, and then we were out in the courtyard.

Well I guess were there, you know how the guys that made you go outside, for eating garlic, well were there any personal habits that other men had that you just wanted to kill them for?

No, I don't think so.

18:00 that was mainly one, the blooming stench of the garlic that they used to go crook about. But no I can't see anything else at all that they were but...

Did your temper become frayed when you were...?

Oh your temper became frayed many times. Not with, well even sometimes with your own mates and sometimes, mainly with the Japs of course, all the time when I had to bend down like that,

18:30 right down so they could reach up and whack me across the face, ooh, I boiled up inside all the time.

And how about with your own mates?

Well you, no you didn't, you didn't, oh I mean sometimes you might have a go at them for not doing enough bloody work you had to do their work or something like that. But no you tried to get on well with them all like that. You mainly, your

19:00 beef was with the Japs all the time like that. But when we were in Singapore then the jail, quite a few of our chaps were working in the kitchen, oh that's right, he was supposed to remind me about Sniper McDonald too, that's another one I want to tell you about, Singapore, at the jail too. There were, what was I gonna say about the jail and that anyhow. Oh yes, when we were in the jail they were up in the kitchen,

19:30 and we used to go up, arrange to go up and play the darts, have a darts competition. The darts was only a blooming way of getting into the kitchen, we weren't interested in playing darts at all, we'd go up

there and they couldn't take any food out of the kitchen. If they made more food than was eaten round the place, it used to have to go in the bin, see, like that.

20:00 So when we used to go up there of a night to play the ASC Cooks' Darts, they used to have pasties on, there'd be a pastie night, and there'd be about twenty or forty or fifty pasties there, left over. So you'd eat and eat and eat and eat, you had to eat all night you were up there; everything that they brought out you'd eat. And you'd go back into your bed at night, oh you couldn't sleep, you're rolling in agony, you'd eaten so much,

20:30 because you couldn't take it out so you had to take it out, inside you'd eat and eat and eat and eat, you'd overeat yourself.

Why couldn't they dish the food out?

Oh they wouldn't allow, I mean, that was the rule. If anybody was caught taking food out of the kitchen, they'd be in the local jail, they'd be in on bread and water for oh well, rice and water for twenty-eight days, I mean by our own men.

But why didn't they dish out more food to each...?

Well,

21:00 there wasn't enough, I mean what was there wouldn't have gone round one unit kind of business. But it was a lot for say half a dozen of us who went up there, I mean, we'd eat maybe twenty pasties in a night up there. Whereas one hundred pasties wouldn't have gone round a crowd of a hundred and fifty men, it wouldn't have been one pasty each see, that was the reason. So they used to make more and put 'em to one side so that when we

21:30 come up to play, we'd have this eat and eat and eat, we'd eat ourselves sick. We'd have a sore stomach, oh you'd be in agony that night you couldn't sleep, you'd toss and turn and everything like that. That was it. And then I mentioned another one of our chaps, Sniper McDonald at the jail, the officers outside the jail used to keep rabbits and they'd keep goats out there. Breed them outside

22:00 and eat them, like they used to eat them themselves, not us, they used to have them. And this Sniper McDonald, he was in our unit, he would have been about the greatest cattle duffer [thief] there was ever in Queensland. He'd thieve the eye out of a needle and thieve the pennies off his dead grandmother's eyes, kind of business. He was in charge of

22:30 these goats out there, and he'd get the Chinese coves and he'd sell twenty goats to the Chinese, get the money and as the Chinese were chasing them out he'd say to the Japs, "Look, they're pinching the goats." So the Japs'd come out and grab the goats and bring 'em back in and belt hell out of the Chinese. Then he'd have the money and he'd sell 'em again too. He used to sell 'em once a

23:00 week there for weeks and weeks, old Sniper. Then there's another thing, don't ever hear anybody say and don't ever say, "You don't like that food," or "That food'll make you sick." It's only mind over matter. In the jail there's another chap there, he was an Irishman, Paddy, I forget his other name. But his mate said, "Get your dixie ready, Paddy.

23:30 After lights out I'll bring you along some stew." So, righto, after lights out they brought him along this stew in the dixie and he was into it like mad. And then they said, "What's it like Paddy." "Beautiful," he said. "Whose rabbits did you knock over?" He said, "Rabbits be buggered, you know that black cat that was in the ward..." Straight away he went out and heaved his heart up; he couldn't eat another mouthful. Up until that he was enjoying it, but as soon as they mentioned, black cat,

24:00 he was lost. So that's what I always reckon, it's not the food that makes you sick, it's in your mind, it's mind over matter. No matter how you try to eat it, you'll be sick, but it's not the food making you sick, it's you. So that's one thing that I've always said to a lot of people since I come home, that it's mind over matter. And when they say, "Oh, I can't eat that, it makes me sick every time I eat it." It's not the food makes you sick, before you eat it you know you're gonna be sick if you eat that,

24:30 so it's in your mind, it's not the food. So that's just one thing that I learned, you learn a lot over there, you learn a lot of psychology.

What kind of things?

Well what brings out the best in a man and what the worst in a man is and how to treat people to get the best out of them, and others you see the worst that comes out in men too over there.

Like?

25:00 The worst; well you see how low a cove can go, thieving off his mates. That happened many times over there. And the best that it could bring out in a man is that chap I was bashed up with in Singapore, Jack Gilding and I who went into jail together in Selerang. He went to Japan and I went up on the railway.

25:30 He was only a corporal in the ammo sub-park from South Australia; he'd been manager of Nestlé's Milk at Broken Hill before the war. He would not get on that mess line, when there's a mess line, everybody

used to line up to go up, except the officers, they had their own mess line. But we'd all hop in, you'd go up and get your dixie out and get whatever you got in. He wouldn't get on that line until every one of his section had got on and gone

26:00 through. So if the food ran out three quarters of the way through the line, he wouldn't have any. But he wouldn't get on that line until every one of his section. And there wasn't another man over there that I knew would do that. Even I'd get on the line with everybody else, I wouldn't wait for everybody else to get on the line, but he did. He went to Japan and they were flying them home, and they were on the airport over there and there's a chap, Stan Edwards from Woodridge

26:30 who died recently. They were standing beside one another, up to you on one plane, up to you on the other plane. Stan Edwards got home; Jackie Gilding's plane went down in the drink on the way home, between Japan and Okinawa. When I found out that it soured me on life. For him, he would have been about the wisest man I knew. He was the best man I knew

27:00 for his men and everything like that. And for him to go through everything like that, finish the war and on his way home, had to go down in the water and die. I felt there's no justice in this world, I wouldn't have the blooming local clergyman come in that front door there, I shunted them all away. I wouldn't have anything to do with them all and yet I was very religious before I went away. But I wouldn't have anything

27:30 to do with any religion or anything at all when I come back, because of those things that I saw happen over there. I felt there's no justice in this world. If there's a God, he must have been asleep, half the time. Because of that, that was one example, that was the main example that I've ever had that cove that did everything for his men and did everything right and then to go down in the water on the way home. I felt that was, there's no

28:00 justice in this world.

You were talking about the lessons that this time taught you about other people, what did they teach you about yourself?

Tolerance, you learned how to be tolerant, you had to be tolerant. You had to be self-reliant in lots of ways; you had to help other people, for

28:30 them to get through. It taught you a lot about yourself that you didn't know I suppose but it taught you, well, for you to come through that and to see what went on all around you, it made you a much better person I think, in myself. I'm not sorry I went through that now, I'm not sorry I was a prisoner of war. If

29:00 I'd have gone to the Middle East, I mightn't be here now, but I came through it all, I'm reasonably healthy and I learned a lot. There's a lot of my mates, mate that went to Borneo, he's still over there, well, I mean he's dead. He was the one that went up to buy some records when we come home on pre-em leave; he went

29:30 off to buy that when I went home. We had breakfast together in town, then he went home, he went up to Palings to buy a lot of records to take home and play and he went to Borneo. He was the one I was nearly going to volunteer to go to Borneo to be with. And they did the two death marches in Borneo in January '45 and March '45 and

30:00 those that were left behind, too weak to go, June, July they set fire to the huts. Those that couldn't get out of the huts were burned alive; those that did get out of the huts, the majority were just shot. He was in a grave, a hundred and seventy-eight in the one grave, unknown, they had no recognition who they are. So they're in the cemetery at

30:30 what's the name of the, that's still Borneo, the island off Borneo, where the big AIF or the big British cemetery is now. All those that have no known graves are buried there too, or there's a plaque there with their names on a plaque, Labuan Cemetery. So he's in there but he was only a young cove. I had another mate of mine was, he wasn't a POW he was on the HMAS

31:00 Yarra. He and I were gonna enlist in the navy in 1938 but my mother said, "No." You had to sign on for twelve years in those days, 1938 even before the war. She said, "You're not signing on the navy for twelve years." So he joined the cadets or whatever they call it, the militia with the navy and then he went on the Yarra and then he went down on the Yarra, so I lost another mate over there too.

Do you think that in the bigger picture these

31:30 **young men's lives were worth it?**

It's a terrible price to pay, especially now. They lost their lives and what happens now. The Japs come out here, open their chequebooks and just write out a cheque and hand it over and buy property here and everything like that. And that's why they went over, to stop them from coming into the country, taking over the country. But now they take it over with

32:00 their cheque book. No justice at all, again. And I've had arguments with politicians, they said, "Well they can't take it with 'em, you know, they can't take the land with 'em." They mightn't be able to take the land with 'em but they, I remember years ago when Iwasaki property was going up outside Yeppoon,

Nippoon as we call it now. And old Joh Bjelke-Petersen [former Premier of Queensland] said in Parliament,

32:30 "Mr Iwasaki Senior and Mr Iwasaki Junior gave me their assurances that this wouldn't happen." or anything at all like that. They could give you assurances for the rest of their lives, you couldn't trust a Jap. I still can't trust 'em, ever.

Have you had much to do with any Japanese people?

No, no, I don't have anything much to do with them. Being a prisoner of war, National Secretary, I've got a lot to say about various

33:00 things. I've reported in the paper at various times, they ring me up and ask me about this and about that and everything like that. I've been...

What sort of things?

Oh there was once here in 1990, when was it, 1987, it was a long while ago, the Sunday Mail come out and took a picture of me here, there when the Japs were going to use the railway as a tourist attraction. And I said,

33:30 "So long as they let the world know of all the atrocities that they committed, doing it up there." And they interviewed me here and I said, "I still hate the bastards and will do until I die." Somebody cut that out of the paper and sent it over to the museum over in Kanchanaburi, there's the JEATH Museum over there where thousands of visitors go through. It's up in glass, up on the wall in there, I've seen it myself when I've been back over there.

34:00 And then one chap from the RSL come back one year and he said, "I see your photo up on the wall in the museum over there." I said, "Don't be silly, why would a photo of me be in the museum?" He said, "Oh yes, it's up there." So when I went over I saw it.

Which museum?

JEATH Museum, J-E-A-T-H in Kanchanaburi over there. We used to call it the death railway; it's the JEATH Museum, Japan, England, Australia, Thailand

34:30 and Holland, J-E-A-T-H they call it now. But that's a replica of the huts that we used to live in, thatched huts, everything like that, it's run by the monks over there now, and that photo and then Weary Dunlop's photo there and everything, photos and memorabilia and that so that's still over there now. And of course they printed what I said, "I still hate the bastards and will do until I die." So many a Jap's read that too.

35:00 **What do you think they think when they read that?**

I don't know what they think at all but I couldn't care less what they think. But then I've said it many times here, I've been interviewed and I got press, Frances Whiting in the Sunday Mail, writes a column in the Sunday Mail, she come out and interviewed me here once about it, when they

35:30 were doing a series of ex-servicemen and everything like that. So I got a, well I haven't got the scrapbook here, the scrapbook's at work that the lad keeps and the whole thing's in there of these photos of me. And there's another one, 1998 when Lion Nathan [brewery company] sold fifty per cent of XXXX [beer] over to the Japanese, Kirin Brewery. And they came to the march in town,

36:00 the Anzac Day march and said, "Did you see this morning's paper, there's a report from the Sunday Mail?" I said, "No, left home at four o'clock this morning, came to Dawn Service, I didn't see the paper." So Lion Nathan, who Bondy [Alan Bond] sold, he bought Castlemaine Perkins and all these hotels like Tooheys, Castlemaine Perkins, Hahn, West End and Swan. And then he owned them, then he sold them to Lion Nathan in New Zealand so Lion Nathan owned the

36:30 lot. So then Lion Nathan sold fifty percent out to the Kirin Brewery in Japan. That's why we call XXXX now, Kieran Perkins, Castlemaine Perkins and Kirin Brewery, Kieran Perkins, after the swimmer. So I said, "Well, I've had my last XXXX, I won't drink another XXXX." So that day they come up, the photographer come up to the Bookmaker's Club where we had our luncheon, the POWs.

37:00 They've got a photo of me pouring the XXXX stubby out down the drain and drinking a Fosters, and big write up too, you know. I said, "They tried to take us over by..." I've said that right back in 1968, I said that when I was Federal President of the POWs, "They tried to take us over by trade..." no, "by war and they couldn't take us over, now they'll beat us by trade, they'll beat us by the buying the place

37:30 and everything like that," which is how it's turned out over the years. So I still hate them, always will. Only good one's a dead one, in my opinion anyhow. Most probably the people that edit this and that, they'll say, "Oh you can't say that, you can't say that." For posterity they should leave that in I reckon.

38:00 Well, what else are the other questions? Are we lost?

We're not lost, just diverging.

Deviating a bit.

We were talking about the aerodrome and the different kinds of work on the aerodrome. But actually on the prison, when did you move out into the

38:30 **huts?**

We moved out in ‘95, ah, ‘45 sorry, 1945 we moved out of the huts. We’re on a six or five party behind the huts, behind the jail. And we were there now preparing the defences of Singapore, digging tunnels into the hills and trenches and everything like that. They were expecting an attack of the allies onto Singapore and we knew ourselves then that the first attack,

39:00 it was every man for himself, we’d go for the hills. Cause they wouldn’t stop and look after us as well as trying to fight a war. Which is what they did in Borneo, they expected an attack there on Borneo, so they marched all the half-fit men out to Ranau, three quarters of them died on the march, they just bayoneted them or shot ‘em and left ‘em where they lay. Well they would have done the same to us

39:30 in Singapore. And they did find out after the war that there was instructions from the higher up right through that, at the first attack that all prisoners to be annihilated, so we were lucky they didn’t. What saved us was the bomb, the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that’s what saved us. And when we heard about that they said, “Oh, there’s a bomb been dropped that wiped out a whole city.” “Don’t be silly, impossible.”

40:00 We were what, four years behind the times of course, we didn’t know much about anything at all but we said, “That’s impossible,” you know to, “one bomb to wipe out a whole city.” We knew nothing about atomic bombs or anything at all. So that was it.

Tape 9

00:36 **Just, yeah tell us about the milk story you were saying?**

Yeah well there’s chaps were working in Nestlé’s Milk factory in Singapore, they were loading the milk onto the trucks and the Japs were taking away, where I don't know. But you weren’t allowed to take any milk out of the place. And this big Jap was there with the chaps, and

01:00 he says, “I know how you Australians thieve the milk.” He said, “You put a can of milk on the table,” he says, “You put your hat on the milk,” when he’s turned round, “You put your hat on the milk, then when you’re ready to go home, you pick up your hat, and the hat and the milk is gone.” He had ‘em searched, he searched ‘em all, up and down the line, had ‘em there for a

01:30 couple of hours, couldn’t find any. So he was marching ‘em out and someone said, “Well I suppose the silly bugger wants his cap back.” and his cap finished at his feet, but not the milk.

Did you hear where it went?

Oh some of the coves got it and took it with ‘em home, back to camp like. Oh yeah they would’ve pinched it, they did pinch it. I tell ya, the Australians are the greatest thieves in the world you know. It’s like this Sniper McDonald; they’d thieve the eye out of a needle.

02:00 They’d thieve anything that they could get their hands on.

What about yourself, did you manage to thieve things ever?

Oh, I don't know, I wasn’t very much in a position to; I never worked in a godown. But no I didn’t get any the opportunity to thieve things at all, I would’ve if I had the opportunity, don’t worry about that, I most probably would have got caught too, for stealing. I didn’t but some of them, they were past

02:30 masters some of the chaps, they could thieve something out right in front of the Jap’s eyes.

We were talking about what you were doing in ‘45 before the war ended. What were you doing, what kind of work were you doing?

Well the officers didn’t go out on working parties at that time so a sergeant or a warrant officer had to go out, for say, a hundred men and argue the point with the Jap, and we were digging tunnels into the

03:00 hills and machine gun nests and everything like that. So we used to have to march the men out and then up to where the Japs wanted us to work and then we’d have to work all day and everything like that, so that went on day after day. Then when the war finished on the fifteenth of August 1945, we come home that night and everybody said, “Oh, the war’s over, the Japs have surrendered.” “You tell that to these jokers, they don’t know anything at all about it, we’re supposed to go out to work tomorrow morning.”

03:30 Thursday the sixteenth, we still went out to work all day long, digging these tunnels into the hills, yet the war was over. And that night we went in, they said, “I bet you any money you like, I’ll put me house on it.” one cove said. I said, “You tell that to these jokers.” Friday morning we still went out to work,

seventeenth of August. Rainy day, I'll never forget that day, raining all the morning; we're arguing the point with the Japs and what he wanted. Then, about eleven o'clock this Jap came

04:00 out from the camp and said, "Jalan Changi." was all I could understand of what he said, which meant, "March to Changi." So all the other working parties were marching back, then we knew it must have been right. They still didn't tell us, they didn't tell us for days, they were still over us with their rifles and everything like that. So we used to sneak out of the camp, around to get the food.

04:30 We come upon food stores full of Australian tinned food, crates of it there. Or you'd go up to a Chinese house and knock on the door. When they come out to see you, one of your mates'd hop over the fowl house and grab a fowl and strangle it like, you know, break its neck and off with the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK . Pinching fowls. But anyhow

05:00 we couldn't go near the Jap camp cause they still were there with all their rifles and everything like that. So then it wasn't until the occupation forces came into Singapore and when they come in, "Oh," they said, "gee this place stinks!" "Oh, can't smell a thing mate." In 1941, we could smell it, when we first went there, oh it stunk, Singapore with the drains down beside the roads and that; and the restaurants they used to have

05:30 all the food out on the footpath and everything like that. And then these occupation forces said, "Oh Jeez it smells." And, "No, I can't smell anything mate, what can you smell?" They said, "The area stinks!" Anyhow, that's what it was. Then 'Linger Longer Louis', he was Lord Mountbatten came in and said, "Oh it'll be a little bit longer you can go home." you know, when we asked him when we're going home. This was in August, oh this is in

06:00 September, "Oh a little bit longer." So we christened him, 'Linger Longer Louis' Mountbatten. So then we left there in the September and got home on October the fourth.

Just in the lead up to that, did you notice changes in the Japanese before the war ended?

Yeah, there was changes; they were trying to buy up all the watches and pens and everything they could get their hands on. They were trying to buy all the stuff that we had, anything that we had left at all. Because they

06:30 knew that they could most probably use them or sell them later on themselves, you know, like that. But there was that, I didn't see any slacking of the authority or the discipline that they administered at all. There was no slackening off there at all, you had to do what you were told, if you didn't do that you got a slap and everything like that.

07:00 **What about in your role as, seeing the officers didn't go out, your role as liaising?**

No, but they still, yeah, they still, we were still digging the tunnels into the hills. You would have thought that if they knew the war was gonna finish that they wouldn't have worried about the tunnels but we still had to dig the tunnels. And we knew as soon as the first shot was fired or the first landing on Singapore, we were all on our own, and we'd go for the hills,

07:30 to try and get away from them, otherwise they'd just shoot us, annihilate us, because they had their orders. The orders came out, they found orders later on which was passed down around to all of our troops, that in the first attack on the island or the first attack on Malaya, wherever they were, they were to annihilate all the ex prisoners of war.

08:00 **And so you told us the story about not believing it at first?**

Oh well, yes, that's what I said, the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, until we were marched back into camp, we didn't believe it at all.

What about the first moment that you believed it, what did that feel like?

Well we didn't throw our hats in the air or jump up and scream and go on like they did in Australia when the war was over you know, in the streets and that, went mad, and everywhere they went mad, but where we were there was

08:30 nothing. I mean you realised the war's over, thank goodness I'm alive now, we'll be going home before long, we wanted to see what food we were gonna get now. So they brought in some shark for us and different things like that, into the cook house. Then the warships started to come into Singapore and we'd make our way down to the

09:00 wharves, to meet the British warships or the Australian warships and eat 'em out of house and home, they'd give you the lot. And later on, it was out of bounds to all POWs because we were eating all their rations, they had no rations left for themselves. But that was only time I was on a charge sheet in my life there. I went into Singapore; there was a chap who married my cousin.

09:30 And they wrote over and told me that he was coming over on one of the ships, the Manunda I think it was. So I went in to see him and he was on his way out to see me out there, so I missed him. And by the time I got back to the jail they'd put on a roll call, and I was marked 'Absent Without Leave', confined to the barracks or some blooming thing. But that was it, that's the only time they put me on a charge sheet anyhow.

10:00 **Did that seem a bit petty at that time?**

Oh well it was, we thought it was petty, you know, everybody's going into town, you knew you were coming back, you knew you weren't gonna hop on a ship and go home to Australia or anything at all like that. It was very petty we thought that, you know, they'd put you on a charge sheet, 'late coming back into camp' or something like that. But, that's the way it was.

And you mentioned Lord Mountbatten, what

10:30 **did that nick name mean?**

'Linger Longer Louis'. Well he was saying all the time, "Just a little bit longer and we'll have you home, just a little bit longer," so they christened him 'Linger Longer Louis' meaning, whether, from what he was saying all the time, "It'll be a little bit longer and you'll be going home." So they christened him 'Linger Longer Louis' Mountbatten.

What did you think of the command structure that had been in Singapore

11:00 **all this time, the officers, the blokes who'd ran the place?**

What, how do you mean?

What was your opinion of their conduct through this period?

What, do you mean those who stopped in Singapore or our officers that went with us up on the railway or what?

The officers in the prisoner of war camp?

Oh the officers in the prisoner of war camp, well there were officers and there were officers.

11:30 Some were good; some were no good at all. Some we wouldn't bring in out of the rain, kind of business, wouldn't have anything to do with, others were alright but they wouldn't go out on working parties with us. There's a few went out on working parties even worked with us up on the railway.

And what about the whole Singapore

12:00 **campaign in general?**

Well the whole Singapore campaign was bungled I reckon because they had no back up, there was no planes there. We had very, very little: old Wirraways and Brewster Buffaloes and something like that against the Zeros that the Japs had. Our planes were all lost in about the first week of the campaign; we had no planes at all. Otherwise, every plane

12:30 that came over, you knew it had the big red fried egg on it and then they'd be strafing us everywhere like that, we had no planes at all. Our two ships they brought over, the Prince of Wales and the Repulse, they were sunk straight away soon as they got over there. Churchill kept all of the blooming munitions and everything over there, wouldn't let anything come over here. So he was to blame for most of it.

13:00 Well he was to blame for the catastrophe in South Africa at the war there, what is it 1901 the...

Boer War?

Boer War, that's right. Then he lobbed the Australians on the wrong beach at Gallipoli, he was the officer in charge of the navy [First Lord of the Admiralty] at the time. Then he made a bungle up of the other war

13:30 too. He was no blooming saint I reckon; he was no blooming number one man at all.

So tell us about leaving Singapore at (UNCLEAR)?

And you know what we always wanted to do, the only thing we wanted to do was to see Singapore from the arse end of the boat and wave goodbye to Singapore like that. That's was all of our ambition over there, not to fly home but to see Singapore from the end of

14:00 the boat, like that, that was our ambition. Well we managed to get away eventually, some of my mates, the one that I was with that did the herrings, he flew home, he had heart trouble, he flew home. But we went on the ship, the Duntroon, went as far as Darwin on the Duntroon. And the Yarra was the other ship, they'd left a little bit before and they got into Darwin in the morning.

14:30 And we anchored out in the harbour, so they got leave, all day long, and they went that night, they got leave. And when we pulled in, in the evening, they decided that all the Queenslanders would tranship on to the Yarra because that was going home to Brisbane and the Duntroon was going to Sydney. So when we got on there, all the other coves were on leave in town, so we bunged on a turn [made a fuss], we wanted to go on leave too. Otherwise we would have over the side of the boat and swam to the

15:00 shore anyhow. So they granted us leave so we went in and went to a dance, some auxiliary or AWAS or WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] or WRANS [Women's Royal Australian Naval Service]

or something, putting on a dance for the troops coming home. First time I ever saw the Hokey Pokey or played or anything at all, like dance. So we stopped there the night and then we got back on the ship then we left next morning and came round to Brisbane.

What was the feeling like on the ship, leaving Singapore?

Well it was relief on the ship coming

15:30 home, we went home, they even gave us beer. The food on the Duntroon was good, it was really good and they gave us beer on that. When we got on the Yarra, it was all Pommy tin stuff mainly, but we got a bottle of beer per man per day, which we didn't get on the Duntroon. But then we went round and we pulled into Hamilton Wharf here, on the fourth of October, I don't know what day it was now but it was the

16:00 fourth of October.

What were you talking about in the boat on the way?

We weren't talking about much at all I don't think, nothing like that, it was just waiting to get home and seeing what home was like kind of business.

Having had a taste for it in Darwin I mean what was the feeling like in Darwin of being on Australian soil?

I don't think I ever saw anybody go down and kiss the ground anyhow like you see sometimes around the place like that. No, it was just

16:30 to get off on leave and go to the dance, that's all they thought about then, all we thought about and went to the dance. Otherwise we'd be still sitting on the ship, without any leave, and everybody else got leave see, so, if you give it to them, you give it to us, kind of business, you know.

Okay, what about when you pulled in to Hamilton?

Hamilton Wharf, oh well that was I looked down, I could see my father and mother there and my brother was there.

17:00 So I met them and then they put us into a motorcade, three of us in the one car, one in the front and two in the back. A chap from Rockhampton, Rocky Cave and Stag Chadwick, the other chap who got married on the day I got engaged. Then went out and the car stopped in Queen Street, wouldn't go. So we got out to push it and people said, "No, you stop in there." So somebody raced out from

17:30 His Majesty's Hotel with a pot of beer each for us, so we had a beer in the car. Then went out to Greenslopes Hospital and met our parents on the grassy slopes before Ward One out there. So then we met them there then we went on leave that night and back to hospital the next morning and spent about a month in hospital there, getting rid of all the hookworms and everything else we had wrong with us. Then they asked me,

18:00 "Do you want to go on the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] over to Japan on the Occupation Force or do you want to take your discharge?" And I thought about it and I thought no, if I went over to Japan I'd finish up in boob more than I was out of boob cause I wouldn't have taken any back slap from them, this time. If I saw a cove with a good watch I would've said, "That's mine," same as they did to us, you know. But, so I thought no, I'd be in jail more than

18:30 I was out of jail, I've give it away. But then I decided to go down to Burleigh Convalescent Depot, I thought of taking discharge and going down there for a holiday. Then I thought it over, I thought no, I'll stop in the army and let them send me down there and let them pay me every fortnight and as well as the pay I was getting. And I was, my mother was sending me down twenty pound a fortnight for me, so I was going through about twenty,

19:00 thirty odd pound a fortnight. And then, only thing I used to spend on that was laundry, when I used to go down to Coolangatta for a couple of days and come back and get my clean laundry and put my dirty laundry in and pay for that and then oh, drink most of the time, we used to drink every day. Every day, every night.

What would you do on the drink?

Eh?

What kind of things would you do on the drink?

19:30 What kind of...?

Things would you do on the drink?

Oh we'd go out, in the sergeants' mess they'd put on a keg of beer at the evening meal, like mess for about forty sergeants and you'd be lucky if you get one or two beers. So after mess we'd go back in and then I'd drink gin and Coke, siphon up the Coke and put it in the gin.

20:00 The other mate was drinking whisky, Corio Whisky it was, and the other one was drinking rum. So we'd

most probably get then, we'd drink there from about half past six to about eight o'clock, not stopping to talk too much; we'd be drinking all the time. Then we'd get a bottle of gin and a bottle of whisky and go down to the Currumbin Hotel around on the water front there.

20:30 We used to get into trouble, we'd go in there and put the bottle on the table and ask for Coke to go with it or some soft drinks to go with it. But we used to drink there every night and we'd just stop in the bar till they closed the bar, or in their lounge. And then we'd go up and the dance floor in there, go in there and have a dance, then they'd open the bar for us again, so we'd come back in the lounge and we'd drink there till all hours of the night.

21:00 And that went on every, six, seven days a week. Money didn't worry us at all you know because we had money in the bank, all our pay was in the bank, like. Then we used to, when we're home, after we got out of the army, oh, hang on, that was there. Yeah and then when we got out of the army, when we were out in Greenslopes at the hospital and that, we used to all meet in at the Royal opposite the

21:30 Post Office, the Royal Hotel was opposite the Post Office in Queen Street. So in those days it was two drinks per person, that's all you could get, you walked in and you'd get two beers, that's all. So we'd walk in and we went down the back bar, the private bar and there was a head barmaid was Agnes down there. So we'd walk in and, "Fourteen, Agnes" because you'd walk in and there'd be about five or six of you

22:00 walk in behind you so you'd always walk in like that. So I think she made more out of us than her wages because we'd always sling her a fiver here, every day she got a fiver from us anyhow, like that. So one Saturday morning there, the bar on a Saturday morning used to be four or five deep, and I ordered over the top, "Forty-two, Agnes." Forty-two beers come over their heads, over to us, pots and glasses and everything like that.

22:30 Because there was about twenty of us there so you'd only get two beers per person, in those days. Used to be a session at lunchtime then it closed, then another in the evening. So we drank and drank and drank and drank up there anyhow all the time. Then I went to Sydney and Melbourne after I got out of the army. I got out the army February the fourteenth, then I went down to Coolangatta, down to the

23:00 Queensland Hotel. It was right down, up from the Kirra Beach, it's no longer there now; the Queensland Hotel's gone now I think. So we used to drink there, there's about eight of us in the dormitory there all ex-servicemen, we weren't all POWs, I was the only POW. We used to start over Tweed Heads, they used to open an hour earlier than Queensland so we'd go over and do the beer session over there then come back. And on the way back get half a dozen bottles of Tom Thumb

23:30 Rum and then come back to Queenslanders and have the beer session then, have lunch and then up the room and drink rum and milk all afternoon, then have, open the bar from night, we'd be Schnapps, Christ knows what. We must have spent a lot of money, hell of a lot of money we spent on grog in those days. Then we'd go up to Currumbin again that night, up the play room and drink up there all night.

Were you all POWs?

No, no, oh no, they were all ex-servicemen in that, I was about the

24:00 only POW in that group like that, you'd just go down and book in the place. And I was knocking around with one of the waitresses round there, so that's where I used to get jugs of milk up for the rum and milk all afternoon. Oh dear me.

Did this drinking session help you?

Well I reckon it got out of my system. Those chaps that came back from the war and went straight back in to work,

24:30 like that were married, most of them, a lot of them were married, they went straight back into work, they didn't get it out of their system. I think those of us that were able to play up and go to parties and drink all the time, talk about it, we used to talk about this and that, that happened, everything like that. But those people that didn't talk about it, well some of them still hasn't got out of their system, they've never let themselves go at

25:00 all like that. But oh no, I think it helped a heck of a lot that we were able to get it out of our system. Then the time I started, six months later I started work, kind of business.

And quickly, what were your trips to Sydney and Melbourne like?

Well those good, we went down to Sydney, with all the POWs we used to do pub crawls down there everywhere around, and that's where I learned to eat oysters, because I went down there and I'd said, "Oh I don't like oysters, I can't eat oysters."

25:30 "Have you ever tried one?" "No I've never tried one." "Well you try it." So now I love oysters. But, you know, we used to go down there, drink all day long, go round to all the pubs, meeting all the New South Wales POWs out of our unit and everything like that too see. Oh yes I enjoyed myself for those six months after I come home, I must have went through a lot of money I think.

And Melbourne, what'd you do there?

Melbourne, oh yes I went down there to

26:00 have a look at Melbourne, I never been there before so I went down to Melbourne. And went round the place to, I don't know whether they had nightclubs down there; went to dances and met a lass down there I was gonna marry her I reckon but I didn't get back down there, I started working instead. My mother said, "You're starting work." and I started work and that so I never got back down there at all.

So how did you meet your wife?

My wife I met her

26:30 at the dance hall at the Trades Hall in Brisbane, where IBM [International Business Machines] are now, up the top of Edward Street there, that used to be the Trades Hall. And they have a dance floor up there, right up on the top floor, so I went up there and I met her up there in 1946. And I got married on the seventh of February, no, yeah, the seventh of February 1948

27:00 and she died six weeks before our fiftieth wedding anniversary, 1997 she died. That was the last photo we had taken together at the Girl in a Million State Final.

And in your post war times, did you have any trouble settling back into civilian life?

27:30 No, as I said, I got it out of my system I think when I got back. I started work back at the City Council, down the main depot and there was another two coves down there just come back to war, well three coves from the war, so we used to drink over the Jubilee every lunch time and every night. And then I went to Northey Street then I went out to Tennyson Power House, back in the City Hall, South Brisbane then back into

28:00 City Hall, then I went up in Victoria Barracks then and worked up there until I retired from work.

What about any memories or dreams, have you had…?

Oh yes, oh yes, nightmares, I had nightmares for years, still get them sometimes. Thinking of my mates who didn't come back and where I was and then you'd think that after all these years, yeah, they weren't dead and they escaped and they living over there and all that and they'd come back, everything like that.

28:30 But stupid dreams I think and nightmares, you're remembering things that happened over there all the time.

What are the hardest memories to face?

Hardest memory? Oh the mates dying. I go up to Thailand now up to the cemetery there and walk along and see the gravestones there, all my mates, tears stream down my face all the time. And even when I went back to Burma in

29:00 May here, the sergeant cook that committed suicide, I went to see his grave was there too. So there's quite a few graves there that I went to visit when I went back in May, that's the first time I'd been back to Burma, and it's not as forward as Thailand. In Thailand now we got a museum at Hellfire Pass and we got a museum right next door to the

29:30 Kanchanabur Cemetery now, there's a real good museum there. With all memorabilia from the war and everything like that.

How important is it to you to return to these places?

Oh I think it is, as a lot of coves said, "No, you won't get me going back there again." But I enjoy going back, look at it now compared to what it was then, of course it was no picnic then and you know going back to Thailand especially,

30:00 up on the railway. But to go back now and to see the country now as it is, we go to Bangkok and spend a few nights in Bangkok. And get all my shirts made over there and all my trousers made and my suits made by the tailor I've got out at the back of the Indra Regent in Bangkok and, oh no, I enjoy myself. In July, my daughter and I

30:30 went over to London for the first time I've ever been over to England. London and Belfast, Scotland, where my wife's people came from, went back to Perth to see where they came from and there and then on the way back we called into Bangkok again for four nights. So in February next year they're opening our POW memorial at Ballarat, the memorial which has got the names of every prisoner of war

31:00 from the Boer War, World War I, World War II and Korea on it, so that'll be open in February then I'm going back to Thailand. We were going back in February but it looks like we'll be going back end of February beginning of March again.

So you talked a bit about this with Naomi [interviewer], but what kind of personal changes did your experience give you?

Who with?

31:30 **You.**

Oh myself, oh well I thought as I said before, it made me a better man in my opinion. I learned a lot by it, I saw how low coves could go and high they could go and learned to be more tolerant, not to be able to say that the food doesn't, you don't like food. It's mind over matter, the

32:00 mind plays a terrific part in your make-up and everything in your life, it's the mind. I come back, I managed to just about obliterate my stammering and stuttering, I just about got that under control or sometimes I break out in a stammer a bit but the majority of it's under control now. I enjoy life and the same

32:30 determination that got me back is the same determination I'm gonna reach a hundred. So that's where I got.

I have one question now, how do you feel every Anzac Day?

I go in every Anzac Day. I go to the Dawn Service around at Morningside here, four o'clock, then I go to Greenslopes Hospital for the Dawn Service there at about half past five, then I go into the march. Then we go up to the Bookmakers Club where the POWs have our luncheon up there,

33:00 and then when that's over we grab a cab and go out to Coorparoo RSL and continue on there. So we, there's quite a few POWs that meet at the Bookmakers Club, we march, our unit marches, and there's not very many of us left to march now. But we march every Anzac Day and then have lunch together up at the Bookmakers Club and then about three others used to come over to

33:30 Coorparoo. Last year there was only the one, the other were up at Hervey Bay for their service up at Hervey Bay so they didn't come so. But we enjoy the day, I start off about four o'clock in the morning and get home about half past eleven, twelve o'clock at night so it's a long day.

How's it make you feel that day?

Oh I feel good. I've

34:00 done, it's the same as I open the paper in the morning and look at the funeral notices, if my name's not there I'm right, I got another day in front of me.

You were talking earlier, I just briefly ask you about what you think of some of the TV or film representation of...?

Oh well there's nothing this, that Changi business [television series] that had those episodes, Slim de Grey [actor] was one of them

34:30 and the other cove that was in Homicide [television series] once or something or other, the police thing like that, he was another one. And it was stupid, those things never happened, it never was anything like that at all, nothing like that, and the people that watching that get the wrong impression of what POW life was like. They reckon it was supposed to be humorous, and to show the humour in it but, and they had pianos and everything in their blooming rooms, they played pianos

35:00 and all this in this blooming silly looking thing. But no, that was a stupid one, there's a lot of complaints from our coves, they wrote in complaining to the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] about it. And that Bridge over the River Kwai, course that was just fiction, it wasn't true or anything like the truth at all. What other ones were there? Blood over the, Blood Oath yeah, that wasn't a bad one, I saw that one, that was Ambon,

35:30 that was the prisoners who were in Ambon and were executed there. I saw that one and then Bryan Brown went over to Japan, they took the film over to Japan and they showed it in the theatres over there, everybody over there thought it was fiction, they didn't believe it. Even our National President went over to Japan the year before last and he went to the high schools in there and the students over there said, "Well we know that

36:00 Japan fought the Americans and the English but we didn't know they fought the Australians." They know nothing at all about the war like that. Even our own children going to school here, they know nothing about the atrocities or anything that happened over there during the war.

I guess I might just finish up with a final question and it is, do you have any final words or comments that you'd like to say in relation to your life experiences?

Well

36:30 as I always say, I'm one of the lucky ones, I'm alive. If I had have gone to the Middle East, I mightn't be alive now. I've learned a lot, I'm not sorry I was a POW. I didn't enjoy it naturally but I think I've learned a lot, it's made me a better person. Well I hope it has but I think it has anyhow. And as I said, I

37:00 wouldn't trust 'em as far as I could throw them. Only good Jap's a dead Jap and a leopard never changes its spots. I think I'll leave it at that.

Alright, thank you very much, well done, thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS