

# Australians at War Film Archive

## William Grant (Mac) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/895>

### Tape 1

00:35 **Okay then. Well as I was saying before, if we could run through our fairly cursory version of events. Whereabouts were you born?**

At Cordeaux Dam in New South Wales, which is pretty unusual, I know that. It's one of the chain of dams in the Sydney catchment area, south of Sydney.

**What was your father doing for a living?**

He was an electrical engineer working on the dam, on it during its construction,

01:00 so that's the reason I have that rather unusual birthplace.

**Did he take any part in the First World War?**

He didn't, he was a Canadian and because of the nature of his profession he had a series of major electric shocks, twice I think he had 11,000 volts go through him, so his health apparently didn't meet the requirements

01:30 for enlistment in World War I.

**Whereabouts were you when war was declared?**

That's World War II of course. Sydney, living in Sydney.

**Do you remember the announcement?**

Yes I do, very well. I had been somewhere on my bike in fact and everywhere I went there were announcements on the radio that the Prime Minister would be addressing the nation at eight o'clock that evening, and I think everybody knew what

02:00 the announcement was going to be.

**What was your response to that?**

I think we had all expected it, my generation. It was pretty obvious, or it had been for years, I felt, that a war was inevitable, and so that really just was what everybody had expected.

**Now how old were you on that date?**

I was seventeen at that time.

02:30 **So too young to enlist?**

Yes.

**When did you enlist?**

Well I had a series of enlistments, in fact. In 1940, September 1940, I joined what was then called the militia, that was the equivalent of today's army reserve, so I joined the militia, the 30th Battalion, which was a Scottish regiment in Sydney.

03:00 I did seventy days of continuous training with them and then recruiting for the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] that is the expeditionary force had stopped at that stage and I was quite convinced, as was everybody else I think, that the war was going to go on, I didn't see much point in going back to civilian life. So although there was no recruiting for the AIF

03:30 two or friends of mine convinced me that I should join the permanent military forces. We virtually had, Australia virtually had three separate armies at that stage, which puts us into a pretty unique position. So I went off and joined 1st Heavy Brigade, which was coast artillery, and started training with them in

January of 1941, and at that stage the AIF still hadn't been committed to action, and it wasn't until

04:00 October of 1941 that I actually joined the AIF, and I did that by... I just went to the recruiting depot which was in Martin Place in Sydney, in civilian clothes. And the PMF, the Permanent Military Forces, took a very dim view of anyone who joined the AIF without their approval, and I had, I sensed that approval would not be

04:30 forthcoming so I adopted my mother's maiden name, of Macarthur, and I've been called Mac ever since, and that's the story.

**And into what battalion were you placed?**

Well I just went to general reinforcements for the AIF at that time, and well, artillery reinforcements because I had been serving with artillery. And I, that was the system in those days, there were a series of training camps

05:00 established at... they're usually major towns, country towns throughout Australia, and in this you simply went there and did their initial training before being sent off to the Middle East. That was the usual pattern.

**Whereabouts did you train?**

I went to Dubbo initially and then to Cowra, in New South Wales.

**And at this stage you were expecting to go to the Middle East as well?**

Yes. And then Japan

05:30 entered the war and ruined those prospects. And while I was still in Cowra, actually he was an Englishman serving in the Australian Army, a Major Paul Keen came to Cowra and addressed everybody in the various reinforcement units there and appealed for volunteers for... we would now call them special forces,

06:00 I just forget exactly what he referred to them as. But I decided to join in any case, so I volunteered for special duty, let's put it that way, and so, and that was how I ended up going into independent company, and for training from then on we went to Wilsons Promontory, in Victoria, and trained there.

06:30 I just keep going?

**Sure. So you had specialised training at Wilsons Promontory?**

Yes it was, and the British were very much involved in the training of

07:00 special forces at that stage. Their commandos had already been in existence for some time doing raids across the channel and so forth and so I think it was generally acknowledged that they knew more about what we now call special operations, than anybody else. And so a team came to Australia, I think in 1940, and selected, looking for specialised training areas, or suitable training areas, and

07:30 Wilsons Promontory was selected. At that stage, remember Japan was not in the war and so tropical warfare was not a consideration, they were just simply looking for rugged, remote country and Wilsons Promontory filled the bill.

**And once Japanese had entered the war, you were doing your training, were you told where you were going and what you'd be expecting to be doing?**

No, not at that stage cause I don't think anybody

08:00 knew. In early 1942 the Japanese were still very much calling the tune, and they were just running rampant right throughout the Pacific area, so nobody could say with any certainty, except that it was fairly obvious I think that we would end up somewhere fighting... well obviously we'd be fighting the Japanese.

**And when did you get your posting overseas?**

In April of 1942, and things were very, very hurried in those days.

08:30 Time was at a premium, and I think everybody realised this. So Australia Day weekend in fact, in 1942, we assembled with people from all over Australia at Wilsons Promontory, Tidal River we generally called it then, and I suppose again, as a sign of the urgency of the time,

09:00 we embarked for service on the 9th April. So as I say, time was at a premium.

**That's pretty quick isn't it? And can you give me an idea of what sort of operations you were doing? Oh sorry, and you were sent to...?**

New Guinea. What sort of training or operations?

**Operations when you were in New Guinea?**

Yeah, well,

- 09:30 as far as possible I think things were made tailor made to suit our training and our requirements, so initially we flew into Wau, a former gold mining town in central New Guinea, and the unit virtually split into two halves at that stage. So the headquarters and part of the unit went to
- 10:00 what we called the Markham end of operations and the remainder stayed in the Wau-Salamaua end. We, a lot of us spent almost twelve months before we saw other members of the unit, we just dispersed completely. What sort of operations were we doing? Well we... constant patrolling, occasionally raids on Japanese installations
- 10:30 and that's about it, patrolling and raiding, just as the occasion came up.

**Well I would like to come back to that in more detail later on I was just getting a, sort of, a general idea. And for how long did that go on?**

We were almost twelve months in the Wau Salamaua area.

**And then you were evacuated?**

Yes, well we were rotated home at that stage, there was no... evacuated gives a picture that is not

- 11:00 quite correct. It was, we were in control of our own destinies again at that stage and it was simply time for us to go home, so we came back home to Australia in May of 1942.

**And were you, did you have further training then?**

Oh yes, I think the whole of the AIF did. After we returned to Australia in May 1942 we assembled, or reassembled at Canungra

- 11:30 in southern Queensland with was destined to become the focal point for all jungle training. And then from there we later on moved to the Atherton Tablelands in North Queensland and spent many, many frustration months sitting on the tablelands, training, constant training in proper warfare conditions.

- 12:00 **And what was your next posting?**

I was then with the 2/12th Commando Squadron and we did the North Borneo landings, and in fact saw out the end of the war in North Borneo.

**How would you characterise that period?**

On the tablelands or what?

**North Borneo.**

Oh, it was very different to our previous operations, which I haven't

- 12:30 mentioned. And while we were in New Guinea, without making too much of it, things were pretty rugged because everything was, almost everything was improvised, rations were short, the Japanese were in the ascendance then for the great bulk of the time we spent in New Guinea, and it was sort of backs

- 13:00 to the wall.

**You saw the war out in North Borneo, did you imagine you would stay on in the army?**

I had thoughts in that direction. Apart from being shot at, which I don't suppose anyone likes all that much, I genuinely liked the army. By the time the war ended I had been commissioned for some... I was commissioned in January 1944,

- 13:30 I didn't have any particular affiliations to any part of civilian life which called me so I thought I would see if I could get into the regular army.

**Did that affect how long it took you back, took you to get back to Australia?**

No, not at that stage, no. Oh, well yes it did because the places I went to. When I, after the war ended

- 14:00 I suppose I was a great volunteer by that stage, I volunteered to join the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, and went to Japan and didn't come back to Australia until January of 1949, so yeah, it did affect my time.

**Did you have much of a period in Australia between Borneo and Japan?**

Oh yes.

- 14:30 From August 1945 the war ended, February 1946 we landed in Japan.

**When did you come back to Australia? Were you held on in Borneo much longer after the end of the war?**

Well, I went direct from Borneo to Japan, so I didn't come back to Australia at all until January 1949.

**Oh I see, sorry, okay.**

That's all right.

15:00 **So you had quite an extended BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Forces] experience as well?**

Yes.

**Again I would like to come back to these in detail because they had various stages as well.**

Sure.

**How did it come, well you came back to Australia from Japan?**

Yes.

**What precipitated that?**

Oh just normal rotate... and we were running the, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force was being run

15:30 down at that stage. So the battalion I was with came home, as did the break bulk of the Australian component of BCOF in early 1949, the remainder were still serving when the Korean War started and so of course that's a different story then. One of the battalions went on and served in

16:00 Korea, as did other components of course

**Were you called upon to take part in the Korean War in those early stages?**

No, I wasn't personally but the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australia Regiment did go to Korea in... I think they actually landed in September 1950 and then they saw the war out in Korea, and they were popularly known as 'old faithful' because they were

16:30 there from go to woe, so, and I had joined just as the war ended in Korea. The French general said later on, "It was very good timing," and I went to Korea and had twelve months in Korea.

**So what were your duties of operations before you went to Korea, what were you doing in Australia?**

Well that was, we were in the Atherton Tablelands.

17:00 The whole of the AIF, at some stage or another, served in the Atherton Tablelands. I've since learned that there were lengthy discussions between the Australian Government and the United States Government in particular, and Britain, as to what should be done with the AIF. Because, you know, I think without

17:30 being vainglorious in any way, the AIF had a very great reputation as a fighting force, and we just simply sat for varying periods of time on the Atherton Tablelands, waiting for somebody to make use of us. So, what was I doing? Extensive training which just went on and on and on, and that was it.

**And what was your rank at that stage?**

I was a lieutenant then.

**Okay.**

18:00 **And how would you, or could you describe your experience in Korea, what were you, what were your operations there?**

Well as I say, I arrived just as the war ended, so at that time what the Americans called 'DMZee' and what we called the DMZ, the Demilitarised Zone, ran right across Korea roughly in line with the 38th Parallel, and

18:30 we dug holes and improved the fortifications and took part in major exercises with the Americans, and... So I suppose in retrospect we didn't do a great deal, except that it was quite hard work and we were kept busy and Korea, of course is, infamous perhaps be the right term, for its very cold

19:00 winters. So that was it, we survived, we improved fortifications, we looked across the DMZ at the Chinese and the North Koreans, and they looked across the DMZ at us and the other members of the occupation force, and that was it.

**And then was it finally back to Australia again?**

Yes in November

19:30 1954 I returned to Australia.

**How did you become involved in the Malayan Emergency?**

Oh again, well I just, my number came up. Australia was probably over-committed I think at that stage, because we had, we retained a battalion in Korea after the, during, right through the

20:00 armistice period. We sent a battalion to Malaya, as it was then, not Malaysia, and so if you were serving in the Australian Army you were a certainty to go to an overseas appointment, and that's what happened. And I went off and joined 3RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] in Korea,

20:30 then went to headquarters of the 1st Commonwealth Division and then finally returned to Australia.

**So the headquarters of the 1st Commonwealth Division that was the Malayan?**

No, no, that was in Korea.

**Okay. What was your role in Malaya?**

I wasn't in Malaya for a great period of time. Again I was attached to head quarters Far-EL, that's Far

21:00 Eastern Land Forces, mainly British rather than Australian, and did some patrolling. Yeah, I suppose that's it, patrols. That's... in periods of non-activity, that usually is the infantryman's lot, that he patrols, so along with a lot of other people, I patrolled.

**21:30 How long did you serve there?**

In Malaya, for odd periods I think. Not a great length of time, I have never really tried to sort it out, I think, because I went from pillar to post really as far as postings were concerned.

**And after that you came back to Australia again?**

Yes. I had, I should mention between

22:00 service with BCOF and... I've got to sort this out now... and serving in Korea, I attended the Command Staff College at Queenscliff in Victoria, that was virtually a twelve months appointment, designed to fit me, or other officers too,

22:30 for staff appointments and commanders, as the name implies.

**Okay then, well I would just like to go back a bit to the beginning and deal with some of these very interesting areas in detail. I was wondering in an early stage of your life, as a child, what image or opinion did you have of the armed services?**

I don't...

23:00 initially, as a child, I don't think I had any at all, it was only as I became a teenager, as I say, I started to recognise the inevitability of there being a war, but up till then I had taken not much interest at all. If anything, I suppose, I was interested in the air force because the air appealed to most kids I think, and then when I went into the AIF, well, I have given you

23:30 my background and the fact that I did it under an assumed name and so forth. I felt that from a personal view point that there was a degree of haste should be involved, that I shouldn't hang around because technically I had deserted from the permanent military forces.

**Besides the context of war and the impending war, what appealed to you about going into the services?**

24:00 I don't know whether you can say aside from that, because that was a sort of all-pervading influence at that time. Everybody, virtually everybody, wanted to be in something, and didn't have a great deal of choice.

**From your militia experience, how did you find your first taste of that sort of life?**

24:30 I think it was more or less what I expected. As I mentioned, my father hadn't served in World War I but I had an uncle, he had quite a distinguished career in World War I and that generation, that's just the World War I generation, practically everybody or it seemed like everybody had served in World War I.

**25:00 Had you got much of an image or a picture of how his experience had been, from him?**

My uncle? Yes, he had served with the Light Horse on Gallipoli and in the Palestine Campaigns, as they were called then. And then one constantly met ones elders, as I say, and most of them had served in World War I

25:30 so you got a picture, yes, of what it was all about.

**Was he very active on an Anzac Day?**

My uncle? Oh he used to go to the marches but other than that, I don't know.

**I suppose I was getting at, was it a part of your childhood or your upbringing?**

Yes, I think so, yes. It's been interesting

26:00 as an observer, I suppose, to see because in those days so many people had been involved out of a very small population but Anzac Day had a tremendous influence, I feel, in my childhood days and as I grew, and so I saw that as, Anzac Day as a great influence. And then there was a period after World War II when the reverse

26:30 happened and there was a, obviously a general population feeling against the celebration of Anzac Day and then it's swung around again now and, you know, I think the current generation is very much interested in Anzac Day.

**Just wondering about, did you have, had you been working after school, before your enlistment?**

I had a very brief period,

27:00 because again, it was time. I had a very brief period, I became a clerk in... which seemed to be the fate of most people, in a radio-manufacturing firm. And I only had probably a bit over twelve months, if that, before I began

27:30 my army experience.

**Okay. I think you mentioned before, you had seventy days training with the militia. What sort of areas did that cover?**

Well, basic infantry training. We route marched, we learned to shoot and become acquainted with infantry weapons. Even now looking back it's interesting. I took part in the only

28:00 divisional parade that I've ever being remotely concerned with in the whole of my army career, and that occurred during the first two months of my army career. So that was at... I was then in camp in Greta with the 30th Battalion, and the whole of the 2nd Division I think it was, paraded near Maitland

28:30 in New South Wales, so there were about twelve or fourteen thousand troops on parade, a big parade.

**What did you think of that as a new young soldier?**

I don't think I was terribly impressed because people were not well trained at... you have undoubtedly seen movies of great parades since then. Well, for a big parade to be successful

29:00 everyone must know what they are doing and be able to do it, and I think with very new and partly trained troops it didn't necessarily apply, but it was an interesting experience.

**How would you compare that militia training to the AIF training that you had?**

It was very similar, in fact, because, as I say, the AIF reinforcements were training with the main purpose

29:30 to get, sort of, rudimentary training, basic training, and then go off and join a unit in the Middle East. So there was a great similarity between the two periods.

**How did you find your training officers?**

I think pretty good, generally. Some of them were World War I vintage people, and so they knew the score. Yeah I would say it was pretty

30:00 good.

**Before you volunteered for the, well, to become a part of an independent company, or special forces now, did you know anything about it, had you been told anything?**

No. It was all, it was quite secret, the fact that they existed and the type of training that they did and so forth, no, so I knew very little. And of course we had a distinctive colour patch, it

30:30 was what was called the double diamond colour patch and that excited quite a bit of comment but other than that, no, I didn't know very much at all.

**So what prompted you to join?**

The desire to get into the war I think.

**Did you have an understanding that would be fast tracking method?**

Yes.

**Do you recall the speech or the call for volunteers**

31:00 **from the British officer?**

British Major? He didn't go into a great deal of detail because he couldn't at that stage, their existence

and the training was classified information, so I think he just virtually told us enough to whet our appetites. The volunteer rate was very high indeed.

31:30 **Well that's particularly interesting that period of training. Did you immediately go off to Wilsons Promontory?**

Yes, well yes, almost immediately. That was, I think, some time in December of 1941, that is just after Japan had come into the war, and we went to Wilsons Promontory in January of 1942. But time really was

32:00 at a premium in those days.

**Well could you tell us more about that training, what did they have you doing?**

There was a great deal of emphasis on night training, which didn't necessarily apply elsewhere, we were trained in the use of explosives, which was not common

32:30 in the army. A lot of emphasis on physical fitness so we... I don't know if you have ever been to Wilsons Promontory but one of the mountains there is called Mount Oberon. And that was, although it wasn't publicised, that is we weren't aware of it, that was one of the initial tests was to climb Mount Oberon, so that just simply appeared on the day's training program

33:00 to climb Mount Oberon, so away we went. It was a pretty tough old climb and quite a number of people packed it in on the way up the mountain and when they got back down below there were trucks lined up waiting for them and they went straight into the trucks and they returned to their previous units. As I say, with out realising it, we had passed the first test for service with independent company.

**Were there many sort of cut**

33:30 **off tests like that?**

Well I think that whole time you were under test, but that was the most direct one, that was a test of, you know, intestinal fortitude I suppose, that's, whether you were prepared to take it or not.

**What else characterised that period of training?**

I think the distances we were required to cover,

34:00 the night training aspects which I have already mentioned, and they were important.

**Did the discipline vary?**

No, I don't think so. Later on, in commando training, yes there was a... particularly when I was training with the marines,

34:30 there was a lot of emphasis then on sticking together and helping your friends and...

**When you were in Wilsons Promontory, were you still imagining you might go to the Middle East?**

No, no that was quite obvious then that, you know, interestingly enough the... I was in, when I volunteered for independent companies I mentioned I was training with AIF reinforcements

35:00 and I was with reinforcements for, what, anti tank regiment and I found it quite interesting later on that those people there who didn't volunteer for independent company did end up going to the Middle East later on, after the Battle of Alamein, they got to the Middle East after all.

35:30 But by then of course the situation had changed completely.

**Any regrets about going over?**

I would have always liked to have served in the Middle East, yeah, but didn't, and I have done enough service in other places since to compensate for any regrets I may have had I think.

**In terms of your training at Wilsons Promontory was there any educational aspect perhaps about the enemy or...?**

36:00 To a pretty limited degree, it was mainly I think because not a hell of a lot was known about the enemy at that stage.

**What did you yourself know about the Japanese?**

Nothing at that stage, and the commando aspects, again, came from the British but of course they had been fighting the Germans so they didn't know either.

36:30 So to some degree the Japanese were an unknown quantity except that I, quite obviously they were pretty good because they had taken all before them.

**I think some of the air force blokes were told that their planes were terrible and they couldn't**

**see straight and they needed glasses.**

Yeah.

**Were you subject to that sort of...?**

Yeah, that was the general picture.

37:00 I always felt the media had a lot to answer for at that time, you see your enemy was generally portrayed as being a buck toothed, short sighted character, whereas the first Japanese I saw in New Guinea were the same height as myself and big, strong characters who bore little resemblance to the cartoon version of Japanese.

37:30 The Japanese in fact, I think, were pretty good soldiers.

**Do you think you had that understanding before you went over?**

No, I don't think so, cause not much was known, although they had been at war in China for a number of years at that stage, but whatever information was available didn't, wasn't distributed to a great degree. So this

38:00 obviously incorrect picture of the Japanese, as a soldier, persisted for a long time.

**You mentioned before that whole period was like a training session, or a cut off. At what point were you told that you had made it and this independent company was as it was to be formed?**

Yeah because remember the 2/5th didn't exist when I was at Wilsons Promontory, we made it exist we formed it. I

38:30 think the actual unit came into existence in March 1942, so which isn't very long from... And so, as I say, off we went and embarked on a ship called the Taroona which, prior to that, had been engaged in the, sort of, Melbourne Devonport North Tasmania run.

## Tape 2

00:31 **You were just saying off tape about how a unit is basically formed, in a bureaucratic sense by the stroke of a pen. Did you start to get a sense of the independent company having its own identity or being a unit?**

Oh yes, yes. Actually it is an experience which not everybody has had to be present at the actual formation of a unit.

01:00 I did it twice in fact later on after I came home from Korea, Japan and was given the task of raising and forming the 1st Commando Company. So again that was, I had the experience twice of being at the birth of a brand new unit, which is a unique experience.

**Well could you describe that experience particularly that 2/5th?**

01:30 Well you could feel a bonding together starting to develop amongst the people, and as I mentioned earlier, we came from all over Australia, which at that stage was quite unique. Most units, when the AIF was first formed, were formed on a state basis, that is they were... and then as reinforcements started to come, they again went to state units,

02:00 and it was unique to have a unit drawn from all over Australia so, and it was probably a very good thing. And that became the pattern later on as the war developed that while they tried to some degree, the authorities tried to some degree to send Victorians to join Victorian units, it just simply became impossible to stick to that, and so one went into general reinforcements.

02:30 And the system worked. And even now, you probably wouldn't pick it up because you haven't got the knowledge but on Anzac Day for example, you know, all the units march and you will see a unit come along and it's still carrying the banner from what I know was a New South Wales unit and things like that. So, and as I say we were a conglomeration of

03:00 states down at Wilsons Promontory but we bonded together, and out of that grew a unit.

**Would I be right in thinking that an independent company, particularly, needs to have that strong unity?**

Oh no more than an infantry battalion, an infantry battalion is generally accepted as being a very closely bonded unit, it has to be, and the independent companies were much the

03:30 same.

**Okay. Now did you have much in the way of pre embarkation leave?**



The people in the eastern states were fortunate, we had pre embarkation leave, no, we only had a week. And people from Western Australia missed out because of the time factor, again, so there was none.

**I'm always interested by this period, obviously you don't know what's about to come**

04:00 **next, but what does one do before you go overseas to fight?**

What, on your pre embarkation leave? Well you live it up as much as you possibly can I think, that's the first requirement. And then later on, although it wasn't classified as pre embarkation leave, we sailed from Townsville and I think we took Townsville apart, although we only had one night there really and we took Townsville

04:30 apart on that night.

**That's a fair claim because Townsville sounds pretty tough.**

Yes, yeah, so were we I think. Well we thought we were at any rate.

**When you were, so did you go, you were living in Sydney at that point?**

Yes.

**Would it be a matter of going around, see all your friends, touch base with family?**

Oh yes. Oh yes well I was, like most of us, I was still living with my family at that stage.

05:00 Yeah, and I think generally speaking, think most of us were aware of the security considerations, you didn't go round advertising that you were on pre embarkation leave, you just, you were on leave and that was it. Probably most people deduced the fact that you were going off. Yeah, so

05:30 you lived it up.

**What were your thoughts about what was about to come?**

I was pretty enthusiastic, I think everybody was, that was what we'd joined for, to... fairly high degree of enthusiasm.

**What had you been told of, in the way of what you would be going into?**

06:00 Not a great deal because, as I say, there wasn't a great deal to tell us at that stage. Remember, when we went to New Guinea there had been no fighting in New Guinea, we were the, sort of, fore-runners of everything. The Japanese had, with very little opposition, advanced right down from Japan and China into New Guinea and

06:30 the Solomons and so forth so, and there just simply wasn't a great deal of information available, we didn't know.

**Okay. So you, now were you trained as a unit to Townsville, you were sent by train up to...?**

Yes. The first time I did the trip, I came to know it very, very well later on, and it's a long,

07:00 long trip up to Townsville, or Cairns later on became the focal point. So I got to know, with attendance at schools and courses and leave and so forth, I got to know all the main stops between Sydney and Cairns, and the Brisbane people, I must say, or the Queensland people were marvellous. And of course

07:30 to this day, I think, I haven't read anything about it, I think the rail system stood up amazingly well to the demands placed on it, cause and the demands must have been very, very heavy indeed, this constant traffic, not only Australians, Americans too. And the Queensland railway system, as you probably know, is a narrow gauge, its three feet six as opposed to four feet eight and a half, and five feet

08:00 three, so it took quite a bashing, and stood up to it amazingly well.

**Were there any Americans in Queensland when you were...?**

Oh yes.

**Did you have much experience...?**

Oh no, not before I left no. No, after we, after I came back from New Guinea, yes. Yeah well I think two American divisions moved through Queensland in addition to base troops and so forth, so certainly the 32nd and the 41st US [United States of America] Divisions had been based

08:30 in Queensland before going off to fight their war.

**So in April '42, I think you were in Townsville?**

Yeah.

**What sort of town was it then, before the Americans?**

Just a, well, remember we weren't there very long, as I said, I think it was only one day and one night. Oh I think Townsville was quite a pleasant town, but other than that I didn't see

09:00 enough of it to be able to form an impression.

**Sounds like you saw the underside of a bar?**

Yeah.

**Okay, well could you tell us about the experience of being flown to New Guinea, was this your first experience of a plane?**

No we didn't fly, we sailed to New Guinea...

**Oh, sorry.**

on the Taroona. Yes, well of course we were a unique unit in that regard, we were the first unit in the Australian Army to be flown to its battle stations, and so that was from Port

09:30 Moresby, and into Wau and Bulolo. The Wau airfield is unique in that it runs up hill, quite a drop in fact. So this was in May of 1942, there could have been no commercial air traffic in Australia for a few days, I think, because

10:00 some of our fellows had the experience of travelling in a commercial airliner, which was just simply taken off the Sydney - Melbourne route - well, there was a great shortage of aircraft. So they went to war lolling back in air line seats, and others who weren't so fortunate, and I was one of them, went in a US Air Force or Army Air Corps as it was then, C-47 Dakota

10:30 with metal seats and so forth. Yeah, and I think, probably for the great majority of the unit that was their first experience with air travel I'd say, not, you know, different world to today. So we were, and people were still learning how to organise things but basically it was pretty well organised, the flight, and we left the

11:00 camp in which we were staying in Port Moresby, drove to what was called the seven mile strip. We had all been allocated plane numbers and so forth, that was all well handled, each of us was given a chaff sack, which was full of supplies, and that was a stroke of genius on somebody's part,

11:30 rather than try and load stores completely separately we used the troops to carry their own stores and that worked very well indeed. And interestingly enough I just finished reading a book quite recently called Nanette, which was the experience of a US Air Force fighter pilot 'cause

12:00 our escorts were Airacobras, and that's the only time I have seen a documented account of things from their view point, which I found quite interesting. So when we got airborne the Airacobras gave us fighter protection and in we went into Wau, except that conditions, well one came to expect this in New Guinea and it's still the same today, conditions were always

12:30 very, very overcast. And suddenly we stood on one wing in my aircraft and went down almost to the deck and were literally hedge hopping over coconut palms, and I said to the US crew chief, "What's happened?" And he said, "We are over Lae," and Lae at that time was a major Japanese air base

13:00 and not the sort of place where you should send unarmed transports. So we flew twice to Wau Bulolo, so we returned on that day, it was a sort of anti climax and we deplaned, and I forget how long, we had at least a week in Port Moresby before we did it all again. And the next time we went in to stay, and did this famous up hill landing

13:30 on Wau and there we were.

**How do you keep a unit occupied in Port Moresby for a week when you were waiting?**

We just went back to the same area that we had been occupying before hand, so we... oh I forget now, that was, 'something nothing' as you would say in New Guinea, didn't have any great significance.

**Well what did you go into at Wau, what was already**

14:00 **set up at that stage?**

We went into civilian houses, cause Wau had been quite a thriving township as a gold mining town, so we just... and in civilian houses and then New Guinea Gold had also constructed large camps, as we would call them, of quite large buildings as barracks really for their employees, and we occupied

14:30 those and ordinary civilian homes.

**So some of the men had flown on a normal passenger flight and then gone into a house?**

Mmm.

**That's quite a strange army experience isn't it?**

Yes, that's true, yeah.

**Did they get you working straight away, what was the integration procedure there?**

I think one of acclimatisation as much as anything, though we did a fair bit of marching, keeping a weather eye open for aircraft, in fact, which was a new experience. Although while we were in Port

- 15:00 Moresby the daily air raids took place, but they didn't worry us, they were usually directed at the airfield, and I think from a Japanese viewpoint achieved absolutely nothing. Well when we first arrived at Port Moresby we were accommodated in married barracks, which was pre war army barracks area, and they had blown a couple of holes in buildings there.
- 15:30 And of course all, air fields were always targets, sounded good in the communiqués, which all countries issued I think, you know, 'Yesterday we raided the airfield at so and so.' Well at best, all they could hope to do was blow a few holes in the runway which were promptly repaired, so I don't think they achieved a great deal, but they were a daily occurrence, so you'd get fairly large formations of Japanese aircraft
- 16:00 come over and drop bombs and then turn around and fly home again.

**It must have been impressive at least the first few times?**

Yes it was, yeah. Cause they looked, I always, to me they looked like silver darts in fairly big formations in fact, they would probably be thirty aircraft or so in a formation, and sometimes they would get cunning and they would send one formation in from one direction and there would be another formation in from another

- 16:30 direction. And they would, that, if you were watching one formation you would, then by experience in another direction also. And initially Australian-manned Kitty Hawks P40s would act as air defence, and then when the Airacobras arrived they took over the role of air defence. And
- 17:00 sometimes they were shot down, and sometimes Japanese aircraft were shot down.

**Did you see any of those being shot down?**

Yeah.

**What's the mood on the ground when you are watching something like that from a distance, is there a...?**

Exultation when an aircraft is shot down, it's, you think that's a pretty good deal. In fact one was quite spectacular, I can remember, where

- 17:30 an Airacobra, which their military classification was a P-39, came up under one of the major Japanese formations, and we couldn't actually see precisely what was happening. And then this twin engine bomber fell out of formation with smoke and flame coming from one motor, and then suddenly the whole thing blew
- 18:00 and it just disappeared, and for quite some time there were fragments of aircraft falling out of the sky. We all cheered at that stage of course, because that was the, what the war was about, but. And then, staying with air for a moment,
- 18:30 we put our Q store [Quartermaster's Store], are you familiar with that, yes, in Bulolo and the Q staff were at Bulolo, and it was a town, it's part of the gold fields a few miles from Wau. And then later on after, I'm getting, I'm not sticking to a sequence here, after we raided Salamaua
- 19:00 which annoyed the Japanese more than some what, and they came in and they bombed both Wau and Bulolo. And our Q store was, they scored a direct hit on the Q store, killed the staff, the Q staff, and I think gave us all some respect for bombs and bombing.
- 19:30 And it wasn't until much later then that we were ever subject to air attack again, cause things just changed in the mean time.

**When you got to Wau, what sort of fortifications or preparations needed to be made?**

- 20:00 Well at our own pace, more or less, we dug slit trenches but I don't think anyone really believed it at that time until we had our first air raid in Wau and then there was a great enthusiasm displayed for digging slit trenches. But Wau itself was undefended, completely undefended, so we put in slit trenches and that was about it.

**You mentioned acclimatisation,**

- 20:30 **how did you find the change in climate?**

Oh, Wau in some ways was reasonably pleasant, it was hot-hot of course, but we didn't notice it, or I didn't notice it, nearly as much as I did later on when we got down into what we call the forward areas. And in the forward area, if you were in the mountains, cause cold was a

- 21:00 problem, which was surprising, other than that it was hot-humid but no great problem as far as acclimatisation was concerned.

**Now, did you find it a beautiful place, New Guinea?**

Superficially, yes it is, it's, the country side's quite beautiful, but from the view point of walking through it,

21:30 or marching through it, which we did, no, I didn't find it beautiful at all, it's a hell of a place.

**Well what sort of terrain were you doing those acclimatisation marches through?**

Just, well, whatever was there. Have you heard of kunai? Yes. Kunai grass is hell to move through because it grows to quite a height and tends to trap the heat, and so at ground level it was not very pleasant

22:00 walk... marching through kunai. Conversely, as I said, when you got into the mountains it could be quite cold. So, all in all New Guinea was not a very pleasant place.

**What provisions were made for those climactic differences?**

None. That I'm aware of at any rate. We acclimatised ourselves and that was it. There was not much you could, that could be done in fact. And air

22:30 conditioning, of course, was unheard of in those days. So you did have, for summer, if you were in the right place you would have an electric fan, but we didn't have electric fans.

**Now for how long did this acclimatisation period last?**

It varied within the unit, which we had been sent in there specifically to do a job,

23:00 so almost immediately reconnaissance parties went forward towards Salamaua and towards Lae to... well they already had an idea what they wanted to tackle. Meanwhile the remainder, and that was reconnaissance parties, and that was in May we started those. And then

23:30 troops moved forward in both areas and on the, I think, 27th, 28th June, the night 27th, 28th June, we actually raided Salamaua which was quite an occurrence because that was the first offensive action by allied forces against the Japanese in World War II.

24:00 **Could you run be through, perhaps, in quite a lot of detail, that operation, perhaps the pre operation period, what were they telling you about what was about to happen?**

Oh well yes, we'd established in the Salamaua area, we had established a forward post at a place called Mubo, which was a... M-U-B-O, a village some miles inland from

24:30 Salamaua. There was a small airstrip at Mubo and we actually dug some fortifications at... or slit trenches again at Mubo, and then once it was planned to raid Mubo itself and then down the other end, at the Lae end, there was a plantation inland from Lae

25:00 called Heaths Plantation. And it was decided that we should raid the two, separate parties of course, so we simply moved troops down into Mubo itself, and they began the necessary preparations for carrying out a raid. Preparations involved,

25:30 you know, checking of weapons, preparation of explosives, sand models were made of the Salamaua area for... so that troops could be briefed on, in detail as to what their objectives were and where they'd be going and so forth. And then I think from memory the actual approach took a couple of days and then

26:00 troops got in to position, and on the night of the raid... this involved a river crossing incidentally too, across the Francisco River which runs behind Salamaua.

**Was that a difficult crossing?**

No, it wasn't. It could have been but it wasn't. And weapons, well

26:30 we were unique in the army, at that stage, in that we had Tommy guns, they were called, they weren't on general issue, they were independent companies. And we also made a wide issue of sticky bombs, sticky bomb had been designed as an anti tank weapon, originally, it consisted of a container containing explosive

27:00 in an open up device, a fairly small circular, or round cylindrical device, and covered with a gluey substance. The idea being that you used to smash this onto the outside of a tank and it would stick because of the glue, and then

27:30 it would detonate and blow a hole in the tank. Well there were no tanks, but, so we carried sticky bombs and for good measure we put a slab of gun cotton in them, which is a high explosive, with the sticky bomb, and we either stuck them or threw them into the Japanese residences at Salamaua,

28:00 well, with the aim of causing as much damage as possible, obviously.

**You mentioned there were two parties, which party were you involved in?**

In Salamaua

**Okay. And what was the.... (phone ringing)**

tended to become rather messy, and so there was always the possibility that the liquid explosive became mixed up with the liquid stickiness, and

28:30 there was a certain lack of enthusiasm in handling sticky bombs for that reason. But with a, one lot with a slab of gun cotton attached to them, they went off with a hell of a bang and did a lot of damage.

**Well how many of these would you have each?**

I forget now, I can't... there were a certain number, but, you know, yeah.

**Were they quite heavy, I mean, were they hard to carry?**

No, no, no, not very heavy. A slab of gun cotton, from memory was, weighed about a pound and a half,

29:00 and the sticky bomb say about the same, but, so no, that was no problem.

**Okay. Now in the party for Salamaua, about how many people?**

I think probably about fifty were in the raiding party. I should have mentioned, and I haven't mentioned before, that we were greatly assisted by the

29:30 New Guinea Volunteer Rifles the NGVR [New Guinea Volunteer Rifles], which was in fact the equivalent of a pre war militia unit from New Guinea residents, and they joined us when we went into the area and were of very, very great assistance because they had local knowledge, some of them had World War I experience and so forth, so

30:00 they helped us greatly. So the attacking force, or the raiding force, for Salamaua was combined, both of 2/5th and NGVR so, and I think was about fifty.

**How did that work in a command sense, did it have their own commanders?**

Well we had to sort that out in fact and there was, they, you put your finger straight on to a problem cause it always was a problem when you had combined units. There was a,

30:30 a captain named Umfleebee, who was with the NGVR, and there was some discussion as to whether Umfleebee or one of our officers, named Winning, who was quite outstanding, should command and it was agreed that in the end that Winning would command. That's one of those things which have to be sorted out, you can't let it ride, you must make a decision.

**And**

31:00 **how was that negotiated, who made that decision?**

Well just between them themselves. I think, it may have been referred back to Port Moresby cause we did have radio communication to Moresby, so I just forget the detail of that, but there was some discussion.

**Were you, as the men, privy to that sort of negotiation?**

Not the actual negotiation, I think we were simply told the decision.

**Okay.**

31:30 **I was a corporal at that stage.**

**Oh okay. But you were aware there is some jostling going on?**

Mmm.

**It's interesting you mentioned a movie about parades before because the image we're given from pre operation periods is of resounding speeches from the commanding officers and nerves from the men. How was the night before, or the period before the raid, what actually happened?**

32:00 Well we got into position and just relaxed, tried to sleep. I forget the actual timing for this now, it was early hours of the morning when the raid actually took place.

**Are there last words given by an officer?**

No, not usually. Oh, he might say,

32:30 "Good luck," or something like that, but that's about all.

**Pretty stiff upper lip sort of stuff?**

Yeah, well there is not much point in it, you are not acting, you know, it's for real, so you're not interested in anything other than the other person, and you have... Yeah, the soldiers themselves might shake hands and say, "Good luck," but that's about it.

33:00 **And was it a prearranged time for the raiding party?**

Yes. Interesting enough we stuck pretty closely to the time. A Japanese sentry rather spoiled things because our troops were in position under and around the various buildings and so forth, and a Japanese soldier came out and urinated on one of our soldiers who took strong exception to that

33:30 so shot him, and that started the raid.

**Pretty much on cue?**

Yes, it was, as it happened.

**So you were very close to the Japanese positions?**

Oh yes, right in amongst them.

**How did you...?**

And the main targets were the buildings themselves and the Japanese occupants, there was a radio mast, which we didn't blow, something went wrong with the explosive charges but that was going

34:00 to be destroyed. There was an aircraft, Japanese aircraft float, I think from memory a float plane that... and they were the, oh and also any weapons that should, we should come across would have been targets.

**Now these specific objectives, were they allocated to each sec...?**

Yeah, it's,

34:30 there were a number of parties, and especially the objectives allocated to each party.

**What was your objective?**

I think just to open fire and fire into the huts, that was... so anti-personnel task if you like.

**Could you describe, well, the run of events during that raid?**

35:00 Well as I mentioned, it stuck fairly closely to time. There were loud explosions as the sticky bombs and the gun cotton went off, yells and cries from the Japanese who were trying to get out of the buildings, Tommy gun fire and Bren gun

35:30 fire. And also, mainly to keep their heads down, all went, we got a three inch mortar into position, now that didn't engage obviously the same troops that were, so this was firing to what we thought would be the Japanese rear area so that they wouldn't be able to rush up reinforcements and so forth. So loud bangs, mortar bombs going off, machine gun

36:00 fire and so forth, and that was the picture.

**And it's still dark at this point?**

Yeah.

**And for you yourself, was it sort of a systematic going from one hut to another?**

Mmm.

**Were there many people involved in that role?**

Yeah, the great majority probably. But, cause the other more specialised roles if you were carrying, you know, explosives, well you had a particular task to perform.

36:30 The anti-personnel role would be more of an impromptu role I suppose you could call it, targets of opportunity.

**Were there many Japanese in that area?**

Yes, Salamaua was a, Salamaua-Lae between them, were what we'd call a fairly important Japanese base. I'm not sure

37:00 of the exact number, I don't think anybody is, who were in Salamaua at that time, but quite a few, you know, a couple of hundred probably. And Lae was more of a major outpost than Salamaua.

**Of a raiding party of that nature, is there any suggestion of taking prisoners?**

No. It's just not practical, and not a consideration

37:30 really.

**Were any of the Japanese able to get to defensive positions and fight back?**

No, not that I can remember, no.

**About how long would all of this have taken?**

Got into hours eventually. Dawn

38:00 was certainly breaking as the raiding party withdrew.

**Did you suffer any casualties?**

A couple slightly wounded, that was all, so we were very fortunate indeed.

**How were they wounded?**

Not sure. Some Japanese had fired back, so probably a rifle bullet.

38:30 **Anything serious?**

No, no we were very fortunate.

**How were they dealt with, did you have stretchers or anything like that?**

Didn't need it, again we were fortunate.

**They could walk?**

Mmm.

**Okay.**

## Tape 3

00:32 we were living in quite good living conditions for a little while, while we were there.

**So you were saying off tape that in Wau you actually had radios...**

Oh yes.

**during, what wasn't called then the Battle of the Coral Sea, but...?**

I don't know, well it was just a battle, we knew there was a battle going on, but it was only later that it was called the Battle of Coral Sea.

**Did you get information from that radio about what was going on?**

01:00 Yes. Talking about Coral Sea now, after our own raid, and we weren't very amused about this, of course once it hit the news it was the news of the day, and as I mentioned it was the first offensive action against the Japanese so radio news was full of the raid on

01:30 Salamaua. And then the speculation began with radio commentators saying, "It is believed that the raiding parties operated from the inland towns of Wau," and so forth. And of course the, well the Japanese they'd have had to be pretty dumb not to work it out, but this just confirmed to them that... so we had a visit by Japanese bombers the next morning, they bombed Wau and us,

02:00 well, that was it, nothing... I'm sorry, your question was, which prompted that?

**It was about the radio coverage, but I was also wondering how the reportage compared to the actual experience of that raid. How did they report it, accurately?**

Oh yes, cause there were

02:30 a couple of reporters in the area, Damien Parer, who later became quite famous, came into us at a pretty early stage and another reporter named Oz McWhite. I can't remember whether they actually reported the raid on Salamaua, Damien Parer did I think. And then, of course, we sent back reports ourselves, I mentioned we were in radio contact with Port Moresby, so an official report of the raid

03:00 and casualties and so forth were sent back by us to Port Moresby, to New Guinea Force Headquarters.

**When would that happen, pretty much on the spot or when you got back?**

Yeah, yeah, pretty soon afterwards.

**You gave me a pretty vivid description of that raid. I was wondering, during the raid, and you said it goes on for several hours, how command plays out, are they directing the whole affair?**

Yeah, although you stick pretty closely

03:30 to, if you can, to the original plan, and allocated tasks and so forth, and hope that nothing much will intervene with the concept, and we were pretty fortunate there. Conversely the raid at Heath Plantation, which I mentioned outside Lae, took place the night after the raid at Salamaua, and in Heath Plantation it was very unfortunate, Major Keen was the first casualty,

04:00 he was killed in the initial assault on the Japanese position, and that created a certain degree of confusion amongst the raiding party as to who was in command and, you know, you don't go into your first action expecting your boss to be killed, but. So that did create a certain amount of confusion and

04:30 that was then a withdrawal, not an evacuation, that was a... from the buildings at Heath Plantation.

**When you heard news that Keen had been killed, how does that affect unit morale?**

Oh, there was a noticeable dip in morale I think, cause he was a good commander and he was a pretty popular commander and, you know, bit,

05:00 actually a degree of sadness. And then I mentioned also that the Q store was, in Bulolo was destroyed a couple of days after that in the Japanese air raids, and again we lost a few people in the Q store, and I think the sort of realities of war hit home pretty suddenly when those things happened.

**Did you find that your role, or the raid itself, brought things home about the nature of war?**

05:30 Yeah but not in any other sense because we were all quite cock-a-hoop because it had been a very successful operation. We knew that.

**How was that expressed after a successful operation? What's the mood like among the men?**

Well, again to, not to a great degree, but I would say exultation again, that you've done something, you've done it well and everybody knows it.

06:00 It was a success.

**How did you feel about your participation in it?**

Same, as everybody else, it was a successful raid.

**I suppose I am imagining that before-hand there might be a degree of doubt about whether all this training is going to pay off and whether you're gonna come to the task?**

Oh yes, yes, always, yeah, as to whether... and how you will perform and so forth, yeah, they are the doubts that beset everybody I think.

06:30 So we were very fortunate really that our first operation was quite successful.

**How does that change the nature of all morale or unity after you come out of a successful operation?**

Well I think you know that you can do what's required of you and that possibly you won't have the same doubts again. That's the way it affects you.

**And**

07:00 **heading back to Wau, was that immediate after the raid?**

Well within reason, yes. Not right back to Wau, to Mubo initially. And there were Japanese aircraft obviously searching for the raiders at that stage, so they were patrolling up and down the, where they knew there were tracks I think, in the hope of catching us

07:30 unawares, but broadly the withdrawal was only as far as Mubo.

**Was that in case of Japanese reprisals?**

Oh no, cause we took on Mubo as a major forward base at that stage, and so that was the logical place to go. You know, there was no suggestion that we should withdraw from the complete area or anything at that time.

08:00 **You mentioned before that this period was basically a lot of patrols and reconnaissance. What would be involved in the reconnaissance patrols, just technically, how many people would go on a patrol and what would you be looking for?**

Small party for a reconnaissance patrol, could be as little as three or four men, as few as three or four men. Oh, getting to know the country as much as anything else,

08:30 and of course constantly on the look out for Japanese patrols. But we were reasonably confident that... I think we could say we were on top and so we didn't really expect to meet Japanese patrols, we could have. And of course we were proven wrong because not long after the raid on Salamaua,



- 09:00 and we had become very casual probably at that stage, we had in Mubo, there were two or three distinct areas. There was an area called Vickers Ridge on one side of the Mubo Valley, and on the other side there was a hill called Garrison Hill, and then a higher,
- 09:30 a high feature above that called Observation Hill, and then going back in the other direction there was a hill called Mat-Mat, which is a New Guinea term for cemetery, and there had been a cemetery there on Mat-Mat. So again we developed defences on Garrison Hill
- 10:00 and Observation Hill and Vickers Ridge, not to any great degree, there were slit trenches and that was about it.

**On these patrols would the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles come along as well?**

Yes.

**You always integrated?**

Yeah. Although I think the knowledge was there that basically they were with, they were to be withdrawn from the area, cause the Japanese had landed in the area in March of 1942 so the NGVR had

- 10:30 been in action for a longer period than us really.

**Does that mean they came to your unit with more knowledge or...?**

Oh yes well they did, obviously, they knew the country and we didn't, and they knew the natives, which we didn't. We'd learned because we had to but oh, the NGVR were priceless in terms of their contribution.

- 11:00 **Were there problems with communication with them?**

No. They were all Australian, no so there weren't any problems. The, and after going back to the other end of operations going down to the raid on Heath Plantation and again after Major Keen was killed, and

- 11:30 there were a couple wounded there too, you know, they withdrew from the area. We withdrew from Salamaua, and they withdrew from Heath Plantation and we went back to, in the case of the Salamaua end, as I mentioned, we went back to Mubo and they withdrew to various camps that they had established previously in the area and then settled down to patrolling,
- 12:00 patrolling, patrolling. Oh, and I was going to mention, and side tracked myself, we didn't expect Japanese patrols but we should have, because in Mubo we had a living area down by the river, the Bitoi River, and I suppose for convenience as much as anything else, and we,
- 12:30 and you learn by experience that convenience is no way to fight a war, and we put a mess area in down there because it was convenient for people to eat together, particularly at night, and relax to some degree and see each other. And one night in July there was a long sustained burst of Vickers fire which
- 13:00 shook everybody to some degree, and it was, although it turned out to be successful, but there was a large Japanese patrol simply marching up the track from the direction of Salamaua. And one of our people, on his way down to have some dinner, saw them, and we did have Vickers guns on and he opened fire with a Vickers gun and of course that alerted everybody, including the Japanese, who
- 13:30 sustained some casualties, and they turned around and went back very hastily in the direction of Salamaua. So we learned again by experience, and I suppose that is one of the messages that you get out of all of this, that you are constantly learning in war as you are in so many other things. So we learned not to simply, sort of, pack up everything at meal time but leave sentries around and so forth.

**And you learned that there were Japanese patrols as well?**

- 14:00 Yes, that's right, that they were patrolling.

**On these reconnaissance patrols, were they a nerve wracking experience?**

Oh, you had to be on the ball, yeah, but they... depended really on the degree of resistance you expected I suppose, so yeah, you were always cautious on patrol, you had to be.

- 14:30 **For how long would those patrols last?**

Well they could last, I suppose, quite some period of time, but... and you could never afford to relax completely for the reason I have just mentioned, and also, there was also the possibility always that the Japanese would patrol also, and if they spotted us they would open fire on us.

- 15:00 **When you say for some time do you mean several days?**

Yeah, in extreme cases, yes. But a patrol for more than a short period was usually because you were going to look for something specific rather than just patrolling, though I don't want to give the impression that you ever patrolled just for the sake of patrolling, you didn't. But obviously if you were gone for a long

15:30 period of time you'd... it wouldn't be the same degree of tenseness and expectation that there was if you went on a short patrol to a specific objective for some reason.

**Did you have many other cases where you actively engaged the enemy on those patrols?**

Yes. We withdrew from Mubo on the 31st

16:00 August 1942, this, that was after the Japanese advanced towards us that I mentioned. It became a confused period, we, Captain Winning took a fairly large patrol forward, a

16:30 fighting patrol as we'd call it, I think mainly, from memory, at that stage as a show of strength to the local natives, and also of course to take on any Japanese if they happened to encounter them but, so that took a fair few people out of the small garrison at Mubo. And then he hadn't been gone very long and we started getting reports in from the

17:00 forward scouts, we had a scout element overlooking Salamaua the whole time from a tree and we started getting stories that there was a lot of Japanese activity in Salamaua. I'm just trying to remember the sequence of events, and... this was sixty years ago remember.

17:30 Yeah, so we sent forward another party and Lieutenant Minchin to link up with Winning and reinforce him which then it put us in a position where we had more troops forward of Mubo than we had in Mubo. I was back in Mubo, incidentally, at this stage. And then throughout the day

18:00 and we knew by our own experience there was, we could see a lot of movement amongst the trees on the Garrison Hill and Observation Hill, which were opposite Mat-Mat. And we knew by experience that in very steep country we'd tend to pull ourselves up by trees, and that's what we were seeing was Japanese doing the same thing, although we couldn't, none of us ever saw the actual Japanese, but

18:30 we saw a lot of movement amongst the trees. And so we were in the position then of having two large parties forward and not very many left behind in Mubo, and so we had a conference and decided that we should get out of Mubo cause we reckoned that it was a pretty safe bet that the Japanese were going to try and encircle us and come in on Mubo. So we moved out

19:00 at night and linked up with each other. There was an area called the Saddle, I was then in charge of the party on Mat-Mat Hill and we had a detachment on Vickers Ridge and we agreed to link up with each other

19:30 so we started to withdraw.

**Did you have communication with the other parties?**

No. This was one of the great weaknesses as far as we were concerned, a complete lack of communication once we started to move, and however we linked up at the Saddle, the two parties. There was some discussion, the party coming Vickers Ridge,

20:00 and I suppose... well, I will never know the answer to this, we could see a light coming through the jungle towards us and some people started saying, "A bit bloody silly carrying a light around at night." And somebody said, "You try and find your way without a light." And they were both correct of course, both view points. So the Vickers Ridge party linked up with us and we

20:30 weren't very well co-ordinated at that stage. I went through what had been the, sort of, base area by the river, and which was completely deserted which meant that our party there had gone, and so I walked in through the base area and was walking out again, and there was a hell of

21:00 a bang, and we found, or I found later, or I found then that the place had been wired for demolition. I didn't know about it. So then we, well fortunately we could get down below the banks of the river, which gave us cover, and we had to withdraw across a, well it was a vine, a kunda vine

21:30 bridge. And we, I went across that to find myself walking straight into the muzzle of a Bren gun, and the fellow on the other end of the Bren gun hadn't been told that there was anybody still to withdraw so, as I say, we were a bit uncoordinated at that stage, however we didn't shoot any of our own party. And then we set out, and we

22:00 decided we didn't have much choice at that stage but to withdraw to a place called Skin Diwai, literally in Pidgin English that means the bark of a tree, diwai is a tree and the skin is bark of course, so Skin Diwai, and that became quite a well known place name. So we simply at night started to withdraw to Skin Diwai and left Mubo. And we were

22:30 quite correct in our surmise because we left some people to observe what was going on, and the Japanese moved into Mubo the next day, in strength, we estimated five to eight hundred moved into Mubo, so we were very glad that we bailed out when we did.

**Did you have much to move from Mubo?**

No. You mean take with us? No, just us, and our weapon, and that was it.

23:00 Then from Skindiwai we kept on moving back cause there were, we were, we had no communications with anybody at that stage, we went back to one of the staging camps on the main track forward to Salamaua, a place called Ballums, and Ballaphone still had telephonic communication with Wau. And

23:30 the whole valley was being burnt at that stage, it was decided that there was a concerted Japanese move forward from their view point into our rear areas, so orders were issued. This became very controversial whether we should have burnt the towns but the whole valley was put to the torch and

24:00 we didn't know what the hell was going on, nobody knew what the hell was going on, and it was all very confusing.

**Slightly terrifying as well I imagine?**

Yeah, well not terrifying but very disconcerting because, as I say, the lack of knowledge was the main thing. And when we got to the telephone they were at least able to tell us that, what they were doing and that was setting fire to the houses and so forth, but

24:30 yeah, but it was rather a worrying period. And then we kept on going from there, withdrawing back to what we knew or were pretty certain would be a safe area to various camps which had been established by the old New Guinea hands, and there we stopped. And that was the, sort of, end of phase one of the operations in the

25:00 Salamaua end, and the Lae people also withdrew a certain distance, yeah.

**How was that different to the next phase of operations?**

Well it wasn't really except that it was a distinct end to what we had been doing, where we had been on top, we had been raiding, we had been patrolling, we had been doing things as we wanted to do them and now the Japanese had moved forward and taken over what had been

25:30 our main forward areas and so forth, so it was a distinct change as far as we were concerned.

**Did you have any further raiding party experience?**

Oh yes. Not long afterwards in fact, this was during, this was at the end of August I just mentioned. And at the end of September we went in and staged a raid on Mubo itself

26:00 which involved two main parties, one went on to Vickers Ridge and the other went down Mat-Mat from the rear, Mat-Mat Hill from the rear. That was one experiment we tried, which wasn't terribly popular. In order to maintain contact, and it really is very difficult in thick jungle

26:30 at night because it's as dark as dark can be and maintaining contact, even with the person in front of you was difficult. So somebody had the bright idea, and we all smoked in those days, of lighting a cigarette, so we kept contact with the cigarette in front of us, and also as far as possible the cigarette behind us, and it worked. Not recommended really, I don't think, because if we could see the cigarettes it was a safe bet the Japanese could too,

27:00 except that they were further away than we were, but it worked and we successfully... yeah. So we went in as a raiding party and then again, this was at night in the early hours of the morning, and again there was a hell of a bang, and whatever else it was it meant that surprise was gone at least, whether it was us or the Japanese. Turned out later on that one

27:30 of our officers, who was leading the way, had trod on a land mine and we evacuated him, he died from his wounds. Then there was a couple of exchanges with machine guns and then we all, sort of, well to use a term which I didn't become familiar until Korea, we used to term it 'bugged out.' And we bugged out

28:00 and carried Lieutenant Drysdale back, but he died. And Bill O'Neil, who only died recently in Western Australia, a Japanese party came rushing down the track from their area, and he took them on with a Tommy gun and got a DCM, a Distinguished Conduct Medal for that, and then we bugged out. But,

28:30 which was something you always had to keep in mind with raids, that unlike an attack where you, the aim is usually to capture an objective, we didn't go in with the idea of capturing anything. With raids you go in with the idea of inflicting as much damage as possible and then you get out. Quick. But, so that was the first raid on Mubo.

**Just to be clear does that mean you bugged out because the element of surprise had gone**

29:00 **and you...?**

Yes, and we, and the other disadvantage with raiding parties is that you know, always, that you are going to be outnumbered once you make contact, with the enemy.

**Well just in the way a successful raid would affect morale, how did the having to bug out?**

Oh, I don't think it affected us greatly, you accept this, you know that that's part of the operations you are conducting will almost inevitably all go that way.

29:30 So we reckon the honours were about even on that particular occasion. And interesting experience, I... now how did I get into this position? I don't know, but I ended up on Vickers Ridge, was on the other side of the river, bit of a

30:00 looking across at Garrison Hill, and a very large party of Japanese came on to Garrison Hill and built what was obviously a funeral pyre, and they proceeded to burn some of their dead, which meant that we had inflicted some casualties, but we didn't know how many. And then we got out completely.

**Was it, or how important was it to number**

30:30 **the casualties you had inflicted on them?**

Well I suppose by simple rule of thumb it meant we won or lost and, as I say, honours were probably about even on that occasion I think.

**In that withdrawal on that particular raid, do you, is it a fighting withdrawal, do you leave people to cover?**

No, because I think we took the view point then that the Japanese had the same difficulty

31:00 of moving at night, as we did, and it wasn't a popular past time with either party, and so, for either side.

**So you don't think they perused on that occasion?**

No.

**Okay.**

Well almost quite certain of it.

**Were there altogether many raids in that twelve month period?**

Everything went quiet for a period after the raid on, that raid on Mubo.

31:30 We still did a lot of patrolling, there was an occasional small action where shots were exchanged but nothing more than that, and it wasn't until January of 1943 that we undertook another, this time a major raid, I would say it was the biggest raid of all. We combined with the 2/7th Company, independent company which had come into the area in October as, you know, sort of, fresh blood.

32:00 And we combined with them and once again we raided Mubo in January after an absolutely exhausting three day approach march, I think, you know, we were all buggered, there was no other way to describe it. And of course we weren't terribly fit at that stage either, we had been in the area now for a fair while, rations had always been light on

32:30 for us. And this is going back to the NGVR period before we actually went in to the area, they did a miscalculation - I'm not blaming them for this - and told New Guinea Force that they reckoned there were sufficient rations in the area to sustain a force of several hundred for six months. But a hundred and seventy of us ate them out in six weeks, we were, from then on rations were always a problem for,

33:00 food was always a problem. But...

**Would you procure food from local gardens or locals?**

Yes if we could, but there weren't many local gardens. We used to get occasional sugar cane patch, which was always very welcome, green papayas which we would cook and use as marrows, and that was about all that was ever available. And there weren't

33:30 very many native gardens, so it was always a problem.

**You were just describing your condition before that raid, the major raid?**

Oh yes, yes, we were physically exhausted and then we split up into various groups. We, it involved some very

34:00 sustained climbing up some very steep features, and then we rendezvoused at a particular area, then we split up and I was with a party that went to Observation Hill. Another party went back to Vickers Ridge to come in on the rear of Vickers Ridge and another party went on to Mat-Mat. Combined raiding strength would have been, oh, I don't know, probably a couple of hundred I suppose, at this stage, with ourselves and the 7th combined.

34:30 And, I know the party I was with, we were suppose to attack down Observation Hill, and we got into position in the morning and once again the signal for the raid, well for the attack to start, was a sustained burst from a Vickers gun. And

35:00 we had all recovered some what, you know, we were in good condition, we'd had a nights sleep, and while we were sitting down waiting for the signal to go in, one of my fellows created something of a

sensation, he decided to sort out his basic pouches, they were the, for

- 35:30 you, they were attached to straps and worn on your chest. And he reached into one of his basic pouches and he removed a grenade which was, the safety pin was dangling by one side only, it was just sitting there and, you know, it could have... and he wasn't the most popular character, everyone got out of his immediate vicinity. But apart from that, if there had been an explosion at that stage it would have ruined the whole raid,
- 36:00 you know, the various parties. So with the necessary degree of care and so forth, he reinserted the safety pin and everybody in the immediate vicinity breathed a great sigh of relief, and then we just simply sat down and waited again. Then we were due to have an air strike that morning in support and sure enough a couple of Beaufighters came in,
- 36:30 to the consternation of the Japanese just below us, but the Beaufighters didn't achieve very much, again lack of co-ordination and communication. And they flew off again and then we got our burst from the Vickers gun and away we went, we attacked straight down the hill, there was, Japanese were there, I don't know how many we killed
- 37:00 but a certain number, and they also killed some of our people on the way down the hill side. And we achieved success in that we cleared Observation Hill, and of course we had no way of telling anybody that we had cleared Observation Hill, and so we just sat and waited for something
- 37:30 to happen, which was all very frustrating. And then as the day wore on we started getting casualties from Japanese fire and other, from other positions which they were, either had captured or were in possession of. We captured, on Observation Hill, a big
- 38:00 twin point-five machine gun, and it was quite a big weapon, sort of, two machine guns and it was mounted on a crucifix mounting, and had bucket seats attached to it and so forth. So I clambered on to this and then experimented and found, almost by accident, that really it was a bit like a large
- 38:30 Bren gun in the way it operated, it had magazines cramped in from the top. And I found, again by experimentation, that if I put my feet on the pedals and pressed that that operated the gun. So I put a certain amount of fire into Mat-Mat Hill, it didn't keep going because, again, we had no way of letting our fellows know that it was us firing and not the Japanese.
- 39:00 So we sat there throughout the afternoon, taking casualties throughout the afternoon, and then, because there was nothing else we could do, again we withdrew that night, getting a bit fed up with night movement at this stage. And worked our way back to one of the, well they weren't camps as such, a staging area we'd used on the
- 39:30 way in, and then all linked up together. And sporadic fighting went on for two or three days around there, this was, I wasn't directly involved in anything after that because we just simply kept on going. And...

**We're just at the end of this tape now.**

## Tape 4

- 00:30 **I want to back track a little. A few questions earlier on, I wanted to ask and clear up a little bit more the business of your technical desertion of the PMF and whether that had any repercussions later on in terms of paper work?**
- No, except the fact that I was called Mac, I have been called Mac now for more than sixty years. No it was and of course the reason I did that is because technically you were a deserter and so
- 01:00 military police would go out. And when I was at Cape Banks which was the entrance to Botany Bay, it was the coast artillery there, there was a constant stream of people coming back under military police escort who had gone over the hill, so I learned the error of doing it that way and that's why I changed my name. Yeah.
- 01:30 If you bear with me for a moment, I make quite a little story of this. Because in New Guinea, at a later stage, the pay sergeant said to me one day, "I've got a most mysterious debit that's come through for you, and I'm sorry but I've got to take it out of your pay book." And I can quote the exact amount to this day, it was for thirteen pounds fourteen and three-pence, see, which in those days was quite a lot of money in fact. He said, "What's it for?" And I said, "Well I don't know for sure but I have got a pretty fair idea," and of
- 02:00 course this was the permanent forces catching up with my clothing and accessories and so forth that were still on charge to me. So I gave up the debit, and then later on I was talking to somebody, after I was commissioned in fact, and he said, "Why don't you get your money back?" I said, "Well how can I?" And he said, "Take your gear back." And I said, "Okay." So I was, next time I was

- 02:30 down on leave, I caught a ferry and went over to Manly and then went up to North Head Barracks with a kit bag containing my gear and handed it in, and got a credit note. And while I was there, as I said, I'm sorry this is quite a story, there was a dental post and a female head bobbed out of this and a voice said, "Are you going back down to Manly?" And I said, "Yes" She said, "Can I share your taxi?" And I said, "Sure."
- 03:00 And this was my future wife, who was a nurse in the dental post at that stage as a, what we call an AAMWS [Australian Army Medical Women's Service], and so we met and I eventually married her, in Japan. And then again I was telling this, oh, and then the tragedy was that, it wasn't a tragedy but a mishap, but after a couple of days in Borneo I lost my wallet, and
- 03:30 in the wallet was the receipt for my clothing and accessories. So again I was telling this to somebody well after the war by now, and I must have always had good, well-meaning friends because whoever it was said, "Why don't you have a crack at getting your money back?" And I said, "Oh, I'm not in the race, I haven't got a receipt." They said, "Try it." So I duly tried it and of course as I thought back it came and said, 'No, without some documentary proof,
- 04:00 no go.' So I told this story, probably the same fellow, and he said "No, don't accept that, you know what is true and what isn't, put it in again." So I put it in again and again it got knocked back, and he said, "Have another crack." So I had another try, and this time, and this is the first time I came to respect Brigadiers see, it went up to the Brigadier in charge of administration on Headquarters Eastern Command in Sydney, and back it came with his note on
- 04:30 the bottom which said, "I refuse to believe that if a thorough - underlined - search is carried out, that this docket will not be found." Well whether his words stimulated somebody into finding it or saying they found it, I don't know, but it was duly found and I got my money back, thirteen pounds fourteen and three-pence, with out any interest I might say.

**But perhaps you could consider the interest came from the female persuasion?**

- 05:00 Yes, right, yes.

**Just, now that you have mentioned it, did your future wife confess later on that she did need a lift or was it just a ruse to get a...?**

I don't know, I don't think we ever actually discussed that. No, it was pretty genuine cause North Head, I don't know whether you know Sydney, North Head is, even now, is fairly remote, and cabs were always at a premium.

**Oh well then it was Kismet. May I ask a little more about your training down at Wilsons**

- 05:30 **Prom [Promontory], particularly because, I think it would be fair to say nothing like this had ever happened in terms of Australian- military history.**

Yes, I think that's probably true.

**I read that a colonel came out from England to get the whole lot going. Was it military mission 104?**

No. I don't think so, although I've heard of military mission 104, it could have been. I heard of 204, I think. Yeah, I don't know whether it had a number or not, but it could well have

- 06:00 been, yeah.

**Well it's spurious, or it's specious anyway to pursue, but I just wanted to know whether that meant that by volunteering for that, which would make you a twice volunteer I suppose...**

Yes, that's right.

**whether that, sort of, propelled you in the eyes of the upper echelon? You wouldn't have known then, but...?**

No. Oh I doubt it very much, doubt it.

**Was there a sense amongst the volunteers for the Independents that you were,**

- 06:30 **I don't want to use the word special, but that you were, you know, slightly more committed?**

Oh yes, yeah and we, rightly or wrongly from the outset, we looked upon ourselves as being an elite force, and were as conceited as only nineteen year olds can be, when they consider themselves to be elite, so yeah.

**Which would rival the most conceited people in the world at the time I'm sure?**

That's right, that's for sure.

**So how did that play itself out then?**

Well it was peculiar in many ways because the,

- 07:00 the Australian Army in World War II was a peculiar organisation in many ways. As I've mentioned at one stage there were three distinct armies, and there are a lot of internal jealousies, and so forth, not often referred to I think. So people who had served in the Middle East always looked down on people who hadn't served in the Middle East, quite unfairly I always thought, because (a) I had joined the AIF in time to
- 07:30 service, for service in the Middle East but the Japanese wrecked all of that, and also, cause people failed to consider age and so forth. I can remember in Japan when we got on to this subject, and the second in command of 65 Battalion said to a group of young officers, "Where were you in September 1939?" And a good friend of mine said, "I was at school sir,"
- 08:00 which took the wind out of the 2IC's [Second in Command] sails. So, you know, but in our experience, or in my experience, and I referred to this, I did an article for the Australian Army journal not terribly long ago and referred to the fact that independent companies were never terribly popular with
- 08:30 the remainder of the army, particularly once we... and we didn't originate the name, in fact we were embarrassed when people started calling us commandos, but that came from within the army. And so we were all gathered together then and became commando squadrons, you know, not just, we just didn't just bite the bullet we swallowed it, and I think we were all very conscience of this. That, and people
- 09:00 used to call us 'walkie talkies,' you know, you would walk into an action and then walk out and talk about it and so forth, which was quite unfair. So generally our relations and the general picture I think from infantry battalions was that if you move on foot you should be infantry, and raiding of course was a concept that was foreign to an infantry battalion.
- 09:30 And incidentally I have served in infantry battalions since then, so I have the greatest admiration for infantry, don't misunderstand me, they fight wars the hard way, there is no doubt about it. But they always, I thought, very unfair to us and just never gave due recognition, when I say 'they' I'm talking about battalion commanders and so forth, who later on wrote books and they never seemed to be able to realise that there is a big difference between fighting
- 10:00 at the end of a tidy, well-arranged line of communication with supplies and so forth guaranteed, and fighting where you, to some degree, always at least partially behind enemy lines, and you have got no guaranteed lines of communication at all, and this gives you a different concept on how to fight the war.

**Yes, it did seem in the first two years that there was this, kind of, perverse**

- 10:30 **snobbery going on, and as you mentioned the Japanese really put the cat among the pigeons, but there was a lot of hangover as well.**

Yes there was.

**You mentioned how rushed your training was, and evidently the fellows that ended up in Ambon or Timor experienced similar problems.**

Yes, the whole army did, yeah.

**Did you see deliberate, not so much errors, but did you see deliberate short cuts being made while you were training at Wilsons Prom?**

Yeah, because we didn't get enough training on, in

- 11:00 various things, and we were supposed to be an elite force remember, but we didn't. And I know for a fact that there were one or two fellows in my unit who fired their first shot in anger in New Guinea, had never had a range practice. How they slipped through the system is still difficult to imagine, but they did.

**What about the fellows, for example, that didn't pass the Mount Oberon test. Did you think that they would have been fine if they had had slightly better training and that...?**

No, I think the test was a good test

- 11:30 in fact, it sorted out what it meant to sort out. That was, have you got the guts and determination to go ahead and do so something or you haven't, and that was purely what the test was for. Okay there might have been errors but, as I say, things were pretty rushed and so you had to adopt perhaps harsh methods.

**Do you, in retrospect, was a lot of it rhetoric in terms of this mental building up of your unit as an Independent?**

Yes, to some

- 12:00 degree, particularly the fact that they were referred to in sort of baited breath by other units and so forth, you know, we were hush-hush and so on, yeah.

**And for example the Mount Oberon... I think a lot of mountain climbers give that a go but it's, I don't know what rating it has, but what sort of experience was that climbing up that?**

Well it was just a hard, rugged climb. I've done, while I was training with the

12:30 Royal Marines later on, I actually did cliff climbing and mountain climbing with them, so Oberon, yeah, it was a hard climb, but that was all. But, you know, in mountaineering circles there are degrees of difficulty, as you probably know, well, it wouldn't rate very highly as a degree of difficulty.

**So it was rushed but it's, you know, it was a fairly effective operation by the, well as history would indicate?**

Yeah, yeah.

**Do you think that, sort of, destiny found the**

13:00 **right type of men for that unit anyway?**

Yeah, broadly, yes.

**What was it that they had, that characterised the suitability for the work?**

Initiative, I think. I think we expected a higher degree of initiative than you'd get in ordinary units. Imagination which, I suppose, to some degree goes with initiative. Physical fitness,

13:30 well of course I've mentioned that. Self discipline to a very high degree.

**And would it be fair to say that you received much less of the kind of square bashing than infantry troops endured when they were in training and...?**

Yes, yeah.

14:00 Although interestingly enough, after I had left them, 2/5th went to 7th Division and became part of the 2/7th Commando Regiment, and one of the sub units in that regiment took out the best drill platoon, I think it was, in the whole of the 7th Division. So, I don't know whether you can draw anything from that.

**No, I'm being a bit speculative. I'm just wondering whether, if they're giving you this**

14:30 **particular kind of training that is unlike the sort of drill that they've been taking the others through, I'm wondering whether you had a different relationship with your officers at the time?**

No, no, I don't think so, no.

**No, I'm fishing.**

And I'm not entirely opposed to drill in any case, I think it has its purpose. And I used often quote, when I did my parachute course, I thought that was a good example of drill sensibly applied because

15:00 a hell of a lot of basic training, basic parachute training has to do with drill, and I doubt whether you would get people out of the aircraft unless you had a basic drill.

**Or push them.**

Yeah, or push them, yeah.

**Just, where did you do your paratrooping?**

At Williamstown in, Williamtown rather, in New South Wales.

**Oh okay, which stage of your career was that?**

Oh that was long after the... I didn't do my parachute course until after the war.

**Okay, alright, I'll save that till later then.**

When I formed the

15:30 1st Commando Company in Sydney

**I also wanted to ask about being flown from Port Moresby to Wau. Did you land under fire?**

No.

**And I also wanted to ask a little bit about the physical look of the place, given that it had been a gold mining area?**

The Bulolo River, today's environmentalists would be absolutely horrified because

16:00 these enormous dredges had just gone right up and down the length and breadth of the river and so it was a churned up mass of gravel and stones and so forth. The towns themselves, of course, were quite nice little towns but...



**Well what was there in terms of, sort of civilisation and edifice and...?**

Well, you tended to have these towns that grew up, sponsored by New Guinea Gold Fields, that was the name of the company that ran the whole thing. And,

16:30 what's this famous place in Papua New Guinea since World War II, the Orub-something, which is held up as a horrible object lesson now-a-days because, and the natives... sorry that's an old term which one doesn't use any more.

**But one uses it probably in regards to 1942.**

Yeah, that's right. ...were horrified by the whole thing. But

17:00 yeah, but so, and I would say there was probably not a great degree of contact at a human level between the white predominately Australian employees and the natives, to use that term again, and it's the only suitable term I can use at this stage.

17:30 It worked, but I can remember one of the old New Guinea hands, that's a white one, hitting a New Guinea native with his rifle because the fellow didn't get off the track quickly enough to suit the... and he said, "Get off the track you black bastard,"

18:00 bang. And that undoubtedly went on to some degree, not a, not very much I don't think because basically, well it couldn't have, because basically the New Guinea natives, with no particular reason to do so, sided loyally with the Australians.

**In some ways, I guess, it was just luck that they decided to do that.**

Yes. And there were a few instances where they didn't.

18:30 In one of our raids on Mubo, for example, we were, heard on probably good authority that the Japanese were guided in by a native that sided with them.

**Yeah well in some ways they could have seen the Japanese as a...**

Yeah a saviour, the greater Asia co-prosperity scheme.

**It worked in some places I guess.**

Yeah.

**In respect of that then, did... oh no, I had another question. But**

19:00 **in respect of the situation with the natives then, this is pretty brand new to a bunch of Australians coming to maybe their first foreign country. Did you, did it occur to you that learning some of the lingo would be a good idea?**

Oh yes we did, and we all learned to speak Pidgin which, believe it or not, is a language, but yeah, most of us learned to speak Pidgin pretty well.

**And were you able to put that to good use?**

Oh, I think so, yes. As a general from of communication

19:30 yes.

**I don't suppose you could share some of that with us on the camera?**

Oh I think I have forgotten most of my Pidgin now. It's unfortunately, and it is unfortunate, it's usually quoted in a humorous vein now because... but it wasn't, it was a very real language.

**Did you have a bit of a joke with it at the time?**

No, I don't think so. Cause these people were still there, that's the old New Guinea hands, by that I mean the white New Guinea hands, and the natives

20:00 themselves. So no, it was a matter of necessity, we, it was in our interest to learn to speak Pidgin.

**I'm going to jump around a bit because Yento covered so much of it before. A question about the gold mining, gold uses cyanide in the water, and I wondered if that ever affected you?**

No I, and I don't know to what extent to was used in gold mining in those days, so there was... I don't remember ever hearing of it in fact

**Did you notice**

20:30 **fellows getting sick fairly soon after arriving?**

No. Oh we all had malaria, and that just became sort of an occupational hazard, but no. And health went down hill fairly quickly in fact, right throughout the unit, because of inadequate rations, malaria, and some of the other mosquito

21:00 born diseases. Yeah.

**What medical supplies did they send with you then?**

Well we did have, we had doctors of course, we had at least one RMO, regimental medical officer with the unit, and he would have had a supply of anaesthetics and so forth,

21:30 but generally speaking it was pretty limited.

**Yeah because I was imagining from time to time you would all be, you know, split up and separated for...**

That's right.

**days at a time. So did you encounter situations where someone got sick and you were at least a day or two's march away or walk from any medical supply or a doctor?**

No. can't remember any but we were, obviously, very, very fortunate in that didn't happen. It probably did and I wasn't aware of it, but if so it wouldn't have been on any sort of a large scale.

22:00 Luck, I think.

**In the reading on the Independents, I read about the second half you were split into two units, in the early days, and you lost a unit commander, was that Keen?**

Yes.

**And that, that unit came under a lot of attack itself did it not?**

No, no.

**I was just**

22:30 **wondering whether I had written the notes down wrong but I was wondering whether... you said you were very, very lucky but it sounds like some of the others weren't as lucky?**

Oh yeah, well I think overall we were lucky and that's partly the nature of raiding techniques, as opposed to anything else, in that I think the number of casualties we inflicted on the Japanese we should have had far more casualties than we did, and to some degree that was luck.

**Did you have any kind of characters or**

23:00 **larrikins among your lot that kept your morale up?**

Yes we did. You could almost always depend on it, on the section funny man, or the platoon funny man, just when things were needed, he'd perform his act. We had a fellow who came from Sydney, who was nick named Cocker, Cocker Selwyn, and Selwyn really was a funny man. And he was never cruel with his

23:30 humour although very often he would take off some other member of the unit, but in, always in good spirit and it was always accepted in good spirit. For example while we were withdrawing from Mubo, and this is true cause I was there, and one fellow said, "I've got a heavy pack sir, I'll push on, so I won't hold anybody up." And that became a standard joke then, "I've got a heavy pack, I must push on."

24:00 That was just an example of humour, but you could always depend on someone producing something funny, even in the worst of circumstances.

**Oh, most especially in the worst of circumstances I guess.**

Yeah, that's right.

**And I often imagine, when you are in a situation where you can't talk, you can only whisper or sign language and so on, that the desire for making jokes then increases, like church?**

Yeah, very true.

**Did the officers take to the funny man though?**

Oh yes, I think so. Remember I retired as a

24:30 Brigadier so I'm, I'm...

**Well this is why I'm asking, I figure you would be able to see both sides of the situation.**

Yes I have, yeah. Well yes, no our officers, when I was in the independent company, were very good, very understanding, and generally popular with troops, and that was pretty common throughout independent companies and commando squadrons I think.

**You know, these days a bit of an age difference means very little to people, but then, you know a couple of years was a lot.**

25:00 **What's my question? Just in terms of officers only being a few years older than most of the fellows they were leading, was that much different?**

No, I don't think so. I, and then later on of course, as I mentioned, I trained with the Royal Marines for quite some time in UK, but again they had a very good working relationship, the Royal Marines. In fact I can remember at Poole

25:30 in UK [United Kingdom], at the Amphibious Warfare Training Centre, and I was still sometimes an object of curiosity as a representative of the Australian Army with the Royal Marines. And after a dining-in night one night, it was suggested that I might like to say a few words, so I did, and said that, you know, during my army career I had served with or alongside a number of British Army units,

26:00 but that now I had been with the Royal Marines, I felt that the Royal Marines were more like the Australian Army than any regiment of the British Army that I had come across. And they digested that for a while and then somebody said, "You mean that as a compliment, don't you?"

**Comparative antipodean roles, I'm sure they must have had a few sips of port before that sunk in.**

Yeah, that's right.

**Well, what did it mean then to be a corporal in a situation like the 2/5th?**

Oh

26:30 well, I suppose we had pretty free and easy discipline, but if the chips were down and something had to be done, I found that soldiers would always respect and obey commands. Only once I can remember when a fellow, see I wanted somebody to do something, I told somebody to do something, and he in effect said, "You do it your bloody self, I'm not going down there." So, and that was always a difficult situation if you

27:00 were faced with that.

**What was your method of dealing with a situation like that?**

Oh, I've got a feeling I did do it myself, it was the easy way out.

**I'm sure it would be a bit difficult to put someone on a charge in a situation like jungle warfare?**

Yeah, that's right.

**Would that have a repercussion later on?**

What, the incident I just described?

**Yeah, or similar.**

No, probably not. Common sense of the individuals

27:30 usually sorted those sort of things out.

**So was there room for privates to make suggestions that officers would follow up on?**

Yes, yeah. I can remember in particular one small action we were engaged in, and a fellow, he was an estate agent who came from Tuggerah Lakes in New South Wales. And Bill Ridley, whom I just learned yesterday died only recently, was taking us up a small re-entrance, and this fellow yelled out, "Don't be so bloody

28:00 stupid Bill, go round the other way!" And it was good, sound advice and Bill Ridley took it, and we went round the other way, of which we were all very grateful at the time, yeah.

**When you were in situations as intense as, say, guerrilla attacks would be from time to time, do you operate with like a, say a buddy or a, do you pair up in a, kind of a tangible way?**

We didn't put as much emphasis on that as the Royal Marines did,

28:30 they put a great deal of emphasis on that.

**Jumping around as I said I would. In, for example, the attack on Salamaua or similar, did you ever come across any women in Japanese areas?**

No.

**Okey dokes. I also wanted to talk about the image that, say, the Independent**

29:00 **Companies had. I read that there was a consideration that it was looked upon as a bit of a dirty job that someone had to do?**

No, I don't think so, I wasn't aware of that.

**Okay.**

As I said, there was, if anything, it was the other way that infantry battalions thought we were, sort of, glamour boys to some degree and so forth, but, yeah.

**When you came back, did that sense of elitism build or diminish?**

29:30 I think it built for a period of time, but then I think it probably diminished because the differences between, say, the operations of an independent company and an infantry battalion were not so apparent as the war progressed, as they had been.

**The Japanese used a lot of tactics that perhaps hadn't been seen in Australian fighting methods. Did, were you trained in those**

30:00 **tactics or did you learn them later on?**

Yeah, we used to run what we called, 'Japanese ruses,' and they used to do things that we wouldn't do, for example, send a prisoner forward with his hands up and then he would suddenly hit the deck and he had a machine gun on his back and things like that. But we didn't do things like that, mainly because it would have been difficult to get volunteers to

30:30 do the job I think.

**How did... I get the feeling that from time to time, when there were definitely nights when you were out in the bush among yourself, yourselves, a small clump of you. I have always wondered about the smoking, and you can smell it for a long way, what kind of considerations were given in that respect?**

31:00 I think common sense prevailed with most people, regardless of rank, in if they could appreciate quite clearly that it was dangerous, or could be dangerous to smoke, I think most people would respect a no smoking order. Didn't apply to, very much to us in New Guinea because again tobacco and cigarettes

31:30 were always in terribly short supply.

**Didn't take on a ball and twist?**

Yes I did. And I smoked a pipe, which was not bad as far as that was concerned but, yeah. But I think the, well there weren't so many people anti smoking then of course as there are now, that would have been a great time to have capitalised

32:00 on it, because a lot of people who were heavy smokers, there's no doubt had a great difficulty in not being able to smoke.

**Yeah, I mean it's a, well, we all know how addictive it is.**

Yeah.

**What about talking then, were there nights where you had a no talking rule?**

Yeah, more or less, or whisper.

**That can be fairly hard to maintain.**

Mmm, true.

**Were there situations, well could you describe any situations**

32:30 **where that became a problem?**

No, none that I can think of off hand. Even if you talked like that, you could always, you know...

**Well in the jungle, things carry in strange ways.**

Yes, they do, yeah, yeah.

**And the other one, of course, boredom.**

Yeah. Well I suppose more than most units, we had to make our own fun, and which we seemed to succeed in doing. And

33:00 so if you were in a situation where you could talk and so forth, I don't know, people have often in these sort of interviews that I've had since, people often say, "What did you do at night, cause you had...?" And you just lay round and you talked and you yarned and so forth, that's if you are in circumstances where you could do that. Yeah, so we survived okay and, as I say, I think possibly you got, we got to know each other, as a group, much better than most units really.

34:00 **And you were you likely to break that stoic Australian tradition of not talking about ones personal life, or did you manage to dish out a bit of personal history?**

Not to any great degree I don't think. And remember, at the age of eighteen or nineteen you haven't got a great deal of personal life to talk about.

**I guess it's all speculative isn't it?**

Yes, that's right.

**So what was the general conversation then, you know, girls, booze and sport?**

Mmm.

**Or booze and sport perhaps?**

Yes,

34:30 that's right. And sometimes, of course, you would talk about the war, the big war probably.

**The Great War?**

No, the fact that we were a very small part of it and we realised that, and you might talk about the events in Europe during the European war and things like that.

**Well yes, cause its hard, now that we have got all this retrospective history, to kind of imagine that there were times when the war was only that part, that portion that you were fighting.**

That's right.

**What about when**

35:00 **there was opportunities for a bit of fun, alcohol and entertainment?**

Well no alcohol. There was later on, of course, during the Borneo Campaign, you know, there was a ration of beer which was available and so forth, but in New Guinea, no, just no alcohol. Entertainment – if you established a, or you were part of a base camp, by base camp I just simply mean a,

35:30 an area where a number of people were congregated for some little time, we'd probably have impromptu concerts and things like that. And we were very fortunate in that we had a fellow who used to belong to J.C. Williamson, I don't know if you've ever heard of J.C. Williamson, and he was a very, very good baritone, and he used to sing. And I don't know if you have ever heard of Lindy Lou?

36:00 Yeah. And I can still remember that in the New Guinea nights, the sound of Lindy Lou. And then when we were up at Edie Creek, which is behind Wau up on a hill, and that was a, again another gold mining area, and we went up there for a rest in, after the battle for Wau, and again it was surprising

36:30 the talent that suddenly became available, and that people would recite or sing or just simply tell stories and so forth.

**You have, kind of, a raconteurs voice, did you get up and offer a little bit?**

No, I felt that was never in my field.

**So coming out of a situation like that, I was thinking you were up there, or in the middle of it all for more than twelve months at a stretch, or more than six months**

37:00 **without contact. Did you come out of it, or how did you... what kind of condition were you when you were released from that particular role?**

Physically probably not very good. As I say we had all had malaria at some stage, there were quite a few people with traces of beri beri, so physically we weren't terribly good. In fact, I know our medical officer

37:30 recommended that the whole unit should be down graded medically, and I don't think that was acted on. Mentally I think we had very few problems, we, I don't know of anyone in fact.

**The trauma that is associated with war service these days, I appreciate that things were different then, but there were traumatic circumstances. How did a some of the fellows**

38:00 **cope with that?**

Well I don't remember any problems, which is... when one reads about everything today I feel it's remarkable that we apparently had so few problems, but we did.

**So there were never any occasions where a fellow was paralysed with fear or couldn't go on?**

No, not that I can remember, no.

**That's quite extraordinary. And in that time then, you would have had nights sleeping very near to enemy positions.**

38:30 **Were you able to get close enough to get to know what the Japanese were like?**

No.

**And when you got back to - I'm just looking at the chronology - you came back and went to Canungra not long after this. When you did get back to Australia an awful lot had happened in that year, were you able to get acquainted with where Australia was at in terms of its war?**

Yeah I think so, pretty well.

**What do you recall had happened?**

39:00 I think the fact that... remember that there was still quite a campaign going on in New Guinea when I got back, that was in May 1943, I returned to Australia. I think the fact that Axis forces had surrendered in North Africa was a, you know, it created a lot of interest,

39:30 of course we could see that as the war was starting to run down, and we, I think we all realised that we were all affected by the, by what was happening elsewhere.

**What about closer to home and in particular, say, Brisbane and so on, would have looked probably like an entirely different world to you. What were some of the stand out features, and I'm sort of assuming that the American presence...?**

40:00 With the American presence in particular, and I remember being struck by this, because I think even now most Australians aren't aware of this. I don't know how well you know Brisbane, but the whole of the south Brisbane area, of course, was off limits to white troops and was restricted to Negroes only. I've always been surprised in retrospect that the Australian Government accepted that at that time, but we apparently did without any

40:30 argument. There were, of course, differences between American forces, generally, and us because of the differences in pay, but generally I think relations between Australians and Americans was pretty good.

**Okay, just swap tapes.**

## Tape 5

00:33 **May we start off with your experience at Canungra and how, kind of, ludicrous it is, in a way, to send a bunch of guerrillas down to learn jungle training at Canungra, if I may be so bold?**

Well, the army works in mysterious ways I suppose one might say.

**A nice euphemism.**

We

01:00 didn't do much actual training at Canungra, it was mainly looked upon as being a, sort of, rest after combat, so we savoured the delights of Surfers Paradise and so forth. Yeah, it didn't have... and remember we went through there as a unit, which meant it was a very different Canungra. Later on, after I was commissioned, I went there as a reinforcement officer and we were responsible

01:30 for the training of new soldiers and they led a very different existence to the members of the 2/5th when we went through there. I disagreed with many aspects of training at Canungra, later on, well some aspects, not many, some aspects.

**Such as?**

Oh, I don't think you can ever teach people how to go hungry, you know, and so deliberately short changing rations and so forth in my opinion was nonsense.

02:00 If you have to go without food you don't need any practise at all, and it was unnecessarily tough in some respects I think.

**Do you think they would have lost... or do you know of situations where they lost soldiers who should have been fine but for the toughness at Canungra?**

No, I don't know of anything specific.

**So your time at the Atherton Tablelands**

02:30 **you described as just this sort of... felt interminable after what you had been doing. Did anything productive come out of that period?**

Well again it probably melded units together to a very great degree and that would have obviously varied from unit to unit I suppose. But suddenly it became more like an army, you know, or popular

03:00 concept of an army, and so we had drill competitions which might, surprises many people and our troops went into with great gusto, they liked being better than anybody else at drill.

**How would you win a drill competition?**

Well you work out a system of movements, drill movements, and the platoon which

03:30 does the best wins the competition. It's surprisingly easy in fact.

**And, yes... look before we talk about Borneo I have to ask, looking at your dates, you must have met your future wife by this stage back in...?**

No, not until January 1943 I met my future wife. January 1944, rather.

**Okay. Did that occur between, oh, well that must have**

04:00 **happened between your time there and going back to Borneo?**

Yes it was.

**So, did that make a big impact or what kind of an impact did that make for you as a soldier?**

What, meeting my future wife?

**Well, were you married in between that time, or...?**

No, no...

**Oh, that was later on...**

I was married in Japan after the war.

**BCOF. Sorry, I'm bumbling around. But what kind of an impact did that have to have met someone of significance when you had to go back and fight?**

Well I think you probably felt the goodbyes more than previously, cause I had no

04:30 personal contacts at all until then, and so yeah, that had a... And then we worked it rather well though, because we both volunteered for BCOF, and so when Joan arrived in Japan I was standing on the wharf waiting to greet her, that was very well done.

**Very romantic. Well look let's talk about Borneo then and being sent back.**

05:00 **What was your role in terms of the landings?**

2/12th had it very easy, we were the divisional reserve and we stayed on ship until everything had more or less been sorted out during the landings, and so we did it very easy.

**What would you actually do though in that period of time?**

Well before going there we did a lot of amphibious, training remember, down at Trinity

05:30 Bay and Trinity Beach near Cairns, that's where I first met my first Royal Marines.

**They strike me as having quite an impact on you then?**

Oh they were a very fine corps, they still are. And you may have noticed in the recently concluded war that Royal Marine Commandos got more, quite a few mentions in the news, very fine troops indeed.

**Did it, was the seed planted back then for you?**

06:00 **Did they, you know, was the seed planted in your imagination back then?**

The sea?

**A seed planted, an idea to want to join the Royal Marines.**

Oh, I see. No, no, not really. I enjoyed mixing with them and meeting with them, and that's all really, and I've stayed friends with some to this day that I trained with later on.

**So in terms of being a reserve**

06:30 **group at Borneo, how far away from the action were you then?**

Well we sat on the ship until we landed, and so... Oh, and then we did some, oh no, we did some patrolling and we had a couple of casualties, but generally it was a pretty easy war.

**What rank were you at that point?**

I was a lieutenant then.

**And we need to talk a little about where you got your commission and how that came about?**

07:00 Well, while we were on the Atherton Tablelands with the 2/5th the OC [Officer Commanding] called me in one day and said, "I'm recommending that you go to OCTU, and that's the Officer Cadet Training

Unit."

**At Duntroon?**

No, that was conducted at Woodside in South Australia. So I went off to OCTU in October 1943 and received my commission in, at the end of

07:30 January 1944.

**Would it be fair in saying that that doesn't happen to every young lad who joins up, that's quite a special...?**

Oh yes, yeah. It is not as rare as all that but it's, yeah it's, to be selected for officer training was yeah, quite a distinction I suppose.

**So what did you have that set you apart from some of your mates?**

I have got no idea.

**You don't need to be that modest if you**

08:00 **know...**

No, I have no idea literally. Oh I suppose my performance in New Guinea must have impressed people.

**Kind of like a first among equals situation?**

Yeah, I suppose so.

**Well if anything is going to weed out those who can lead against those who can't, the army's going to.**

That's right.

**So did you find that Woodside gave you some fairly solid**

08:30 **information that you needed?**

Oh yes, I think so. But it was a mixture of academic training, that's academic military training and practical field training. Yeah, I think it helped me a great deal.

**Were they needing to rush fellows through there as, in as much as they had been earlier on?**

No. There were three wings at OCTU, the first wing dealt with administrative aspects of the army,

09:00 the second wing dealt with theory, and the third wing was essentially practical. When I say theory, I mean great concentration on map reading and movement, in the sense of planning movement and so forth, yeah.

**The kind of fellows that you were training with, was there anywhere they, anywhere particular**

09:30 **where they might have come from?**

No, all over the Australian Army, in various theatres, from various units and so forth, so there was no common denominator.

**And was there a passing out parade at the end of all of that?**

Yes, yeah.

**Was that, how would you describe that moment for you then?**

Oh, I think it was a great thrill. A senior officer congratulated us and gave us our pips,

10:00 and they were pinned on. Later on, we couldn't go to the extent in those days of having a commissioning ball, which is a pretty common occurrence now. But yeah it was, made it quite a distinctive day, it's something that sticks in ones memory, yeah.

**What about your family, were they able to send congratulations?**

Oh no, not really. They didn't do anything about it until after the event, I don't think.

**Did they know about it?**

Yeah.

10:30 **Cause it, well it strikes me as a fairly major achievement,**

Yeah.

**under the circumstances. And then there is a war on so it's a little bit hard not to imagine being a soldier, but did you know that it was, sort of, going to be a defining aspect of the rest**



**of your career?**

No, not at that time.

**Why did you accept to become a commissioned officer?**

11:00 Well, I felt that I had, to my satisfaction, demonstrated some qualities of leadership, which I was happy to pass on or to make use of in command of fellow Australians, and I suppose that's the reason.

**So it was all about honour?**

Yes, yeah, I suppose so. And I have given talks since of course, instructional

11:30 talks, one thing I always started off with saying, there is a great distinction between command and leadership. Anyone can be a commander because the system will put you there, but not everyone can be a leader, and that was a distinction I always made and I think OCTU, in particular, brought that home to me.

**Can it teach someone how to be a leader?**

No. Although leadership can be taught, or aspects of leadership can be taught, but

12:00 no, the old expression 'he's a born leader' still has a lot of truth in it I think.

**And how much people skills do you think go into being a leader, as opposed to technical capacity?**

Depends entirely what sort of a unit you are serving on I think. In fighting units, a great deal of people skills are required, in more technical units not nearly to the same degree.

12:30 **Did you see any of your old mates when you got back from OCTU then?**

Yes. And no, I didn't have any difficulties or any unusual experiences.

**They didn't rib you?**

No, no, no. Most of my old former comrades in arms would salute me as they met me and then congratulate me and say, "Well done." They were pleased to see it and I think they were quite genuine.

13:00 **What's it like being saluted?**

I think it's just simply, I just accepted it as part of the system.

**These days when people salute each other for a joke or a gag, chances are they don't really know what's involved in that. What do you think of seeing people around the place cracking a salute here and there?**

13:30 Well I think to begin with its part of the system. It used to be, there was period during the war when people said, "You salute the uniform, not the man," upon which comedians used to say, "You must have had a lot of fun going past tailors' windows," and so forth. I don't subscribe to that at all. It's a sign of, I think, respect

14:00 and, as I say, my experience with former comrades who had been on equal terms with me, always gave me the impression that they were only too happy to salute me.

**Well sounds like they made the right choice when they sent you down to OCTU then. The end of the war, you are still in Borneo?**

Yes.

**Can you recall the announcement that the Japanese had capitulated?**

Yes. To some degree I felt it was an anti climax when it finally

14:30 came, because after the dropping of the two atomic bombs it was obvious to everyone that this was the end of the war. And again with radios at the time, no matter where you were, there were interminable talks by somebody who was talking about U235 [highly radioactive uranium] and uranium and so forth and so on, and this went on day after day after day, and it was obvious that this had to come to an end. I know I was surprised when the second atom bomb

15:00 was dropped cause it seemed to me then that it was unnecessary, and to some degree I still think it was probably unnecessary. But, so no, so when... I forget whether there was an advance announcement that, 'There will be an important message at such and such a time,' I forget whether that happened on that occasion, but when it did happen we all knew it was going to be the end of the war.

**So the business of mopping up around Borneo etcetera?**

I wasn't personally involved in that, but some people were

15:30 and there were, of course, some casualties after the end of the war. I remember seeing one incident, my

unit commander at the time had a brother in the air force and we went down to the air field at Labuan Island the day after the war ended, and there were, we were still maintaining air patrols over Borneo. And several Beaufighters

16:00 came in for a landing and one of them suddenly did things that I knew were not supposed to happen in the air, it went sideways and then the other way, then it just simply crashed not very far from us. We were sitting in a jeep, so we started the motor and raced down to the crashed aircraft and as we got there I saw a tongue of flame and a lot of smoke shoot into the air and I thought, "Christ, am I going to a hero or not?" Then discovered it was unnecessary cause one

16:30 of the motors was on fire where it had been torn off the aircraft during the crash. So we jumped out and helped the, there were only two crew in a Beaufighter, helped the two crew out of the Beaufighter, and one of them died later on. Now what was I...?

**Post war fatality.**

Yeah, yeah and, that's right, and there were still battalions on active contact, patrols

17:00 in the mainland. I was on Labuan when this ended of course, so there were no... well if there were any live Japanese they were very much laying low at that stage, so I wasn't personally involved with anything with the Japanese.

**And there were Japanese POWs [Prisoners of War] at that stage in Borneo?**

Yes, that's right, yeah. Then we, from Labuan we went by an American PT [Patrol Torpedo] boat, or a collection of PT boats, down to Kuching the capital of Sarawak,

17:30 and had the pleasant experience of releasing our prisoners and putting the Japanese back into the same compounds. And then for a few weeks before I went to Japan I helped to, sort of, administer the Japanese prisoners and the day to day administration required in running a prison camp.

**Okay then, had you heard before you went down to Kuching, much about the state of the prisoners down there?**

No.

18:00 We got odd snippets of information out during the war, and in fact I did the School of Military Intelligence at Southport during the war. And I know we were all very surprised at - I can still remember his name - a Major Steele gave us a talk on the Japanese, and prisoners, and we all realised within a few minutes of him starting to talk that he had actually been a prisoner, and that rather surprised us.

18:30 And then he gave a very good talk on Japanese treatment of prisoners and so forth.

**Was he an escapee?**

Yes, he was. And there were very, very few as you probably know.

**Hardly any, Ambon maybe, if they were lucky.**

Mmm.

**So Kuching and arriving to release the prisoners. Had they been, sort of, emancipated in the sense that they knew the war was over already?**

Yes they knew the war was over. They were

19:00 very much waiting for us to arrive. And I, and as it turned out, we weren't the first, there were other troops ahead of us that got in and... and I'm sorry about that, I think that must have been a great experience to be able to walk into a prison camp and say, "Okay fellas, we're here!" But I didn't quite have that experience in my case.

**No, I can also imagine that for the POWs they were probably in a, you know, a hunger**

19:30 **induced sense of, sort of, you know, constantly dazed probably?**

Yeah. Well I had some contact with them, with released prisoners, and they were quite, ones I met were quite happy to talk and...

**Big chunk of information to, sort of, pass on immediately in regards to what they had been through?**

Mmm.

**But do you recall the, sort of, incidentals that they mentioned?**

No, no I don't interestingly enough, because we didn't know a great deal, remember, about what

20:00 had been happening. We got the first indication, I think, at the Kuching camp when there were graves there of Australian prisoners, and others too, of course the Brits had been there also, and it was a very

interesting, brief experience administering the camp.

- 20:30 Captain Matthews who was awarded the, I can't remember whether he was a VC [Victoria Cross] winner or not, but I remember he, quite distinctly his grave, I remember seeing that. He certainly had an MC [Military Cross]. And experiences with the, more with the Japanese then, than with our own people because, as I say, if we had made contact with our own people it was all very brief and they were
- 21:00 whipped off fairly smartly, which they all expected to be. And then our experiences with the Japanese was interesting because the Japanese who had actually, we'd been fighting against in Borneo were in pretty poor shape generally, the way we would, you know, expect to be. But the fellows, and there were a lot who didn't see an Allied soldier until after the war ended, and they didn't take very kindly to being prisoners and these big, well-fed Japanese
- 21:30 were striding around the place, and some of them made it very obvious that they didn't like this. And there were certain rules laid down that they had to conform to, they were allowed minimum use of their own transport aircraft and they had to be painted white and have green crosses. And the Kuching airfield, which was littered with... destroyed Japanese air field, I got a message one evening to go down to the air field,
- 22:00 and I went down and there was a white aircraft there with green crosses on it. And this was a group of senior Japanese officers who had decided that the opportunity was too good to miss, so they grabbed an aircraft and in their blissful ignorance they thought they were on their way back to Japan. So we soon disabused them of that idea and took them off, but it was... And I used to go down every morning to the compound
- 22:30 and it was surprising, really, how quickly you could establish a working relationship with people. This, there was a sergeant major named Yamamoto which, of course, is a very common Japanese name, and when he saluted, and this, I found this was very common with the Japanese, he used to literally hit himself on the head, 'Bang!' like that see, "Good morning sir!" And they, we required them to number, to show our control, and I thought I would be cunning one
- 23:00 morning, I said, "I bet they are stacking the front rank." So I said, "Rear rank, number!" And they went, "One, two, three, four, five." And the Sergeant Major banged his head and gave a big grin and I said, "What are you laughing at?" And he said, "Because we have tricked you sir." And I said, "Yeah, alright," and they had too, it was a small victory. And we then found we could get on reasonably well with the Japanese. And also learned something about myself, because we had heard enough about the treatment
- 23:30 of our prisoners to know that it had been pretty terrible so, and two British officers, a major and a lieutenant, stayed behind to identify potential war criminals. As they came through, we put the war criminals into a separate compound, and amongst the Japanese stores we found some blue and white
- 24:00 scarves, I suppose, and we gave them to these so that they could identify themselves, and they immediately became proud of them because they knew they were being singled out for something. Major MacArthur, the Brit [British] officer, the senior Brit officer, spoiled the affect somewhat, because he could speak Japanese, and he used to chuck them under the chin and say, "You're going to be shot!" And the result of that was that quite a number tried going over the wire, in fact. They didn't get very far, cause they were in a hopeless situation,
- 24:30 you know, the densest jungle in the world was then in Borneo and they would have had to try and slog through that, apart from guards and so forth. So it was a very interesting few days, or two or three weeks that I spent in that period.

**How did you determine suspects for war crimes?**

Well from personal identifications. As I say, these two officers, and others, would stay behind and there were various people who...

- 25:00 I remember who was called "the Ball Kicker," a Japanese, and he'd obviously endeared himself, you know, like hell, cause they, so he came through and we...

**So he was a Japanese sympathiser?**

Mmm?

**He was a Japanese sympathiser?**

No.

**No, an Australian sympathiser from the Japanese side?**

No, no, he was a Japanese soldier, so they identified him and put the finger on him. And then they had also, and there was apparently a very good degree of undercover communication, which rather surprised me.

- 25:30 And they were able to say, "Right, when we get to Sandakan..." there were, they knew in advance certain Japanese by name, and said, "We want so-and-so and so-and-so," and they would pluck these people out, if they came through us, or the word would be passed elsewhere, and then they would go off

and identify them. So...

**Pretty traumatic for the people identifying**

26:00 **I'm sure?**

Yeah.

**And did you notice any difference amongst the, say the suspects for war crimes in their camp, than the fellows who were going to just be shipped back to Japan and repatriated?**

Yeah, when they found out, yes, they weren't very happy, obviously. As I say, once they realised that the blue and white sashes weren't just for... improve their appearance, they weren't terribly keen.

**Did you see any examples of Australian**

26:30 **soldiers unable to restrain their anger toward them?**

No.

**And amongst the Japanese there would have been a mix of, say, Shinto, Buddhist and Christians?**

Yeah.

**Was that apparent?**

No, I don't think so. I remember we had one priest at least, Roman Catholic priest came through, and Shinto priests. No, we didn't make much attempt to sort them out on religious grounds, we just tended to put 'em all in together.

27:00 **My line of enquiry is more to do with their capacity for accepting surrender, giving the big bogey about the Japanese refusing to surrender and so on?**

Well, yeah I was still amazed how readily it was accepted, really. One

27:30 humorous little incident, no, not on that particular subject but later on, a friend of mine who was in command of a DUKW Platoon, you know what a DUKW was? It was an amphibious vehicle, spelt D-U-K-W, which was an abbreviation for whatever it stood for. And they were off-loading Japanese from transports out in the sea and then bringing them, running them in ashore.

28:00 And he was reminiscing and said one day they were doing this and, of course, all that you did in a DUKW was reach down and you changed gears into sea drive or water drive, and he said and he did this. And this, and he said, "You could see the looks of consternation on the Japanese prior to this as they were, as far as they were concerned they were going to run aground in a ship." And they changed gears and out they ran, and he said, "You didn't have to speak Japanese to see they were saying, 'No

28:30 wonder we lost the war.' "

**From an admin. point of view, what kind of a challenge was that?**

Not a major challenge because, as I say, the Japanese accepted it.

**But literally, technically, moving them in, shipping them home etcetera., did you have to work out troop loads and...?**

Oh I wasn't personally involved in that, yes, but yes. I think, as far as possible, they gave that back to the Japanese and told them to work it out themselves.

**What about**

29:00 **hospitalisation or medication or food for the Japanese POWs?**

Yeah, well we made, as far as we possibly could, all of our facilities were immediately available to them.

**So did they ship up AAMWS and WRANS [Women's Royal Australian Navy Service] and so on?**

To BCOF, yes, but not to Borneo.

**Not to Borneo, okay. And what, from a personal point of view how, what was your view of the situation after fighting the Japanese for so long?**

29:30 Well I found that it was impossible to maintain a level of enmity and dislike for any period of time. As I say, I mentioned the sergeant major, now that was not an unpleasant experience, he was just a nice guy, he really was a nice guy, and I accepted that. We set out one day to

30:00 make bastards of ourselves, and we set the war criminals to task. There was a great load of sleepers at one end of the compound so we had them, at the double, and carry the sleepers from one end of the compound to the other, and then dump it and then carry them all back again, and that was what we would call sheer bastardry. And that lasted about one episode, that's carrying them one way, and I could

see my soldiers didn't like it and I didn't like it either, and

- 30:30 I said, "Okay fellas, that's enough," and everyone was very happy about that. So I don't know whether that proves anything about Australians but it did to me that we, we just weren't cut out to be, to do that sort of thing.

**Was there any work that they needed done, that they set the Japanese to do?**

Yes, we employ... I just forget just what tasks they were on, yes, we used to send them out on work parties. Well Kuching,

- 31:00 which was a pretty large town in those days, it was thirty-five or thirty-six thousand population I think, so there was work to do round town and repairing roads and do all sorts of things.

**Okay. And did the locals come back in that time?**

Yeah.

**Did you witness their returning home to...?**

They just sort of drifted in, I don't remember them... and a lot of them had been there too, of course, right through the occupation by the Japanese. I remember feeling very guilty

- 31:30 one afternoon, I went off for a walk with a friend of mine and we were looking for, in fact, for a new house. We were living in quite a nice house and I said, "Let's go and find another one." We went in, you know, prepared to be conquerors and take over, and we found a very nice home indeed, only snag being the family were still there, and they came out and greeted us. So we forgot any ideas we had about taking over that particular house obviously.

**Houses that were otherwise empty though,**

- 32:00 **had that option, what was the process of acquiring or re - what's the army term - requisitioning?**

Requisitioning. It wasn't any really, but these were the, obviously the owners of this house, well we weren't prepared to go into, to establish whether they were or they weren't. The fact that they were there in occupation was sufficient for us to accept the fact that they were the owners.

**A pretty surreal environment...**

Yeah.

**...for most of it. How did it come about that you could apply for BCOF?**

Well there were volunteers called for,

- 32:30 right throughout the Australian Army at that stage I think.

**In a situation like, you know, being in the middle of Borneo, working the way that you were, just need to know, how you received that information? Whether it's a normal situation and you get a missive one morning or...?**

Yeah, and we probably put it in routine orders then.

**In triplicate.**

Yeah, which used to be published every morning of course.

- 33:00 **The situation with your fiancé, or your then girlfriend at the time, how did you co-ordinate managing to both go to BCOF?**

We exchanged letters, and mail was operating quite normally. In fact, I think it was a better service then than it is now. I can remember in BCOF, I'd write letters to Australia and they'd be here in three days sometimes, and that was from... you wouldn't do that today from Japan.

**Not even from rural New South Wales, I don't think.**

That's right.

- 33:30 That's right.

**Okay, so what were the last duties you had to perform in Borneo before taking off to Japan?**

I think there was another officer and I handed over responsibility for the compound I was administering, and just simply said, "Okay, it's all yours," and walked away.

**Why wouldn't you want to go back to Australia for a stint?**

Oh, well I did want to go back to Australia.

- 34:00 And we were, one of their early rumours was that there would be leave granted in Australia before we

went to Japan, but it didn't eventuate, and I don't think anybody was very upset. And we were all curious to see another country and to see the people we had been fighting against and so forth. So, yeah.

**It's interesting that you are not fed up with it and exhausted and want to go home and have a bit of a rest?**

No, I don't remember feeling that way at all.

**So could you describe then that sensation of**

34:30 **being, you know, for want of a better word, a victor arriving in the conquered land?**

Yes. Have you interviewed any other people who have had similar experiences to me?

**I don't think I know anybody, or have met anybody that went straight from northern, or the Pacific to Japan, most of them came home first.**

Well the only reason I ask the question was to see if other people agreed with me. Something I will never forget

35:00 was the passage up the inland sea, you know, which is between two of the main Japanese islands, Shikoku and Honshu. Cause if there were any doubts whatsoever about who had won the war, they were resolved there. I think every headland had a sunken Japanese ship, sometimes quite major ships sitting on them, and this is where the US and Royal Navy had just simply roamed up and down shooting up shipping.

35:30 **I think they called it the great turkey shoot.**

That's right, yeah.

**What kind of a sensation did that conjure up for you then? A sunken boat has a personality.**

Oh, I don't think any of us at all felt sorry for the Japanese, that was the first thing. You know, and you'd make, sort of, ribald comments about the state of the ship and so on.

36:00 Silence, I think. I can always remember on the ship going up the inland sea, the complete silence of our troops and the American sailors - we went in on an American ship - just acceptance, just looking and accepting it, and that was it. And even when we went ashore

36:30 this Kure dockyards were an incredible mess, they had been bombed and bombed and bombed. And we set off and we marched through all this bomb damage, through... and this of course, remember, is some months after the end of the war when we went there, this is in February 1946, and the war ended in 1945. Past Japanese

37:00 civilians standing in the streets, some of whom bowed as we went past. All looking pretty disreputable, including the women who were in what we called, 'mompie suits.' That was, the nearest equivalent I can think of in terms of description were... what do we call them? Exercise practise suits.

**Leisure suits.**

No, they weren't

37:30 that.

**Track suits.**

Working ones. Doesn't matter. But they looked very much like that, and both males and females looked quite unattractive. But no signs of anything, I think complete impassivity on the part of the,

38:00 the Japanese. And we marched up the railway station and boarded a train and went to place called Kataichi, which was as cold as charity, I remember that. Sitting around fires constructed in forty-four gallon drums, holding frozen bottles of beer against the fire, or against the drum, in the hope that we could defrost it and get a drink out of

38:30 it. They were initial reactions and, but again, it didn't take very... well, there was never any active ill feeling displayed by either party that I can remember, which was, I suppose, interesting.

**Well perhaps emotional fatigue springs to mind?**

Yeah, I suppose it could.

39:00 **We're about to wrap this tape up, but I just thought I'd finish off by asking, were you among the first units to show up there, or had there been a steady supply since August?**

Yes, yes, the Americans had gone in first of course, they were... but they had moved out by the time we got there.

**Do you have any idea whether the Japanese could distinguish between yourselves and the**

**Americans?**

Oh I'm sure they could,

39:30 as far as uniforms and so forth were concerned. But whether they were able to distinguish any different racial characteristics and so forth, I don't know, and I don't think we ever discussed it with the Japanese, even after we got to know them.

**Okey-dokes.**

## Tape 6

00:31 **Sorry to make you repeat yourself, but we were just talking about the interesting situation you found yourself in, getting married in Japan. Could you remind us what happened?**

Yes. It became quite involved, I think we were the first Australian couple to become engaged in Japan, and we found it was slightly more complicated than I had realised. And I became involved with a very, very charming

01:00 wing commander in the Royal Air Force who was then in an administrative appointment, he had a DSO [Distinguished Service Order] and DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] as a bomber pilot from World War II, and I came to know him quite well. And then, I suppose this was almost inevitable, somebody else jumped the gun, we had done all the spade work and they managed to be married a week before us, not that we cared at the time, we were more interested in getting married than we were in breaking records, but it was just interesting, that's the way it worked out.

01:30 So, and one reason for all the administrative hoo-ha was because Australia had no Foreign Marriages Act, and so we had to go to Tokyo after a civil ceremony... after a church ceremony in Kure, which was the head quarters of British Commonwealth Forces, we had to go to Tokyo and have it legalised by a representative of the British Embassy.

**Very strange.**

02:00 **You were saying before also, you were married by an American?**

American serving in the Australian Army, that was pretty rare too. In fact he is the only one I ever came across, as a chaplain certainly. Actually we had in the 2/5th we had an American who, of course, was inevitably known as Yank, Yank Bullock, and he was in Australia when, as a merchant seaman, when Japan came into the war, so instead of

02:30 waiting until he could join the American forces, he went down and joined the Australian Army, so he served with us throughout the... And the Americans were always a little bit ridiculed because of their propensity for wearing steel helmets, there must be something catching about it because this fellow, although he was in the Australian Army, loved to wear his steel helmet, where most of us didn't, we didn't ever wear it.

**Maybe it's genetic.**

Yeah, maybe.

03:00 **So can you tell us about the ceremony you had in a church in Tok... not in Tokyo, in...**

In Kure.

**in Kure, yeah.**

Well that was just a standard wedding ceremony. It was a hall which was christened Saint Peters for the benefit of the exercise in Kure, and we had a sort of standard church wedding. I had a best man and a groomsman and we had two bridesmaids and away we went. We

03:30 were married, that was on a Saturday afternoon, and then on the Sunday morning we took the train and went to Tokyo to have it all legalised. And if I can digress for a moment, cause that has nothing to do whatsoever with what we are discussing. An astounding coincidence, and I have often quoted this, one of my colleagues in, on head quarters 34 Brigade at that stage, was a fellow named Joe De Costa,

04:00 who still lives in Melbourne. And his family had lived in Japan, and his father very wisely sent him to, and his sister, sent him to Australia, or sent them to Australia, before Japan came into the war, cause he could see what was coming. So during the occupation we met Mr. De Costa senior, he used to often visit Kure and, I mean, he knew we were

04:30 being married and we would be going to Tokyo and he insisted that we come and see him at Yokohama so I said, "Yeah, okay, we would be delighted." And the first morning we were in Tokyo we went for a walk along the Ginza and I said to Joan, "Damn, I've forgotten Mr De Costa's address." We hadn't walked fifty metres and who should we meet, Mr De Costa. Now the odds against that happening, just on population grounds alone were approximately a hundred million to one, cause that was the then

population of Japan, and apart from people outside

05:00 the Australian Army he was the only person I knew in the whole of Japan. So I have sometimes told that story.

**Would there have been that many white or Caucasian's faces around?**

No, no.

**Still it's an extraordinary co-incidence isn't it?**

Incredible.

**Were you able to both get leave to have a honeymoon of sorts?**

Yes, yeah. Oh yes, oh the system became very generous and we had a great honeymoon in fact, cause we went off to Kyoto initially.

05:30 And then in subsequent years we... and of course from being the poor relation initially, BCOF suddenly had all sorts of beautiful hotels made available to us for leave purposes and so forth, so a lot of people did very, very well indeed. I, we did. So, as I say, we stayed in the Marunouchi Hotel in Tokyo, and then the next

06:00 year we went to Kyoto, and then we went to one of the hot spring resorts on the southern island, and that did us in fact. We had three honeymoons in three years, which we thought was pretty good.

**Was there any sort of restrictions on travel, or was there anything like, any problems you encountered getting around the country?**

No. If you wanted to go by rail anywhere of course you had to, well not, wasn't very different to

06:30 having a, to arrange in advance a rail trip here, except that it was all done by the army, and it all worked.

**So, I'm not sure about the dates, when were you married, when was your honeymoon?**

In November of 1946.

**So, not long after you had been there, but nearly a year?**

Oh, nearly a year.

**Nearly a year.**

Nearly a year.

**What were your observations on the country, you must have seen some different parts, different stages?**

Well rural Japan

07:00 was, and still is, a very, very beautiful country indeed, so we enjoyed seeing that. And then with the passage of time it was possible to rent a jeep and then later on buy a jeep, as they became available, so it was possible to get round the country. To a large degree we were supposed to restrict ourselves to our national area so in BCOF, was BCOF, and even within

07:30 BCOF it was desirable that you fixed up in advance if you wanted to go from the Australian area to the British area for example, and then if you wanted to go to the American area it was different again. But broadly, it all worked very well.

**And was that easy enough to cross over into the American controlled area?**

Yeah, yeah.

**Were any noticeable differences between those sections?**

In the way we went about things?

**Mmm.**

The Americans were much more free and easy

08:00 than we were, they had a ridged non-fraternisation rule with the locals, which they didn't observe. We had a ridged non-fraternisation rule, which we did observe and so there was very... which in retrospect I think was a mistake, it gave very little opportunity for contact between the Australians and the Japanese, on a social basis. So, yeah,

08:30 that was one difference. We ran into inevitable silly differences, I suppose, differences between American and British, and I include us as British, nomenclature and so forth, so that the first winter, we in BCOF almost all died of cold. We were working on what the Americans called a 'short ton,' which to us was simply a ton... no, sorry,



- 09:00 the Americans work on a short ton, as they call it, their ton was two thousand pounds whereas ours was two thousand two hundred and forty. And when you are dealing with a force of about eighty thousand, at one stage in BCOF, those extra two hundred and forty tons make a hell of a difference, and there was grave danger that BCOF was going to run out of coal during the first winter.
- That seems a slightly hilarious oversight doesn't it?**
- Yeah.
- 09:30 **Such a basic difference.**
- And then the engineers soon became... little things like talking about faucets instead of taps, and things like that. But as I say, over all it worked extremely well.
- What were the differences in, perhaps in attitude towards being occupational force?**
- Well, as I say, the Americans were much more easy in their attitude, they were much easier than we were. Other than
- 10:00 that, I don't think a great many differences.
- The people we've talked to in BCOF mainly stayed in one position, you're in an unusual, well, more unique position there. Did you have much to do with the Americans or the people in the other areas?**
- Well we, as a couple, and we again were fortunate I think, in that the initial married quarter that we were given was a pre war Japanese private residence,
- 10:30 and because we were unique and we were the only Australian married couple in Japan for quite some time, and so they, the area in which they quartered us belonged to the American Military Government, so we got to know a hell of a lot of Americans quite earlier on in the piece, and it worked very well.
- What did Joan make of all this?**
- She enjoyed it immensely.
- I mean, she must have, to applied for BCOF as well. Were there many**
- 11:00 **other Australian women around?**
- Only in the services at that stage, we had nurses and AAMWS and so forth. And then of course wives were permitted to come from Australia to Japan later on and so, yeah, by degrees it built up to be quite a community. We had special homes in special areas built for us and it became a very, very
- 11:30 soft cop indeed, it was a very pleasant existence.
- Well we should really talk about your actual, your duties. I suspect that there were quite distinct stages of the Occupational Force?**
- Yes the, initially the charter for BCOF was to, under US Norgard direction, was to, sort of, weed out the war potential from Japan.
- 12:00 And so once again we patrolled in an infantry battalion, endlessly, and there were dumps of poison gas and all sorts of things in Japan, and like most Asian races they were great tunnellers and burrowers, and almost every hillside had a tunnel of some kind in it for hiding war stores, or not necessarily war stores but hiding stores generally.
- 12:30 And of course the war stores were the ones we were interested in, so those which were suitable for civilian use we generally just simply passed on to the civilian population. War stores we destroyed.
- Were you working in collaboration with the ex Japanese army or...?**
- Yeah we... well, not necessary as Japanese army but ex Japanese, yeah. A great majority had been in the army probably
- 13:00 and they were entirely co-operative.
- Even with things like poison gas and...?**
- Yeah.
- Were there some deposits which were actually secret, which you found just by discovery?**
- Oh I think they probably all were. But a lot of people came forward and said, told us, but others were... that's the reason we patrolled, simply to find them.
- How would you do that, was that going through factories**
- 13:30 **or... what would you look for?**

Yes, going through factories and combing... probably you got tip-offs before hand you came through a particular mountain area. And I remember one tunnel on Irian Jaya, we went looking through this, and it was dark so we were striking matches to find our

14:00 way, and also treading pretty carefully. What ever we were walking was crunching as we moved and we found out afterwards it was dried out nitro-glycerine which, of course, would have made an unholy bang if that had gone off. But we didn't know, nobody had told us about that one. And that would not have been deliberate to withhold that from us, because the Japanese co-operated completely.

**So torches weren't standard issue on that**

14:30 **particular patrol?**

No, they weren't, yeah.

**How big were these tunnels, can you tell us more about those?**

Oh some of them were very big indeed, you know, they would have vehicles in them, and lots and lots of stores.

**So quite high and wide as well then?**

Mmm.

**Were all of those known or were some of those discovered by accident?**

Some discovered by accident, but generally, I think, we were informed in advance, tip-offs that there was

15:00 a tunnel for so-and-so.

**Did you have chemicals experts attached, or people to deal with the gas element of things?**

Oh yes, yeah, and there was an island called Kora-ha-hish-ima, it became a disposal place for a lot of war-like stores. It was also, that was its Japanese name, it was also often referred to as 'Burning Island', because there were constant burning off of explosives and

15:30 other war like stores for which there was no civilian use.

**So in your role it was finding these deposits?**

Mmm.

**Were you involved in transporting them to places or distributing them or destroying them?**

Well, as I say, a lot were taken to this island and they were there disposed of, and again the Japanese co-operated completely. In fact, there was one occasion where, I think, from memory a barge caught fire or something

16:00 and Japanese and Australians were saving each others lives in that episode. So by degrees, as I have said before, you can't live among a people and maintain a hatred, it just... I found impossible and I think most of our people felt the same.

**Were there any cases of conflicts or physical disagreements?**

Not to my knowledge.

16:30 There was a, one case of interest because of what didn't come out of it. This was an Australian soldier who broke into a Japanese dwelling and murdered the elderly Japanese couple, and that posed quite a few conundrums. Because the state of feeling in Australia at that stage was such, that although they, he went on trial and he was found guilty but, he ended up getting seven years or something

17:00 ridiculous, although perhaps today it would be standard, I don't know, but then, you know, it would have been the death penalty, automatically, but... And the legal pundits in BCOF said, "There is no way you are going to sell a death penalty to the Australian public that an Australian soldier who, you know, twelve months ago was fighting against the Japanese, is now going to be tried for murder of Japanese," and so nobody even tried to push that one through.

**This is something I have come across on quite a**

17:30 **few occasions, that the people who didn't actually deal with the Japanese have a long lasting hatred, whereas people in close contact...?**

Yeah, that's right, I think that's true. Last time I appeared on something like this, it was to say a few words... there was a film produced, I forget what it was called now, but it was about the occupation of Japan and so forth. And to me it was very noticeable that a lot of the

18:00 people who appeared in the film, Australians and so forth, had never had actually been in the war, so in some cases they were all gung-ho, in others, because they had no practical experience whatsoever, they literally didn't know what they were talking about. But, I don't know.

**When you went over, that was only people who had served in the Second World War at that stage going to...?**

Who went from, yeah, went from the islands. And then not long after that, people started coming direct from Australia.

18:30 **Did you notice a difference in the way they dealt with the situation?**

No, I don't think so, because they were absorbed pretty thoroughly into units, you see, yeah.

**You mentioned before the lack of potential for socialising with the Japanese, were you able to communicate with them on a personal level as aside professional on many occasions?**

It was difficult, but we did,

19:00 yeah and soldiers did. I was limited by being (a) an officer and (b) being married, so after everything settled down, but... Well, there were quite a few weddings between Australian soldiers and Japanese, so obviously they found a means of communication.

**Well that was another question, someone we talked to actually yesterday, really his experience of the Japanese was in brothels**

19:30 **in the black market.**

Yeah.

**Did you see much of that?**

That would be pretty typical for, in a lot of cases. Did I see black market?

**Yeah.**

Oh yeah, it was pretty rife. Well it was understandable too because, you know, an Australian soldier or any soldier could walk into the canteen and for a few pence in those days, buy himself a chocolate and go out and sell it on the black market for ten times what he paid for it, and this applied to bigger things too. So, and cigarettes in

20:00 particular of course, always had a very ready market.

**Were any items off limits for the black market?**

Not through black market that I'm aware of, but there may well have been, I don't know.

**I mean, I suppose by its nature black market is all off-limits, but whether anything was brought down hard upon and tried to be policed?**

And I think everyone had different experiences, you see if you were in one of the service units, by service unit I mean supply and transport, or something like that you see,

20:30 inevitably you were in a unit and, for convenience, you were billeted in an area where you were able to... it encompassed your normal occupation you see. So a lot of those characters had ready access to black market, they had ready access to brothels and so forth, much more so than the soldiers of 34 Brigade, that was the infantry brigade. So, as I say, you could have different experiences from different people.

21:00 **This fellow yesterday actually was told on arrival that there were certain prices for some objects and certain rules and things in that, so it was almost regulated.**

Yeah, I'd believe that. I didn't have personal experience of it, but I'd believe it.

**Well you were telling me about the earlier stage of BCOF, finding war materials and disposing of them. For how long did that period last?**

It probably lasted about three years I would think.

21:30 It took a long while to completely eradicate it.

**Were you personally involved in that process the whole time?**

Only when I was with the battalion, and again an interestingly little story probably. My company in fact, in the battalion, we found what was obviously a Japanese training establishment, military training establishment, you know, huts and everything that went with it, and a field firing range in the back-

22:00 ground, and so we started to use that as a battalion training area, when we got back to the stage of doing some training. And then during the Korean War of course BCOF was looking for... or BCFK as it was called then, British Commonwealth Forces Korea, was looking for a suitable training area for people going to Korea. So we came up with this battalion training area that my battalion had discovered,

- 22:30 and it was extensively used. In fact, at one stage, there was a British Company, an Australian Company, a New Zealand Company and a Canadian Company all undergoing training. Korea and Japan, at that stage, were interesting because you really saw the final stages of the British Commonwealth and it really worked, it was a very pleasant experience, in fact, to soldier alongside Canadians and Kiwis [New Zealander] and Brits and so forth.
- 23:00 But then in about the third year, or forth year, after the Korean War ended... no, not that long, the decision was made at one stage, you know, and we were still putting people through the battle training courses and so forth. And somebody said, "Hey, come on, you know, there is a lot more chance of somebody being accidentally killed in Japan doing the battle course than there is in Korea."
- 23:30 So we got orders to run it down and dispense with staff, which we did, and I had, I thought at the time it was an unforgettable experience. The last day, and in fact the Japanese - newly created - Self Defence Force, as it was called, let us know at the last minute as they were going to take it over, they would like to have a formal hand-over take-over ceremony, which created problems
- 24:00 for us because we had packed all the rifles, and so forth, away and we were ready to go so, however, we unpacked everything. And then the morning came that the Japanese all arrived in trucks, and then they de-trucked or de-bussed and they formed up on one side of the parade ground and we formed up on the other, we presented arms to each other and then we ceremoniously lowered the Union Jack and we ceremoniously raised the Rising Sun.
- 24:30 And I thought, 'God, if someone had told me that I would be ever be present at a parade like this ten years ago, I would have said, "No way, impossible."' And it really was a fascinating experience.

**It's a very, very unique experience.**

Yes.

**In your time in Japan in BCOF, was there any sort of undercurrent about Korea being a problem?**

Oh, well the Koreans, as such, were always a problem to the Japanese, much the same sort of

- 25:00 problems we have now with illegal immigrants and so forth. So the Japanese, yeah, they knew all about illegal immigrants, and the Koreans were a big problem for them.

**What sort of...? Sorry, go on.**

No, I was going to say we tried to give them as much assistance as possible, without obviously taking sides in the thing.

**I was about to ask how that played out, what sort of problem that presented for you?**

Oh I, it didn't become a major problem.

**What sort**

- 25:30 **of, well not problem - that's a bit loaded - but what sort of factor did ex-soldiers play in Japanese society?**

Australian ex soldiers or...?

**Japanese soldiers.**

Japanese soldiers. I don't think I have got any direct personal knowledge there, as I say, there had been so many of them that they were just simply absorbed back into the community. Some of them I think suffered, not physically,

- 26:00 but suffered because of it. I remember we had a legal officer on brigade headquarters and I remember him making the comment, "Look around you and make a decision, if ever you are involved in another war make sure you are on the winning side not the losing side," and I think that was damn good advice in fact. But no, I think, again with surprising smoothness I think they were absorbed back into the

- 26:30 population.

**The reports we are getting on BCOF are largely a surprising smoothness in operations.**

Yes it was, a very successful operation. And that extended into unlikely areas because the British were the first to withdraw, because they had so many other commitments in the world, and that saw the beginning of the end for BCOF. But there was one unit which stayed behind for some time because we had specialised knowledge,

- 27:00 and this was an engineer unit, in the British Army, and that was still serving at the time of partition of India, you know, when India and Pakistan split and became two separate countries. And of course back in mainland... there is a term, I forget it now, to

- 27:30 describe the, what used to be the... oh. the sub continent, yeah. I don't know why that... I think I would

have always resented that if I had been an Indian or a Pakistani, but it was called the sub continent. But back in the sub continent, of course, the Indians and the Pakistanis, as you probably aware, were slaughtering each other with great gusto. Now the members of this particular unit were drawn from all parts of India, and they went through this period without there being any trouble whatsoever.

- 28:00 And I have always said since that that was a great compliment to the British, really, that they were able to, (a) they had raised them that way, and (b) they were able to continue to maintain it.

**So they were from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds?**

Yes, yes, yeah. And even though... and we knew because we were talking of their officers, you know, and 'Private so-and-so in the Indian Army (UNCLEAR) this day, and so-and-so the Pakistan army,' and their,

- 28:30 their immediate families had been killed in the rioting in, back in the sub continent, but they survived and went through it and there was, to the best of my knowledge there was never any trouble.

**In terms of Japan, so much is made of the shame and surrender in fighting. How did that play out society at large?**

To the best of my knowledge there was never any trouble whatsoever. They seemed to take the attitude, once the Emperor had spoken and said, "Surrender,"

- 29:00 and it was obvious to them - as I say, the incident with the DUKW - they had been well and truly beaten, there was just never any desire on the part of the Japanese to take any action whatsoever against the occupation force. There were provision on the statute books for crimes against the occupation, but to the best of my knowledge there weren't any.

**In terms of your experience there,**

- 29:30 **how did that change as the years went on?**

Oh, I think it became a bit of a joke in the end, the fact that we were till trying to maintain this occupation force presence, and it wasn't. It was a, became a... as I've said, you can't maintain hatred, and apart from that, living in close proximity to them, soldiers were marrying them and it,

- 30:00 it just all became a great friendly get together, really. And, you know, there were Japanese war brides coming to Australia, that wasn't entirely happy, we can be very... I'm trying to think of a good term. Australians almost sanctimonious in their attitude towards

- 30:30 feelings with the Japanese, you know. But our authority said, "No," and except for soldiers marrying and so forth, to a large degree that was obeyed, I suppose, and certainly it just all relaxed until there was no point in continuing on with it in the end. And of course the Korean War was a

- 31:00 safety valve to some degree, because we were already running down the BCOF, then the Korean War started and almost immediately 67 Battalion, as it was, became 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, and off it went to Korea. And then the Canadians and the Brits and the New Zealanders all joined in, and I think everybody who served in Korea looked on Japan as home, you know, you went back to go home to Japan

- 31:30 on leave and so forth, so it was all very good indeed.

**Did it feel like home for you?**

Yeah, to a very large degree.

**Forgive me, I have got the dates wrong, did you come back to, did you leave Japan in '49?**

Yes, January '49.

**Was there much talk of Korea being a problem militarily then?**

No, although I met some Americans and they gave me a film show,

- 32:00 which used to be popular in those days, with 35mm colour slides and so forth. And I still can remember photographs of Koreans on parade and the Americans on parade and the, my American host saying to me, "There is going to be trouble here, eventually, because the Koreans are not going to continue to accept a..." See, I don't know whether you are aware, but Korea was virtually split in half at

- 32:30 the 38th Parallel, and whilst on our side of the 38th Parallel everyone settled down and just simply got on with making the peace on the northern side, it, course they just bubbled away in a potential war mood and then eventually invaded the south, so, it was not a very happy period.

**Well in terms of the conflict there, what, well what education did you have, or what did you know about communism**

- 33:00 **as a potential enemy?**

Probably not as much then as I should have. I learned a certain amount when I did staff college, which was during the Korean War, and in fact one of our projects was to study communism. I well remember

the American student, came from Georgia, and his syndicate put on a skit there. A group of officers in the bar and

- 33:30 somebody said, "Well tell me something about dialectical materialism, what its mean, I have heard about it in connection with communism." And somebody else said, "Well you have got to understand a fair degree about communism before you can understand dialectical materialism," and you could only get that information by a fairly detailed study. And then the next question was, "Yeah, well how do you discuss this?" and so forth. And somebody said, "Tell me something about Stalin," see. And the interlocutor said, "Oh well, Stalin of course, you must understand, came from Georgia." And my American, who was a genuine Georgian from the United States said, "Man oh man, another Georgian boy!"

**Was there a fear,**

- 34:30 **a real fear of the communist threat?**

Not at that stage not, no. There was of course, yeah, later on, after the Korean War started, yeah, very much so. I don't know whether fear's the right way to describe it, yeah but, yeah.

**So it really was the Korean War setting off that...**

Oh yeah,

**consideration of that threat?**

that's right. And then when I was in UK at a

- 35:00 later stage, of course, you just got used to the fact that it was a daily event in UK, that you'd hear a sort of whispering sound, and you would look up and there would be a B47 or a B52 just flying over head, this constant US, and British, air patrols over the United Kingdom. And that was at the, oh probably at the height of the cold war, this was in '55, '56, that period. Very awkward period.

- 35:30 **Just before you came back to Australia, in your... well, what were you opinions about staying on in Japan as those years progressed, you said it was getting to be a joke. Did you feel that at the time?**

Yeah, well I think we all got to the stage where we couldn't see any direct point in it anymore, you know, what we had gone there for had been achieved I think. You know, destruction of war-like stores, and the spreading of 'democracy,' as the

- 36:00 Japanese called it, we had achieved that, I think, to a large degree, or we felt we had at any rate. And I think we had to quite some degree, and the first free elections were held in Japan and spread more 'democracy.' Yeah so, and I think we all got, we suddenly got to the stage where we felt we could go home. But, that was it.

**How do you spread democracy? What were the means?**

I don't know that we, whether we

- 36:30 had the right answers or not. I think we just broadened, as far as we possibly could, our degree of contact with the Japanese, our social intercourse with the Japanese. We looked after them to a very great degree, which I think they appreciated. Tried to set an example of fun loving democratic

- 37:00 Australians. Yeah I think, yeah I think basically it did establish a very good relationship between Japan and Australia and I think that, to a large degree, goes back to the occupation. Hiroshima, which of course was smack in the middle of our zone, we were in Hiroshima prefecture - I've still never seen any reference to this outside BCOF writings - an Australian engineer

- 37:30 was put in charge of the initial planning for the rebuilding and redesign of Hiroshima, and I have never seen that mentioned anywhere.

**Did you have a chance to go to Hiroshima?**

Oh yes, it was a sort of Mecca, initially, everyone that went to Japan wanted to go to Hiroshima.

**What were your impressions?**

Devastating.

- 38:00 Nearly every city in Japan was wrecked from the affect of conventional bombing, and I think that was the thing one constantly had to remind oneself of in Hiroshima - one bomb did this, you see, and this was a pretty salutary object lesson.

**In terms of actually being in a place like a post nuclear fall-out area, is there a**

- 38:30 **particular smell or feel or anything particular about that space?**

I think the thing that impress... it still lives in my memory, that I haven't found anybody else who agrees with me. In what had obviously been a major industrial and commercial areas, were the piles of office safes all rusting away by the side of the road, where they had been... they had been salvaged from the buildings of course, and then no use, and I don't know what they did with them eventually.

39:00 I always remember that. No, I don't think so, I can't remember anything particular. And I suppose we all had rather mixed feelings about the atom bomb, at the time. I visited Japan several times after the occupation and I remember on the last occasion I was there I re-visited Hiroshima and...

39:30 because there is a centre there, based around the atomic bombing, and the inevitable book for visitors' comments, so I think I said something like, you know, "Tragic for the people of Japan but fortunate for the remainder of the world," which it was. And whenever anyone tries to pin me too closely, "Don't,

40:00 don't I feel guilty?" I say, "No," because it was a terrible weapon and a terrible way to end the war, but on the other hand, this, (a) it was the treatment of our prisoners, and I don't think we would have ever got an Allied prisoner alive out of Japan if there hadn't been a cataclysmic end to the war. And also it was object lesson, you know, there has been several occasions since then when we would have been in a major war and not, sort of, Gulf Wars, in a really major

40:30 war, if it hadn't been for nuclear weapons, which put the brakes on everything. That's my opinion at any rate.

**Just at the end of that tape.**

## Tape 7

00:33 **Sorry.**

No, will I just simply go on...?

**If you could perhaps talk about what you said before about how nuclear weaponry changed the nature of being in the army.**

Well I felt it because, I felt at that stage I couldn't see any potential role for conventional military forces if ever nuclear weapons were used. I think I would still subscribe to that view point. And that's why I

01:00 said earlier, at some stage, that in many ways I think we have got a lot to thank nuclear weapons for, because we would undoubtedly have had a major war if it hadn't been for nuclear weapons. I think the Russians agreed with that view point too, in fact.

**You mentioned that the nuclear weaponry was a factor in the technical or tactical considerations. Was that early on in your experience? When did that begin to come in?**

Oh, in the mid 1950s I suppose.

01:30 And you can, as I've mentioned, Colorado in the United States and going to an airfield there, a B52, for example, surrounded by all the various weapons that it could carry and then in the background there were various rockets and projectiles and missiles that were all part of the United States armoury at that stage. So to them it was

02:00 a very, very real circumstance, whereas I felt it never was with me.

**Well thinking of Australia, how was Australia different when you came back in 1949?**

I don't think I noticed any great differences except that the war was over of course and everyone was a lot happier presumably because of that. But other than that, I don't remember any great, any significant differences striking me.

02:30 **Well yourself, you had made a home in Japan you had been away for a long time, how did it feel to come back to Australia?**

Very good, enjoyed it immensely, saw friends, went out, enjoyed the... Australia. Things were still a bit grim in Australia of course at that stage. Not really on European standards, but for us you couldn't get a new car, for example, and all those sort of things, and clothing. A lot of things were still in quite short supply.

03:00 **I think building materials were a big problem as well.**

Mmm, that's right.

**Did you find it difficult to re-enter a, sort of, civilian or, I mean, Australian society after so much time away?**

No, none whatsoever.

**Any of your friends find it difficult?**

Not to my knowledge, no. Remembering a great majority of my friends were in the army probably. But no, but even there, in discussion with them, no, I don't remember any problems whatsoever.

03:30 **So where did you come back to?**

Well I just went to another appointment in the army. Did a training course after which I was accepted as a regular officer.

**Was that the Queenscliff College?**

No, no. Queenscliff South College it confuses a lot of people, Command and Staff College, about the nearest civilian equivalent you can get, I suppose, is something like a post graduate course, or something like that. It lasted

04:00 for twelve months, and it fitted you to be a staff officer and for command appointments and so forth. The army, in a sense, it goes, progresses from stage to stage. So that was, stage one, of course, was to get you commissioned, well now that's done at ADFA, Australian Defence Force Academy and Duntroon. Then you do command and staff college is the next rung in the career,

04:30 and then you probably do Joint Services Staff College where you bring the three services together, and they study problems from a tri-service view point. Then you can go to what used to be called the Imperial Defence College, that was conducted in UK, and now its called The Royal College of Defence Studies I think it is, which is open to all Commonwealth countries. Or you can be, say, you could go

05:00 to foreign staff colleges, so we have people that go to - I forget what it's called now - Command and Staff College in the United States, that's right, and Britain at Camberley and so forth. So it's a constant learning process.

**And what did your twelve months staff college experience entail?**

Well I'd had absolutely no experience in... well, limited experience only,

05:30 sort of learning the hard way, about staff work, so you learned staff procedures, tactics in great detail, foreign armies, all sorts of things. But it was a very interesting year, it was a very hard working year too, I might say.

**How did studying tactics compare with actually being in the field, and actually being**

06:00 **in action?**

Well, they are being used... all armies use them, I don't think you could survive without them. And we used... you would make a lot of use of things called TEWTs [Tactical Exercise Without Troops], which is... what's the term were you use the capital letters only, I can't think of the name, there's a...

**An acronym.**

An acronym, yes, acronym. The, that stands for Tactical Exercise Without Troops, so you...

06:30 and they are very useful, every army in the world uses it. So you could give a theoretical setting but in a... make it as practical as possible, and then pose problems and people work their way through their problems and so forth. They are very effective, and of course you can call the tune as far as what happens, to a very great degree, so they are very effective in that regard.

**If only war was like that as well.**

Yeah, that's dead right.

**Well, I mean,**

07:00 **did your instructors or teachers, I'm not sure what the term is, did they have much war experience or...?**

Oh yes, usually. Well, it depends, you know, it varies at different periods of history as to how much war experience they've got, but yeah.

**Had any of them had experiences similar to yours, say, in independent company?**

Yeah, there were one or two people from independent companies got through onto directing staff, as we call them,

07:30 yeah.

**As a student, what sort of room did you have to make suggestions, I mean, you'd been a participant yourself?**

Oh, quite a lot.

**which to an academic context.**



Oh, well you have got to remember it's an academic context closely allied with the,

08:00 the actual subject matter, so there is not a great deal of difference. Fascinating in some respects, particularly where you got other armies involved and so forth, and staff colleges round the world always have a percentage of foreign students, which all adds to the interest of the whole thing.

**Were they... where were they from when you were studying?**

08:30 India, Pakistan, United States, Canada, New Zealand, we had a civilian from Department of Defence, that was about it I think. But it has tended to grow since then and we now have Indonesians, for example, sometimes, they have been attending staff college.

**So I suppose some degree of cultural exchange as well?**

Quite a bit in fact, and that's one of the main benefits of these

09:00 schemes, the cultural exchange.

**Now, just in terms of details, what rank were you when you went into the college, was that affected by...?**

I was only a captain when I did staff college.

**Does that affect your rank at all?**

No, not immediately, but it helps later on if you got PSC [Passed Staff College] which are, sort of, magic letters after your name. And certainly when I went to Korea, I was unique that, as a captain, I had a PSC

09:30 and had already completed staff college, that was pretty good at that stage.

**What rank were your fellow students?**

Up to lieutenant colonel.

**I had something in my head and now it's gone. Oh, to what degree were invalided or seriously injured soldiers put down, directed toward,**

10:00 **say, staff colleges. Was that a factor?**

No. Unless you had somebody who had been badly wounded but was still considered to be capable of movement, say, and then that wouldn't necessarily affect their posting to a staff appointment.

**So you were really being considered for an active role?**

Mmm.

**Even though it's an academic, sort of, context?**

Mmm.

**Okay. And during this period, where were you**

10:30 **housed?**

What at, when I did staff college?

**Was that on campus, or...?**

Yeah. Oh, no we had to find our own residences in Queenscliff, which were pretty crummy in fact, anything that was available. So I went down with my wife and son and we lived in, well, a residence at Queenscliff.

**Sorry, your son had been born by this stage?**

Yeah, he was born in Japan.

**Oh really,**

11:00 **what year?**

1948.

**Wow, that's amazing.**

Why?

**Well it's just that, you know, the paths of peoples lives.**

Yeah, that's right.

**Being born in Japan he's part of BCOF.**

Yeah, yeah.

**How was being pregnant for Joan in Japan, how was her medical...?**

Oh that was okay because we had a complete Australian hospital there, 130th Australian General Hospital, we had the 92nd Indian General Hospital and so forth, so medical facilities were excellent.

11:30 **Oh, okay. So, and I think it's during this period that the Korean War breaks out?**

Yeah, the Korean War started in 1950, so I had been home from Japan for more than, oh, well, eighteen months or so when the Korea War started. I think the message to us then was that, whereas in,

12:00 up till then, of course, the Australian Army had only ever existed in order to fight wars, and that was an unusual circumstance to be placed in where we were more or less told, 'Just carry on with your normal career, and if the army wants you to go to Korea, it will. If you are going to go into an appointment within Australia elsewhere, so be it.' And I think that is the only sensible way of looking at it in fact, so we became not only war fighters only, we

12:30 became career soldiers, that's what it amounted to, regardless of what circumstances cropped up.

**So the nature of the Australian Army really changed at that point?**

Yes it did, yeah.

**What were your personal preferences about going to Korea, or not, at that stage?**

Oh, I was quite happy to go to Korea. A great majority of my friends served in Korea at one stage or another. I had friends killed in Korea,

13:00 and it was a nasty little war, Korea. And in the end I tried to hurry things up a bit because negotiations were in process for a long time in Korea, and I just had a feeling when they, when they went into effect the last time that this time they were going to work. So I was then,

13:30 I forget what appointment I was in but I, oh, I was already with what was called BCFK Reinforcements, so I was out at Ingleburn training away to go to Korea and I sensed that this time they were going to work and there was going to be peace, so I tried to hurry things along a bit, but didn't. And I was still in the pipeline when peace, the armistice was signed and so I didn't get to Korea in time

14:00 to participate in the war. And as I say, then later on I was escorting a French General around Australia and he was asking me about my military experiences and I told him that, and he said "Ah, very good timing."

**Did you feel that at the time, were you a bit frustrated?**

No, I didn't, I was a bit frustrated, a lot of it, most of us were I think. It was an experience and... although I then did, after, I did twelve months in Korea

14:30 within a non fighting capacity, that was...

**What was it that was compelling you to Korea, why...?**

Well because the army, because Australia was participating in a war in Korea, it's as simple as that. I felt that it was, you know, if the army wanted to me to go, okay it was my duty to accept. As simple as that.

**You mentioned the training you were undergoing when the armistice was signed, was that specific to Korea, how did that differ?**

Yeah to a very large degree.

15:00 **How would that differ from other sorts of training.**

Well it probably didn't differ from other sorts of training, except that it was specifically orientated towards Korea, and a lot of lessons were learned in Korea. Korea in many ways, of course, was a reversion to World War I as far as the type of war was concerned, trench warfare. And even during the period I was there I spent most of my time, we, well most of the period was digging,

15:30 and digging, and digging, cause... and they still exist to this day, of course, across the centre of Korea, the spine of Korea.

**Those trenches?**

Mmm.

**Wow. And in terms of the harsh winter, was there any sort of training or provision made for that?**

Yeah, as much as possible, yes. Cause the Imjin River, which ran across the British Commonwealth Division front, and a thumping great river, it used

16:00 to freeze over, you know, you could drive vehicles on it, so that's an indicate... and that was a mild winter I found later, the winter I was there. And I'm very glad always that I wasn't there for the first winter because my friends in 3RAR and 1RAR at that stage, they just weren't equipped for it, they had ordinary Australia winter uniforms, and it must have been terrible, it really was.

**During those early years you must**

16:30 **have been watching with baited interest. What information were you able to get about what was going on?**

In Korea?

**Yeah.**

Oh, very detailed information, always, yeah.

**That's contrary to the Australian public - I don't think that we really got much in the way of details?**

Oh, I think there was a fair bit of information, if... I don't think a great many people were interested, that was the limitation. I

17:00 had friends often, you know, when I said I was going to Korea, said, "Are you taking your family?" And I said, "No, I don't think so, there is a war going on." You know, just general ignorance.

**It's amazing isn't it?**

Mmm.

**You said before it was a, 'nasty little war,' or...**

Yeah.

**not sure what your phrase was. Was that your opinion at the time? What did you think of the conflict?**

Well, I don't...

17:30 not sure. It was a war and a, obviously a nasty war, this... you know, there were a lot of casualties in Korea.

**Is it worth your while as a soldier, and you are committed to the army, to even question causes of wars, or do you give yourself much room to speculate on whether it's worth while?**

I think that's a, probably a present day phenomenon to

18:00 question things. I visited Vietnam on several occasions, although I can't claim to have actually served there, and I suppose I would categorise myself as a fairly vehement supporter of Vietnam, that is, our intervention there, although I know quite well that a great many people would disagree with me. That was my assessment, and I made two or three visits quite early in

18:30 the piece in Vietnam, and it will always be a bone of contention, I think, to what people think about it.

**Those early visits, when were they, were they pre our intervention?**

Oh, my first visit, yeah, it was before the Australian Army was there, it was in 1959, I think,

19:00 is the first time I visited Vietnam, and then again in 1962 and 1963, and each time it had changed to some degree.

**What was your role in 1959, was it...?**

Just purely an observer. In fact I went with the Brits on that occasion, I stayed with the British Embassy in

19:30 Korea, in Vietnam. And then we put our training team in, AATTV, Australian Army Training Team, Vietnam. That went in, in 1962, so I, from then on whenever I went to Vietnam I visited members of the team in its various locations.

**Did you have duties in Vietnam? Was that, again, an observational position?**

Observation position.

20:00 **With a view to reporting back to...?**

Yeah. Just to, yes, as I say, I visited the... and at that stage I was pretty closely wedded to special forces, this... So I was with independent companies in World War II, and then after my first visit I think it was,

20:30 to Vietnam, or may... I forget the exact period. No, when I came home from Japan/Korea, I was appointed to raise and command the 1st Commando Company in Sydney, which again swung me in the

direction of special forces and really, for the remainder of my career, I was involved in some way with special forces.

**Does that mean you trained a lot of the people who went to Vietnam?**

Yes,

21:00 quite a few.

**This is out of chronological sequence because I haven't talked to you about Korea, but I didn't realise you'd been to Vietnam. The special forces in Vietnam, did you call directly on your experiences in doing similar things, I imagine, to what the basic kind of things in Vietnam was?**

Yeah, yes. Yeah,

21:30 and of course I had also, at that stage, I had been to UK and trained with the Royal Marine Commandos cause, as I say, I was orientated pretty definitely in the direction of special forces, made it my service career after that. So I remained in, I went to UK... I came home, I had leave, I started 1st Commando Company,

22:00 I then went to UK to train with the Royal Marines and then came back to Australia, and went on in command of 1st Commando Company.

**Was that experience with the Royal Marines influential in your commando leading?**

Oh yes I think so. As I say they are, I think, a first class corps, the Royal Marines, and I learned a lot with them, good practical experience.

**Okay, well perhaps we should talk about**

22:30 **when you got notice that you were going to Korea, this was, so this is actually after the armistice. No, but you had been training.**

Yes. Yeah, well the two went together in fact, I was still in the final stages of my training when the armistice was signed but I still went to Korea, so it didn't make any difference at that stage. And then I arrived in Japan and it was very pleasant to be back in Japan in fact, I enjoyed it, and then went on to Korea after only a few days in Japan, and then

23:00 had twelve months in Korea.

**What were your observations of coming into Korea? What did you see and what did you think of the place?**

It smelled, literally, but you could smell it.

**Was it like...?**

But, again, it was a very beautiful country, very rugged but very beautiful. Korean people are hard people, it's... I think you feel

23:30 that when you are dealing with Koreans that they are tough cookies, they really are, and I think their appearance is tough much more so than the Japanese.

**What was the state of the country on a social level, I mean, what were the towns like and...?**

Oh, it was badly knocked around during the war.

24:00 I have, I don't know where I have got them, I have got photos somewhere of Korea that I took at that stage. But it had been, you know, the tide of war had sort of run up and down the peninsular, I think, on three occasions and, as always, from the view point of the civilian population, they didn't come out of it at all well.

**Was that part of your role, trying, dealing with the aftermath of war?**

No.

24:30 **And social...?**

No. No, I had nothing whatsoever to do with that, but you couldn't help not observing, or observing, rather.

**What were you most occupied with doing in that twelve month period?**

Which twelve month period?

**Korea.**

Oh, sorry. Well I

- 25:00 spent the first few months in the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, so digging holes was the main occupation during that time, and also participating in what could only be American terminology, 'Exercise Scram.' And I think it still governs their thinking to some degree to this day. The American thinking at that time and for some years afterwards, I know from my personal experience with them was, 'There will never be another
- 25:30 Pearl Harbor,' and so, you know, cause they were caught, literally, in a completely unexpected war, and there is no doubt that this influenced them. So I can remember in Korea even then, when it was during the armistice period, seeing gun crews sitting on their guns, sitting on, you know, in pouring rain when there was no sight of war anywhere at this stage, but the Americans had ordered that there would be a degree
- 26:00 of manning of all major weapons at certain times, so they went right ahead and did it. And then we would get these exercises, and you just simply pick up the phone - I was on divisional headquarters for most of there - and your phone would go and you would pick it up and an American voice would say, "Scram." And you dropped everything and you went out to your allocated battle position,
- 26:30 and that went on... probably still goes on, I don't know. There's only Americans there now, of course all the other components of the allied forces have gone, so there's only Americans and South Koreans. But last time I was, I visited South Korea a few years ago and was taken down to see the tunnels at... they were very concerned that the North Koreans were tunnelling under the DMZ, so that could come up in the South Korean zone.
- 27:00 I think this was the most futile thing I have ever seen... at the end of one of these tunnels there was a soldier sitting there, just looking down the tunnel, this tunnel went straight into North Korea and so it was permanently manned. There was an observer there, peering down the tunnel looking into North Korea, you couldn't see anything of North Korea except a hole in the ground, but still, that was the instruction, so...
- 27:30 **What do you have to do wrong to get that job, that'd be...?**
- Yeah, well that's a good question. I thought that.
- Jeez. Was there any real fear, not fear, but consideration given to more conflict in those early months?**
- Oh yes, yes. The Americans and the South Koreans in particular, they took it dead seriously. And, you know, you have probably seen this on film, the hut which is divided down the centre with a line running... There is a table in the middle
- 28:00 and so that there is no argument there is a line runs down the centre, a painted line, and this side is North Korea and that side is South Korea, and this is where they hold their regular talks about the future of Korea.
- I haven't seen that.**
- Yeah.
- Well that was the American point of view, in those early months, what the Australian or British Commonwealth Force?**
- We just went along with it I think, because we were under treaty arrangements,
- 28:30 we had agreed to support it and so forth, so we just went along with it.
- Did the nature of your duties change in that twelve month period?**
- Yeah, cause I went to divisional headquarters.
- Okay.**
- So then I became a staff officer on the general staff, which meant that I was responsible for operations and training and things like that. And I got to go
- 29:00 down to I Corps, that was what it was called, actually it was the 1st Corp, but I Corps, which was the American Corp Headquarters for our area. I used to always find that quite amusing because the Brits had what was called a liaison air flight equipped with Austers - I don't know whether you are familiar with aircraft - the Austers are light aircraft. And I used to fly down periodically in an Auster
- 29:30 to liaise with corps headquarters, the only snag being - and I don't know why the Brits did this cause technologically they were quite capable - the Austers didn't have radios fitted. So we would, I would arrive in the middle of this terribly busy air field, you know, with American light aircraft stooging around all over the place. And suddenly in the middle of this would appear an Auster, which the Yanks knew quite well didn't have a radio, and so used to see red lights going in all directions, American aircraft clearing the area,
- 30:00 which was quite convenient from my view point cause I would just go straight in and land. But, it was

crazy.

**Were there any sort of conflicts of opinion about command in terms of, between the British Commonwealth Forces and the Americans?**

No, no. We tended to do things our own way, which the Americans didn't always agree with. And I think there has been an unfortunate trend in our army in recent years where we have tended to swing more and more towards

30:30 the American way of doing things than the British. I still prefer the British way of doing things. So, well "Scram" I suppose, in itself, was a good example of the American way of doing things, and they tend to do things on a cut and dried basis, you know, if you do so-and-so and it doesn't work therefore you do so-and-so, and they will try and put down on paper as many solutions as possible.

31:00 The British way is, you prepare your initial plan, something happens, you then, as we would call it, you make a new appreciation, based on the new situation. The Americans tend to be much more cut and... well, I might be doing them a disservice, but they used to be much more cut and dried in the way they approached things. But good people to work with for all that.

**Is that basically saying there is more improvisation in the British form, if things crop up?**

Yeah, I think so, yeah.

31:30 **How did that manifest itself in Korea, did that ever come up, become an issue?**

No it didn't, I don't think so at any rate, except perhaps in the planning stages, during the period I was there. As I say, we would go so far and say, "Well now I can't plan beyond that because I don't know what the situation will be," whereas the Americans tended to come up with a number of alternative plans. And the Brit concept

32:00 was that you can't do that, and I think I agree with that.

**How did you personally find this period, being away from your family?**

Just accepted it, one of those things, your job.

**Was communication between Korea and Australia, I mean, well set up at this stage?**

Well I've mentioned already letter writing was very good, but not

32:30 much else. I don't think we could call, make telephone calls at that stage, from Korea to Australia, so it was essentially letter writing, but in all other respects it was all pretty civilised.

**Did you have any leave during that twelve months?**

Yes, I used to get what was... R&R [Rest and Recreation], that's where the term came from, out of the Korean War, rest and recuperation. So,

33:00 I forget what the periods of time were now, but you would get R&R in Japan, six or seven days at a time, and you probably got two or three of those during a twelve month period, so it was all very good.

**Did you have any old friends in Japan?**

Amongst the Japanese? No, although we did have one while Joan was...

33:30 that's right, I went back on a visit from Australia, and Joan was with me, and so in the main street of Kure we went into a shop. I said, "This is where that Japanese girl, who was pregnant at the same time that you were, living, let's call in and see if she is still there," and she was. And she was overjoyed, she really was, she came thundering down the stairs.

34:00 Their son was then at university so, but she produced photographs of him and oh, it really, it was a red-letter day as far as she was concerned, there was no doubt about that. So that gave me a little warm feeling, you know, it was very nice to be placed in that situation.

**Did she recognise you?**

Oh yes, yeah, so it was very good. One of those good things which come out of situations, not always but every now again.

34:30 **Those trips to Japan, were they like going home for you?**

Oh, well from Korea, yes, yes they were, yeah, always very pleasant experience.

**Okay, well your Korean experience, was that always going to be a twelve months tour, was that established early on?**

Yes, yeah, that was under the United Nations Agreement which ended the war in Korea but, and it was rigidly policed

35:00 too. So there was no way I was going to, would have been able to spend more than one day getting out

of Korea when the time came.

**How about one day less, cause you got back earlier?**

I could have, I suppose, yes. But usually it was timed so that you, you would, yes, that was more important, you would not be in Korea more than, but you probably could have been less than.

**What was the rationale behind that?**

Well, it was obviously terms of the armistice

35:30 agreement, that the strength of forces on both sides of the DMZ were so-and-so and so-and-so, and they couldn't be exceeded by either side. And that was the rationale.

**Just, we are just approaching the end of this tape, I was wondering how, if at all, you had to adjust to a staff position and how you found that experience?**

Oh no, well, see when I did command staff college you got practice in filling various staff appointments and so forth, in an exercise situation.

36:00 Oh no, I found that was just part of your career, that was it. It's a... so you, the aim was to produce officers as well rounded as possible and as many different experiences in that situation.

**And during that period, was there any talk of, or your participation, or more Australian participation in Malaya?**

No, I don't think so.

**Okay.**

That's a sudden switch, why Malaya?

36:30 **Sorry?**

You said, "Was there any talk of, more talk of Australian participation in Malaya?" I said, "That was a sudden switch," we've just been talking Korea and Japan and...

**Well that is where you went next.**

Yeah, that's right. Yeah, okay, alright, fine.

**Sorry. Sorry to throw you like that, I just, well...**

No, you didn't throw me, except I was just curious that's...

**I was just wrapping up your Korean experience,**

Yeah, yeah, that's right.

**wondering if you had any inclination of**

37:00 **what the future held for you at that stage?**

No not, not really, no, personally. I'm not bored, I'm just yawning. No. What next? Because at that... and then when I got home from Korea/Japan, that's when I went off to train with the Royal Marines and...

**In the UK?**

Mmm.

**How long was that posting?**

37:30 Seven months I think.

**Right. How did that come about, was that a voluntary position?**

Well the Royal Marine Commandos were, at that stage, accepted as being pre-eminent in the field of special ops, so we formed the two commando companies and decided that was a logical step in the formation, that we should send off the officers commanding to

38:00 get as much experience as possible from the Royal Marines.

**I suppose I was, before, getting at when you began to realise that Malaya, the Malayan situation, might play a role in your life or your career?**

No, I think it took a long time, because Malaya went on from 1950 remember. That was when, I think, Gurney, the British High Commissioner was murdered in 1950 by the CTs [Communist Terrorists], so from then on it, sort of, bubbled away in the background

38:30 always, as far as British Commonwealth was concerned, sort of second fiddle to Korea. No, that's probably not entirely true because the Brits had a very vital interest in Malaya, as it still was then and so, yeah, so it was... And Australia, we didn't, or we weren't represented in Malaya until 1957 I think it

was,

39:00 and then we sent a battalion, or battalion group to Malaya to back up the Brits. and...

**And before then, there hadn't been any talk of the Australian involvement?**

No, no.

**Okay. That's the end of that tape.**

## Tape 8

00:32 **I wanted to ask a question about 3RAR, when you turned up, and what kind of condition the fellows were in?**

Oh great, except for the K Force fellows, I don't know whether you have heard of the term 'K Force.' K Force were special enlistees for the Korean War only, and of course as soon as the war ended they all wanted to get out and come back to, come back home.

01:00 Under terms of their enlistment they couldn't do that and some of them were a bit cheesed off about that.

**That's in the worst of it, I guess.**

Mmm.

**What, did you have to invent things for the men to do in that year that you served?**

In Korea? There was a fair bit of sport played inter-unit, which meant international on occasion. No, not that I'm aware of. We were pretty

01:30 busy in fact which I suppose people find difficult to accept, but we really were. I used to go out... and we were in a bit of a unique position in that we actually, 3RAR actually lived north of the 38th Parallel, we were in North Vietnam, ah, North Korea for the period that I was there. And we used to go down every morning, go out to the allocated battle position in the event of the war starting again we were, we knew where we would

02:00 be going and we were preparing positions there, so that involved a morning trip to go on with the digging and the preparation of the battle position.

**At the time was there much likelihood of it starting up again?**

No, I didn't think so, but some people did, no I don't think so.

**Did the Americans at the time behave like victors or**

02:30 **the vanquished?**

Neither. They just got on with the job and accepted it.

**And this exercise "Scram," was that just sprung upon you at any time?**

Yeah, that was the whole idea.

**At night?**

Yes, always at night.

**Why does that not surprise me. Since your service in the Second**

03:00 **World War, in terms of active service and so on, what kind of technological changes had become the norm?**

I think an overall improvement in weapons, if one can use the term improvement in weapons. But

03:30 just improvements generally I suppose, that's all..

**Well for example, the rifles were...?**

Oh yes, because in Korea we were still using World War II rifles. Then shortly after I came home there, we introduced the SLRs, it was called, the self loading rifle, and they have just progressed ever since, so that now we have

04:00 the Steyr is the standard weapon, that's again an automatic.

**What about things like night technology?**



Oh yes.

**Night vision?**

Big, big, big changes there. Didn't exist in Korea.

**Oh okay, so, I'm sorry, I'm still talking round about Korea. Radio communication, had that sort of taken...?**

Yeah, no dramatic improvements but there had been improvements, yes. Whereas in

04:30 World War II, communications generally were pretty primitive, in Korea they had improved greatly. We had, at platoon to company level you were almost guaranteed to have good communications.

**And what about soldiers', I was going to call them 'luxuries' but they are not luxuries. Evidently in the Second**

05:00 **World War the Australians did it quite tough, were there much improvement in conditions and rations?**

Yes, I think there were. Although there is one school of thought which would say that bully beef and biscuits, although much maligned, is still one of the best staple diets you will get, and I've got a sneaking regard for that view point. But now of course you can have canned this and canned that and there has been a tremendous improvement, yeah,

05:30 except that every now and again I think you should fall back on bully beef and biscuits.

**Could you tuck into one now, do you think?**

Bully beef and biscuits, yes! Yeah.

**Is it a kind of a nostalgic...?**

No. No, because they were, you felt you were eating something, you didn't always feel that with these little cans and so forth, and I never did like Spam very much as opposed to bully beef.

**What about the M&V [Meat and Vegetables]?**

06:00 No, I didn't like M&V very much.

**I haven't met anybody who did. Okey dokes. Oh, and also socially, in Korea, how can I put this... there seemed to have been a lot of regard for honour and valour during the Second World War, I suspect things were a little bit different in the early 50s?**

No, not noticeably I don't think, not as far as we were concerned.

06:30 No.

**Okay. What about interaction with the civilians in Korea?**

Very, very little. I think the second last night I had in Korea, I think, opened my eyes cause my colleagues on divisional headquarters insisted on giving me a farewell party. So we went down to Seoul for this, and went to a night club; (a) the fact that there was a night club

07:00 in existence surprised me, and (b) the goings on in the night club rather surprised me too. But it was, I suppose, it was an interesting night out, if nothing else.

**Well that's an interesting euphemism for the place.**

Yeah.

**Could you be a little bit more explicit in what was going on there?**

Oh there were American soldiers all over their, or American officers all over their Korean girl friends like a rash, you know.

**What,**

07:30 **how did the Korean men sort of cope with that?**

I don't know, I didn't... they were noticeable by their absence at the night-club I might say.

**And were the girls in the same position most women are during a war, in that they kind of needed to make a living and stay alive?**

Yeah, yeah.

**Okey dokes. I wanted to move on and talk about the connection, or the link, between the end of Korea and the beginning**

08:00 **of the Royal Marine Commandos. I've got a weird question for you... is that, do you know**

**anything regarding the etymology of commando and commander and so on?**

Commando and commander?

**Well, like, are they connected or...?**

No. To the best of knowledge commando is a South Africa term, which first came in to prominent use in, during the Boer War and the,

08:30 as a forerunner for the type of operations we now call special operations. The Boers used to send commandos on raids into the British forces, and so the term stuck.

**Is there a direct link between your 2/5th experience and joining the Royal Marine Commandos?**

No.

**So how did this offer come about?**

Oh well, I think when the Australian Army decided to reform commando units,

09:00 I think they probably looked around for somebody who had war time experience, cause remember this was... the war ended in 1945 and I went off to train with the Royal Marines in 1955, so it was ten years afterwards. And during that time all the wartime units had been disbanded, the independent companies, and we were literally starting again from scratch.

**So you are about twenty-five at about this time, took you to the UK?**

09:30 Older than that. I'll be... gee, I should be able to jump straight in on this.

**I've got your dates right here anyway.**

1955.

**So about thirty-three.**

Yeah.

**Okay. In army terms that is almost considered senior.**

Yeah.

**So what, how does, how do you, how were you placed**

10:00 **then with what would be probably be a lot of young bucks around the place?**

Yeah. I developed a theory of training at that stage because I had a lot to do with the supervision of training, and so forth and so on. And the impression I formed was that... I don't know whether this is borne out by anybody else, I think a man is probably at his fittest in his late twenty and early thirties. As a young buck, yeah, you know,

10:30 over a hundred metres you could run the legs off me at, say, thirty-two or thirty-three, but if I want sustained effort over a period of time I would go for the older man every time. And then I was able to prove that to my own satisfaction, with both myself and other people, in the commando when I formed it, that if you want sustained effort, you want people who develop the technique of not burning themselves out in a brief burst of energy.

11:00 **That leads one to be cynical about why the army was so keen on the, sort of, seventeen to twenty-one year olds, in terms of enlistment then?**

Yeah, that's a good question I suppose. You could probably give a cynical answer to that saying they don't know their own minds and they... so forth and so on, but yeah.

**In any event, where were the UK Royal Marines based?**

Oh, their prime commitment, when I was with them, was in Cyprus in fact

11:30 fighting the Cypriots, or the Greek Cypriots. I did my training at a place called Bickley in Devon which is still used by the Royal Marines as a training establishment.

**It's a nice part of the world too, I believe?**

Yes, it is.

**So when you got to the UK, did you take your wife and child?**

Yes.

**And**

12:00 **was it, oh, well I'll be cheeky enough to use the word 'cushy' post, in terms of what they sent**

**you to do?**

No, it wasn't, it was bloody hard training. The Royal Marines don't mess around, they... and so, yeah, no any thoughts I may have had in that regard - and I didn't in fact - but I would have been quickly disabused of those thoughts. No, it was hard training.

**So it wasn't really a career climb then?**

Yes it was, because it gave me another leg-in, in a different sphere,

12:30 if you like.

**And did you go with the rank of captain or had you been...?**

No, I was a major then.

**When did you get your pips for major?**

Get my crown for major.

**Pardon?**

Crown. In 19-, oh in, before I left Japan I was promoted to major, in 1954 I think it was.

13:00 Sorry, I used to have all these things at my fingertips once.

**Oh that's alright, we're sort of only asking you to trawl through names and dates of sixty years and so on, so don't feel too bad. Is there a special ceremony when you become a major?**

No.

**Just in the post?**

No. I promoted myself in fact, well, with official sanction. But I left Korea and was posted, peculiarly enough, as second in command of the Divisional Battle School, which was established at Haramura, which was the

13:30 place that I mentioned we discovered when, during BCOF days, when we were looking for weaponry and so forth. So I went back to Haramura... tell you a funny story in a second just about that. And yeah, so and I knew that as second in command it was a major's appointment, so apart from having the seniority and the experience and everything else, I had everything except the rank.

14:00 And I was sort of messing around down in Hiro, which was a base area, and I said one morning, 'Oh the hell with this.' So I got out of bed and put on a couple of crowns and went up to Haramura and marched myself in, and a couple of people were vaguely surprised but everybody accepted it, so there it was.

**Well I think I can confess to a bit of self-promotion myself from time to time. That's kind of funny though, you hear about so many rules in,**

14:30 **in the service, I guess you can, I guess you get to a position...?**

I suppose I have seen, I seem to have broken more rules than most people I suppose.

**Well I haven't heard many broken rules today.**

Well enlisting under a false name is usually considered one, and now I have promoted myself. I had never thought much of that before in fact but... and it worked okay.

**So when you got to the UK was the war still significant in terms of its physicality?**

No.

15:00 Oh, I don't... well if you went down around London at that time, there was still bombed out sites and so forth which hadn't been repaired, but remember again it was ten years after the war.

**True. True, but time did move a little slower then than, say, perhaps today.**

Yes it did.

**What about, sort of, could you pick an ex serviceman in civvy [civilian] clothes?**

No.

**So how, well that's... I'm just trying to figure my dates, but the Queen, we would have had a Queen by then I think.**

Oh yes, yes. The King died, King George VI, while I was at staff college in 1952, so Her Majesty was crowned, well, very close to my departure for Korea in fact.

**And the crowning of**

15:30 **the young Queen sort of heralded in a, potentially a, sort of a, new lease of life for Britain...**

Yes, yes it did.

**and any member of the service who's closely aligned with the monarch, the monarchy. So what connection did you have with the royal family at the time?**

None. Except that she introduced a new crown for majors to wear, she... the current crown is called the King Edward crown, and prior to that it was a different crown

16:00 under the previous monarch. Other than that, I think, there were very few changes. And we of course were much more closely aligned with the British forces, at that stage, than we are now.

**Were you invited to any royal functions?**

Not at that time, no. Later on I was made an Aide to Her Majesty in... I forget when, now.

**What did that mean?**

16:30 Nothing very much, except that I was... some people used to put the letters after their name, I never did, ADC. It was quite an honour in many ways to

17:00 be made an Aide de Camp to Her Majesty, but didn't mean... Oh, and I had a very elaborate aglet which I wore on my right shoulder, I think it was, yeah. But it didn't make any difference other than that.

17:30 **Did you do any service in her company?**

No. It's very much an honorary appointment really.

**If you didn't, sort of, have a high regard for the royal family and you were in the services, what would you do, just keep quite about it or...?**

Yeah, I suppose so.

**Well, I mean, it doesn't preclude that just because you are a, you know, you are a soldier that you necessarily believe in the royal family.**

No, that's right, that's right.

**Okay, let's get down to some tin tacks. What role**

18:00 **were you involved in at the Royal Marines?**

Training, then training me. So I did a basic commando course, which was six weeks of pretty gruelling training in fact. In fact during the last week of the course another Australian major who had gone to UK to train with me, he was going to take over 2nd Commando Company, he was killed in the second last week of the course.

**Because**

18:30 **the training was so tough?**

Yes, yeah, on a... there was a thing, a device, which I then installed on Middle Head in Sydney, called the scramble course. And the scramble course involved up a mountain down the other side, across a stream, up another mountain, and you just did that several times, on a timed basis. And poor old Jack Anderson, when...

19:00 and it involved several river crossings, or minor stream crossings, and we came to one of them and used to go across them by what was called the Postman's Walk, that was a, one rope suspended another, and you stood on the lower one and worked your way across. And when we got to this particular one, although we, in the group, we were about half way through, I reckoned, but there was no body else in sight. So he went into the water, with the idea of getting himself across,

19:30 and he went on the wrong side of the rope, he put himself in on the lower side, which he should have realised. And of course the river... 'shee-oow,' and he was gone, and that was it.

**What sort of stand does the army, or even in the UK, take when they lose a man during training in a non-war period?**

Everybody is very sorry, and that's about it.

20:00 **And yet these days there would be cries for compensation and litigation and...**

Yes, yeah.

**so on. Was that the case then?**

No. I called to see his wife when I got back to Australia, or his widow as she was then, and she made it very obvious that she was very bitter. He'd told me while he was alive that she never really liked the army, even though it was his career.

- 20:30 And again she made it obvious that she expected me to – because I was flying back from UK and I was going straight up to see the, my unit, which was then at a place called Gan Gan in New South Wales, doing training – and she made it obvious that she expected me to stay for a time with her. But I
- 21:00 hadn't even thought of that, I must confess, maybe I was... should have. When I said, "Well I want to catch such-and-such a plane," she expressed surprise, and I went off, and that was the only time I ever saw her in fact. She wasn't at all happy. That's understandable of course, I'm not being facetious there.

**No, no, no, just, I guess things start... the world is starting to change and various things are contracting. Just if I may ask,**

- 21:30 **how did you wife cope with the amount of danger you placed yourself in?**

Well if she did feel it, she never let on, I was never aware of any deep feelings that she had. She was very concerned when Jack Anderson was killed, of course, because we were all, we were just the three of us together, and she had his body brought back to Australia.

**Were there many junior officers**

- 22:00 **to you while you were training there? Like, for example, was it mainly lieutenants up to captains and majors training, or was it a...?**

Well it was Royal... I just went through with the Royal Marines and whoever happened to be on course so there were marines, that's private soldiers, were doing the same training. Marine Bell, I remember, was my 'Oppo' as the Brits would call him, or sidekick, and yeah, so I just trained with everybody else.

**So would that have made you a fair degree older**

- 22:30 **than most of them?**

Yeah.

**How did that go down?**

Oh well I think they accept... as a major, I think they accepted the fact that I would be older in any case, so yeah, there was no great problem there. And I was very, very fit physically at that time, so I didn't have any real problems with training in any way.

**When you are in a level playing field, such as those training courses, do the other men still retain their respect to you as a major?**

- 23:00 Yeah. Yeah.

**So it never blends into the background for periods of time?**

Oh, it does to some degree, particularly if you are canoeing and one of you is in one cockpit and one is in another, yes, because you... and you've got to work together, that's the whole point. And also cliff assault, and things like that, when you are roping up and down a cliff, a degree of close companionship is highly desirable, yeah.

- 23:30 I only felt guilty once, and that was when we were doing a canoe launch from a submarine, and I was clumsy I acknowledge that, and I capsized the canoe and we had a very wet period.

**Is there any friendly retribution or respite for that?**

No. No.

**How would you describe the UK Royal Marines as, in terms of character as, say, separate to Australian men you fought with?**

- 24:00 Well, as I say, when I made this little impromptu speech, I said that I felt they were more like us than any regiment of the British Army I had ever come across, and I would still stick to that view point.

**What was it then?**

Just, oh they are very practical, very practical. Very realistic, which I suppose is another way of saying they are practical. Yeah, they were just good troops.

**And do you think that the class system had any bearing on them as soldiers, whereas it wouldn't here?**

- 24:30 I think that has gone out to a very large degree, in the British services. It did initially, the first time I had met the Brits, yes, it was very noticeable from our view point, but I don't think it applies so much now. Only they have got a rather, I thought, annoying habit of only calling people junior to them by their surname, so, "Blogs come here." I would always, in similar circumstances, say,

- 25:00 "Private Blogs." But, and in fact the Australian soldier would tend to pick you up if you didn't, and if you said "Blogs" he would say, "I have a rank you know sir!" Even if he was only a private.

**Was, quite apart from these training exercises you went on, you were on the commandos for**

**seven months, what else was involved?**

Well, that was it, seven months of continuous training. Oh, one was an easy one, so I did

25:30 the basic commando course, I did a cliff leaders course. I had always said I wanted to see Land's End and I found myself climbing up Land's End within a short period of arriving in UK. And then I did a swimmer canoer's course which involved diving and paddling a canoe. And then as a, sort of, let-up from all of that, I did an amphibious warfare staff course where we did staff planning of operations

26:00 and so forth.

**It's funny, I think a lot of people continually assume that anything to do with the army is to do with weapons, ordnance and so on. And we live in a health obsessed society now, it's a wonder more people aren't thinking of the army as a way of staying fit.**

Yeah, I some times wonder that because it really is, and by degrees it's percolating into civilian life, so a hell of a lot of things that I did, as military training, people are now doing for fun, by joining various courses and so forth, yeah.

26:30 **Okay, coming back to Australia, were you called back or was it simply the end of your post over there?**

Just the end of my posting.

**Okay dokes, so we are looking at about November '54, if, I wrote it down before?**

Yeah.

**Okay.**

November '54 is when I came home from Korea/Japan, we are now looking at mid 1956 when I came back to Australia from the Royal Marines. Cause I went to the Royal Marines

27:00 in October of '55, and now I am coming back to Australia in mid 1956. Sorry, have I thrown you out in some way.

**No, no, only unless there is something significant that we have missed in between that and taking up action with the Malayan Emergency?**

No, nothing in between that.

**Okay so the business in Malaya had been going on for oh, ages by now.**

Yes.

27:30 **What was your knowledge of it at the time?**

Oh, sort of general knowledge because it was, involved British Commonwealth forces and was another war and, you know, my job was to take an interest in wars at that stage.

**Are you at a position where you can turn down requests made of you in terms of service?**

Then?

**Oh well, it's a stupid way of phrasing the question.**

28:00 **Were you asked or did they tell you to go to Malaya?**

No, they told me.

**And what was the assignment?**

Just purely to do... well it was a special operations course again but, and I was, run by the Brits again, and I was attached to headquarters, FARELF [Far East Land Forces] Head quarters, Far Eastern Land Forces while I did that. And that again didn't involve anything very much, other than slogging through the Malayan jungle for a few

28:30 weeks.

**I'm just trying to work out whether the Royal Marine Commandos, whether your time there was designed specifically, you know, with a, sort of, more sinister feeling as to what you would then do with that?**

No, I don't think so, I think it was just to... that was pretty early in the piece of my time after raising 1st Commando Company here. No, it was just anticipated I would put the knowledge that I had gained with the Royal Marine Commandos into training

29:00 our own commandos out here.

**Well I meant to ask before too, you know, after your experience in New Guinea did you find that the Royal Marine Commandos new more, had more technology or more technique?**

Yes, more technique. As I think I mentioned they were, I think, recognised as being pre-eminent in the world. They probably... no our Commandos are good,

29:30 and of course we now have SAS [Special Air Service] in addition to, but they all come under the category of special forces, so. And the Brits have always, surprisingly enough, because, you know, many Australians look on the Brits as being pretty soft characters, they are not in my experience, and in fact they have led the world, I think, in a lot of these special operations techniques and so forth.

**Well not in war, they have acquitted themselves over and again.**

Yeah.

30:00 **A fair amount of social change going on in Australia in the '50s, and a fairly solid, sort of, anti communist feel at the same time, it's a while before the referendum. Are you able, as a full time member of the service, to really engage with, sort of, social norms?**

Oh yes, I think so, yeah. I don't remember any difficulty at all in that respect.

**And the sentiment in Australia towards**

30:30 **armed, or servicemen?**

Generally pretty good, I think we were accepted everywhere. Some people used to, sort of, cock an eye when you said you were in the army... "You what?!" They couldn't understand anyone in his right mind being in the army as a full time career, I think.

**Well no, and I will ask you the same question a bit later on in terms of the 60s,**

31:00 **I'm sure you got quite a different response from people.**

Yes, yes. Vietnam had an impact right through the services.

**Yeah, it pretty much imploded I guess.**

Mmm.

**So, you say that your involvement in Malaya was kind of dragging men through the jungle, and so on, but it must have been a little bit more involved than that?**

No, again it was a special one arranged for me to some degree. And

31:30 just, again, to slog it out in the jungle today.

**Glass of water?**

Yeah. I mean, no, I'll be okay I think.

**Sure?**

Thank you.

**I would lay bets that very few people in Australia know much about what's going on in Malaya at the time. Did, were you permitted to tell people where you were going?**

Oh yes, yeah.

**And did they give you much response?**

Well, curiosity, more than anything else.

32:00 **What did you find when you got there then, first of all, did you, sort of, look at it and go, "Oh God, more jungle?" Or...**

Yeah, to some degree. And to make it worse, I remember the first exercise I went on with my hosts, and I really was in good shape at that stage. And this involved, we got out of the Land Rovers and we went straight up a, the side of a mountain, and then just

32:30 away we went. No, I'm sorry, I'm talking about next morning. We, the first day we just simply were issued with kit and so forth and the next day we, off we went and out of the Land Rovers and straight up the side of a mountain and then slogged our way through the jungle, without anything to start with. And my whole being was crying out for a cup of tea or something, cause I just, literally I was not used to that, I was used to hard training but I liked to have something inside me.

33:00 And finally we stopped about four o'clock in the afternoon, and that's when you made camp then. And I was, as I say, I was in good nick, and we were carrying Burgen rucksacks cause we get more into them, so. And we had this stop and I thought, 'Jesus, that pack's heavy,' so I took it off and I started to unpack it, and sitting in the bottom of the damn thing I found a fifty pound canon ball.

33:30 Some Royal Marine's sense of humour. So I... probably in years to come, somebody will find this canon

ball laying in the middle of the jungle and say, 'An intriguing mystery, how did a canon ball get there?' Well I could tell them. So I just I heaved it down the side of the hill.

**What was the size and shape of the unit that you were to lead?**

In Australia?

34:00 **In Malaya.**

Oh, I was just attached to the Brits, I had no command responsibility whatsoever.

**Is that odd for a person of your, by then, considerable rank to be just detached like that?**

Oh, well I had just done it in UK not recent... long before, acting as one of the mob.

**And what was the purpose of you being there then?**

Acclimatisation again, and to really

34:30 reacquaint me with various aspects of special operations I think.

**Well if you will forgive me for kind of looking sideways at the situation, I'm just having... I'm struggling to kind of understand how, what effectively a war is a kind of opportunity to get you acquainted for... do you see what I'm not understanding?**

Yeah well this was special operations as the Royal Marines saw them. But...

35:00 **But what are they preparing you for, if not the war that you are fighting at the time?**

Well, that's it, that's what they are preparing me for.

**So do you go out on daily patrols and...?**

No. No, it was, the war in Malaya was winding down at that period, and you would have been dead unlucky, I think, to have found a live CT anywhere in the area where I was operating.

**Did you come across villagers in your time?**

Yeah,

35:30 but you didn't have much to do with them.

**What does that mean, you would see them walk through...?**

Yes, yeah.

**And the reaction of the locals there?**

They were used to it, I think. They were used to seeing Brit soldiers on treks, and so forth, it didn't create much comment.

**From my reading, I understand that the crisis in Malaya came about largely because of the post war occupation set up, so how were the British placed**

36:00 **at that point then, in Malaya, when you arrived?**

Well, I think his name was Sir Patrick Gurney was assassinated, and this was part of a general plan by what were called the CTs, the Chinese or Communist Terrorists, operating in... see terrorism was in vogue even then.

36:30 They hoped, and I think this was probably backed by China at that time, the same way as we now have hopes of a Muslim uprising throughout the whole of Asia, I think the Chinese basically hoped to instigate a Chinese uprising throughout Asia at that time.

**And what sort of...?**

Communist

37:00 led uprising.

**Yes. No, I'm just curious to know what that was like for an Australian soldier attached to a British unit wandering around the jungles, but you were in a non-combative role at the time by the sounds of it?**

Yes, except that I was carrying a rifle and...

**Well, did you make what, I guess, they eventually started to call contacts?**

No. As I say, it was winding down at that time, the whole Malayan Emergency was coming to an end. But

37:30 I don't think it lasted for... it probably went on for another couple of years, but at very low scale, low



key.

**How long were you sent over there for then?**

I only had a few... oh, I forget the exact period, a couple of months, that's about all.

**Okay, couple of months. I need to ask because we don't have too many vets [veterans] from Malaya to talk to about this.**

Mmm.

**First of all, how different was your uniform?**

Oh, the Brits and ours were practically interchangeable.

38:00 **Say, compared to what they were wearing in Korea, was it much different?**

Yes, because Korea was, remember the main problem there was a cold weather war.

**Well apparently they didn't have warm weather gear anyway, so I just wondered.**

That's right.

**So you were in jungle greens?**

Mmm.

**Were they markedly different to what had been worn at the end of, say, the New Guinea Campaign?**

No.

**Rations - same old?**

Yeah, we were on Brit rations but they were pretty good.

**What are the Brit rations?**

38:30 I forget what they were now.

**Bovril?**

No, I don't think so. I don't think they were markedly different to American rations in fact, or Australian rations, except that... no they were still on, they made a lot of use of bully beef when I was with them, so we... and they used to have one enormous meal a day, as I said, my whole stomach was crying out for something. So that was when at four o'clock you'd knock off and then you'd,

39:00 you'd make a stew, bully beef stew, and everyone carried onions cause you added the onions to the stew and so forth and so on. But basically rations, in terms of quantity and so forth, were pretty good. And you had little cans of stuff, such as the Americans had.

**In all the time that you were over there, did you fire your rifle in anger?**

No.

**And did any of your unit?**

No.

**Did you achieve what you went over to achieve?**

39:30 Yeah, I think so. But maintain my existing standard of fitness. Taught me new things, the Malaysian jungle, Northern Malayan jungle is different to the New Guinea jungle, so it gave me experience of operating in it, different type of jungle. And the locals were different - if we did have any contact with them. Malayan villagers are much more advanced than New Guinea villagers. Yeah, so I, it was good experience

40:00 I think.

**And was there any, say, air power used at the time?**

I didn't see any but the, 1 Squadron was still there, to the best of my knowledge, the Lincolns. But if so, I think they had very little use because the war had got beyond that.

**Okay.**

00:30 **Upon your return to Australia it said in your notes that you began exercises in Northern Australia the Kangaroo exercises?**

Well I did some exercises yes. Exercise Kangaroo happened every three years, a major exercise involving all parts of the army, Navy and the Air Force. That's why I did exercise K92 [Kangaroo '92]

01:00 based in Darwin and I did before that sorry, when was it, going back to the seventies I think 1976 I was directing staff on an exercise one of the major exercises

01:30 where we were based, no I'm wrong, I will have to think about this for a minute. The Commando Regiment acted as enemy and was based on Derby in North Western Australia

02:00 so I joined them and it was interesting cause the aim of the exercise was to test the fighting ability both men and vehicles and so forth in wet weather conditions Northern Australia and instead of which it never got below forty four degrees the whole time I was there and it was just as hot as Hades.

02:30 It was a worthwhile exercise and...

**What in your opinion was the state of the regular army at that point?**

At that point?

**Yeah late '50s. A long time since the war.**

03:00 Generally speaking pretty good I think. After Vietnam of course this is what you asked me before, after Vietnam we had a sort of self criticism based on almost what the Communist used to do and they used to like nothing better to sit down and criticise

03:30 themselves and we did that after Vietnam, after the Vietnam was ended and we withdrew. That was in the '70s of course.

**What prompted that?**

Oh the realisation that we hadn't done particularly well in many aspects.

**Was that the sentiment after Korea?**

No, I think in Korea it was

04:00 no I think in Korea we generally thought we had done pretty well in Korea and Vietnam was a new experience, it was a new experience for everybody at first.

**Yes I was saying that you didn't seem to think that that was the sentiment after Korea but it was after Vietnam**

Yes.

04:30 **So in the fifties, I'm trying to paint a picture, because it is quite economically buoyant and secure and absolutely no threat to Australian shores?**

Yeah I think that's pretty correct.

**But a fair amount of concern about a Communist uprising fuelled mostly by the Americans, so at the time was there any reason to question the point of a full time committed and**

05:00 **rather expensive Royal Australian Regiment?**

I don't remember anything as such, I think about the only thing for several years at that time, the defence vote was pegged at the same level other than that I don't remember anything in particular.

**Okay in the years leading up to Vietnam where**

05:30 **did your career take you?**

I better be completely honest at this stage I think and tell you by that stage I was a member of Australia's Secret Intelligence Service which is something that I don't normally broadcast.

**There was a bit of a gap in your notes I have to say, which I did wonder about,**

06:00 **you don't strike me as an idle individual, can you talk about that?**

Not in any, yes, but not in great detail well yes but in great detail.

**Can you talk about that off the record?**

Ah, yes, yes.

**Because we are in the position to be able just about embargo just about anything that you like in which we could get it for the record and stick it in a box for fifty years if you wanted it to?**

Okay all right.

**Shall we do that?**

Yeah well I'm not saying you need to embargo it no, but I will be careful and not say anything that I think I shouldn't.

06:30 **Well we would like you to, well lets have a chat and if there is anything you would like to embargo afterwards. How did that come about?**

I was asked to join. When I joined ASIS [Australian Secret Intelligence Service] or my first acquaintance with ASIS was in 1958 I think it was

07:00 and in fact being completely honest now the period that I spent in Malaya was part of my introduction to ASIS and I went off to do special operations. ASIS at that time was responsible for both special operations and the collection of secret intelligence.

07:30 Secret intelligence is so called because you don't want the enemy to know that you are collecting it, so it was secret and I just simply was asked if I would like to join ASIS and I said, "Yes I would," and I joined ASIS which meant at that time then I resigned from the regular army and almost immediately afterwards I went into the CMF [Citizens' Military Force] as it was still called then or the Reserve Army

08:00 paddled my own canoe from then on.

**Did you retain your same rank?**

I continued on then in the CMF to soldier on there so properly speaking I was a part time Brigadier in the CMF when I became a Brigadier.

**Just the bit between Major and Brigadier I'm wondering did you go from...?**

You are pinning me.

08:30 I went to commander of an infantry battalion in the CMF as a Lieutenant Colonel and then became a full Colonel and then was posted to Hong Kong and enjoyed my time in Hong Kong very much indeed and fulfilling an intelligence role with the Brits.

09:00 **When you were sent to the Marines was that..?**

that was straight.

**While you were at the Marines did they notice?**

Not till I came home and had finished my time with One Commando Company in fact that I was then asked if I would like to join ASIS.

**And there was reasons for your time in Malaya you were on a training learning how to be an intelligence officer?**

09:30 Yeah, this again was sponsored by ASIS the training course.

**What did you actually do in Malaya that contributed?**

Nothing and I'm being quite honest there but ASIS put its own civilian employees through this and the fact that I had just joined even though I had been doing this on a practical basis in the army they still thought that I should

10:00 do the basic course as far as they were concerned. Which I did.

**Who was the 'head-hunter' [recruiter] and under what process did they operate?**

We preferred to call them talent spotters.

**You can call them whatever you like. Who sourced you?**

I'm not sure that I should go into detail on that one.

**OK can you describe the process of being selected then?**

Yes

10:30 following that period in Malaya I decided myself that in fact, if they made me an offer I would very much like to join ASIS and so I sort of without being too open about it sort of spread that around that I'd be quite happy to accept an offer of service and it duly came and I simply joined ASIS.

11:00 **How does one subtly let that information be known?**

I was already dealing with some of the people who I knew I would later be associated with. I think I told someone.

**Could you indulge my John Le Carre images here, was it pink gin at eleven o'clock in the morning?**

No, although I have done that myself since then

11:30 no I just simply made an offer of service and it was accepted and then I did do a training course as one would expect basically in the UK I went off to do what was called an ONEC an Officers New Entry Course as an army officer at that stage seconded to ASIS.

12:00 **What's the process of being demobbed then if you are going into another Government position?**

Technically I don't think I ever was demobbed in fact, I just simply and for some time after I joined ASIS I continued as a member of the army using rank and so forth

12:30 and then I think I probably decided that we better do something about this, that I was marking time in between, so I was duly, formally approached then with an offer of service with ASIS and I accepted it and joined and I think the main point I make is, I went in initially as a training officer, I was going to mention earlier but we started getting into deep water

13:00 ASIS when I joined was responsible for the conduct of special operations and for the collection of secret intelligence.

**Well I guess some of those commandos would end up with quite a lot of classified information in their hot little hands?**

that's right.

**I have to double check, you went to intelligence school?**

I did during the war and that was purely coincidence.

13:30 The School of Military Intelligence I enjoyed it, it was a very good course. It was one of the favoured courses there were two favoured courses conducted by the army during World War II, one was the School of Military Intelligence and one reason for that undoubtedly was the fact that its location was in the Pacific Hotel at Surfers Paradise and the other favoured course was the Air Liaison Officers Course. The popular story was that at the end of it was you were assessed by how much grog you'd consumed during the course and not by your ability.

14:00 I think that's a slightly hypocritical story but hard drinking course.

**Can you talk about the ONEC Course, but I have a serious question though, when were a member of ASIS and you were travelling internationally what do you tell customs?**

You are never travelling as a member of ASIS, initially I had a green passport issued to me when I was a member of the army

14:30 and that simply stated I was an army officer travelling on duty. Then when I gave that up I just travelled as a diplomat.

**Is that your status?**

hnm....

**What do you tell the Tax Office?**

Oh, we had special arrangements with the Tax Office.

**I bet you did.**

We had special arrangements with so many things. If you are going to run an intelligence service you just have to do these things. So you

15:00 approach the right person in the right place and say, "OK lets come to some arrangements here," and most Government departments are extraordinarily co operative, a) you have got the mystique of being involved in intelligence and there's no doubt that that exists and b) there were, some people get a bit worried about what might happen if they don't co operate which of course is nonsense. But however we didn't usually disabuse people of that idea if they obviously had it.

15:30 **What did you learn on the new entry course?**

The use of cover, you are familiar with the term?

**Cover? Kind of but it would be good to elaborate?**

16:00 Cover is the nominal existence that you live as opposed to the actual existence, so for example, as I just said my cover was a diplomat and I used that. So you learn to live your cover, you learn trade craft that's how you do all the things you are required to do as an intelligence officer

16:30 on a secret basis.

**Can you give me an example of what a secret officer needs to know?**

Well trade craft covers every aspect of running agents and careful here, unlike the Americans who tend to

17:00 use the term agent to describe people, I don't know whether they do in fact, I don't think they do I have worked quite closely with the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] of course, on occasions. I don't think they do but certainly we never do. We use what I think is a common sense approach and say agents are the people who work for members of intelligence service, not the actual intelligence officers themselves, so I would describe myself at that time if someone really pinned me

17:30 and say, "I'm an intelligence officer," not an agent, we never used the term. So it covers well as I say living cover and secret writing, this is silly cause I was in charge of training for quite some time, so I should be able to rattle all these things off.

**Perhaps it's conditioning the evasiveness?**

Condition myself out of knowing any more, no I don't think so.

18:00 **Well lets talk about cover then, its of a great interest to a lot of people in as much as how you delineate your private life from your professional life, lets start with the uppermost how you dealt with the public in that respect?**

Well one always had to be careful

18:30 cause I am being very open with you now I'm still very cautious with friends and people who are not in an official position to be informed so I am putting you into an official position by doing that. It's bloody awful sometimes, to be quite frank because

19:00 you are never off the hook, and you have always got to be very much aware of this that you don't willingly disclose your actual work to people who are not entitled to know.

19:30 You have got to become used to people in ignorance who make mistakes and annoy you because they do make mistakes and sometimes never seem to really get the hang of what's it's all about?

**Forgive me are you talking about the other members of ASIS or just GP [General Public]?**

No the people outside.

20:00 Just trying to think of examples with might clarify things a little bit.

**Well I'm wondering if you would be in circumstances where you would be the only member of ASIS in amongst other workers who were unaware of your MO [Modus operandi]?**

Yes,

20:30 so in circumstances like those you try and train yourself and your assistant not to appear to be too well informed on matters on which you shouldn't be too well informed but inevitably from an intelligence point of view you do learn a lot of things that are of great interest to the GP. So you have got to be careful to clamp down on that.

**Did they give you any acting training?**

No.

**Would it have helped?**

Perhaps in some cases yes.

21:00 Well I suppose to some degree you did, we used to do surveillance exercises for example where sometimes we acted as the quarry and sometimes we acted as the surveillance and if you were the quarry and this might have gone on for quite some time then you would be finally pulled in for detailed questioning

21:30 and how well you conducted yourself was of great interest of course and a certain amount of acting ability was required there because you are living a lie but you have got to try to convince people that it is the truth.

**If you are good enough you can believe a lie so that it becomes the truth?**

Yes that's right yes you can and certainly cover stories and so forth

22:00 I used to always emphasise, "base it on the truth as far as you possibly can cause the likely likelihood of being caught out then are remote compared to if you knowingly live a lie and continue to try and hoodwink people in believing the lie, you won't, eventually you won't get away with it because you will do something which will trip yourself up."

22:30 **What could your wife and child know for example?**

Joan of course knew everything and that was always recommended that you didn't try and keep any secrets from your wife. Peter incidentally is dead, that's my son, he died some years ago because of the nature of his, he was a photographer come journalist, and he operated in Vietnam and various parts of Asia.

23:00 I put him in the picture to some degree because a) because it was useful to him and he could go to one of our Embassies and I was nearly always under diplomatic cover and sometimes it gave him a useful contact to be able to talk about me or I could give him an introduction to somebody and Joan I think Joan switched on I certainly didn't try and keep anything

23:30 secret from her. I remember one occasion in Hong Kong where I was operating under British auspicious incidentally, my cover there was defence that I was under a defence appointment, I remember finding Joan bailed up by three other Australian women who were genuine female members or wives of people in the Department of Defence

24:00 and they had asked Joan what she did or what I did and she said he was with the Department of Defence and this was tantamount to waving a red flag at a bull and sometimes you get circumstances like that and they were difficult.

**Did she have to sign the Official Secrets Act as well?**

I don't know, do we have an Official Secrets Act?

**Well it's hard to tell because I presume it's secret.**

24:30 No I don't think we do the Brits do I know that and certainly we used to always wave that in front of people, the official secrets act.

**I think if a member of ASIS asking me if there is an Official Secrets Act then somebody is pulling somebody's leg.**

No I'm quite genuine, I was just thinking about that the other night, certainly when I was acting as a Brit and I did, I filled two or three appointments with the Brits we used to talk about the Official Secrets Act then but I don't think Australia has an Official Secrets Act.

25:00 **What did you sign when you joined ASIS?**

Nothing that I can remember.

**Do you swear an oath?**

No

**What do they have over you if you turn out to be a bit of a rotten egg?**

I suppose

25:30 a treasonable activity I suppose.

**So could they would take you to court?**

Hmm.

**It's a bit tricky because they wouldn't be able to declare what it is that they are upset about at the time.**

That's probably true.

**At the time every western country was tied up with you know with fear and intelligence and security and so on, what was the bulk of the work that you were sent out to do then?**

26:00 Well of course the entire time that I was in ASIS the enemy was communism this often meant working with officers in another intelligence service a friendly intelligence service and exchanging information with them

26:30 and that basically the whole purpose of the exercise, or the whole purpose of the operation was to gain as much information about communist activities in other countries.

**Apart from Hong Kong and Britain which I think you said you were in was your time in Vietnam anything to do with ASIS or was that strictly army?**

No I was there under ASIS cover, that is I liaised with the CIA,

27:00 but I also of course had a lot to do with the American army who didn't know that side of my activities.

**Was that your cover?**

I was an Australian diplomat, that was my cover.

**But while you were training Vietnam soldiers?**

No I didn't do any actual training of Vietnam, well I did but in remote areas I had trained Vietnamese in Singapore and I had trained Indonesians in Singapore but I didn't have to go deeply into cover for that. They just accepted me and I used military rank and they just accepted that.

27:30 **Could you give me say an example of a situation in which you were in cover, the operation that you were working on and the sort of bogus surrounds that you had to establish do to achieve that?**

28:00 I suppose when I was acting as a diplomat, so when I was in Indonesia that was under ASIS auspices so I was there as a Councillor in the Australian Embassy. I might say that the other members of the embassy knew who and what I was so that tended to ease of some of the difficulties in some degree

28:30 **What about say your reception staff what would they know?**

One always had to be careful there because some did and some didn't which made it doubly difficult in fact. Generally I think they knew.

**When you are secretary you have access to all sorts of stuff, if you had you're your wits about you, you could read between the lines?**

Well secretaries, we had our own, we called them Operational Assistants rather than secretaries because we reckoned they were in a different category and they were,

29:00 they had to be highly trained people who we expected as a back up in any difficult situation.

**How closely to the Menzies Government did your work?**

I was not a member during the Menzies era.

**Oh it was Post that was it?**

It wasn't until 1950, wait a moment he was still around wasn't he?

29:30 No but in any case we didn't, there were no political overtones what so ever.

**OK I've got a serious question for you here, do you know what happened to Harold Holt?**

No

**I was just trying to be smart. You must have been accruing a lot of information about Vietnam long before it hit the Australian press?**

Yes, in fact I visited Vietnam for the first time in 1959

30:00 interesting enough under British auspicious, that is I went there as a Brit and was attached to the British Embassy not the American. Yeah I did I got a lot of information about Vietnam before hand. My first visit to Vietnam was in 1959 the next time I went was in 1962 when I did a lot of liaising then with US Special Forces

30:30 the Green Berets [American Special Forces].

**Did you have much to do with the implementation of the team [AATTV - Australian army Training Team Vietnam] then?**

No not a great deal but by coincidence and it was genuine coincidence I happened to be in Singapore when the Team was assembling there immediately before going into Vietnam. So I went over and spent the evening with the team before they left for Vietnam and then subsequent visits I used to always drop in on the various outposts

31:00 where the team was located.

**When you were working with the CIA over in Vietnam can you talk at any length about the kind of discussion and the interest that the CIA had back then?**

Back in Vietnam?

**In '59**

Oh wherever I went

31:30 the Americans liked this they would always lay on a briefing session even if it was a two man hut in the jungle somewhere I would always have a briefing officer who would go into great detail. I don't think there is a great deal that I can impart that wasn't really general knowledge, other than the fact

32:00 that I was privy to that I was particular information.

**I mean if you let your imagination go you can kind of figure out a lot of it and I will get you to explain this, you know meet with various individuals, exchange information, shown**

**photographs of various dissents that you wanted to keep an eye on or....?**

No, I didn't engage in anything like that.

32:30 Just generally filling in a picture and keeping me informed what their operations were and so forth the way that it operated.

**So on a clinical examination it was research that you'd do?**

Yes I suppose that's fair enough.

33:00 For example the first time I was in Vietnam in '59 no the second time in '62 I was there when and again there in '63 and I was there when President Ngo Dinh Diem was over thrown. So I would set off and fly in an Air America aircraft usually

33:30 with a Turkish pilot and I could never work out that one and some times I used to think what on earth would I say if I crash landed in the Vietnamese jungle in an unmarked Air American aircraft with a Turkish pilot who didn't speak very much English. I think that would be a maximum test for me to talk my way out of that one. I didn't have to fortunately.

34:00 But the Americans I always found, they were very good and highly professional, as one would expect of Americans I think but I think the whole American effort they tended to convince themselves of certain things that weren't necessarily correct and

34:30 that's when the Vietnamese story started to go wrong as far as the American story was concerned.

**Do you think they tried to over examine what Ho Chi Minh was trying to achieve?**

Over examined?

**Well its easy to say in retrospect because I wasn't there at the time on one hand you could say communism was a great fear that everybody should have but on the other he was trying to unit his country?**

Yeah that's right and you would get some Americans to acknowledge that too incidentally.

35:00 I think it was a very, very confusing period for the Americans, the whole of the Vietnam experience. To some degree never really got on the top of it in my opinion which was tragic because there were some very dedicated individuals working there.

**Graham Green's book the Quiet American sort of insinuated most strongly that the CIA took a big stick to stirring the pot in Vietnam, would that be your conclusion?**

35:30 I honestly don't know. I think a lot of it was conjecture by the part of people like Green and so forth. I don't know.

36:00 **Where was Australia placed then in regard to its secret intelligence in relation to America and Britain, was it divided or torn?**

No we probably had a great liaison with the Americans than the Brits did, because we were in war with them and the Brits never were as you know.

36:30 I don't know it doesn't help much I know.

**I will talk about some of the more practical trades that you learnt in the course later on, what was the most effective training that you received at ONEC?**

37:00 Trade craft generally, as I say living your cover, practical things and you see these illustrated in movies sometimes. If you are in a restaurant always try and have a table where you can see and observe other people,

37:30 I guess I'm not a very shining example of the craft but I really have forgotten a great many things.

**I will try and jog your memory was there things specific to driving?**

Well yes and no, basically common sense most of the things there, if you were suspicious of the car behind you always go round the round about and if on the third occasion the same car is still following you there is a pretty safe bet

38:00 there is something peculiar going on and as I say all common sense things.

**That sounds like Mel Brooks, did you enjoy Get Smart [television show]?**

Yes.

**Were they ever close?**

I don't think that was a bit too much a put on.



**It was a great panacea I suppose.**

Yes

**Alright we've got to change tapes.**

## Tape 10

- 00:32 ASIS was, well the existence of ASIS was first disclosed by a reporter I just forget who it was now, and the first official notification of the existence of ASIS was by Fraser
- 01:00 **Before or after he became Prime Minister?**
- After I think but I'm not absolutely sure.
- I have some bold and silly things to ask then I will get back to the chronology of it but the kind of bogies of the era the Petrov Affair were you well informed?**
- No oh well yes but that was essentially an ASIO [Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation] operation not ASIS and that's the other thing to, to me I still find it staggering the number of people who can't distinguish between ASIS and ASIO
- 01:30 and write about the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and then in the same breath they'll talk about the Australian Security Intelligence Service as if the word service or organisation makes a difference, it does not, and it was quite obvious and I think that a lot of people had to say that they never really clearly sorted out the difference between the two. ASIO would have been far better called a security service than an intelligence service
- 02:00 there is too much similarity between the titles as it is. See the Brits refer to the MI5 [British Intelligence Organisation] amongst themselves as the security service which it is, its responsible for security and ASIO is responsible for security and it still amazes me that supposedly well informed people have never really hoisted in the difference between the two and the fact that they are separate organisations.
- 02:30 **Well I'm prepared to blunder in and make another error, who was effectively behind the supposedly possible apocryphal intelligence gathering on the Whitlam Government?**
- Never took place to my knowledge there wasn't any.
- So purely spurious. After your training what were they called that you went on, missions, positions, postings?**
- 03:00 Well usually we went under Foreign Affairs cover on a posting.
- Did you have to move your camp to Canberra?**
- Eventually yes, in fact that was my last task in ASIS was to oversee the movement of the service from Melbourne to Canberra.
- 03:30 We haven't mentioned previously that the service remained in Melbourne for many years and it got to the stage where it was difficult, the same as your question was becoming difficult. In the end people genuinely couldn't understand why the hell friends of theirs were working in Melbourne and not in Canberra.
- 04:00 So we and the Government recognised this and we were given approval to go to Canberra and establish ourselves.
- Did your family ever have a difficulty with your situation apart from the three women with your wife in Hong Kong, did they run into sticky situations?**
- No I don't think so.
- An unusual position for your son to find himself in I guess you know he is in a similar situation to you in many ways in terms of cover and confidence and was there any one you could go to to debrief from time to time if it became a little hot up?**
- 04:30 Oh yes, we had various appointees on the headquarters and so forth who would take care of anyone with a problem or a difficulty in that regard yes.
- And what for example would they do for example with a bad egg of an ASIS?**
- Well we have had a few bad eggs of course unfortunately. We're terribly enamoured of these characters
- 05:00 who, and they still quite him on television, Warren Reid who spilled the beans completely and they still interview him on television and accept everything that he has to say as absolute Gospel truth but its not. He was never in a very senior position his knowledge was

05:30 strictly limited the same way as any junior officer in any organisation, their knowledge is always limited. So we used to find newspaper articles and so forth annoying more than anything else.

**What could you do when you would see one that was wrong?**

Nothing, there was nothing you could do cause you would call attention to yourself if you tried to go against it in some way.

**You are not a religious person per say?**

06:00 No I go to church on Sundays I'm not deeply religious, no.

**Did that ever clash?**

No I don't think so.

**And what about going to bed at night you know that final conscience prick you get simply from being rude to the shop keeper if I am how do you reconcile that for yourself?**

Never had any problem what so ever.

**Was it some sort of technique that you learned over the years?**

No I don't think so.

06:30 I just didn't see any problem I had a job to do and I did it and that was it without any pricks of conscience or anything at all and I still don't have any degree of conscience. Probably the only thing is and some people do find it difficult, you are living a lie for a large part of

07:00 your life and that undoubtedly does affect some people, but I was fortunate that it never affected me.

**When you retire from living a lie, what happens, do you sort of retire into the truth or do you have to maintain the lie?**

We are a lot more open now, I mean I would never have admitted that I was a member of ASIS to you in an interview such as this

07:30 and occasionally I will tell people if they start questioning me and getting too close to the truth I was a member of ASIS as simple as that. Usually it is accepted with out any great problem.

**Do you have to hand in a badge at the end of your time?**

No there is no such thing as a badge.

**So you are effectively still a member of ASIS?**

Yes, I guess so a retired member of ASIS.

08:00 **Fair enough, but I take it no information would ever come you way these days?**

That's true.

**I was fishing there, do you read the news and sort of read between the lines?**

If there is something to read between the lines, yes I tend do, I'm giving a talk next week to a ladies Probis club on Australian Indonesian relations

08:30 I haven't gone back and I could go back to the service and say, "Give me the latest dope on Indonesia", But I'm not going to because, although it's now twenty years since I served in Indonesia, I have still kept myself sufficiently well informed, sometimes on an official basis, sometimes unofficial in the meantime to still be able to I think give a worthwhile interesting talk to a group of ladies.

**You probably retired before the latest craze of Internet use etcetera with all the explosion of information**

09:00 **what devices were extended to you during your time for surveillance I'm talking about?**

Not a great deal that I can think of.

**Did you have the authority to tap a phone?**

No, you mean me personally or ASIS?

**You as part of ASIS.**

No

09:30 the media generally tended to credit both ASIS and ASIO with all sorts of things that they never did.

**But if you're trying to procure information on people that's a tool of communications why wouldn't you bug it?**

That's right, well you would have to get approval you would have to get Government approval.

**But could you under certain circumstances?**

Yes you could.

**And did you?**

(Laughing) yes.

10:00 **Did it prove effective?**

Yes, I am very proud in Hong Kong when I was working as a Brit officer, working with the British service the fact that we had a hotel room bugged and the occupant said she was moving and by the time she was installed in her new hotel room we already had it bugged

10:30 which I thought was pretty good.

**How did the Government figure its budget for something like ASIS?**

Oh we used to hide it, it was added on to other departments and so forth.

**Contingency fees for example.**

Yeah.

**So you would be always be working off tailings off other budgets?**

No we have a budget of our own now in more recent years but for a long time we were just simply added on to Defence or Foreign Affairs.

11:00 **Do you speak any other languages?**

Yeah but not well I can speak Indonesian to some degree, I can speak Cantonese, schoolboy French, that's about it.

**Did you need to use any other languages in the time that you worked for ASIS?**

For convenience more than anything else yes, on occasions, it helped in other words I don't think it was ever vital that I was able to speak another language

11:30 but it was useful.

**Did you keep a diary during this period?**

No.

**Were you told not to?**

No, no I could have, as far as possible we tried to live a perfectly normal existence and if you were in the habit keeping a diary I think you could have kept a diary. You might have watched some of the entries that you put in the diary I suppose there was no regulation against it.

**Did you ever get into any tricky situations?**

12:00 No, not in the sense of being dangerous or anything. I can remember in Singapore on one occasion, wait a moment till I sort this out because it became quite complicated, I was in Singapore debriefing I think, from memory, somebody from another country. However I do remember I had three separate people all approaching the table at which I was sitting in the cafe

12:30 hotel none of whom I wanted to meet each other but who were all obviously intent of approaching me at the same time and that could have been very embarrassing so I stood up and simply bugged out and as I went I said, "I'm sorry I have to go," to the three people, like that while I was on the move and just kept on going.

13:00 Otherwise that would have been embarrassing it wouldn't have been dangerous, but it would have been embarrassing.

**So did they teach your techniques, you know how some people are just good at disappearing in a crowd did they teach you that sort of stuff?**

I suppose so, actually it was humorous with Andrew Peacock when he was Minister of Foreign Affairs, he came to Jakarta and this was purely by chance in fact but I was dealing with him and

13:30 we had a thing going in Thailand and he had just been in Thailand and I was debriefing him, unconsciously, that is he didn't know that he was imparting information to me, but he did know I was a member of ASIS and one afternoon and this was purely by chance. I came out of a lift just he happened to be a few feet in front of me so I just sort of caught up and fell into step along side him and

14:00 he said "How did you do that" and there was nothing sinister about it, it was just that I happened to be

in the right place at the right time.

**See if you can answer this, politicians come and go, but someone from your position trained in a life long career are never going to just go, does that put you in a slightly more authoritative position than with high ranking polities [politicians] that you would have dealt with over time?**

14:30 Yeah I suppose so I have never seriously thought about that.

**Well the British have this long establish tradition of the Civil Service which effectively are the government no matter who is in office, we don't really have a strong sense of that?**

No but we try to and we certainly we used to keep politics right out of any connections that we had with politicians, no suggestions that us or ASIS of leaning more one way or the other.

15:00 **Did ASIS have the power to suggest very strongly what the Government should do?**

Not very strongly, but yeah we could suggest I think yes.

**What was its point then?**

ASIS? Well you would produce the information, the intelligence and let the government make up its own decision basically as to what they do with it.

**Would it be tweaked? Would it be tweaked depending upon who the Head of ASIS, I don't even know who the head of ASIS is or was or what position they hold but people are subjective by nature wouldn't they tweak the information depending on what they want to see as the outcome?**

15:30 They may do but I think we would try and avoid that situation if we could.

**Could you go through chronologically the international situations that you as a member of ASIS were involved in, Malaya you weren't, Indonesia crisis, Konfrontasi [Indonesian confrontation]?**

16:00 No I wasn't in Indonesia during the Konfrontasi but, well I was in Indonesia I was what was called a declared officer, that is I was declared to the Indonesians as an intelligence officer which made it easy in many ways and not so easy in some other ways.

16:30 Even when you were declared sometimes you had to create a situation whereby without creating doubts or casting suspicion on yourself and you virtually went through what we would call a recruitment process, where now I recruited, well he was conscious to ASIS but he

17:00 didn't know me or was he conscious, I forget now whether I made him conscious, I went through the usual spiel of making him aware of who I was and what I was and then you sort of sat back and waited for a reaction and in his case he was a very senior Indonesian

17:30 he reacted very well indeed and promptly started thinking of ways and means where he could help me in fact, it was very encouraging. Sorry question again?

**I was asking which international involvements you had something to do with and whether Konfrontasi was one of them?**

No

**Well after that was effectively was Vietnam**

18:00 **not precluding all the business going on overseas I'm sure you had nothing to do with it, the Cuban Missile Crisis?**

No

**At the time was looks like a bit of histrionics regarding a fear of Russia and the fear of Communism what was your...?**

18:30 No I don't think it was ever. I think there was as Clancy would say 'a clear and present danger' and I think that existed all the way though.

**From your intelligence gathering what were the great threats to Australia or democracy?**

I think the communist powers would have used any means at their disposal to put America and its allies out of business in any way they could.

19:00 That's my summing up.

**Did you have any knowledge of this during the Second World War?**

I was an innocent babe at that stage despite having done the School of Military Intelligence.

**We didn't have an underground here in Australia so they didn't have much to worry about. I'm backtracking a little bit, your knowledge of Australia's commitment to communism or its**

**commitment**

19:30 **to rid itself of communism were you instrumental in feeding the government documents on any particular identities?**

No, that would be more a ASIO role than an ASIS role.

**You say you were frustrated by the lack of division that most GP have about the two organisations but can you see where it begins to cloud in peoples minds, its all hush-hush and its all undercover..**

20:00 That's right and that creates the confusion I'm very much aware of that.

**Very much so. I'm sitting here thinking you are gathering intelligence but you are not involved in security I can't quite see the differences necessarily?**

Well security is really the protection of Australia.

**But this is an academic protection of Australia?**

I suppose in some ways it is, I suppose defence is security yeah.

20:30 **For a military man to be in ASIS you kind of thing well what was it that you were doing?**

Hmmm.

**Well then just jumping channels a little bit, after your.....**

I really opened a Pandora's Box didn't I?

**Well you don't sit down too many days with an ASIS member and kinda just shoot the breeze do you?**

21:00 **I feel honour bound, its part of my position in this job cause we have to leave soon and we won't be coming back. Can you talk to me a little bit about your connection with the CIA and Vietnam and Australian's role in that?**

Well my connection with the CIA was basically a personal one whenever I went to Vietnam and I made several visits there with out having ever been stations there for any long period of time almost inevitably I met the CIA representative.

21:30 I think they looked upon us as a worth while ally pull of no punches as far as information was concerned that was the impression that I had.

22:00 Play it for real and I can remember in Indonesia on one occasion in Jakarta where one of my contacts was in fact the Chief of the Army and Chief of other things I called down to see him one day at the American embassy, telephoned to say that I was coming, so I went and saw him and we went and had a long session and unbeknown to me

22:30 my American counterpart wanted to see me at the same time and the next day he said to me "Where were you yesterday" and I said, "I was with..." whoever it was and he said "you bastard, you didn't tell me" and I said "no I'm sorry" but generally we played it very straight with each other. I'm still quite good friends with some of my CIA contacts.

23:00 They were pretty good people generally and I see this again is the danger again you build up a bogie man and you build on it and so forth I think they were, most of my contacts were very genuine, CIA contacts were very genuine people as far as I was concerned.

**Was there a level of paranoia?**

Not apparent no, you mean about communism and so forth?

**Well I mean amongst yourselves I suppose?**

Oh no, no I don't think so.

**Information is a very valuable thing and it definitely accounts for people selling it from time to time.**

23:30 No, I never even thought of that.

**I'm not suggesting that you might but I'm suggesting that you have probably met people along the way...?**

Well I mentioned one person by name and there were a couple of others yeah whom I wouldn't entirely trust yes.

**Did you become very skilled in sizing a person up in about ten seconds?**

24:00 I don't know, you are enjoying this aren't you because you are privy to information that was unexpected

and you haven't had it before.

**Of course I am, it's a mental windfall isn't it yeah absolutely I'm enjoying it as I do the rest of the job too you know. Our subjects often tell us things and we just go, that's extraordinary and here you are telling me about a life that you have had to live that has been a professional duplicity I suppose.**

24:30 **So its very interesting and you are a military man.**

The two went together as far as I was concerned.

**Well I can see that, I'm wondering if in the last bit of the tape if we would talk how you merged them back together again?**

25:00 it was surprising how easy it was, cause when I visited Vietnam under ASIS cover, inevitability I had contact with the CIA and inevitably through them I had contact with US Special Forces and US Military. So it all worked in together in that respect. Yes I don't think I ever had any real problems.

**When you went back you would have been of a certain rank that was not privy to some of information that you had did that ever cause you any dilemmas?**

No

**Was it strange dealing with officers of a higher rank that wouldn't have known that you were a member of ASIS?**

25:30 Yeah I can remember one or two instances there when suddenly they found out suddenly they expected all sorts of things of me because I was a member of ASIS and they made it obvious that suddenly I put things on to a different relationship as far as they were concerned.

**Were you considered the grease to the wheel once they found out?**

Yeah I suppose so to some degree yeah.

26:00 **Did you find it a bit of a privileged position, you just suggested that I'm enjoying myself with this, but surely you would have enjoyed yourself with that privy information?**

Yes very often or quite often lets say that in preference to very often.

**How would you describe that for example?**

I don't know to be quite frank.

**Professionally smug for example?**

No I don't think so

26:30 just the perks that went with the job I suppose.

**And I'm curious were you quite passionate about the situation against the communists or where you a more clinical person?**

No I was quite passionate sometimes it just seemed to me to be so obvious that there was a clear cut dividing line and a lot of people couldn't see it or wouldn't see it

27:00 and yeah I used to feel quiet passionate about that.

**How did you cope with the sixties revolution then?**

The same way and that was more from a military view point than anything else that that became dangerous cause my Orderly Room Sergeant I remember he was a little man was chased and almost attacked in Melbourne by a group of screaming women because he was in uniform

27:30 and I found things like that pretty hard to take in fact.

**When you found it was hard to take what would be your reaction would it be verbal or physical?**

Well you couldn't do anything, I just, within myself found it hard to take that people could be so wrong and the same way about I can remember an Anzac Day march and the Women Against Rape were everywhere and this was in Sydney and there is no doubt that

28:00 they deliberately set out to try and interrupt the Anzac Day march.

**That carried on for many years did it not?**

Yes it did.

**It has certainly swung around in another direction now**

Yes it has.

**What about the moratorium then what were your views on that?**

Well I think it worked in the end so I have no particular strong feelings I thought originally my son, my own personal observations and so forth remember I got into Vietnam very early in the piece

28:30 admittedly only for fairly brief visits and I thought we were quite justified in our intervention in Vietnam but I am not so sure now, I felt that at the time.

**And would I be close in suggesting that the intelligence that you gathered prior to sending Australian troops there influenced the Australian Government to do that?**

29:00 I doubt it, I think that was a political decision more than anything else.

**What could you say that prove the efficacy of ASIS in that era?**

Probably not a great deal on that particular subject.

**What about the era in total then?**

Oh we produced, you could only get the reaction of the people

29:30 what we called our customer departments and if they came back and made very favourable comments on a piece of intelligence that we had provided then you had a glow of satisfaction and thought that you had achieved something worth while.

**So I'm annoying you now I think by asking you these questions?**

No, no you're not, I have got a very thick skin I can assure you.

**For a Cancerian I'm very surprised.**

30:00 **Did you keep files on people?**

Yes, we had to, we had to we had no choice.

**And what would flag a file on personnel?**

Remember we weren't ASIO we weren't interested in security aspects, we were interested in a person's back ground and their access to intelligence that's what we would keep on file.

30:30 We couldn't give a damn about whether there was Red under every bed or a Red in bed it didn't make any difference to us, it was the intelligence that was available from that particular person was what interested us.

**Would they come from all walks of life then?**

Yes.

**And would most of the people that you accrued information from be aware of what was happening or would you manage to do that in all sorts of ways?**

No, in most cases they would be aware.

31:00 **That sounds a bit extreme then, so a fellow might come in from England on holiday and he's got something that you might want to know about would you present yourself to him?**

I think it would depend entirely on the person and who and what he was as to how you presented yourself.

**I would be a bit alarmed if someone suddenly presented themselves to me and said they needed to talk to me?**

We would probably try and go through a period of cultivation first.

31:30 It depends but by and large we would try and do that period of cultivation. The same way with the national of the country in which we are operating you decide you want, right here's my target so you

32:00 would target him and ingratiate yourself with him and cultivate him until you thought the time was right to make a hit.

**Quite fascinating really? Hell of a way to live a life.**

Hmmm.

**Did you ever come off feeling a bit cheesy?**

No

**Do you know of any person's lives that had been affected by the fact that they had been**

**cultivated?**

32:30 No, not that I'm aware of I know we had one girl who was posted to Saigon and when she got to Saigon she refused to leave the aircraft and came back again. I had a certain degree of sympathy for her but she had left it a bit late because she had been through all the processes up till then and all the training course and everything else and I'll never cease to be amazed that she let it go as late as she did

33:00 **Do they do a character check on you and you would have come up clean as a whistle I'm sure?**

Yes, I forget what we called the process now but yeah. This was fairly constant in fact, you'd go up for a review again but I forget just what we called the process.

33:30 **It would be interesting these days on who would come up with out form, just about everybody has got some dark little secret somewhere in their life?**

I suppose so, but we wouldn't be interested in secrets of a prurient nature or anything like that unless they had some intelligence value.

**In your position was it simple enough to go through channels to find out information on just about anything that you wanted to know within the Australia Government?**

34:00 Yeah I suppose so but again we wouldn't ask for something unless it had an obvious intelligence connection I think.

**And would be the process you would have to do that?**

Oh we had our own indices of people and so forth so we'd

34:30 call it tracing you know and if say, you could send off requests all over the world, put any trace on, Stella [interviewer]...

**I would be interested to know what you come up with, a few protest marches here and there.**

And that's the way it works in the majority you would get back 'no trace' or somebody might have something,

35:00 but then again unless its of intelligence interest we are not interested.

**But you would have to read between the lines in certain circumstances wouldn't you?**

Probably, yeah

**You know a late library fine might mean nothing to one person and something to another etcetera?**

Hmmm

**Okay I'm going to have to wrap this up so to get back to the war...**

Yeah, OK I had forgotten about the war

**I wanted to ask you what you thought of the Occupational Forces in Iraq at the moment?**

I think they are going through a most unfortunate period and I would hate to be in that situation.

35:30 I don't see any way out of it, immediately. You know there is no doubt that we are in a world situation now where violence simply begets violence and that's all there is to it and I can't offer any suggestions on how you might overcome this.

**Your situation as a soldier in the Second World War then**

36:00 **was markedly defined by Australia's geographical position at time and it changed very soon after that, a did you have to change as a soldier to change that attitude?**

No I don't think so.

**On reflection where was your best contribution in the services?**

36:30 I would say my contribution to Special Forces. I know I made that as a heart felt comment recently when I was awarded the OAM [Medal of the Order of Australia].

**Which I'm glad you reminded me about.**

I wrote a thank you letter to everyone that had sent me letters of congratulations. I had a lot of people who said "hey this is a long way overdue, why did it take so long"

37:00 and its not for me to comment on that but I do feel that my service of 37 years in the army could have received greater recognition than it did, particularly my contribution to Special Forces, I still feel that in fact.



**I was curious not see any MMs [Military Medals] or DCMs [Distinguished Conduct Medals] or so on maybe the army was a bit arbitrary in its dishing out of those things?**

No, not necessarily I don't think.

37:30 **But certainly some were over looked?**

That's right I got one very nice letter saying that.

**Did that make it all right?**

Oh it helped and I toyed very seriously with not accepting the decoration, as your know you are contacted first

38:00 to see, in fact I rang two or three people and asked their advice to what they thought, 'cause I didn't feel. I'm conceited obviously I didn't feel that it was due recognition for a very lengthy period of service.

**What would have been due?**

I would have thought I would warrant an AM [Member of the Order of Australia] at the slightest and possibly the AO [Officer of the Order of Australia]

38:30 because OAM you are sort of scratching the bottom on the barrel a bit but since I've got it I don't feel so badly about it because you suddenly come to realise that not everybody has got an OAM so that helped to some degree.

**And does it make a difference on Anzac Day when you march then?**

No.

**Of all the units that you served in what brings you back to the Independent 2/5th?**

39:00 That was my original unit even though most of them that I see now are just ordinary soldiers I think perhaps I feel a greater bond with them than any other unit that I served in and I just enjoy seeing them. I was at a committee meeting, today is only Wednesday isn't it?

39:30 I was at a committee meeting yesterday afternoon of the Commando Association of Victoria and I always get a kick out of seeing those characters.

**Do you still lend your services professionally anywhere?**

No, I'm a member and a former President of the Royal United Services Institute which keeps me in touch professionally I suppose.

40:00 no but basically no.

**You will have to forgive me I will have to declare my ignorance here I looked up an RFD I never found?**

Reserve Force Decoration.

**Thanks, when did that come in?**

Oh I'm not sure to be quite frank but I got it for the period I was serving in the CMF, or the Army Reserve I got that.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**