

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Victor Davis (Vic/Bluey) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/89>

### Tape 1

00:40 **So as I was saying before, if we could just get the details of where you were born and where you grew up.**

Well I was actually born in England and, on the 9th

01:00 of the 9th, 1919 at 19 minutes past 9.00, so mum said. Now I was there but I can't be terribly sure, but we came to Australia in 1928 and came to Richmond. We lived in a street called Durham Street, Richmond and what I can remember about that

01:30 as kids we had a little billy-cart and up the road from me, was a cartage contractor, horse and dray and my mate and I went up there. "Could we please have some manure for the garden?" "Yes." so my mate filled his cart. I filled mine and I swept up the bits, threw them in the dung, put the broom and fork away and away I went. A couple of days after,

02:00 that man saw my dad and he said, "Oh, your boy was up getting manure." and dad said, "Yes, I hope he wasn't a nuisance." He said, "On the contrary, if when that boy wants a job I can help him, don't go past me." He was then a Richmond Councillor and also a member of the Board of Works and the Tramway Board. When I wanted a job he was Chairmen Elect of the Tramway Board

02:30 and my dad said to him, "Remember my boy?" He said, "I certainly do", and that's how I got my job with the Tramway Board and only that I was brought up to be clean and tidy and it impressed him that I swept around the dung pit and cleaned up.

**And where did you go to school before you went to work?**

I went to school at Brighton Street State School Richmond, and a lot of my Collingwood

03:00 friends would be surprised that I went there because I'm an ardent Collingwood supporter, been a member for 50 odd years. But anyway I went to there and then I, we moved to Thornbury, to Collins Street Thornbury, which our back fence backed onto the school fence and it was at Thornbury that I got the name Bluey.

03:30 The boys on the corner, one fellow, red-headed fellow, Lloyd Pink and Lloyd, they called him Redder. There was another, Ginger something and they said, "Well, we'll have to call you Bluey." and from then on Bluey stuck to me all my life.

**You must've been quite a team of redheads back then?**

Well there was a few, yes, yeah. Anyway I went to Penders Grove

04:00 School and there was talk of, I was always very keen on bands, and there was talk of them forming a school band and oh I've got to be in that, gotta be in that. The day came and the meeting, I turned up and they took our names and we had about six weeks of theory and the big day came when the instruments were going to be there.

04:30 So we went in and there they were lined up on the platform from cornets up to basses, and they'd give you an instrument. You knew the fingering of the scale and you'd play the scale and if he thought, the bandmaster thought you were suited to it he'd let you keep it. I went through and I was put over in the doubtful starters. Anyway it finished up that there were six doubtful starters and five

05:00 instruments so we went through again and I missed out again. He said, "Well, you play the bass drum." so it come to taking the instruments home and I grabbed the drum. "Oh no Blue", he said, "That drum doesn't leave the school", so I had to go home without it. Anyway I graduated to the side drum and I played the side drum and I played it as a matter of fact in a massed

05:30 bands ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone of the Shrine of Remembrance in, just not sure,

'31 or '32, and we marched from the Shrine, the massed bands, school bands marched back to Flinders Street Station. Anyway my parents, cost one and sixpence a week to be in the band and my parents

- 06:00 reckoned it wasn't value playing the drum for one and six, so although it was the Depression years they scraped together and bought me a cornet. I played third cornet, second cornet, repiano cornet, first cornet, solo cornet and was in the band for a while and anyway I was one of those cheeky so and so's who'd want somebody to sing, righto, I'll sing.
- 06:30 Wanted somebody to recite, "Righto, I'll recite." Anyway he wanted somebody to play a double B bass, so I said, "Righto, I'll play the double B." So anyway the next practice, although my back fence was the side fence of the school I was invariably late, and this was an evening practice and I snuck into my cornet spot and I'm just getting my cornet out and he tap tap
- 07:00 tap on the stand, "Oh no Blue", he said, "You're over there", and there's this double B bass, and I said, "I was only joking." He said, "I wasn't." I said, "My parents wouldn't let me play", and he said, "Well, you play it for tonight." Alright, so I played the double B bass and quite often he would go outside and listen. He can hear better outside than in the room with us, and he said to us,
- 07:30 "Go and play in a march", and we played that march through for three or four times, and on this occasion he got us playing the march and out he went. So he finally came back in, we finished the march, we played a couple of other things and finish of the practice so we're going home. So I just left the bass and grabbed my cornet. He said, "Oh no Blue, you take the bass." I said, "No, my parents
- 08:00 won't let me." He said, "Yes they will." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I went and saw them while you was playing the march", and I got home and of course, mum and dad said, "Oh you said, you'd do it." Well I played the bass and he had about I think five other school bands and of course the double B bass was a pretty rare commodity. Consequently I got jobs with his other bands and I got quite a few country trips and that out
- 08:30 of it, yeah, but in regards to the music I was always interested and of course Anzac Day in those days, there was no school bands in the Anzac March and I used to go and watch, and the Anzac March used to finish at the exhibition building, corner of Gertrude Street and Nicholson Street, and I used to watch the march and think how
- 09:00 wonderful it would be to be in that march. Anyway when I left school I joined the Northcote Citizens and Soldiers Band and I had great pleasure in them marching in the Anzac March. Little did I know I'd finish up marching as a returned man myself, but I left Northcote Citizens and Soldiers when we moved to
- 09:30 Thornbury and I, yeah we moved to Thornbury, and anyway I didn't, I beg your pardon, cut that out. I, when we left Thornbury, we moved to Malvern. My father ended up a private chauffeur for Hector Bell, the Chairman
- 10:00 of the Tramway Board, the man that gave me my job, and that necessitated them living in Malvern because the garage for the Chairman's car was there. Now I worked for the Tramways. The Tramways had a, Malvern Tramways Band was a good band, but I started to go out to dances and get into,
- 10:30 involved with girls and consequently you couldn't practice, so I didn't go on with the band.

**Did your father have trouble finding work during your childhood?**

Well he didn't because we had an aunty that lived in Richmond and she sponsored us to come out and she used this man, Hector Bell's name

- 11:00 to, I think people had to nominate work and she used his name, because when we got here he said, "Oh, I'm terribly sorry that she used my name". Anyway he did help my dad, yeah, but my dad early in the piece he worked at a garage in Bridge Road, Richmond
- 11:30 selling petrol. He'd get one and sixpence, 15 cents in the pound, which is \$2 and he, you know, might work all day and get two shillings, 20 cents, but eventually Hector Bell got him a job as
- 12:00 a truck driver for the Board of Works and then when he became Chairman he took dad as his private chauffeur and dad was there until he retired.

**Had your father been involved in the First World War?**

Yes, oh yes. Yes, he was a returned man, yeah.

**Did he ever talk about that when you were a kid?**

Oh, not very much, no. I mean

- 12:30 unless you're prompted like an occasion like this you don't talk much, no.

**And you met a lot of World War 1 veterans when you were involved with the Soldiers and Citizens?**

Oh, a few yes, in the Northcote Citizens and Soldiers band, yes, yeah, yeah.

**And did they ever tell stories about the war?**

No, not that I can recall, no.

13:00 **And so tell us about your first job?**

Well my first job before I went to the Tramways was on a dairy farm on the corner of Jones Street and Collins Street Thornbury and it was all sevens. 7.00 in the morning till 7.00 at night, seven days a week for seven shillings a week, yes, and for a fellow

13:30 named Digger Daly.

**And you were about 14, 15?**

I'd just turned 14, yes, yeah, yeah.

**Digger Daly, was he a digger?**

He was a First World War man too, yeah. Hell of a good bloke too, yeah, yeah.

**It's a lot of work?**

Yeah.

**Did you have time for play after that?**

Well what I used to do, I'd get there 7.00 in the morning, I'd get there and they'd be milking their cows and I'd give them a bit of a hand to milk and then

14:00 he had more customers than he had cows to supply with milk, so he used to buy milk from another farm around the road, so the horse and cart would be there from his doing his night round and I'd take it around to this other dairy and get their can of milk. By the time I came back they had milked our cows and

14:30 water-cooled the milk and put it on the cart and I'd take it up to another dairy that brine-cooled. Now brine is a, well a colder than cold, cold water, that's what it is, and then it would be in their,

15:00 in their dairy. Yeah, in their cool room I beg your pardon, in their cool room and I would bring back the can that went up last night and that would come back to our dairy and they'd serve milk to customers during the day, and their motto on their bills too I remember, "You can whip our cream but you can't beat our

15:30 milk", which is quite good isn't it?

**And so you'd be working until 7.00, what would you be doing the rest of the day?**

Well, after I bought the milk back in the morning I'd take the cows out grazing and bring them back in the, about 2.00 o'clock in the afternoon. Then I'd do an afternoon round and come back and give a hand with

16:00 the milking and then around to this other dairy for their milk and take it up to the brine-cooling and come back, and by that time it was 7.00 o'clock.

**That's a big day, isn't it?**

Yeah.

**So I suppose Thornbury was paddocks then?**

It was, yes, yes, well this was paddocks, the corner of Jones Street and Collins Street, yeah.

**Did you walk to work?**

No, I had a bike. I had a little 26

16:30 inch wheel bike.

**And you still found time and energy for dancing?**

Not then, I was too young. No, it wasn't until I went to Malvern that I, I went dancing, started dancing, yeah.

**What did you do for work at Malvern?**

Well I worked for the Tramway Board you see, and I worked, I started off in their

17:00 Maintenance Depot in Scotchmer Street Fitzroy and they couldn't apprentice me there so they then sent me to Preston Tramway Workshops and I was apprenticed the coach-painting and I used to go from Malvern, we lived not far from Malvern Town Hall, to the corner of Miller Street and St Georges Road

each day to work

17:30 at Preston Tramways.

**That's a fair distance isn't it?**

Yeah.

**How long did it take you?**

Oh God, now, oh a good hour, good hour.

**So you would've known your trams pretty well back then?**

Yeah, yes.

**And how long did you stay in that job?**

Well I was there until the war, and I was on leave from the Tramway Board to the army

18:00 and I joined the army in '41. I was in the call-ups and I thought, well I had a mate that had done three months compulsory training and he said, "We'll join up", and I said, "No, let me see what it's like." So I remember I reported to Mayburn Place Armadale with one cut lunch and

18:30 they herded us on to the train to Flinders Street, number one platform. We lined up there and there's a bloke, another group from another area came along and there was a bloke full as a boot, and anyway of course everyone's laughing at him and he stopped and propped and he came over and I thought he was gonna hang one on me but he whacked the bloke beside

19:00 me, and the most insignificant little fellow you could see, but anyway they put us on the train to Trawool and we were in camp in Trawool and that was the Engineers and we, first I got involved with the bugle.

19:30 They had a bugle there and I played the bugle there and I had, I've always been interested in horses, I like a bet. And I hope this is in order me telling you this?

**What, sorry?**

I say is this alright me telling you this?

**Yeah, this is fine, yeah.**

Yeah, anyway we'd got a wireless in our tent and

20:00 one of our blokes said, "Oh so and so horse in the race", he said, "I backed it the last three starts." He said, "I would, it would be here wouldn't it, can't get a bet on." I said, "It couldn't win." He said, "Will you hold a shilling each way for it?" I said, "Righto." So anyway I held his shilling each way and it got beaten and we went out on our work for the day and we came back before the last race and there was a horse in the last race that he wanted to

20:30 back, so I said, "Righto", and another fellow in the tent said, "Can I have a shilling each way?", or something. So I held them both and they both got beaten. So anyway the next day, just after lunch there and there's races on and a bloke stuck his head in the tent and said, "Do you know where we can get a bet on?" And they said, "Yes, Blue will set you." So, excuse me, I accommodated him

21:00 and anyway that night I won a bit of money at the cards so came Saturday and there's races on and I set up as a bookmaker and there was fellows came along and they wanted a pound each way and I thought, oh I'm not going to hold that kind of money but it finished up I had about, we

21:30 better give the dogs a go?

**I don't know what we can do about them? Some more noise, echo?**

**Just keep going.**

**Yeah, just tell us the story.**

Yes, anyway we, as I say it finished up that I'm holding about £5 for about

22:00 six or seven horses and I looked at the field and I thought, you know, what is there, that'll be a skinner for me, that'll win and nobody's backed it? And I remember, this is a few years ago, a horse called Sunbell, so anyway Sunbell jumped out in front, he come around the turn, he's in front, he's still in front coming to the post and Sunbell wins.

22:30 So I'm a big winner on the day and what we used to do, we used to get leave every second weekend and another fellow there, a fellow named Jimmy Cardwell who finished up Melbourne's greatest football secretary in years to come, and Jimmy used to run a book too, so I'd have leave and he'd be there or

23:00 he'd have leave and I'd be there and after the last race, oh we had leave into Seymour, and after the last

race what we used to do was get a taxi and you could get a taxi to Melbourne and back for £5, so this night we went to Melbourne and we were on our way back the other side of Tallarook and we'd,

- 23:30 we'd only got leave passes to Seymour, anyway there's a road block on, and it was civilian police, army police, navy, airforce, every vehicle had to stop and of course we got picked up. So they put us in the truck and there was another car came and the driver of that must've been awake because he came around the
- 24:00 corner and stopped and then let them get out. Anyway there's whistles blowing and away they went and they picked them all up bar two. So daylight came and of course it was no good waiting any longer, they abandoned their set up and they were bringing us back to camp, we were about a mile from camp, and our truck pulled up and it's one of the
- 24:30 blokes who'd walked about six miles and saw this truck. See the Military Police used to be in 30 hundredweight trucks but this was a big 2 ton truck, and anyway they pulled up and they said, "Hop in, you're stiff", and he got picked up. So we got back to camp and of course there's a muster parade, everyone's called out on parade
- 25:00 7.00 o'clock in the morning and they'd called the role and when they call your name they call it three times. We had a fellow named Cec Ruddie who after the war became a great fullback for Essendon, but anyway we were known as Sappers in the Engineers. "Sapper Ruddie", nothing, "Sapper Ruddie", nothing, "Sapper Ruddie". "What the
- 25:30 hell's going on?" He'd got in the back of the camp, got into his tent, got his pyjamas on and he stood his beautiful curly hair up on end and come out as if was half asleep. What the hell's going on? And we, standing ovation, it was wonderful.

**The roadblock was looking for you guys?**

Yes, yeah, because see we were out of bounds of our leave pass, yeah.

- 26:00 But we got confined to barracks, yeah.

**How long?**

For that day, and then we were charged. I think we got a five shilling charge or something, yeah, five fine.

**You were doing a fair trade on the book?**

Yes, yeah. Yeah, it didn't worry me, yeah.

**How long were you there at that place?**

Three months and we were

- 26:30 then back to your normal work, back to the Tramways and I was there until August and then I joined the AIF [Australian Imperial Force].

**And do you remember where you were when you heard that war had broken out?**

Yes, I do. I remember I'd taken a girl home down to South Melbourne and I walked up Park Street

- 27:00 to the Shrine and there was people waiting for the tram, they used to be all night trams and you know, one every hour or something like that, and there was people there and they said about war had broken out, and I lived in Malvern and I didn't know whether, you know, there'd be bombs dropping before I got home sort of thing, yeah. But yes, I
- 27:30 joined up at the Melbourne Town Hall and was taken to Royal Park and you were sworn in, finger on the Bible. I think I just had my little finger on the, stack of fellows around but I was there and I had a mate that was in the ASC [Army Service Corps] at Fisherman's Bend,
- 28:00 so I tried and eventually got down to Fisherman's Bend. Oh, at Fisherman's Bend I wanted to, Show Day there were races at Ascot. Ascot Racecourse was opposite the Melbourne Showgrounds, it's a Housing Commission area now, but I wanted to go
- 28:30 there and there was a horse in that, and would you believe this horse Sunbell that got me the money at Seymour, at Trawool, and I had to go, you had to know if it was trying. If it wasn't trying it wouldn't win, so anyway they had a thing on at Fisherman's Bend where you applied in writing for leave. Now I couldn't apply in writing for leave to go to the races,
- 29:00 so I told a deliberate lie and said "My parents were moving and I wanted to help them move." So my leave was knocked back, so I went over to the main orderly room and saw the commander and I said to him about I applied for leave and got knocked back. He said, "So what", he said, "Leave's a bloody privilege, and they can put you on a charge sheet for being here now." He said, "You know you're not
- 29:30 allowed to be here." I said, "I thought you was crook on me." "Crook on you?", he said, "I don't know

who you are, who are you?" And he said, "What did you want the leave for?" And I told him, so he said, "Well see me after lunch." Lieutenant Denham his name was, and he said, "See me after lunch and I will say yes or no", he's said, "It's the bloody end of it." So I saw him after lunch, he said, "Yes alright, you can have the leave", and it was pay day. I said, "Can I be

30:00 first in the pay queue?" "Struth", and he said, I said to him, "There was a fellow there owed me £2, see and he was getting £3 10 a fortnight", and I said, "Can he be second?" He said, "Bloody hell", so anyway he was second, so I got my money and I went to Ascot and there was a horse, I'd

30:30 got £5.10 and I was going to have £4 on Sunbell and £1.10 to keep for the next fortnight. Anyway I got there and there was a horse there, a good old trial horse and he was in an earlier race and I thought, by God, I reckon he could win so I had 10 shillings on him at eight to one, £4 at

31:00 10 shillings and he one, so instead of having £4 on Sunbell I got £8 and so I went and saw my informant and he said, "Yes, it's five to one", but he said, "They'll knock it off, go for your life." So anyway I had £40 to eight and I'm walking out of the betting ring and a hand

31:30 grabbed me by the shoulder, what do you know? And I looked around and it's Dickie Denham, the officer that I fronted for the leave, and I said, "Sunbell, but go for your life, they're going to knock it off." He said, "I'll see you over at the bar after." Well thank God Sunbell won, and I went over to the bar and he's bought me a beer and he said, "Why didn't you tell me?" I said, "I couldn't tell, I couldn't write out an application for leave to go to the races." "Oh", he said, "If you get anything like that again,

32:00 come and see me." So anyway I was leaving the course and I saw a fellow from a stable that I knew at Caulfield, and he said, "You done your dough Blue?" I said, "No, I'm in front." "Oh God", he said, "Well if you're in front, don't go, the boss reckons Manawatu will win the last." So I went back and I found this Dickie Denham

32:30 at the bar and told him and I had £5 each way Manawatu at eight to one, £40 to five each way and it won. I was a millionaire, yeah.

**It was a huge day.**

Yes. Well now, now that was Fisherman's Bend, I don't think there was anything

**What had you been doing at Fisherman's Bend?**

We were training,

33:00 AFC training. We got our truck driver's licences and we were doing rifle training and we'd go to the rifle range. In fact we went down to Williamstown there was a rifle range and one of the greatest cup of teas I've ever had in my life. We were out on the range all day and we came in and there was a lady comfort fund put on afternoon tea for us and it was a beautiful cup of tea.

33:30 But yes, anyway Fisherman's Bend, we went, we were put on draft. There were 60 of us going to Singapore and we were sent to Caulfield Racecourse and I had been many a

34:00 time taking horses to the races and never thought I'd finish up sleeping in the horse stalls but anyway, we embarked on a boat called the Marella. It was I believe the Kaiser, Kaiser Wilhelm in the First World War owned it and he built it to tour the world when he captured it. Well he didn't capture the world

34:30 and they took the boat off him, and it was a passenger boat to Singapore and it was Chinese staff and Malayan crew and it was beautiful food. You'd wake up in the morning, a little Chinaman, good morning, a cup of tea and a little sandwich and you'd go up for breakfast, a lovely breakfast, come back and your bunk had been done out. You'd go up on deck and have

35:00 a bit of physical exercise and then morning tea, very nice luncheon, afternoon tea, ice cream on deck and the evening meal was just out of this world, and after that the bar would open, and of course there were civilians, women on board and the dancing, and anyway we got to Sydney and we had

35:30 a couple of days in Sydney leave, and then on to Brisbane. We were going up the Brisbane River and the word got around we were going to be taken off and, she wants you

**It's alright, it's just a call that there's five minutes left on the tape.**

Oh right.

**There's at least a couple of minutes.**

We were taken off and put into camp at Redbank.

36:00 So this was on a Friday and we were having leave for the weekend as of 3.00 o'clock Saturday afternoon. Well that was a bit late for me to go to the races so we went to a dance, yeah, went to a dance Friday night at South Brisbane and I said to a girl, "Where's somewhere about 45 or 50 miles out of Brisbane?" She said, "Beaudesert." I said,

36:30 "Righto." Anyway we came back into Brisbane and of course the last train leaves Flinders Street

Station, Melbourne at midnight and we thought the same there. We got there about quarter to 12.00 and I think the last train left about quarter to 11.00, so what do we do? They said, well the only thing is to go around the Roma Street Station, that's the country station, and sleep in the paper

- 37:00 train. There was a train used to go out, go to Toowoomba and it would go through Redbank, drop the papers off. So they said, "Sleep in the paper train." So we got in the paper train and this is December and of course we're shorts and shirts, sunny Queensland. Well it was so bloomin' cold and we got out of the train and across the road there was only one shop with a light on, a baker's.
- 37:30 So we went over there and knocked on the window. "Go away, go away." Anyway knock, knock, knock. Finally came to the door and we told him, you know, "We just want to come in the warm." So he was very good, he took us in and gave us a bun and a cup of tea. So we went back on the train and we got out to camp. So I fronted the CO [Commanding Officer] there, a fellow named Bray, Donkey Bray,
- 38:00 Colonel, Captain Bray and I told him that "I'd been in touch with an uncle at Beaudesert and that if we could be at Brisbane Post Office, GPO [General Post Office], by midday he'd take us home for the weekend." So he fell for this story, so away we went to the races. So we got in there at the races and practically the first person I saw
- 38:30 was a detective from Melbourne that I know and he was up there on exchange. They have our detectives go up there and their detectives come down here looking for crims and he put us on to a winner and got to the last race and I was with my mate and I said, "Look at that girl, isn't she gorgeous?" And she was dressed in red and white so we looked in the book for something red and white, a horse called
- 39:00 Fast Company, so and we knew that Briscoe was one of the top riders there and he hadn't ridden a winner. So 10 to 1 Fast Company, we backed it and up it got, yeah. So and the next day this detective met us and took us for a drive around Brisbane and to the hotel where he and his wife were staying and he really did us proud. So on the
- 39:30 Monday we did a 17 mile route march and the following Monday it was going to be a 27 miler, so everyone's looking for the lurch to get out, so I had a bit of an itching feeling in the tail and somebody said, "Go on sick parade, they'll give you a bit of pile ointment and you'll miss the route march." I went on sick parade and the next thing I know I'm in hospital to be operated for haemorrhoids, and
- 40:00 it was myself and another fellow that had appendicitis that didn't go, and while we were in hospital the other 58 got on draft and they went to Singapore in a troop ship. They were there two days and the Japs hit and of the 58 that went there, was only 4 came back. So I was really lucky.

**We'll stop there.**

## Tape 2

- 00:32 **I think you just escaped being sent to Singapore.**

That's right, yeah, yeah.

**And so what happened to you then after you came out of hospital?**

Well, after I came out of hospital, see I was a VX number, Victorian, and up there Queensland is QX and they didn't know whether they should direct me where to go. Firstly I came out of hospital

- 01:00 and while I was, I had convalescent leave and I came home to Melbourne on convalescent leave so I went back there and they, I went on parade and being red-headed I got sunburnt so I ended up
- 01:30 the CO said, "You come and see me, you frighten me." So he said to me, "What did you do before the war?" I said, "I was a painter with the Tramway Board", so he sent me to the workshop and I'd went to night school learning signwriting so they had me doing signs, "Driver under instruction", and "Excuse me", this was prior to my operation.
- 02:00 See look, I'll have to just go back over that.

**That's fine, yeah.**

What happened, I missed out on the route march and I was in the camp hospital under a course of injections and anyway I came out of there and I had convalescent leave from that, came back to the camp and

- 02:30 they had me on parade and that's when I got sunburnt and they had me painting. So there was a trade grouping, two shillings a day extra for your trade grouping, and I went into the Brisbane RMIT and did a trade test and passed it and got two bob a day extra. Now

- 03:00 they had a thing on that out at Enoggera they had the, it was an ammunition dump and these buildings, there were about 20 by 20 I suppose and they were white and they had to be camouflaged, so they had us out there painting them, and anyway that went on for a while and then I came back
- 03:30 and I paraded to go on draft again and the doctor that saw me said, "Oh, you're the fellow that had the injection for haemorrhoids." I said, "That's right." Anyway he examined me, said, "Oh no, you're in no condition to go on draft, you've got to be operated on." So I was operated on and
- 04:00 I was in hospital for a couple of weeks at least, and went to a place called Sandy Gallop at Ipswich in Queensland. Now Sandy Gallop, they said, "Don't tell people you was in Sandy Gallop." Sandy Gallop was a lunatic asylum and they, what they did they took over the women's section
- 04:30 and made an army hospital and the men's section still existed. The loons used to come and talk to us through the windows and that, but they said, "Don't say you was in Sandy Gallop." Anyway while I was away getting fixed up and that I, the unit moved to Goondiwindi in Queensland.
- 05:00 So when I was finally declared A class I went back to the unit at Goondiwindi and having the trade grouping I was the unit painter and signwriter and we went from, we were at Goondiwindi and we went from Goondiwindi to Tenterfield. We were there for a couple of weeks and then to Glen Innes and
- 05:30 we were in camp at Glen Innes and at Glen Innes they used to commandeer trucks from farmers and people around and they'd be camouflaged and a number written on the bonnet, and so I used to go into the town to a garage and write the numbers on the bonnet. I had also
- 06:00 a little sideline, this was the training depot, ASC training depot and they, the new recruits would come in, the universal kit bag, a long sausage bag and I cut myself a set of stencils and I'd put their name and number on their kit bag for one and six, and you'd got to a tent, oh
- 06:30 no and no, there'd be six blokes in the tent. "You can do mine." "Righto", I'd do his. "Oh yeah, you can do mine." Finish up get the lot and I had a, they'd say, "I don't want to turn my bag out." I said, "You don't need." I had a piece of board, I'd slide it in the bag and you had a smooth surface to work on, but anyway I was there and I
- 07:00 ended up this, I went home on leave, that's a funny little incident. I went home on leave and see as I say they were Queenslanders and it came to Christmas and they were getting four days home leave plus travelling time and I went to this Donkey Bray and he was a man that if you stood up to him he was alright, but if he could find a weakness
- 07:30 he'd grind you into the ground, and I said to him, "Look, you know I'm a Victorian, I don't see why I can't have my four days home leave the same as the Queenslanders." "I think you're right", he said. So I had my four days home leave. Anyway it meant I was home for Christmas but not the New Year and I didn't know where I'd be the next New Year so I overstayed. I was AWL [Absent without Leave].
- 08:00 So I came back to the camp and old George Wright the RSM, [Regimental Sergeant Major], I said to him, "What's doing?" "Oh Blue", he said, "They're getting fined a fiver" and, he said "That what didn't get leave went AWL" and he said, "They're getting fined a fiver and 28 days Boggo Road." Now Boggo Road was the big gaol
- 08:30 in Brisbane. So anyway it came my turn to front and I was called up to the company orderly room and it was a big deal, "Bluey, we'll send you a file when you're in gaol", and you know and all this sort of thing, and anyway it was a great joke that I'm on the charge sheet. So there's an escort and I fell in between the escort and old George, left right, left right, marches us
- 09:00 down, so I go into the CO, reads out the charge. He says, "What have you got to say?" I said, "Look sir", I said, "I'm not going to tell you any lies about our sick aunties or dying grandmothers. I just wanted to be home for New Year because I don't know where I'll be next." "Fined £5, march him out Sergeant Major." I missed the 28 days Boggo Road, and I got outside and old George said, "You bloody beauty." He said, "Well, you're the last Blue", he said,
- 09:30 "Will you march these blokes back?" And there's me "March back, left right, left right." The escort that had brought me down and they're up at the orderly room and they applauded, yeah but anyway finally I had a difference of opinion with this Captain Bray about something, and I said, "Look sir", I said, "I joined this army to see a bit of
- 10:00 action, not to be in the training depot." He said, "Fair enough, you're on the next draft." So the night before I went on draft he took me to the officers' mess and brought me a couple of beers, so I went from there to a staging camp at Aloomba, out, just out of, not
- 10:30 Aloomba. Aloomba's near, anyway a staging camp just out of Toowoomba and another incident, I wanted, there was races at Dalby, so I wanted to go there and I got onto a hairdresser, see the hairdressers and barber shop you could always get a bet on with a barber who was an SP [Starting Price] bookie and you know, he knew what was
- 11:00 doing and anyway he put me on to a taxi driver and there was a taxi load of us went to Dalby races and we got to Dalby and we went to a pub and we had a couple of beers. Anyway, one of the blokes Charlie,



they said, "Well, better get to the races." I said, "I better find Charlie." "Oh", I said, "Charlie's not going to the races, Charlie's got a girl here." So we went to the races, we came back and had

11:30 a few beers and Charlie appeared and away we go, and at a place half way between Dalby and Toowoomba there was a street carnival thing on, stalls and that, and we said, "Should we? We'll have to have a look at this", and this bloke Charlie that'd been there with the girlfriend, he said, "Don't take too long", he said, "The missus is expecting me home for tea."

12:00 "Yeah, but..."

**Sorry Blue, I'm just going to pause for a sec. I think**

Incident at Toowoomba, there was a sergeant there and he was a real mongrel, so much so that he had his own, he was the sergeant major there, and so much so that he had his own tent and he had a table in his tent and somebody tied

12:30 a piece of cotton to the handle of his shaving mug and under his bed there was a dynamite charge, and he only had to pick up his mug and pull that tight and it would've blown him up. Well they used to have props propping the sides of the tents out, bit of wood, and the piece of wood fell and fell over the cotton and when he picked his mug up it just went tight from his mug to this lump of wood.

13:00 Otherwise he'd have got blown to bits.

**Did you ever find out who did that?**

Well they had a big parade on. They offered 21 days leave to anyone who, you know, gave them the information but I wasn't gonna say anything. I knew who.

**You did?**

Yeah, yeah.

**Did many of the men know do you reckon?**

Excuse me blowing my nose.

**That's alright.**

There was only a few

13:30 knew, yeah. So that was Toowoomba.

**He wasn't very liked then this sergeant?**

He was hated, yeah, yeah. Well, then I had a fellow there too and he'd say, "Look, will you lend me 10 bob?", which was half a, was a dollar, yeah, and he was going into town. He said, "I've got see an uncle", he said, "I can get some money off him."

14:00 So I lent him 10 bob and I'd meet him in town and he'd give me my 10 bob back. Anyway I found out later that what, he was a big tall dark handsome ex-footballer and he was a pick-pocket, and what he used to do he'd pick on the Yanks, and of course he'd have one hand tapping them on the shoulder

14:30 and the other one going to their pocket, yeah. And he'd been in gaol and he got involved in a fight. Evidently a Yank had retaliated and he'd been in gaol, and of course his pay book confiscated, that's why he didn't have money, but I mean he always paid me, yeah. And that's about the end I think of Toowoomba.

15:00 Well from Toowoomba we went on draft and I joined my unit, the 2/5th Field Ambulance at Ravenshoe and when you joined the unit, Colonel Macintosh was the CO, and you fronted the CO and he, which was good. I mean some units didn't, but

15:30 he got to know you and you got to know him, and he said, "I see you're a trade group painter and signwriter." I said, "Yes." He said, "We don't carry that here." I said, "Well, I'll have to go somewhere else." He said, "No, yours is substantiated. You can only lose it by misdemeanour", so I stayed with the 2/5th

16:00 and that was at Ravenshoe, we joined them at Ravenshoe. Now, turn that off. I joined the unit, 2/5th at Ravenshoe and we embarked for Townsville for New Guinea on the 7th of September. We

16:30 were on a boat called the Katoomba and I'll always remember that because the boat was full of dysentery and there was blokes running everywhere looking for toilets. I thought I had a cunning one, a bathroom, but there were about three other blokes there before me. But anyway we arrived at Port Moresby and there was a sign up there that said,

17:00 "Through these portals pass the world's greatest mosquito bite", and that was us, and we went to a place called Pom Pom Park where we had to establish our camp, and we were there and, cut it off. Moresby,

- 17:30 we had a plane came over and it was going home to Australia. It had officers, American plane, and he used to come up the valley and then bank around past our camp and then go over the hills. Anyway it was so low that we had blokes on the top of the hill, we thought it might hit them, but it missed them just but hit the next hill and they were all killed.
- 18:00 **What had happened to it?**
- Well I don't know. It didn't climb high enough. Anyway another thing while we were there, the Guinea Gold was the army paper and they didn't give you much with regards to the races. They'd give you two fields of about 40 horses. Well 40 horses wouldn't run in a race,
- 18:30 so my dad, drove the Chairman of the Tramway Board and was stationed quite a lot of his time at Tramways head office. Now if he could get the Melbourne Herald on the Wednesday night, Wednesday afternoon before 2.30, that had the fields and the starting times
- 19:00 and weights and everything and he'd send that to me. I'd get it on the Friday lunchtime mail and I had a fellow in the orderly room would type them out in triplicate and another fellow in the transport that would drive me around and I used to get rid of about 24 or 5 copies at a pound a copy, and I'd give the typist five bob a copy and my driver five
- 19:30 bob a copy. So I'd get 10 bob a copy. So 24 copies, well that's £12 and when you're on army pay it was good money and this went on for quite a while and before Dark Felt's Melbourne Cup in 1943, well known ABC [Australian Broadcasting Company] broadcaster Mel Morris, came on the air and he said,
- 20:00 "I was talking to Victor Hartley, the jockey that's riding Dark Felt", and he said "To tell you boys up north that Dark Felt is over the line." So came Dark Felt's Melbourne Cup and it won and they backed it to a man and the following week when I went around with my copies there's only about four bookmakers still going, they'd all gone broke.
- 20:30 **Who was running books back then?**
- Well, different other units, yeah, yeah, but anyway we left, we left early January for yes, wait on, before that there was an airstrip
- 21:00 not far from us and there was truck loads of troops on the bank going down to their airstrip and a plane took off and crashed into them and there was a great explosion and they were calling for medical personnel from everywhere, and they was about 100 killed, but yeah,
- 21:30 that was an awful thing, especially so that the nurses had only just been in New Guinea for a few days and there was bodies shrivelled up the size of babies and you know, the nurses were very traumatic. But finally in early January we flew into the Ramu Valley to Dumpu. Now
- 22:00 we, one of the, previously the troop planes were fighter escorted but we were the first lot that were unescorted and we were going over the Owen Stanley Ranges and looking around for Jap fighters. Anyway we landed at the Dumpu airstrip and got on the side and
- 22:30 over came the Japs and our fighters too. So we sat on the side of the airstrip and watched the dog fight.
- Can I just interrupt you for a second?**
- Yeah.
- What I might do is put this case next to you and you can put your bit of paper on that. It's just crackling a little bit in the microphone.**
- Oh I see, sorry.
- Then you can grab that anytime you like? Yep?**
- Wait on, before
- 23:00 you
- Yeah, sure.**
- Yeah, well we were, we went to Dumpu as I say and I was in headquarters company, and headquarters company ran what they call the MDS, [Main Dressing Station]. Now A and B Companies they were, went with the
- 23:30 Infantry and they handled the wounded and they would bring them back to what they'd call an Advance Dressing Station and then from there they'd come back to us. Now they operated on them with us and they would then fly them out to Moresby to convalesce and some
- 24:00 they would send home, depends how bad they were, but we were bombed and strafed, pardon me, in the Ramu Valley and at Dumpu, and another little incident, just going back to when we left Moresby we had planeloads and

- 24:30 I was late on place at parade for my planeload because I got dysentery. Anyway Dick Armitage who is still a very good friend, I was only speaking to him a few weeks ago, and Dick was the sergeant in charge of our planeload, and when I got down there late he said, "Oh the old so and so, that was the sergeant major", he said, "He wanted me to put you on the charge
- 25:00 sheet." I said, "You're not going to?" He said, "Of course not." So we got to the Ramu Valley and we set up there and the sergeant major came, he wanted me to do a sign, a board sort of thing whereas he could determine what job, what work there was, the cookhouse, the wood heap and things like that, and if he put a bloke's name he was on the job and if a bloke that was at the cookhouse was at the wood heap
- 25:30 he was away from his work. So only I did this job and old sergeant major said, he came down to my tent, he said, "I took it up and put it at his tent and he came down and he said, oh, he said, thanks Blue", he said, "That's exactly what I wanted, good." He said, "Oh, after lunch, come up to the orderly room." I said "Righto." So after lunch I went
- 26:00 up to the orderly room and he, fall in, and he's got me on a charge sheet, so I marched in and I fronted Major Walker, the 2IC [Second in Charge]. The charge was read out and he said to me, "Have you got anything to say?" I said "Only that I had the shits," and
- 26:30 he said to the sergeant major, "Have you got anything more to say?" "No". "Fined five shillings, march him out." Now that was the minimum they could fine you, and anyway in the Ramu Valley we didn't have our pay books, we'd have a credit from our pay book to the canteen and a credit of a pound and when you cut that
- 27:00 out, well then another pound, but anyway I went off back to my tent and Major Walker couldn't have been 10 yards behind me and oh, our currency was tins of tobacco. We'd bet, I used to run a double on the races. 50 tins of tobacco to one. And anyway he came down and a tin of tobacco was worth about one and seven pence halfpenny, and he came down and he said, "Where's
- 27:30 your cards Blue? I'll play you cards", and he got three tins of tobacco and if ever I played against someone that wasn't trying it was him. He gave me my fine back. Now wasn't that beautiful, yeah, and oh I got to tell you back to the bugle, goodness me. At Ravenshoe when I first joined the unit they had a bugle and it was an old brass bugle and
- 28:00 they had a fellow there playing it and he made a shocking job of it and in disgust I took it off him, I said, "For God's sake", and anyway I played the bugle and the old sergeant major he was one of those that he put his H's where he shouldn't and leave them off where he should, and he said, "Get those high notes, you are a bugler", and he said, "From now on you are the unit bugler", so I played this bugle, and they said to me after a while about
- 28:30 a silver bugle and, stop your film, stop the film. That alright?
- Well done, great.**
- And they told me as I say, about the silver bugle. They said nobody could play it, so I said, "Well produce it", and they produced it and this is it. Now this bugle was
- 29:00 presented to the unit in 1940 by the original 5th Field Ambulance from the 1914-18 war, so this would have to be, well at least made in 1914 if not before, and that's the bugle.
- It's got a nice note to it too, hasn't it?**
- And I was, yeah. That's it.
- 29:30 So I then played this bugle all through the unit and I have a photo there, I played it at Dumpu. They opened a war cemetery at Dumpu and there was
- 30:00 a Reverend Donald Redding, a padre, and he was a wonderful fellow, a very well respected fellow, and he used to get me to play for funerals. Anyway he got me to play for the opening of the war cemetery at Dumpu, and I remember this morning, Sunday morning and I'm dying for a smoke and
- 30:30 I thought as soon as I'm dressed I'll be right. Well he came and I didn't have time for a smoke and of course bowling along in an open jeep you can't smoke, so we got to where the cemetery was and an officer came up and threw a salute. "You're the official bugler?" "Yes." "That's your position over there", there was a dais. Well I couldn't go over there and put the bugle under my arm and
- 31:00 roll a smoke, so I had to go without a smoke and it came to the end of the service and you come to attention, turn right and I was from me to you from General Vasey and I played the Last Post and Reveille, yeah. By God I enjoyed a smoke after that.
- 31:30 Yeah, but he was a great man Donald Redding. I remember when we, before we went to Borneo we were in camp on the Tablelands and he wanted me to play for something and my mother had sent up a bottle of wine in a loaf of bread. They used to get a long sandwich loaf
- 32:00 and hollow the bread out, put the wine in and then pack it in and it would travel well, and my mate and

I were having a drink and Donald Redding came in and I felt a bit embarrassed see, and I said, "Oh, we're just having a drink for Christmas. Would you care to join us?" I thought take the bull by the horns. "Well", he said, "Seeing it's the festive season I don't mind if I do",

- 32:30 and he had a drink with us and time went on, years passed and I was in, working in Fitzroy and coming home through East Melbourne and I saw this fellow waddling along. I thought that's Donald Redding and anyway I pulled up. "Well", he said, "Fancy seeing
- 33:00 you." I said, "Hop in." He said, "I'm only around the corner." I said, "Don't matter", so I drove him around. "Well", he said, "I think we better have a drink for this occasion", and he took me in and we had a couple of stubbies of beer and thoroughly enjoyed one another's company, and he originally came from South Australia and he went back to South Australia and I just luckily happened to see where he died and was being buried,
- 33:30 so I got onto Interflora and got a wreath on behalf of the 2/5th Field Ambulance and I was so glad I was able to get it in time, yeah, but he, wonderful fellow, yeah.

**We'll have to ask you more questions about him later on. And so how long were you in the Ramu Valley?**

Oh, I suppose about, excuse me.

**That's alright, yep.**

- 34:00 **Check your notes.**

April, well from January to April, yeah. Now we flew out of there to Lae and we got to Lae, they took us to a staging camp and they said, "No, you're not for here, the one down the road." The one down the road, "No,

- 34:30 you're not for here, the one back up there." Well up and down this road all the afternoon and finally we ended up at the first one we started at, so they said, "Oh well, there's some old Jap huts over the back, go and bed yourself down there, and then come and have a meal." So we laid our beds out, went and had a meal and then there was a canteen open. Now the canteen that we'd had in the Ramu Valley only had
- 35:00 cigarettes, tobacco and squash, but this one had chocolates and so we got into that. Anyway finally comes to going to bed and we get into bed and we've been in bed two minutes and lice, and anyway we got out and of course you couldn't do anything till the next day but we washed our gear
- 35:30 in the Lae River and didn't sleep there, but that night we were embarking the next day, and that night we sat on the side of the road and they called the nominal role of draft and old Dick, the sergeant major with his bad handling of the English language called the role and, "Private 'obbs, 'olmes, 'art,
- 36:00 Private Habbott", and anyway of course it's dark, and we were all laughing and he couldn't pinch anyone for laughing and poor little Tommy Bowden, the sergeant, was holding the hurricane lamp for him to read, Tommy couldn't laugh, and old Dick said, "You can laugh, you 'ave not got your leave pass in your 'and yet." Your leave pass, yeah, but we eventually got on board this boat, the Duntroon,
- 36:30 and the cooks had a money making thing on. They had ice cream like butter boxes of ice cream and of course we hadn't seen ice cream for years and I think about two bob filled up your dixie, your meal thing, and we really made hogs of ourselves, yeah, but we came home and we went
- 37:00 to Aloomba just out of Townsville, they put us in camp there. I remember, oh, just dating back to when I had the haemorrhoid operation I was coming out of the anaesthetic and I said, "Oh mum, my bum, oh mum, my bum." Somebody said, "Cut it out Blue, there's a nurse here." I said, "Oh my
- 37:30 poor posterior." Anyway as I say, time went on and we were at Aloomba playing two-up and it was just on dark and I'm singing out, "I'll back the head, back the head", and a bloke from across the ring, "Hey Blue, how's your poor posterior?" And it had been the bloke that had been in hospital with me, yeah. Anyway we were lining up and they wanted mess orderlies to serve the food here, you, you and that Blue
- 38:00 bloke. I said, "I", and anyway it was a bloke I knew, a bloke named Douglas Campbell, I always remember his name, and he said, "You want a steak, don't you?" And everyone else is getting bully beef but those that worked in the kitchen had a steak, so that was a good go, yeah. But we, yeah

**You came back to Aloomba?**

We came back to Aloomba yeah, and then

- 38:30 came, got the train home, yeah, and we had our leave and we went back to Strathpine, a suburb of Brisbane, it is now, it was only country. But we, yeah, we were in camp at Strathpine and we did a march through Brisbane before
- 39:00 we went to Borneo, went up to the Tablelands. We went up to the Tablelands and we were in camp there

- at Kairi and we did amphibious landing training down at Cairns and then back to Kairi and then we
- 39:30 embarked on LST's to go to Morotai prior to going to Borneo. LST's are those that open up at the front, Landing Ship Transports, you drive trucks on, and what they did they, there was 240 ships in the convoy and they'd beach about 24 at a time, load us up
- 40:00 and then stand us out in the harbour while they loaded the others up. So we were standing out there and they had guns and trucks shackled down on deck. I couldn't walk from me to you without stepping over chains, and anyway at one stage there we were a fortnight
- 40:30 anchored out in the harbour, and they said, "There's more troops coming aboard." Couldn't possibly do it. They put more on board, yeah.

## Tape 3

### 00:30 Telling us about the amphibious landing?

- No, well we're on the LST's waiting while they filled up the others, and anyway finally we got going and we got outside of Cairns Harbour and we struck part of a cyclone and we went as far just going in ever increasing circles in eight
- 01:00 days as we would've gone in one day straight sailing, pardon me, and there was people sick everywhere. Anyway my mate and I are sitting on deck, one minute you're looking up at the sky, the next minute you're looking down at the sea and one of the cooks came out and said, "You blokes look you're doing alright, you better come and work in the cookhouse." Well that was the supreme
- 01:30 test to face food. Anyway we went working in the cookhouse and that was good because it was a Yank LST and those in the cookhouse would eat what the Yanks had. Our blokes were eating meat and vegetables, you know, dehydrated food, and the Yanks would you believe they had turkey and ham and ice cream, lived like lords, yeah.
- 02:00 Anyway we got to a place called, we were running short of food and water and we got to a little island called Biak and the Yanks had gone through with flame throwers and there was half grilled Japs everywhere, the island stunk, but all we wanted was water, so we got our water and left there, and we called in at Milne Bay to replace, restore our food supply,
- 02:30 and while we were there we anchored out in the harbour in Milne Bay, and anyway a Yank that I'd got to know when we were anchored at Cairns, he used to go ashore on leave and he come back and told me about the good time he had at Cairns, and anyway he came around, see, they're not allowed to have alcohol while they're afloat, they've either got to be tied up to a wharf or
- 03:00 anchored, and he said, "Man, I've been looking for you everywhere", and he got a couple of cans of beer and a cigar, and there's me sitting up on deck smoking a cigar and drinking the beer, but he was a hell of a good bloke, yeah. Well we replenished our stocks there and went on to Morotai and they took
- 03:30 us off at Morotai and took us out into the jungle. That's where you make your camp, and we had to knock everything down, you know, all the trees and that down and build a camp, and Morotai you could set your clock that it would rain at 4.00 o'clock. It was as regular as clockwork and pour and anyway you'd finish
- 04:00 up up to your calves in mud and the day would dawn the next day and nice sunny day, you'd start to clear up and you're starting to get around good, you'd do your washing and get it dried and then down would come the rain again, yeah, yeah, but there was an instant there just harking back to when I'd come down on
- 04:30 leave when I was up in the Tablelands, I just made it to a troop train leaving Central Station, Sydney and there was navy, navy, airforce, army and I just got on and got on the navy part and I'm going through and I bumped into a bloke. I said, 'I'm sorry,
- 05:00 mate." He said, "I know you", and anyway it was a bloke, Bill Henderson that was in the school band with me, so I sat down and we spent the night together sitting there talking. Get to Melbourne, he went his way and I went mine, and had my leave. I came back and anyway I started, left Melbourne with £10, which was plenty of money.
- 05:30 I got into a card game and got off the train with five shillings, 50 cents. So anyway the Anzac Buffet in Hyde Park they put on a free meal for servicemen and got you accommodation too. So I went up there and I got my tray of food and I'm looking around, "Hey Blue." I look over and it's Bill Henderson. "God", I said, "Fancy seeing
- 06:00 you again." Anyway his story was he'd been to Melbourne, went to his parents' place, they'd gone for a holiday and the neighbours didn't know where. Went to his fiancée's place, she's cleared out with a

Yank, so he came back to Sydney and spent his leave in Sydney and he's got about as much money as I've got, so anyway I said, "I'll find out and get accommodation, see you back

- 06:30 here for tea tonight." and this is Saturday night. So anyway I, they sent me out to a place like the Victoria Coffee Palace, unlicensed hotel, had a room there so I came back and met Bill and we had tea and we came out in Hyde Park, and like we've got about five bob each and no good looking for a girl with that kind of money. Anyway
- 07:00 there was a couple of girls away from us and a couple of soldiers tried them and got the brush off, and there was a dog running around and the dog's going between them and us and through the dog we got talking to them so we pretty quickly let them know that we were broke. Anyway they didn't clear out and they ended up, they said about coming home to their place and they've got a pianola,
- 07:30 we'll have a sing song around the pianola if their parents would agree. So we're walking up to the tram and the girl I'm with pressed two bob in my hand. I said, "We're not that broke." Anyway they got home, went in and asked. "Yes", so in we went, we had a sing song and a bit of supper and we were to meet them the next day. So we met them the next day and they got a little case each and we said, "What's the case?" And they said, "We're going to work after
- 08:00 we leave you." So we went around and the spruikers in Sydney we went and listened to them and had a walk around and we're getting towards 5.00 o'clock and my train went at 8.00 and I said, "We better get up to Anzac Buffet", and they said, "Why, are you hungry?" I said, "Yes." So we sat down under a rock on a seat and they got a picnic
- 08:30 tea and they kept us in cigarettes all the time, so we went up finally to the time and they come and saw me off and the girl I was with gave me a little parcel. She said, "There's something for you to have on the train", so I thanked her very much and I went on my way and when I felt a bit peckish I thought I'll see what's in here. I opened it up and there was two sandwiches, two cakes, a packet of Craven A.
- 09:00 cigarettes and five shillings in cash. Now wasn't that beautiful, yeah, and when I got back to camp I bought her a pendant and sent it to her and thanked her very much, yeah, but just one of the lovely things you find. And another occasion I was coming back off leave and the same situation, I got into a card game, I got to Sydney and anyway
- 09:30 I went to, on the way down, I went to Canterbury races and I backed a horse in the hurdle race and it won, but I saw another one in the race that was crying out for a bigger track, a horse called Magmort. So the winner that I backed was a horse called Sixteen Annas, a very good hurdler, so when I came back I got two and sixpence and I got on the race train,
- 10:00 a tram, and the conductor came along, "Fares please, fares please, come on soldier." I said, "You don't pay on trams in Melbourne." He said, "You don't pay here but it's a race special, sixpence", so I gave him the sixpence and give me the ticket and we got off on the siding at Randwick Racecourse, threw my ticket away and went to go in, "Where's your ticket?" "Oh, I said, come on, we don't pay in Melbourne." "You've got to have your blue tram ticket." "Oh", I said, "I threw that away."
- 10:30 "In you go." So I went in and Magmort was in the hurdle race. Sixteen Annas was favourite and Magmort's nine to two, so I had nine shillings to two Magmort and it won. I ended up I had a bet in every race there, every race in Melbourne, I had a double going in Melbourne and got beat and I had another double going in Sydney and I walked off the course with £7 10, and
- 11:00 off two shillings. I've won a lot of money at times at the races but off two shillings that's one of my best performances.

### **If we can just go back to New Guinea again?**

Yeah.

### **I think we left you, you'd gone from Morotai to**

No, that's going to Borneo.

### **That's going to Borneo.**

Yeah, we went to Morotai and yes, anyway we're on Morotai and I had a mate that was in hospital,

- 11:30 so you'd get out on the track and some arrived and it was, anyone but the Dutch would give you a lift but the Dutch would fly past you in a cloud of dust but anyway I, a navy jeep pulled up and I got in and just for conversation I said, "Oh, I've got a mate Bill Henderson",
- 12:00 I said, "He's on the, God, Westralia" and I said, "Do you know where that is?" He said, "Yes, the bloke said, it's here." I said, "Oh." He said, "Yes, it's anchored here", and I said,
- 12:30 "When is it going to come in?" He said, "It's not, but there's a boat goes out every hour on the hour", so after I'd seen my mate in hospital I got on the tender and went out, found Bill and it happened to be their biggest ration day so I had a good day, yeah, and anyway I wrote to him

- 13:00 and then the last I heard when we were at Balikpapan when the war finished, the boat come in there but he wasn't on it but I went out and saw some mates of his and they gave me food and eggs and bacon and steak and there was a truck load of surface
- 13:30 mail. See letters would come by air, but parcels would come by surface, by boat, and there's me half full sitting on top of this truck load of surface mail and Japs too. We had Jap prisoners working for us, yeah, but that was Billy Henderson, yeah. Yes, now going back to Morotai, we were on Morotai until we
- 14:00 then assembled in battle order and went to Balikpapan and did the amphibious landing there at Balikpapan in Borneo, yeah.

**And how long were you there before the war ended?**

Yes, we were there at Balikpapan until the war finished and we came home by boat and got to Brisbane just before Christmas,

- 14:30 about the day before Christmas because we went into came at Yeerongpilly and we stayed there the night and the next day we were coming home to Melbourne and on Christmas Day actually we were on the train, and they'd said over the air and in the papers about troops getting turkey for Christmas and we said, "Yes", and you know, we would be in transit.
- 15:00 Anyway we got to Williamstown in New South and there was Comforts Fund girls on the station and cakes and Father Christmas, you know, did the right thing, and then we got to Moss Vale, it was tea that night and we got off the train and they opened the doors of the dining room and there was the turkey, yeah,

**Beauty.**

and

- 15:30 oh it was beautiful, and a little girl waiting our table I said to her, I said, "This is wonderful, we thought we'd be in transit, you know, we'd miss out", and she said, "Do you want to take some with you?" The original doggy bag, and she gave us some turkey, yeah.

**And how long until you were discharged?**

Well we got home on Boxing Day and

- 16:00 my parents had kept Christmas until Boxing Day and then I went back and I was discharged on the 10th of January and I was married 12 months later on the 11th of January.

**Interesting, so how did you meet your wife?**

Well she reckons I met her at Leggett's Ballroom in Prahran. She reckons I asked to

- 16:30 take her home and she was with her girlfriend. I reckon I met her at Malvern Town Hall, at a dance at Malvern Town Hall, but we was, yeah we were married oh, about six months after I met her I suppose, yeah.

**How was that first year back for you?**

- 17:00 Well very good, see I worked for the Tramway before I went, pardon me, in the army and you had to be back there a month after discharge so I had a good time for that month and then went back to work at the Tramways and the Tramways gave you a War Savings Certificate for
- 17:30 each week you was in the army. Now a War Savings Certificate was worth 16 shillings on purchase and a pound, another four shillings more on maturity. Well five years in the army was a good few War Savings Certificates, yeah.

**That's incredible. Did they do that, were there many companies that did that, do you know?**

Some people made up their pay to equal to

- 18:00 what they were earning but it didn't give people the incentive to soldier on because it meant that, well a general would get as much money as a private, or a private would get as much money as a, made up from his pay, from his normal working, but it meant that you, everyone got that War Savings Certificate whether you was a private or a general, yeah, and no, that was
- 18:30 very good.

**Must've been nice to come home to, a bit of financial security?**

Oh yes, yeah, yeah.

**And did you stay back with your parents?**

Yeah, I went back home to mum and dad until we were married and my wife, we lived in Stanhope Street, Malvern and my wife lived over a shop in Glenferrie Road, Malvern. She could see my backyard

19:00 from her back verandah upstairs, yeah, but yes.

**And where were you married?**

We were married at Church of Christ at the corner of Hawthorn Road and Princes Highway, Malvern, and that was quite something too in as much as

19:30 neither of us were of that religion but she'd been to a wedding and liked the service, so we went to this church and "Yes, they'd marry us", and took us in the church and I wanted the, there was a piano, I wanted it moved, "Oh", the wife said, "You can't do that." He said, "It's your day, you can have what you like." So anyway

20:00 we as regards drink of course, drink was a scarce commodity and people said, "Go to the Richmond Brewery and let them see you're a returned man." I went there and it didn't make any difference, they couldn't give you any beer. I went to a Richmond Hotel in Swan Street Richmond and they couldn't help me. I went to Tony

20:30 Barbita's Hotel in Little Collins Street and it was the biggest Richmond House in town, and he took me up into the lounge and there was fridge boxes around the room, he lifted them all up and he got about a dozen bottles of beer. He said, "When that finishes, the house trade finishes." I said, "God, I'm getting married", I said, "What can I do?" He said, "Make a squash." I said, "That's a sissy drink." He said, "Not the way we make it."

21:00 So he gave me the recipe, there was a sweet wine and a dry wine, it was lemonade and dry ginger ale and you served it with crushed ice and orange, and anyway we had our reception at the Central Park Kiosk on the

21:30 corner of Wattle Tree Road and Bourke Road, Malvern and we went down the night before and the wife put the place cards around, and I mixed up the brew and I had a stinking headache and I had a bit of a taste of it and the headache went in a flash, but it was very good and it was January as I say we were married and of course there was people there looking for the

22:00 beer. "God", they said, "Blue loves a beer, you know", and there was these jugs of stuff around, and anyway somebody in desperation went for a drink of this. They said, "This is it", and I think I made up about six gallons and it went off in a flash, yeah, and I had people come to me after for the recipe.

**Now had your wife had anyone away at the war close to her?**

22:30 No, no. Her father was a First World War man, but no, none of her, she had two brothers and one brother was killed when he was only about 18 or 19 and the other was rejected for army service.

**Did you ever tell her any of these stories you're telling us about your time at the war?**

Occasionally I suppose, yes, yeah.

23:00 **Did you have much to do with the people you served with in that first year or the years after the war?**

Oh my word. You mean now.

**Especially immediately after the war as well?**

Oh yes, yes, because we have our reunions. We have a reunion on, pardon me, on Caulfield Cup eve which is the date the unit first embarked for overseas and we, after Anzac Day we

23:30 march, or I did until I became crippled, and then go to the Rats of Tobruk Hall in Middle Park and they're the two occasions but I've got mates that if I know about a horse that's gonna win I'll ring them and yes, we're very good and they're, with my wife being sick

24:00 at the present time they're ringing me up and asking me about her, yeah, they're very good friends, yeah.

**So those first couple of years especially after the war were you marching then or commemorating then?**

Well see, after we got married we moved to Cobden in the Western District and

24:30 I didn't used to, we wait?

**It's fine, OK.**

It's one of ours I hope. Yeah, and anyway I didn't used to come down then 'cause it was too far to come, but when I came back to Malvern I'd been to all the reunions, yeah.

**So those friendships you've made have obviously been enduring?**

Oh, very much so, yeah,



25:00 yeah.

**Were a lot of those blokes at your wedding?**

No, they weren't, no, no. No, but, no, they're good blokes and as I repeat we keep in touch with one another, yeah.

**25:30 Did you stay at the Tramways long after the war?**

No, to be honest you had to be back at the Tramways for six months to get your War Savings Certificates and I was discharged in, I went back to them in February and I ended up I left the Tramways, well in the

26:00 November. Funny thing like before the war if you thought of leaving the Tramways it was like stepping off the end of the earth because it was a secure job, but I'd seen a bit of life and people during the war and I had the visions of going out working for myself and I had a mate that had been with the Tramways was house painting and he said, he said,

26:30 "Come with me, there's a few things you've got to learn different to the Tramways", so I went with him and then I was with him for a while and I went up to Cobden 'cause I've got friends there and there was a fellow, the only painter in the town, and he painted a hotel and ended up owing the publican money, so I thought well

27:00 he's not a very good businessman, I can do better than him. So I ended up, I went up there and there was a bloke up there was an SP bookmaker at the pub that I'd met on a trip up there and mentioned about going there. "Oh", he said, "If you're, come up here", he said, "You can paint my place." So I also got

27:30 onto a builder there and we ended up, we moved up there and I'd, was a bit early for the builder. He said, "Oh, look, there's work about but", he said, "I've just got to rustle it up." He said, "If you can get yourself a couple of week work then I'll be able to use you", so I went to this SP bookmaker bloke and he said, I gave him a price for his

28:00 house, £25, \$50, and he said, "Oh, look", he said, "I've got a couple of sons I can buy a bit of paint and get a couple of brushes, they can do it, unless you can do it cheaper." So I dropped it down to £20, it's better than standing around. "Oh", he said, "Righto." So I ended up I painted his place and he said, "Well there you are",

28:30 he said, "There's the £20", he said, "And there's the £5 that I beat you down" and he said, "And that's what I think of you", and he gave me another £5, yeah, and he said, "If anyone wants a recommendation for your work, send them to me."

**This seems to be a recurring theme, people seem to have respect for you and generosity towards you.**

Well yeah, yeah, oh yeah, I've met some wonderful people during my life, wonderful people.

29:00 Well then I started with horses up there and the race club up there I was on the Committee there and I used to put up the names of the jockeys and I remember one meeting there I went in and the steward in charge was there and I went in

29:30 and I said to the secretary, "Colin, I want the starters and the riders in the first race", and the steward in charge says, "Out out", and I thought oh well, you're the big boss. So a little while after, Blue Davis, "Come on, you want the starters", and the steward looked at me and looked at the secretary, "Oh", he said, "I fear I've made a mistake, will you introduce me to this gentleman?" And he introduced

30:00 me and anyway, he said, "I thought you was a bookmaker, they come in wanting this that and the other." And anyway time went on and I, a mate, oh, when I went there the winning post was just like a picket on the running rail and I said, "God, that's no good", and I came down one weekend to my parents at Malvern and went to Caulfield Racecourse and measured

30:30 up their winning post there and another mate of mine, George Randell and I built the winning post, and I said, "Well that's my tombstone." Anyway I got a trainer's licence and I had a horse on lease from a fellow in Ballarat and this

31:00 bloke, I had the horse in first start for me was in Colac and of course a new horse coming to a new area you've got to have the registration papers showing the brands and that and he was to bring the papers with him. So I got there and wasn't there, wasn't there. Finally they called him over the air

31:30 and he turned up and he hadn't got the papers, and this steward that had been at Cobden was in charge and he roasted the tripe out of this bloke and he said, "Only that I know Mr Davis as a genuine person, I wouldn't let the horse run", but he said, "Don't you ever do this again", and he let me run the horse without the papers which was very nice of him, yeah, a bloke named Frank Bullock.

**32:00 I wonder if I could take you back just for a second to Balikpapan.**

Yes.

**And do you remember the day you found out that the war ended and how you found out?**

Yes, yes I do, and it was funny too, there was an extra ration of beer given out that day and we had a speaker system and I went down to play the Last Post over the speakers

32:30 and I got my extra ration of beer and I put my bottle down and stood up and blowed the Last Post, turned around and somebody had knocked off my bottle of beer, and the beer there was in a compound, just out in the open and of course it was red hot. What we'd do was dig a hole and bury it for a couple of days, yeah, before we'd drink it.

**Did that do the trick, did that cool it down?**

Yes, yes, yes, yeah.

**And how did you find out, was that over the speaker as well? Did someone**

They,

33:00 yes, see they, they had a radio system over the island and that was something too. They announced over that that war had ended, yes, and of course us being a field unit like infantry, machine guns, artillery and Field Ambulance were field

33:30 units which when the war finished weren't wanted. Now there was fellows with us that had been, you went home on a points system, and there was fellows with us that had been to the Middle East and see our unit went to the Middle East, Milne Bay, Dumpu and Borneo and there was some of them that had been to the lot and of course they had high priority points,

34:00 and they went home early and anyway we were sent to a Casualty Clearing Station. Now there was still blokes falling off trucks and breaking legs and things like that so there still had to be medical attention, and we were at this Casualty Clearing Station

34:30 and my dear mother and father knew a fellow that knew the owner of a horse and anyway called Windrow, and they used to, they wrote to me and told me this man reckoned Windrow would win the following Saturday. Now we were at this Casualty Clearing Station

35:00 and I'd done my money playing two-up and there was a fellow, George Dwyer, that played a lot of two-up and I went to him and I said "Would he lend me 10 guilders?" "Oh", he said, "Oh, I've got money owing to me." I said, "Well look, why I've come to you, I've looked at the board and you've got the same number of points

35:30 as me so wherever we are next pay day we'll be together", see because we didn't know if we'd be there or at the transit camp waiting to come home or on a boat coming home, so he said, "Well, that's honest enough", so he lent me the 10 guilders. So I had the 10 guilders on Woodrow at five to one and it won, and anyway I collected my \$60 and I had 40 guilders on one horse

36:00 all up another, and gave George, I went to George to give him his 10 back. He said, "What, didn't it start?" I said, "Yes", and I told him what I'd done. "Jeez", he said, "That's good betting, I hope it wins for you." Anyway the first one won and the second won was a good thing beaten, but, excuse me, we were at the transit camp waiting to go home.

36:30 They had a boat that's going to take 300 and they take 350 because there were blokes getting sick and there was a bit of VD [Venereal disease] about too and they wouldn't let them go home. Anyway we were down there and it came to pay day and we went to the two-up and George won well and I won a bit. So the next day is Saturday races

37:00 and I said to George, "Give us 10 guilders." He said, "You've got money." I said, "No, back a horse." "No", he said, "You're a horse man, I'm a two-up man." I said, "Come on." So I ripped 10 guilders off him, backed a horse and came back and I said, "Here you are", gave him the money and I said, "You've got 10 guilders." "God", he said, "It won." I said, "Yes." Do you know I backed five winners straight

37:30 and we broke one bookmaker, and we got onto another one and backed a winner with him, yeah, but dear old George, and George was married with a couple of kids and he sent it all home bar a shilling day which you had to keep and George came home and he used to

38:00 drink at the Parkview Hotel which is on the corner of Scotchmer Street and St Georges Road and I, my first job with the Tramway when their Building Branch was in Scotchmer Street, yeah, but anyway I saw George a couple of times and his story was that he came home and your deferred pay, you got that I think about a month

38:30 after, that was out of your pay they kept a shilling I think a day, and your deferred pay you got that about a month after and anyway he gave that to his missus she said, "George, I've got another bloke, I'm off", and George got off a tram opposite the Parkview Hotel and I reckon this day he stepped under the car and got killed, but it was a

39:00 good fellow, George Dwyer, yeah.

**Well just finish this tape there.**

## Tape 4

00:31 So you've said about the doctors?

**Yeah, if you could tell us something about them?**

Yes, certainly. Colonel MacIntosh and Major Walker were two of our surgeons and in the Ramu Valley the lighting system was such that if one light was on every light had to be on, and this particular night

01:00 I'd normally play the Last Post and the lights would go out, and they didn't, so I went up to the engine room and they said, "Oh, they've got an operation on." So I went over to where the operation, the operating theatre was, anyway they said, "Blue, come and give us a hand, put a gown

01:30 and mask on and hold the light." They had a mobile light and they had the big light on but some angles they couldn't get on. So I ended up I got myself a job and whenever there was an op on I got a job, and it was good because the cooks would make scones and they'd have scones and jam and coffee, so it was a little bit of nicety. But there was another,

02:00 we had an operating team came there and they were asking for a fellow named Smith and anyway they couldn't see him anyway. They went to the officers' mess and that and they ended up going to tents with new arrivals. "Anyone named Smith?" And a bloke said, "Yeah, my name's Smith", and he was a brilliant surgeon and he was just there with the ORs [Other Ranks]. He hadn't

02:30 even got pips on his shoulders, and I remember he did an operation, and appendix operation from cut to sewing in eight minutes and then walked out and collapsed with malaria, but he was a brilliant surgeon, but on one occasion there I'm with MacIntosh and Walker and a fellow came down in the morning

03:00 and he was diagnosed as acute indigestion, so they give him an indigestion powder. By 1.00 o'clock in the afternoon they've got him on the table, acute appendicitis. So the normal, you cut them on the right hand side, they cut him there and nothing. They cut him in the middle, nothing. They cut him on the left hand side, and there's Walker on one side and

03:30 Macintosh on the other down there shaking hands inside of him, and they said to me, "Where do you think it is, Blue?" I said, "It could be up his bum, I wouldn't know." Anyway they were gonna sew him up and Walker said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute", and appendix is about that long. This was a little one and black, and the blacker they get the more they get to bursting and that becomes peritonitis and that's blood

04:00 poisoning, and anyway they got it out. Now this bloke, he was an unusual case, and the cooks had a portable fridge room, so what I used to do is make up a bottle of squash and put it in the fridge room and take it over to him. So anyway one day I went, it was a stinking hot day, I thought I'll have a mouthful and top it up with water,

04:30 swigged it down and I spat and spluttered and somebody had put Atebrin in it and Atebrin's got quinine in it and it's as bitter as anything, and I came out and the cooks are finished, they're playing cards there. I said, "What so and so did that?" "We don't know", and I said, "Well, they're a bastard, whoever did it." And anyway we used to wash in the Ramu River

05:00 and you'd have to lay on the water and flat out over the water going over you, but we'd go over there, you weren't allowed to get around in bare feet, with a towel around you and your boots on. So I'd been over for the evening wash and came back and one of the cooks who wasn't there sang out to me, he said, "How was your drink Blue?" I said, "Was you the bastard that did it?" He said, "What did you say?" And I repeated it. He said, "Don't call

05:30 me that." "Well", I said, "If you did it that's what you are." Anyway we punched on, punched on for a while and the towel fell off, so there's me just with the boots on, and he broke my nose, so that was the finish of the fight. So anyway the next morning I went up to Major Walker, he was the doctor on duty. He said, "Are you tough?" I said, "Why? He said, "You should have a whiff of this." I said, "Go

06:00 on", and he got his thumbs either side, crunch, and the tears rolled down. Anyway I went on my way and after a while it jumped out, so I went back to him and he pushed it back in, and that night we were playing cards and his torch, he said, "How's your nose?" I said, "It's jumped out again." "Oh", he said, "You can get yourself a sheila, it's not gonna worry you", and so

06:30 that lasted 13 years later, I believe see the bone's straight like that and with the break there's a little ledge just like that, and every cold I had for 13 years a bit of mucous built up on that and all of a sudden I woke up one night screaming, and anyway I had to be operated on and I went to Vimy House when it was in,

- 07:00 near St Kilda Road, and I remember I said to the doctor, "Do you give me a general anaesthetic?" He said, "Yes." I said, "It's alright, cut my head off as long as I don't know about it." So I went there and anyway there were six of us all nose jobs in this ward, and he said, the nurse came, "Oh", she said, "Mr Davis, yours is going to be delayed, there's another surgeon got
- 07:30 the theatre." Well blokes would go away, come back all tied up. I saw the whole lot of them and finally it's my go and they took me in and they give me a whiff. Next thing I know I wake up, I'm in the bed, "Mr Davis, Mr Davis." I felt and there was nothing. I said, "What's happened?" And they got me in there and they couldn't
- 08:00 get the tube down my neck. See, operating on your nose, they send you, put you out over your nose but then put the tube down your neck, and they ended up they come and did me with a local anaesthetic and he's going down my nose and then he went the other nostril. I said, "No, that's not it." He said, "I'm only having a look." I said, "You only have a look", yeah, yeah, but

**Do you remember many of those operations?**

Yes, yeah,

- 08:30 and now MacIntosh and Walker, Walker ended up he retired at Castlecrag in New South Wales, yeah, he lived, and pardon me, I, my sister was, and her husband
- 09:00 was living in Sydney then and I rang and spoke to his wife and I said, "Is he home?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Well, can I speak to him?" "Well", she said, "No, he's got sort of a thing where he's lost his voice." "Oh", I said, "I was thinking of coming up to see him." "Oh", she said, "I'd love you too." So anyway I went up to see him and him writing and me talking and we had a few cans and
- 09:30 it was good and I came home and the next Anzac Day I got a card and I said "The undersigned are those with the unit that were at the march and wish you well" and I sent it to him and I got a lovely letter which I've still got at home which he said "He'd treasure it till the day he died." Well he ended up in his working life the house doctor
- 10:00 for a hospital, like he's the doctor for the staff and he ended up he died in that hospital, so wouldn't he have been well looked after and deservedly so, yeah.

**Your impressions of him at the time, what were they?**

Oh terrific, terrific yeah. Now Colonel MacIntosh he left our unit and, before we went to Balikpapan

- 10:30 and he ended up at what is it, Prince Alfred the big one in Sydney, and he got polio and they used to lift him on to a stool and he'd sit on the stool and operate, and anyway time went on and I often said if I went driving to Queensland I'd visit places that
- 11:00 I'd been to, which I did. I went to Glen Innes and Tenterfield, Dalby, Toowoomba and anyway we came home down the coast and Colonel MacIntosh had retired to Forster or Foster as they call it
- 11:30 and we went there and went to his house and he was on his sticks out on the nature strip, and I got out and I went over. He said, "I know you." I said, "You should, Bluey the bugler." He said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I've come to see you." "Well", he said, "Isn't that sweet of you", and anyway I said, "Are you going somewhere?" "No, no", he said, "Come in",
- 12:00 and he'd introduced me to his the wife. Anyway he got to the door, "Beryl", he said, "It's Betty and Bluey Davis from the 2/5th." We went in and we had a good old yap and a few cans and yeah, and anyway another time we came through there and he was up at the RSL [Returned and Services League] for lunch and we went up there and saw him, and he's died
- 12:30 since. But he was a great fellow, yeah.

**They must've both worked pretty hard back then?**

Oh yes, yes. Yeah, when we were at Moresby, was New Year's Eve and I often threatened to swing the Last Post, so anyway this night we had a brew, a unit brew that we made and it wasn't much good so we'd

- 13:00 top if off with a bit of pure alcohol. 'Cause you'd throw it down and pretty quickly throw it up, but gradually a bit stayed and we got full, so I ended up swinging the Last Post and I believe old Dick, the sergeant major, "Private Davis, Private Davis!" and Colonel MacIntosh said, "Pull your head in Dick, see him in the morning." So anyway
- 13:30 old Dick said, "You was jazzing the Last Post, them over the hill and down in the valley will think we are jungle happy", and the same old Dick, there was another unit and the bugler was a corporal, carried the rank of corporal, so I put in for a transfer to
- 14:00 them. Anyway old Dick came to me, now this is his approach. He said, "Do you want a kick in the arse?" I said "What?" He said, "Do you want a kick in the arse?" I said, "What?" He said, "You 'ave put in for a transfer. Me and the CO are very 'appy with you." Old Dick, and the same old Dick, years went on and he had a son in the unit too. Him and his son, and they had fruit

14:30 box up at Red Cliffs near Mildura and anyway the wife and I went for a tour and we ended up going to Red Cliffs and I rang his son and he said, "Are you coming out to see me?" I said, "Well, if you have the old man there." He said, "I'll have him there", and we went and saw Dick and Vic. Dick was the father and Vic was the son, yeah. We went and saw them,

15:00 and I know I said the wife thought he was a sweet old thing, and I know I said at a reunion I said, "Thank God, people you marry", fancy me marrying a woman thought old Dick, was a sweet old thing, yeah.

**Do you reckon you were different people during those years?**

Yes, yes, and we were family. That's another thing, that's another thing. In the Ramu Valley

15:30 there was as I told you I was a trade group painter and signwriter and there was a message came around. Any of the undersigned that are not on your unit strength are to transfer to the 2/2nd Pioneers. So anyway I went to, up to, the 2/2nd Pioneers had been in action, we were waiting

16:00 to go, our unit was waiting to go into action and the 2/2nd Pioneers had been in action and were waiting at the airstrip to come home on leave, and I went up there and I saw one bloke that used to be in the school band with me and I said about coming there. "Oh no Blue", he said, "Don't come here, go up, when we're back in Australia", he said, "You march them out for a route march and stop and

16:30 practice and then march them back in", and he said, "Another bloke, Snowy Wilson played football for Northcote and he, no", he said, "No way, don't come here." He said, "Reckoned those that are not transferring are gonna shoot through, gonna desert." So anyway I got out on the track and the jeep came along and it was Colonel MacIntosh. He said, "What are you doing up here Blue?" I said, "Oh, I've been up to see

17:00 the 2/2nd Pioneers." "Oh", he said, "Yes, I believe you're transferring to them." I said, "Not if I can help it." He said, "How can you avoid it?" I said, "I can relinquish my trade grouping." He said, "How much is that?" I said, "Two bob a day." He said, "That's money to you", but I said, "You know I can get a quid on the side." So he said, "Oh well, I'll, come and see me after lunch." So anyway I had lunch and went up. He said, "Come

17:30 in Blue." I said, "I've been on to the brigadier", and he said, "Evidently Davis doesn't want to leave the 2/5th Field Ambulance." I said, "How right he is." So I relinquished my 20, my two bob a day and stayed with my unit which - my unit was my family. But I mean there's another good thing. He had more on his mind that just me. He'd been up the front line to

18:00 see where we were going and he come back and he attended to my matter, yeah. Oh no, he was a good bloke. His, he came to the unit as a major and his batman, Jack Maddox, said to him, said, "You know, when you came here, we used to call you the mad major." He said, "Yeah, what do they call me now?" He said, "Alec

18:30 the geek." He laughed like anything, yeah.

**Now what sort of jobs did they have you doing in the operating theatre?**

Oh well as I say handling the light, yeah, yeah, and some of the instruments, yeah.

**So you would've learned a lot about operating techniques then?**

Oh yeah, it was very interesting, yeah.

**Was it a bit gruesome?**

Oh, well no. I mean to say

19:00 I, it never affected me, no, no. My wife, she can't watch an operation on television, yeah, that's her.

**What sort of problems or operations did they mostly have?**

Well they'd have appendix, haemorrhoids, or wounds, bullet wounds. Now another thing, there was a bloke had a wound in the head,

19:30 and if they'd have sewn him up he would've had one big scar that hair wouldn't have grown on, but they cut his head like a football and made four equal size rows of stitches and they said, "His hair will grow." Now that's consideration, isn't it under those circumstances, yeah.

**So you feel that they retained their humanity?**

Yes, oh yes,

20:00 humanity to man, yeah.

**They must've had hundreds of operations.**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But no, they're good people. As I say we got a lot of friends, yeah.

**In the operating theatres did you lose many people on the table?**

Oh, there has been occasional ones, yeah,

20:30 yeah, yeah, but the majority, see we'd fix them up and they'd go, as I say, fly them to Moresby and they'd sort them out there, the general hospital at Moresby, and they'd sort out who would stay and who would go home.

**How many people would be in**

21:00 **an operating theatre?**

Two, four, five.

**Could you just sort of give us a basic running order, the equipment that was in there and the people, what they were doing and things like that?**

Well there's an anaesthetist and the two surgeons and then there'd be, oh I forgot the anaesthetist, that made six, yeah. Anaesthetist, two surgeons and

21:30 two other assisting and me.

**Did they have problems with equipment or supplies in those operating theatres?**

No, no, they were pretty well stocked for equipment, yeah.

**Did they have much in the way of machinery back then or was it just some tools?**

For what?

**I have a mental image now of operating theatres with machines around and**

22:00 **things to monitor.**

Well, not the equipment they have these days, no. No, they would have, take X-rays if necessary, yeah, yeah, but no, there's nothing like you can, like I've seen myself in hospital on television my own inside.

**So they**

22:30 **just had scalpels and things like that? Did they have suction?**

Yes.

**anything for suction or**

Yes, yes, yeah, but no, I've seen the inside of a few hospitals. Yeah, I've got, well haemorrhoids in the army, I've had lung cancer, pneumonia and twice in

23:00 with pneumonia and the then this thing with my disc, and I had complications when I had the nose I think. I had complications set in with that and I came to Melbourne, see we were moving to Ballarat. I'd bought a house and stables at Ballarat and we moved up there and this was after I'd had the

23:30 nose operation and finished up my head came up like a football, and anyway we came to Melbourne and they got into me with antibiotics and they discharged me to report to outpatients in St Kilda Road. Anyway I had my wife staying with friends at Caulfield

24:00 and I woke up and my head's up again and down the road was a doctor that worked at Repatriation Heidelberg and I went down and saw him. He said, "Jeez, have you have got a case." He said, "I'll put you back in there." I said, "No, let me see my specialist Monday because", I said, "If you put me back there he doesn't come there till Wednesday", and I said, "If I see him

24:30 Monday, he'll operate on me." So anyway I went in there and the pressure, my eye it was burning, pressure on my eyes, and anyway he got a needle and put in this lump and couldn't, the needle wasn't big enough. Finished up with a needle, I said, "Jeez, we use that on horses." Anyway he stuck it in and he drew out and it was like lifting a blind.

25:00 Oh, it was beautiful and he said, "Straight to Heidelberg you", and because it was gonna fill up again. Anyway he sent me to Heidelberg and he operated on me there, yeah.

**Did you have any problems or diseases in New Guinea or in the tropics?**

I never had, never had malaria. Somebody and it wasn't a doctor, I don't know where, but somebody's told me in the

25:30 time that there's a certain type of red-headed person that's immune from malaria. Now I took my precautions like others did but they still got it, but I never did, but I did get tinea and tinea in the crutch as a matter of fact and I was in hospital there and I had a New Guinea native man was my boy

- 26:00 used to work for me, and you're in the hospital and it's made up of tent flies and he'd come along the back, "Master master, how you, how you?" And "Oh he, a wonderful fellow", yeah, but word got around too that we were coming home on leave and I thought, oh God, me with this tinea. Well the nearer we got to Melbourne the more it cleared up thank God, yeah, but
- 26:30 **And did you have much to do with that particular New Guinean?**
- Oh yes, yeah.
- How was communicating with him?**
- Well he spoke Pidgin English, yeah, yeah.
- Do you remember any of that now?**
- "You one feller name, name, you got pikinini, you've got a baby and yeah, you got chop chop", and there's another thing in the Ramu
- 27:00 Valley we had a bomber, a fighter, a plane come over strafing and this was at night and anyway the ack-ack shot him down and the place lit up like daylight, and as I said it was a girl's delight, there'd be about 300 naked blokes out looking
- 27:30 at this, yeah, and he finished up half burnt and up a tree and we couldn't get too close. The Provos surrounded it, you know, but we could see him hung up the tree yeah, dead of course, and he strafed
- 28:00 us and bombed us.
- Were there many casualties that day?**
- A few, yeah, yeah, yeah. Poor, those natives, they used to, "Emila man emila man", and they'd go and they'd run into the Kunai grass, Kunai grass like cane, high grass and they'd just run and hide in the Kunai grass, yeah, 'cause they're still susceptible
- 28:30 to being shot, yeah. Talking of the Kunai a mate of mine, Harry Martin and I, Harry was in my tent and we'd been up their Valley to another unit and we got a lift with another unit and they,
- 29:00 off the track and we got out, got off the jeep there and we come through the Kunai and oh God, that'd choke you. Yeah, we were lucky to get through that, yeah, but yeah, now there's something else.
- 29:30 **I'll just ask you though,**
- Yeah.
- so a lot of the men had friendships and connections with some of the New Guineans?**
- Not terribly good, no, no. No, I knew a bloke he was with ANGAU, [Australian New Guinea [Administration Unit] something Association and they were in charge of the natives, and anyway I went over to him
- 30:00 one day and he was away somewhere and there was a few of them playing cards. You know, I thought be sociable with them, he came, he said, "Blue, no no", he said, "Don't associate with them like that." He said, "It belittles yourself", yeah. But yeah, now there was something
- 30:30 else I was gonna tell you. Turn it off for a bit. I was the bugler and I was the unit signwriter and also they got me to look, the Salvation Army used to service our recreation hut. Now the,
- 31:00 all they did with regards to recreation hut was a sick man's job, you know, and all they'd worry about was a bit of writing paper and envelopes, and anyway one bloke said to me, he said, "You're not an ordinary bludger, you're a technical bludger." He said, "You're a painter, the bugler" and, he said, "You look after the rec hut." Anyway this
- 31:30 Salvation Army bloke came and I got talking to him, well we used to get tea and coffee and biscuits, tobacco and cigarettes, cards and talking of the tobacco too, they used to give you little one ounce packets of tobacco. See the tobacco that we got was in two ounce tins
- 32:00 because of the deterioration in the heat in the tropics, but these one once packets, and what I did, as I told you I used to run a double, 50 tins of tobacco to one, and what I'd do I'd swap them three one ounce packets for a one two ounce tin. See I make a one ounce profit, but what I did
- 32:30 my parents sent me a cake and in a tin and soldered, sealed and, no, in a tin and what I did I packed these one ounce pieces of tobacco in the tin, put the lid on it, soldered it around, just put a hole in the top and put it over a billy of water and boiled
- 33:00 it, and the heat would drive the air out of the box of tobacco and create a vacuum and I'd just put a spot of solder over the hole and that'd make it air tight and I brought it home and a barber across the road from where I lived I sold it to him and he

33:30 reckoned it was a beauty because cigarettes and tobacco were limited, and oh, that was a beauty, yeah, yeah.

**I just want to talk again about the operating theatre**

Yeah.

**while we're still on the subject? Was it in a tent or in a building?**

A tent.

**How big would it have been?**

I suppose it'd be about the equivalent of two normal tents, yeah.

**What sort of table do they have for the operating table?**

They had

34:00 quite a good operating table. See the Ramu Valley, the only means of entrance and exit was by plane and the only, the biggest transport they could get in was a jeep and we, you know, operating table that was no trouble to get one of those

34:30 in. Incidentally talking of that too, pardon me, you wouldn't have known of a pianist named Isadore Goodman. He was a very, concert pianist and in 1939, in early '39 before the war broke out there was bush fires and Leggett's Ballroom at Prahran had a special bushfire appeal night and all celebrities turned up

35:00 to perform and I had a mate that used to sing with the orchestra at Leggett's and he said that Goodman came down, they had a grand piano for him and the orchestra was playing for the dancing and he said, "I must loosen up, loosen up." He said "He's playing beautiful music for dance music." When it come for him to do his act he plays some classical piece and somebody said, "Play

35:30 Sweet Swing." He said, "Sweet Swing affects people from the hips down." Anyway time went on and as I say, the Ramu Valley there used to be concert parties, but of course being reduced to a jeep they were one man things. I mean they'd have

36:00 a country and western singer or something, and this Isadore Goodman came and his grand piano and anyway it was a few nights before we were to leave the Ramu Valley and we'd just been told and of course we were in quite high spirits and we went to where he was performing and same thing, somebody asked him to play Sweet Swing and he said the same

36:30 reply. "Yeah, swing affects people from the hips down", but he was very good because he'd play doodle oo, that's the hero, doddle or, that's the villain, doo doo, that's the heroine, and he'd tell you the story and you could read through, yeah, and it was most interesting. Isadore Goodman, yeah.

**How often would you have those concerts?**

Ooh, probably every couple of months perhaps, yeah, yeah.

**You would've looked forward to those?**

Oh my word.

37:00 Oh yes, yes, and in Borneo we had the great Gracie Fields come. I'll never forget they set up a like, it was like an amphitheatre, it was down where there'd been a quarry and they set the stage up and she came there and it was beautiful and

37:30 also, there was another great performer came to us when we were at Moresby, another great lady singer, I forget her name now but she was a very good entertainment. In fact she hesitated

38:00 before she sung Home Sweet Home, yeah.

**Was that an emotional moment?**

It was, it was, yes, yes, yeah, yeah.

**How did you react.....**

Gladys Moncreiff, that's her, Gladys Moncreiff, yeah. Our Glad.

**How was food and drink on those concert nights? Did you get different food?**

No, no, no, no, you just

38:30 had your food at your unit and no supper. See they're out in the open, but they used to have pictures their first, like drive-ins, they put up a screen, picture show and of course they only had the one camera and the reel would go and then they'd stop, you know, and have to change reels, just get to the pasho clinch and it'd stop, hey.



39:00 Yeah, and

**Did people heckle those moments?**

Oh yes, oh yeah.

**What sort of things would they yell out?**

You know, there'd be a pasho scene, somebody would yell out, "I want to go home." Or the bloke would be hesitating and they'd say, "Get out the way and give me a go." Yeah, oh yeah.

**Do you remember any of those films?**

39:30 A few Bing Crosby films and yeah, Eddie Cantor and Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, yeah, yeah. Oh no, they were good entertainment. They used to take kerosene

40:00 tin to sit on, yeah, and I remember in Borneo in Balikpapan after the war had finished and we went up and there was a house that had been bombed and anyway there was a bed there, a single bed and the frame, a wooden frame, and

40:30 I walked home with this bed and put it in my tent and I got a canvas sheet and I tacked it on and I had a good bed, yeah.

**Must've been pretty rare.**

Yeah, oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

**That's the end of it.**

## Tape 5

00:40 Da da da da da da, go.

**Well before I get to some of the specific questions about the war that I want to ask you**

Yes.

**I was reminded of this amazing trip that you had across to Australia from England when you were just nine years old. Can you tell me more about that?**

It was on a boat

01:00 called the Beltana and it took us, I think, 30 days from England to Australia then. I do remember that there was a boy washed over board, and a red-headed boy, and of course there was great panic by my family thinking it was me, but gladly it wasn't, yeah, but no, I can't say I remember

01:30 much more about it.

**Did you turn nine when you were on the boat?**

Yes, I had my ninth birthday on the boat, yeah, yep.

**How did you celebrate?**

The 9th of September. I think they had a little party for me, yeah, because it was pretty austerity times, those, yeah but I think they had a party for me. But that's about all I remember.

02:00 We came to Richmond and we rented a house at 33 Durham Street, Richmond and I went to Brighton Street State School and oh we were there for about 18 months I suppose and we moved

02:30 to 103A Collins Street, Thornbury, and that was the school, that was the house that backed on to Penders Grove State School where I eventually joined the band, so I think that's about all in that department unless

**I was wondering, sorry.**

you've got questions.

**I was just wondering what you knew of Australia before you came?**

Nothing. What's your

03:00 next question?

**Well what did you expect to see when you got off the boat?**

Nothing really. We had no stupid ideas about kangaroos and Aborigines and that sort of thing, no. No,

had no strange illusions, no.

**What sparked your interest**

03:30 **in music before you joined the band?**

Well I always liked bands, always as a kid my bedroom, I had photos of bands and I had, we had a little gramophone and we had some band records and I had a couple of sticks and I used to play the drum to the band music, yeah. Yes, I was always interested in it and

04:00 as I say when a band was mooted for Penders Grove State School, "Oh yes please", and I was one of the first in, but I have told you the story of that haven't I?

**Yes.**

Yeah, yeah.

**Was anyone else in your family musical?**

Mum bought a piano for my sister to learn. We moved from

04:30 103 Collins Street to a street in Preston and next door to us was a lady that was a piano teacher and of course I suppose she's looking for business and mum bought a second hand piano but my sister was at that stage she'd

05:00 go in next door for her piano lessons but her mind was more on the dance she was going to that night and she wasn't musical minded either and that didn't last long. In fact I think mum played more piano than my sister, yeah, but yeah, that's about all, yeah, yeah.

**Did you ever contemplate that you might be a professional muso?**

05:30 Oh, it went through my mind to be in a dance orchestra, yes, yeah, and I had my cornet with me in the army when we were up at Goondiwindi and I did set in and we had a little band there, a piano, a sax, cornet and drums and

06:00 we played a bit there, but then after that I came home on leave on occasion and left my cornet at home and never went on with it and when I came out of the army I sold it, yeah, because as I say I was going to dances myself, wasn't interested in going on with it, yeah.

06:30 **So you gave it up after the army?**

Yes, yes, yeah, yeah, yeah, was me playing the bugle in the army was my last hurrah as regards music, yeah.

**Now bugling is much harder in some ways than cornet.**

Yes.

**Can you explain that?**

Well a bugle is all by pitch, you see. A cornet is pitch and fingering

07:00 of the keys, but bugle is purely pitch in all ways, yeah.

**And can you explain how you change the pitch for those that don't play?**

It's the pressure see, yeah. I mean, and pardon me if I do it wrong.

07:30 See it's all pressure.

**Very difficult to do.**

Yeah, hard on the ears too was it? You took the earphones off.

**It also has to do with the shape, doesn't it? How do you change your lip shape?**

No, it's pressure, pressure, yeah,

08:00 and ppt ppt, yeah, yeah.

**How did you learn when you were in school? How did they teach it to you?**

Well you learnt the theory, the scale by theory and learnt to read music and that's where, what you learnt and what you played

08:30 by reading the music and the fingering of the notes and the pressure and you took it from there, yeah, yeah.

**You have to have a good ear because the same fingering plays a number of different notes.**

It does, yes, but and then the pressure plays a number of different notes too, yeah, yep.

**What did music mean to you**

09:00 **when you were young?**

Oh, it was, well apart from school and playing football it was your life because in the school band you had to practice four hours a day. Now God knows how the neighbours put up with it because there was one, two, three of us within about three houses of one another and

09:30 all of us doing four hours. You could do a couple of hours in the morning and a couple of hours at night, and as I say, the neighbours must've been very good to put up with it, because I can't ever remember anyone complaining, yeah.

**And a lot of marches or other drills?**

Oh yes, oh yes. We used to march. We'd go out,

10:00 see your practice was Tuesday and Thursday and Tuesday was after school, Thursday was after tea at night and Tuesday we might be inside all day, all, it'd usually be from about 4.00 till 6.00, and we'd either be inside or perhaps go out marching, yes, yeah. I

10:30 remember one occasion we were practising for a competition and we even did an hour's practice in the morning, and of course kids there, I'll hold your music for you. I remember one kid he'd hold my music with that hand and got an ice cream in this hand, and I just couldn't play, yeah, and the school,

11:00 the bandmaster looked at me, "What's wrong?", I said, yeah.

**Did it make your mouth water?**

Water, yes, yes, yeah, yeah.

**Have you heard the old stories about people sucking on a lemon to stop?**

Yes, yes.

**Tell us about that?**

Well it's the same situation, yeah, yeah.

**Why did people do that do you think? Just to be funny?**

No, no. The kid enjoyed, it was a warm morning,

11:30 the kid enjoyed his ice cream. Good luck to him, he didn't realise that he was upsetting me, no.

**And when your mouth waters what happens to the cornet?**

Well you can't blow, you dribble, yeah.

**Tell me about those times in the army when you were in training and you had a little band going?**

This was up at Goondiwindi, yeah, well

12:00 it would just be dances on of an evening and we'd play for the dance, yeah. It didn't last long because some of the other members got sent to different places, it broke up the band but it was a bit of fun while it lasted, yeah, yeah.

**Did you miss music later on?**

12:30 No, not really because, pardon me, when I come out of the army, as I think you've gleaned by what I've said that I've got a great interest in horse racing and I came out of the army and I, as I've told you before, I married my wife 12 months after and we haven't got any children so I didn't have to, and

13:00 anyway we moved to Cobden in the Western District and that's where I got my first horse and trained it there and then we moved back to, I had two horses, yeah. In fact there's a little story relating to the army from that. I had a little mare called Tyra Queen

13:30 and I took her to a little picnic meeting, and anyway a fellow came up to me, he said, "G'day Blue." I said, "G'day." He said, "Remember me? I was ambulance driver attached to you at Moresby." I said, "Oh yes." "Anyway", he said, "How will your horse go?" I said, "I think it will win." So anyway saddled

14:00 the horse up and sent it out and I went into the betting ring and it's two to one on favourite, and I said to the bloke I trained it for, I said, "Jeez, you've had a decent wack at this." He said, "It was even money when I started." So anyway the horse won and I had it in a race later on, and

14:30 I kept the horse moving about. As a matter of fact a fellow that worked for me, I said to him, "Get a coke bottle, get that half full of whisky and top it up with coke", and he did that and I brought it back and I

poked it down the horse's neck. "Ooh", he said, "That's doping it." He ran away. I said, "Cut it out." Anyway this army fellow came up to me and

- 15:00 he said, "It'd nearly win again." "Oh", he said. "No", I said to him, "What, do you live up here, live here?" He said, "No, I came up from Melbourne with a bookmaker." No wonder my horse was two to one on, he's told the bookmaker. "See", so I said. He said, "He'd nearly win again, wouldn't it?" I said, "Oh no, not two in the one day." I said, "I'm only running it to back so and so." So anyway when
- 15:30 the betting was on and so and so was favourite and mine's four to one, so we backed mine and it won again, and I saw this bloke after and I said, "I thought you was only a battler." I said, "I gave you the tip for yourself, not for a bookmaker", yeah, but that was just a little sideline, but then I left
- 16:00 Cobden, came back to Melbourne, and this mare we sold her 'cause she, it was about her limit, she wasn't very good, but the other horse I had, a horse called Flying Silver, it was a mare too, and I left it up there for 12 months and then brought it down here and trained it and I ended up I won four races
- 16:30 with it, yeah.

**Great, I'll just check my notes here for a moment.**

Sorry.

**No, I'll just check. Yeah. I also wanted to ask you again about your childhood. What you, how you thought your father's service in World War I, how that affected him in his later life.**

No, no, didn't affect him in any way, no. I mean this day and age of

- 17:00 counselling, I mean I'm sure in his year, years in the army and mine too, I mean you had blokes that have got wounded or killed around you and you just went on. Now somebody gets in a situation like that they'll have counselling, but that didn't happen in our day.

**And after the Second World War that would've been the case as well?**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Did**

- 17:30 **You know any blokes that would've benefited from some help of some kind after the war?**

Well as I say, after our war that counselling wasn't available, but I suppose there were. There were things called shell-shock. In fact you'll hear people, football commentators and that using the term shell-shock, and to see a person that shell-shocked is a very sad situation and I do remember one

- 18:00 radio personality that used the term and I sent him a copy of a page of book that I've got describing a fellow that was shell-shocked and I've never heard him use the term again, so it must've struck the right nerve.

**That's a very interesting point. It's much more serious than the contemporary person would realise.**

Yes, yes.

**Can you describe to me what the bloke you knew who**

- 18:30 **had it, or you knew some blokes, of some blokes that had it, what those symptoms were like?**

Well they were nervous, they were mental and a noise, something would bang and they'd think it was a bomb or something, and they'd just really go to pieces, yeah, yeah.

**Where had your dad been in the First World War again?**

He was in France,

- 19:00 yeah.

**Just checking my notes again. I remember you telling me, or us yesterday about when the war broke out and you remember Menzies stating that, do you remember what your reaction was?**

Well as I say, you didn't know how soon Melbourne would be bombed sort of, but

- 19:30 I thought well maybe I'll have to go to war and as it got closer I thought yes, I've got to go to war, yep.

**What were some of the reasons in your mind when you decided to enlist?**

Well you wanted

- 20:00 to, you was allied to England and also the possibility of Australia being attacked. In fact that got a real possibility because well Australia was attacked, yeah. But that was after I was in the army, Broome and Darwin were

20:30 bombed, submarines attacked Sydney Harbour.... and Townsville, I think Townsville was attacked too, yeah.

**When you signed on did you feel like you were signing on for Australia or for mother England?**

Oh no, you were signing on for Australia. Yeah, Australia was your country, yeah. Yeah and

21:00 you signed on for the duration or 12 months after. The duration being the duration of the war and 12 months after if necessary. Well see the war ended in August '45 and I was discharged in January '46. So what's that, four or five months after, yeah.

21:30 **Did you feel as though there was pressure from your mates or from family to enlist?**

Oh no, no. No, I mean I had, as I think I told you, I had a mate that had done his three months training before me and he wanted me to enlist but I said, "Oh no, you know, let me try it first", and I didn't know whether I'd join the army, navy or airforce, and

22:00 at one stage during my army career they came around and wanted recruits for the airforce and I, you had to sit an examination and I sat for this examination but there was a list of questions, say 30 questions that it was impossible in the time given for you to answer them, and of course I

22:30 started off at one, two and three and pondering over them and what I found out after, what you should've done is to go through them and answer the easy ones and then go back. Consequently I didn't answer enough.

**What was your preference? Which of the services did you want to go into?**

Well that was the airforce, but I'm glad I stayed in the army and

23:00 specifically the 2/5th Field Ambulance.

**Were there a lot of blokes that wanted to go airforce?**

Oh, there was a number from various units, yes, yes. Whether they thought it would be a better life than the one they were living, I don't know, 'cause then at that stage too the airforce recruits were going to America and Canada

23:30 for training, yeah, and I suppose the thought of that trip would encourage them.

**Were there other aspects of the appeal of the airforce made it appealing?**

Oh, no, no, I can't say they do. Talking of the airforce, just switching to when we were in Dumpu our air

24:00 strip at Dumpu was an emergency airstrip and we had planes going over bombing Nadzab and if they were, if they'd been shot or damaged they'd pull in at our airstrip and I remember a fighter came in and of course when they came in there'd be an

24:30 alert and there'd be a fire truck and ambulance and everything, and anyway this pilot came in, they rushed over and they said to him, "What's wrong?" He said, "Where's the God damn shit house?" That's all he landed for.

**Did he take off again after he'd found it?**

Yeah, yeah.

25:00 Another time we, when we came out the Ramu Valley we came in DC3's, Douglas Transports, and our plane was going along and all of a sudden it climbed and we passed over an airstrip where a fighter plane took off

25:30 and if our bloke hadn't have climbed the fighter plane would've bumped into him, yeah. We wondered what, the plane nearly stood on end sort of thing, yeah.

**Close calls. Going back to your decision, what made you choose army over navy?**

Well no, navy never come into it.

**For you, OK.**

Airforce dear girl, airforce, and well because

26:00 I'd done army service and I'd got a mate that was in the army at Fisherman's Bend and anyway just diverting there too, he got on draft and went to Alice Springs and he, he was there and

26:30 he got into strife. He came home on leave, that's right, and Caulfield Racecourse was army then, and anyway he was AWL and he gave himself up at Caulfield Racecourse, and anyway they said, "Righto, sit down there." Well he sat there and he sat there and he said, "It was a hot day and I was thirsty", so

27:00 he thought bugger it, over he went to McNamara's Hotel in Caulfield, a well known hotel and of course

he got full and didn't go back, and finally when he did give himself up he was sent to Alice Springs and tried there and put in gaol, but the Provos that were running the

27:30 gaol were pretty liberal and they'd let them out for a night, and he got out, he ended up at a brothel, and anyway there was a fight started and the Provos were called in and of course he was arrested and taken back. Now he was charged, 'cause he couldn't say that they

28:00 let him out on purpose, he had to, and he was charged with breaking out of gaol and of course he got a longer gaol term and when he served that he was discharged as an "undesirable", and discharged from the army, yeah.

**Not good.**

No.

**Was there a lot of that that went on that you heard of in the army, going to the houses of ill-repute?**

Yes, yes. In the Middle East the

28:30 army ran them. In fact our fellows in the Middle East Field Ambulance blokes worked there on the hygiene side of it, oh yeah.

**You knew men who'd been there during the Middle East, during that sort of work?**

Yeah, fellows that were in our unit.

**What did they say about that sort of hygiene work?**

Oh well, it's all in a day's work

29:00 Yeah, I don't know whether they got any perks as a result of it.

**Do you know what the procedure was if I may ask?**

In what way?

**How they checked for the presence of disease and everything?**

No, to be honest, no, not without being too specific.

29:30 **What about when men were in New Guinea or in Borneo was there any of that sort of thing going on?**

Well, pardon me, not in New Guinea because the only women there were New Guinea natives. In Borneo, yes there was, because there was civilians there but you were stupid to indulge because there was

30:00 so much VD there. I think I did say to you when we went to the staging camp, you'd go there and there'd be 300 gonna go on a boat and they'd take 350 because see there was nothing to do and blokes would be getting about and getting involved with women and, pardon, getting venereal diseases as a result of that, yeah, but

30:30 by the same token there was a AGH, [Australian General Hospital] there and nurses, and of course the nurses were very popular with the officers and I remember I knew a fellow there. He was a cook and I'd go and visit him. He had a thing going, his wife was in the airforce at Townsville

31:00 and she'd sent him airforce film, he'd take photos, send them to her to be developed and then they'd come back, a big sheet of about six photos in the sheet and he'd employ, and employed me cutting them up and he'd set them up into sets and sell them, and anyway he said, "We were talking one day about the nurses and

31:30 of course being popular with the officers, and one came there and she was the biggest fattest girl you've ever seen." I said, "Oh, she wouldn't be." He said, "Mate, she's getting as much as the rest of them, yeah."

**Do you think it was some loneliness or desperation or what drove people to that?**

32:00 Remember that old song, Love Is A Many Splendoured Thing, yeah.

**This may seem like an odd question but were there any times that you heard of men getting with other men?**

Well not in our time, I mean there were those types about but I never struck it in the army. We did when we came home from,

32:30 where was it? When we came home from New Guinea, yes, we came to Brisbane and we had night leave into Brisbane and some of our blokes came back with a queery bloke and he was gonna play merry hell.

33:00 Anyway they finished up they stripped him and tied him to a post and hosed him and when we left in the trucks, this was about midnight, he's standing there screaming dripping wet.

**In Brisbane?**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Why do you think the boys got up to that?**

Well he bought them a bit of beer too, yeah, yeah.

33:30 But that's as far as he went with them, yeah, which is, deserved his reward I reckon.

**You heard tell of some of those men elsewhere?**

Well as I say, look, not in my time in the army. I mean there was those, those sort that you knew, I knew they existed in our

34:00 life, possibly they did in the army but they'd be terribly suppressed, terribly suppressed. I mean I'd heard of it. I remember there was a champion boxer before the war and he was effeminate, but you know, there's all types, yeah, make a world.

**You mentioned that there was just natives at New Guinea.**

Yes.

**No blokes**

34:30 **struck up romance with the native people?**

Women, no, no, no. No, I think they respected the women and the men, you know, their wives, and of course there were the piccaninnies, their babies, but not to my knowledge, no, no.

**How did men cope with the absence of**

35:00 **any girlfriends, romance, social life for years?**

Well can I be very honest?

**Of course.**

And you're still filming this? Well, obviously self enjoyment, I'll put it that way, yeah.

**It's a long time, five years, four years.**

35:30 Well you came home on leave, oh yes. In fact this night that I was telling you about when we, they hosed the bloke down, there was a few of the blokes lived in Brisbane, of course they went straight home, and one bloke come back in the early hours of the morning just before we left telling us how many times he'd made love to his wife. "Get

36:00 out, you mug, yeah."

**One bloke told us he thought it was almost more difficult for the married men because they had to go home and then get motivated to go back up and leave again, must've been hard for them. What were your perceptions? Harder for single men, harder for married men?**

Now how do you mean? Say that again.

**When they're missing home do you think it's harder for the married men or harder for the single men?**

36:30 What, to come back to a relationship with a woman? Well I, it'd be harder for a single man because he's got to find the right woman. I mean a married man's got his wife and she's there and there's an old joke, you can cut it out if you like, about the soldier that went home and he's got all his gear on, he's packing his pack and that,

37:00 and he came in and his wife's sitting at the table writing, and anyway he grabbed her and, "Who is it? The butcher, the baker?" "No. Oh, it's you love". She said, "I was just writing to you", and he said, "Well wait till I get this pack off and I'll be writing to you."

**What I was trying to say was**

37:30 **actually leaving and going back after you've been on leave. Is that harder for single or, yes, yes.**

Yes, yes. Well I tell you what I had a girlfriend and I was going back off leave and at this stage you had to take everything that you had, your universal kit bag, your rifle, your bayonet, your gas mask, your tin helmet, everything that you possessed, and anyway the train went from number one platform

- 38:00 Flinders Street, and I'm running late and I said to the girl, "Faint, fall over." She said, "I can't", so anyway I went head over turkey and the train's just pulling out and I thought I'll be right for another day's leave, and I went head over turkey, whistles blew and they pulled up the train and there was military police come from everywhere and they picked all my gear up and put me on the train.
- 38:30 Yeah.
- Didn't get your extra day's leave?**
- No. Then another occasion, you know what I told you early about me having this operation for haemorrhoids, well you can cut this part out if you like, but I came home to Melbourne on leave and I, when they operate on you they shave you from the navel to the knees, back and front,
- 39:00 and after a while, hairs starting to grow and I had a pad with Vaseline on it to stop the chaffing and I went to a doctor in Malvern. My leave was nearly up and he couldn't help me and I ended up I went to, I was in the city with this girl, a public toilet in Elizabeth Street Post Office, and I went down there and I had a tooth that I could suck blood out of
- 39:30 and I sucked some blood out and spat on this pad, put it on and we went to a doctor in, I remember a Dr Rosebery in Church Street Richmond opposite Saint Ignatius Church, and I said to her, "Now", I said, "The act's on from when we get off the tram." So we got off and I shuffled in, it came my turn, "Next please", and I got up and shuffled, "Next please", and I got the door and he said, "I'm sorry old fellow", he said, "What's your problem?" And I said, "Well I
- 40:00 had the operation for haemorrhoids", and I said, "I'm supposed to go back off leave." So I said, "And there's no sleeping compartments for privates", so anyway he said, "Give us look at you?" And of course I took this pad off, put it on a chair sunny side up. He said, "God man", he said, "You're still bleeding." He said, "You're in no condition to travel, leave extended 14 days", and I was at a dance that night.
- 40:30 But they're the things you did to cajole a bit of leave.

## Tape 6

- 00:30 We right again? Yes, to continue on from that I went back off leave and went to the convalescent camp that I'd come from and saw the doctor and he said, "Oh, you'll have to go to Greenslopes." Greenslopes was the big military hospital in Brisbane. I went to Greenslopes and never even dropped my pants. He said, "You'll have to go to Brisbane General Hospital",
- 01:00 so I went to Brisbane General Hospital and I got my army sick report and there was a Lance Corporal at a desk and you gave him your sick report and he gave you a hospital card, and anyway I had a talk to him and I got myself known to him and gave him a cigarette, and anyway like I was thinking, anyway I saw the doctor
- 01:30 and I said about leave and oh, wait on, no. Let's go back before that. I, at the convalescent camp I fronted the doctor and this is after I came back from leave that I went and saw Dr Rosebery, and I came back and anyway
- 02:00 saw the doctor there and he said, "Oh yes", he said, yes, "You're to be no duties." So I said, "So what does that mean? I'll be confined to the camp?" "Oh no", he said, "You can go into Brisbane." I said, "Well look", I said. "You see, oh", he said, "As regards rest you see", and he said, "No, you can go into Brisbane", and I said, "Well you can see I'm a
- 02:30 Victorian." I said, "Now I won't be resting walking around in Brisbane", but I said, "If I got home to Melbourne I'd rest." "That's right, 14 days leave to Melbourne." So I then came back there and as I say the procedure to Greenslopes and to Brisbane General and Lance Corporal I gave my sick report to and got the card and I
- 03:00 saw the doctor and he gave me some tablets to take, so I came back to this Lance Corporal. He said, "How did you go?" I said, "Well, he gave me these tablets to take and told me to rest for at least 21 days" and I, so he wrote on it, "That's
- 03:30 right", look I've got mixed up. This was the result after I come back from Melbourne I went to the doctor and that's, anyway I saw this Lance Corporal and told him the doctor said "Take tabs three times a daily and rest for at least 21 days", which the doctor didn't say, but that's what I told him and he wrote,
- 04:00 "Take tabs three times daily, rest for 21 days, Dr Smith per Lance Corporal Brown" and that's when I went back and saw the doctor and he said about resting see, and I said, "Well, I'm a Victorian." He said, "Yes", and that's when he let me go to Melbourne, yeah, yeah.

**You were mentioning that you had a girlfriend, a lot of the men had girlfriends or say fiancées or wives. Did they tend to worry**



04:30 **when they were in the army that their girls might meet someone else or an American?**

Well it was very prevalent because there was a lot of Yanks in Melbourne, and the Yanks were better dressed. Their privates' uniform was like our officers' uniform and they had good money and of course they were a strange nationality, yeah, a fascination, their talk and

05:00 that sort of thing, yeah. Oh yes, it was very rife.

**I remember you mention there was one man who actually lost his wife**

To a Yank, yeah, yeah, a mate of mine who was in the navy, Billy Henderson, yeah, yeah. Oh yes, that happened, it happened with Aussies. I remember at Goondiwindi, not Goondiwindi, at Glen Innes there was a fellow there and, one of our

05:30 blokes and he got on with a woman there and he was a fine looking good type of bloke, nice fellow, I knew him, knew him well, and anyway her husband came home and he said, "Out out", and he wouldn't let the husband in, and she didn't want anything to do with the husband like, and the poor devil's come home from being in action and can't get in his own home, yeah. Yeah, that was sad.

06:00 **Do you know what happened then?**

Well the last I heard they were together but of course I don't know how long, and it would get to the stage where he would go overseas, so whether the romance continued or whether the husband got back in or whether there was another fellow, that's unknown.

**By the same token, did some of the women worry**

06:30 **about their fiancées or husbands getting into trouble overseas?**

Oh I suppose they would, yeah. I mean unfortunately I can't think through a woman's mind. Wouldn't want to, how confusing can life get, but oh no. Mind you I always said when we were talking on that subject

07:00 a woman's married to a man and well, they make love when they want to, then he joins the services and eventually goes overseas and for a while, she's only human and she finishes up getting desperate and takes another man. It's as simple as that, and another thing they used to do. We were at camp up on the Atherton Tablelands up in North Queensland.

07:30 The Yanks were in camp at Royal Park and right in Melbourne. Now harkening back to when we were in camp at Fisherman's Bend we would have night leave and we'd go home and come back. There was no AWL because well, the men had their women about, but when you're stashed way up

08:00 in North Queensland and you can't get home of a night or for a long time, there was blokes going AWL and wives doing the wrong thing with the Yanks, whereas if the Yanks had been in camp up there, I mean Australia's miles from their home, so a few more miles up there wouldn't have made any difference, but

08:30 if the husbands were in camp close to Melbourne it would've made a lot of difference.

**Yes, I see what you're saying, yeah. Were there some of the attached fellows who got themselves into affairs and things?**

How do you mean attached?

**They had a fiancée or a wife or, as opposed to the single fellows, finding girlfriends.**

Well no, because, you mean those

09:00 that were in camp close to Melbourne or

**I was just thinking of generally, while the married or engaged fellows were in the army away or at another camp or something like that, did you hear of them getting involved with women?**

Well see, you get, for instance I said about Goondiwindi, now up there you would, they used to book dances with girls and

09:30 there might be a dance Saturday night, they'd book the fourth dance next Saturday night. They'd have to book dances ahead, that's how scarce girls were, and how big a majority of men there were because there were a lot of troops in camp there. Another little story with regards Goondiwindi, we used to bet with a bookmaker

10:00 and it wouldn't matter, you could back the first six winners but come to the last race and if you hadn't got cash you couldn't have a bet, so what we used to do, there was a publican and you could hock your watch and he'd give you so much on your watch, and anyway I, on one

10:30 occasion there, after a while, after a few years I think they declared one part of Goondiwindi wrong for army camp and we were to march out and go to Tenterfield. Anyway I'd got my watch in hock for £2 10

- 11:00 and I thought of a scheme and I had a mate that had got his wife up there. Anyway we were in the pub and the publican served us. I said, "What time does that train get up from Brisbane?" He said, "1.00 o'clock." "Oh, goodo." So the next drink I said to him, "Look", I said, "Can I get a room here?" I said, "My
- 11:30 wife's coming up on the train." "Oh", he said, "Yes, I think I can fix you up, but my mate, I got him primed up", he said, "But I told you", he said, "Your wife will be right out where my wife is." I said, "It's alright?" "Yes, yeah". "Oh good." The publican said, "Then you're right?" I said, "Yes, thanks very much." So the next one is the cruncher. I said, "Look, you've got my watch in there", and I said, "I owe you £2 10." I said,
- 12:00 it's got "To Vic from Lily on the back." Lily was my sister, she gave me the watch for my 21st birthday, but I told him that was my wife and I said, "Look, if I give you a pound now and the other £1 10 next pay day", he said "Oh, alright", he said, "You're not in the mob that's marching out are you?" I said, "Oh no." Anyway I got my watch and we marched out the following
- 12:30 Sunday, and I got on the rank the other side from the pub, put my head down, left right, left right. I marched out. Anyway we went to Tenterfield and then to Glen Innes and Captain Bray who I've mentioned to you before had a girlfriend in Goondiwindi and he went up there one weekend and I'm wanted
- 13:00 at the orderly room and I thought he wanted me to do a painting job. He said, "Blue, one of your chickens has come home to roost." I said, "Yes." He said, "You had a certain deal with a publican in Goondiwindi" and, he said, "You didn't honour it. Now, how much a day do you get? I'll deduct from your pay." I said, "Well, now you know how much, Jack Russell and I were
- 13:30 in that pub", and I said, "The girls they would slip you a drink on the side", but I said, "That publican never bought us a drink." He said, "He didn't?" I said, "No." He said, "Bugger him, I'll tell him you've gone on draft."

**So what was the point of the story with your wife coming? How did that relate back to the watch? I'm a bit confused.**

Well because it had, the watch had "From Vic to

- 14:00 Lily" see, and I let him think Lily was my wife and I said, to him, "Look, you got my watch, if I come up here, if she comes up here and I haven't got my watch", I said, "We're gonna be in strife straight away, yeah."

**You were pretty good with the girlfriends, pretty charming.**

Now, that's a bit of an embarrassing statement. I enjoyed their company and I hope they enjoyed mine.

- 14:30 **You were a good dancer?**

Yes, I was, yeah.

**What were the popular dances of the day?**

Well dancing used to be old time and modern. Old time would be the Valletta and the barn dance and the modern would be Fox Trot and the modern waltz. The modern waltz was the real romantic one if you like to put it that way, yeah,

- 15:00 yeah.

**Did you have a favourite to dance?**

With?

**No, I meant style of dance, a favourite style?**

No, no, all of them, all of them, yeah, yeah. 'Cause the Canadian barn dance, that was one where you change partners all around, and we used to, you could pick a good dancer in that, so you'd go around and if you picked a good dancer you'd say, "Can I have such and such a dance?" "Yeah, yeah."

- 15:30 **What about the popular tunes of the day? You're very good on music, can you tell us some of those?**

Yes, now, as a matter of fact at Glen Innes I had a thing I used to sing with the dance band there and the, I'd get in for nothing and anyway, I'd

- 16:00 sing Why Can't We Do This More Often?, I Always Dance With You, The Anniversary Waltz, that was another one, and this fellow that ran the dance he used to say to me, he had numbers hanging from the ceiling and have a lucky

- 16:30 number was a free supper at a café, and he's say, "Go on Blue, go on, go and get your girl and have a dance", and he'd pick me and he made it revolting at the finish. I said to him, I said, "You're making it

too hot, give somebody else a go", yeah, but no, that was good.

**Since you sang with the band will you sing me one of those**

17:00 **tunes?**

I couldn't sing now, God, no, but the tunes of the day, of course White Christmas that was a big thing, Bing Crosby's White Christmas and yes, no, I couldn't sing now.

17:30 But you know, it was a bit of fun and as I say, I used to get in the dance for nothing. I think it was about one and sixpence to get in the dance but if I got in for nothing well that was good, yeah.

**And did you have a favourite girl to dance with? You were gonna say that before I thought.**

Yes, I had a couple of girlfriends, yeah, yeah, at different times, yeah. They evidently liked dancing

18:00 with me, yeah.

**Did they write to you when you went overseas?**

One did, yeah, yeah, one did. As a matter of fact when we came home from Borneo when the war finished she met me. We came home to the wharf at Brisbane and they wouldn't let the people on the

18:30 wharf. All there was was the Northern Command Band playing Roll Out The Barrel and when, and we got on the trucks and come out the gates, and this girl, "Bluey, Bluey", and all the boys got onto me and we knew we were going to a place called Indooroopilly and she had a friend and her husband, her husband and he had a car and they came

19:00 out and picked me up and took me home to dinner that night and it was very nice, and of course we left the next morning to come see her and she wrote to me a bit but I finished up I dropped off because, you know, I made friends back home here and that was it, yeah.

**Tell me about when you first got home and you first saw your parents again. That must've been lovely.**

It was.

19:30 Oh yes, yeah. Yeah, my dear mum and dad, yep. My sister, she didn't live far from mum and dad and a little story with her, once there when we were in the Ramu Valley she sent me in a sealed tin

20:00 some Violet Crumbles, and it just come one of those days you was having a downer and, pardon me, to get them was wonderful. So I wrote and thanked her and told her how pleased I was. I came home on leave and went down to see her, see her. I finished up I got Violet Crumbles virtually coming out of my ears. I had pockets full of them, yeah.

20:30 **Can you describe to me that first night when you came home for dinner with your mum and dad? What happened?**

Yes, yes well I, you know, I was so thrilled to bits and they had Christmas dinner. See it was Boxing Day when I got home

21:00 and they'd held over the Christmas till Boxing Day and we had a real bang up Christmas dinner, yeah. Yeah, it was really lovely.

**What did your mum serve?**

What did she serve? Oh I think, now God, I think pork, yeah. Yeah, I think it was pork,

21:30 yeah. Good cook mum.

**They must've been so pleased to have you back home.**

God yes, yes, yeah.

**And you stayed there until you were married?**

Yep, yeah. Yes and then

22:00 when we were married we went to a place called Mount Slide up the other side of Yarra Glen for our honeymoon and then we came back and I had visions, I'd been up to Cobden to visit friends and I had visions of going to Cobden, so we cut short our honeymoon actually and went up to Cobden for the

22:30 rest of the honeymoon, surveyed the situation and eventually we had a room and use of a kitchen in Windsor and from there we went to Cobden, yeah. We were there for three and a half years and came

23:00 back to Melbourne and we had room and use of a kitchen in Swindon Road, Oakleigh and from there I had a friend that owned a house in Windsor and it was 102 and 104 in the street, it was two, one house on two blocks. It was a lovely house. The man that built it was a French

- 23:30 Polisher and all the woodwork was beautifully polished, and we rented that. When we first suggested to rent it, he said, "Oh, you couldn't afford it." So anyway I thought about it and discussed it with the wife and I thought well, he wanted £5 a week and he said, "Nobody I'd sooner have it but you couldn't afford it." Anyway
- 24:00 we thought about it and I said to him, "Look", I said, "How would it be, if we took in a border to subsidise the rent?" He said, "Yes, that'd be alright." So anyway we took in a border, a girl and she was a very nice person, Dawn, and she stayed with us until she got married, yeah,
- 24:30 and we then left there and went to Ballarat and I bought a house and stables there and I trained horses in Ballarat and I won races but unfortunately the scarce commodity was jockeys to ride work of a morning and I, we decided that we'd come back to
- 25:00 Melbourne and we came to Melbourne and oh, very dear friend of mine, old Pop Nichols was a top trainer in Ballarat, and old Pop was anointed for dead. They called the family up and they thought he was gonna die and he was anointed for dead but he rallied and anyway a fortnight after we
- 25:30 came, as I say, to Melbourne and eventually found a house in Clayton and I went and saw the War Service who finance you and we put a deposit on the house and we went, we were staying with friends at Caulfield while we were there and I went home that evening, I picked up the paper and saw where well known Ballarat
- 26:00 trainer, EH Nichols died in St John of God's Hospital. So of course we went back the next day and went straight to Mrs Nichols and offered our condolences and she said, "Oh Blue, will you take over Pop's horses?" And I said, "Well I will until", I said, "We're going to Melbourne in a month's time." I said, "I will until we go to Melbourne", and he had a fellow that rode work for him and he said, "Can I work for you?" And he
- 26:30 had a jockey that was apprenticed to him and of course a jockey can't ride unless his master's alive and he said, "Can I change my indentures to you?" I said, "It's no good Mick, I'm going to Melbourne." Now there's the thing that I wanted, and you don't wish anybody dead, but if Pop had died a fortnight before when they thought he would I would've had his horses to train and his jockey and his work rider, yeah, and God knows where I would've
- 27:00 finished. So I came back to Melbourne and I thought well I'll start again and I always made sure I have my bread and butter coming in as regards a job, and when I first went to Ballarat I was painting and then I got a horse and another one and finished up winning races and with more horses that I could train
- 27:30 and work too, so I trained full time, but when I come back to Melbourne again I'm starting again. So I'd always been fairly good at figures and I got a job in credit and finished up that I improved with that and I was going to the country and interstate with this company, and of course you can't train horses and do that too, so that was the end of my training

28:00 horses.

**You were speaking just of the War Service there.**

Yeah.

**Did you feel that the War Service looked after you veterans?**

Oh yes, oh yes. Yes, they looked after us as regards financing your home, also as regards your trade. Through War Service I got ladders and planks and tools, brushes and all for painting, oh yes.

28:30 Oh yes, they were very good, yeah.

**What about acknowledgment in the community? Did you feel when you were a returned serviceman you got acknowledgment, thanks?**

I suppose not, you know, nobody got down on their hands and knees so to speak, but I would say yes, yeah, yeah.

29:00 **I'll ask you more about on Anzac on the next tape because this one's about to run out?**

Alright.

**Yeah.**

## Tape 7

00:31 **Yeah, record this.**

**Are you on?**

**It's on, yeah.**

**OK, great, yeah.**

Yeah, on the train they would have officers that hadn't seen active service but they were checking the carriages for the occupants in case of any damage. So of course on the way down, as I said before, it was Christmas Day and the train had pulled up and people had run out with beer and wine and

01:00 whisky and they were very good, and of course we're getting a bit tipsy and anyway he came along this fellow and he said, "What's your number soldier?" And I said, "VX60958", and, "What's your name?" I said, "Fitzcanningpipe." He said, "What?" I said, "Fitzcanningpipe. "F I T Z", he said, "F I T Z, C A double N, C A double N I", he said, "My word." Now I said, "Don't you have a shot at me about my name?" I said,

01:30 "All through this army", he said, "I'm sorry old fellow, I'm sorry, and my mate's gonna say his name's MacWaterbottle", and he was laughing so much he couldn't, yeah, but yeah. Anyway let's get serious.

02:00 **You are a funny bloke.**

I'm what? I hope that wasn't a rude word.

**No, funny. You've got a great sense of humour, it's cracking us up. Now I should ask you some questions about the war specifically.**

Yes.

**Did you feel when you were in the army that Australia was gonna win?**

02:30 **Oh yes, oh yes, yes, confidence, yes.**

**Did you have a sense of how long it would take?**

No, no. No, we didn't think it would take as long as it did, but no.

**You mentioned that the jungle looked pretty bad**

03:00 **where the bombs had taken the tops off of all the trees.**

Yes.

**Can you describe that to me?**

Well I mean it knocked trees down and stripped leaves and that sort of thing and see, Balikpapan was the second largest oil port in the world, and there was quite a population. There were some nice houses there and anyway

03:30 when the Japs, it took the Japs 25 minutes to take it from the Dutch. I mean they just threw their hands up, wasn't a short fired. Now we were told it would take us six weeks to take it back and it was Dutch mandated territory and we, anyway it's gonna take six weeks. Well we

04:00 did in three weeks what we should've done in six, so we said to the Dutch, "Well righto, that's it." "Oh keep going", and we went for another three weeks. Well it meant more Dutch, more Japs and more of our fellows getting killed or wounded and the, as I say, we were immediately to hand it over to the Dutch.

04:30 The Indonesians, we were told any Indonesians were to send back to the town of Balikpapan and they picked out those men that could work for them. The rest, the women and kids and old people were just outcasts and they were sent beyond the perimeter, and you know, could've been in Jap territory, and anyway they would be going along the road

05:00 from Balikpapan and you didn't know whether some of them got a lift in our trucks, others had walked all the way. There was one woman came past our camp and she got a baby in her arms and she was crying her head off and we took her into our doctor and the baby was dead, and anyway she was so distraught we couldn't find out whether if she

05:30 left the camp, left Balikpapan or came by truck, the baby was dead when she left there, if she'd walk it was pretty sick when she left there, but all they wanted was the men to work for them and not a thing, there was a water point and one of our trucks went to get

06:00 water and he got, saw a bit of movement in the jungle nearby and anyway he wasn't armed so he just quietly got down and found a Provo, their military police armed, and he went and got this bloke and the bloke was there, this Jap, with poison to poison the water point. So good job

06:30 we got him, and there was another occasion up in the hills, the Japs had dug in and got storage in the hills and anyway when the war finished, of course we rounded up the Japs but there was I think,

07:00 boats would come in, the navy boats would come ashore to try and look around for souvenirs and so forth, and he saw the floor of this lift a bit and he went and got a Provo and the Provo got a hand-

grenade and threw the grenade in and they ran away and there was a hell of an explosion. The Jap was there to blow up God knows what. So it was a good job they got onto him.

07:30 **You were explaining to me that part of the reason Balikpapan looked so destroyed was the need to destroy this oil pipeline.**

Yes, yeah.

**Can you tell me about that?**

Well see the Japs had run oil pipes from the oil tankers down to the sea and the, in the sea they've got logs of wood and they were gonna set fire to the oil and the logs and burn us out when we did the amphibious

08:00 landing. Well the navy wouldn't take, let us go in until the airforce assured them that that pipeline set up was busted up. Plus the fact that I believe there was frogmen, underwater men that went in and they, you know, assured that it was busted up.

08:30 **What was really, would you say was the most special thing about your ambulance unit, the 2/5th?**

How do you mean special?

**Unique or wonderful, that you really felt positive about being in it. Were there certain people or certain things that you did that made it so good?**

Well yes, there was people in it as I've explained,

09:00 the officers, Colonel MacIntosh and Major Walker and there was others in the unit that were good people and it was, it was like a family and it's continued on since. There's photos there of some of our fellows at a recent Anzac Day march

09:30 and, oh yes, it was a great friendship and one only rang me last night to inquire how my wife was, and I mean that's friendship.

**What did you feel was your greatest contribution to that unit?**

Oh God, oh, I don't know.

10:00 Well I suppose my activities as a bugler and signwriting that I did. I mean that was what I was there for and I had a lot of mates, you know, we had a bit of good humour and that sort of thing, but just friendship I'd say, yes, and friendship is a big

10:30 contribution. When you've got friends that still, as I say, ring you up last night to ask how your wife is, so I think I could say my biggest contribution is my friendship.

**You also helped save lives too.**

Yes, yes, well I mean that was part of what you was there for, yeah, yeah.

**As a bugler did you have**

11:00 **a particular status, sort of a special status that you had within the unit, a special role?**

Well I was the only one of my kind in captivity, put it that way. But no, I had my job to do as a bugler and I played the calls and I had a special call I used to play. See we used to, I think I told

11:30 you the Salvation Army equipped us with things including a big AWA [Absolute Wavelength Accuracy] radio and anyway when we were in camp up in the Atherton Tablelands they used to have I think about 6.00 o'clock at night they'd have a special sports program that gave the race results and the football results and I

12:00 had a special call that I'd blow five minutes before it was time for their sports so that my sports minded mates could come up, yeah, and we had this radio in Dumpu and we used to, on a very good night and just on AM band

12:30 you could get 3DB Melbourne, and 3DB used to broadcast the boxing. The great Eric Welsh, one of the greatest sporting commentators, race caller and very knowledgeable man, he used to do the boxing, and anyway on a good night you could get Melbourne and there was a fellow

13:00 named Leo White, Kid Young, Leo White his name was, he fought as Kid Young and he came from Geelong and we had fellows from Geelong, so if he was fighting I'd go and round them up and we'd come and listen to it. And anyway I remember one night I went and rounded them up and I came back to my tent and on my bed,

13:30 like it was dark, but there was a cigarette. I said, "Off there, off there." It was a strict rule with me, nobody, you know, sits on my bed. You could sit on a four gallon drum or something, and it was Major Walker, he said, "Oh, you're a hard man Blue." I said, "Rank doesn't matter to me, off", and he got off,

yeah. But yeah, we used to get, as a matter of fact I wrote

14:00 to Eric Welsh and he sent a cheerio. Of course he couldn't say where we were. That's another thing you weren't allowed to say in correspondence where you were, and when we were in Port Moresby I got a letter from my sister and she said that Vera, a mate of hers, her brother said was in

14:30 New Guinea. So I thought well this is my chance, so I wrote back to my sister and I said, "I'm glad to here where Sid is. I hope to see him any day." And she wrote back and she said, "But Sid's in New Guinea." I thought well where the bloody hell do you think I am, yeah.

**What do you think was the most difficult part of being in New Guinea?**

15:00 Oh, the mosquitoes, malaria. I remember the first night they used to give us mosquito lotion and at dusk you had to turn your sleeves down and of course you couldn't wear shorts, and I remember the first night we were there and, pardon me, somebody said, "There's pictures on down the road", so we went there and we've got mosquito

15:30 lotion on our forehead and face, and anyway it rained and mosquito lotion's running down into your eyes. I never used it again, never used it again, not on my face anyway, yeah. But no, I was fortunate that I didn't get malaria.

**When some of the blokes did get obviously quite ill and then obviously die from things as well,**

16:00 Oh yes, yeah.

**can you tell me a little bit about the process you went through? I know you bugled at some of those events.**

The funerals, yes.

**Yes, services. Can you tell me about those?**

Well yes, I mean they were very touching because they were ex-mates, but fortunately not our unit, but from other units I remember a good mate that, I told you

16:30 about at Toowoomba where they tried to blow up the sergeant major, didn't I? Well this fellow he, Rex and Titchy Poole were there and they came on with me and they finished up going to the 12th Battalion, and Titch was a very good soldier and he got killed at Dumpu, up on Shaggy

17:00 Ridge and you know, that was a blow to me because I knew him so well. He was a crossword puzzle man. His wife used to send him stacks of crossword puzzles, yeah. Very nice bloke, yeah, Titchy Poole.

**You were at his service, his funeral?**

No, no, 'cause he was buried away from where we were, buried where his

17:30 own unit was.

**I'm sorry, yes, about the situation you were in?**

No, wait a minute, he was, they conducted, they conducted it see, and their unit bugler would play for it, see. I was the bugler for the 2/5th but when it come to the opening of the war cemetery they picked me out of all the buglers to play there, yeah.

**Can you tell me more about that 'cause I know you've got beautiful photographs of that**

18:00 **event?**

Well as I say, that was a very special day, a Sunday morning and Major Redding who incidentally they wanted to make him a lieutenant colonel and come back to Australia, but he said no, he would stay a major and stay in action, yeah, and he got me to play at that service

18:30 and it was very impressive and General Vasey was there, I think I told you that, yeah, yeah that was a very, that was probably the biggest thing ever I did as a bugler, yeah.

**When men**

19:00 **became quite emotional at the loss of a friend or attending a funeral, did you ever go and have a chat to them, see how they were going?**

No no, I mean to say, although they'd lost a friend they were comparatively composed. I mean they, I didn't see anyone break down crying, but they're obviously inwardly upset

19:30 but they didn't show it, no.

**That's sort of part of the culture of the army.**

I think it would be, yeah, yep.

**What particular calls did you do at a funeral?**

What calls? You'd play the Last Post and then Reveille

**Those two?**

Yes, yeah.

20:00 See, Last Post is the end of this world and Reveille is the beginning of the next world, yeah.

**That's beautiful symbolism.**

Yeah.

**Did you see any blokes that went what they call troppo?**

Yes, yes. Yeah, and of course they were

20:30 sedated, yeah, yes. It's a sad thing to see. I remember a fellow that, he was wounded and came into the hospital and our, the Main Dressing Station, and he,

21:00 calling out for his mother, "Mum, I'm a good boy." I mean the poor devil, yeah, and he died unfortunately, yeah, yeah.

**What medicines did they use when the men, you said they sedated them if they were a bit troppo? What did they use?**

21:30 Ooh well, I don't know. No, I don't know actually, no. Probably phenobarbs or something like that. I remember a good mate of mine who's passed on, Harry Martin, and Harry was in charge of a ward and the orderly officer came around and he said,

22:00 all the patients were asleep, "Oh", he said, "Matin, all your patients are asleep." He said, "Yes sir", and he said, "Well, now you can go to the two-up", and Harry had given them a phenobarb to put them to sleep, yeah. Yeah, well there's a fellow that

22:30 he died, he probably died about oh I suppose five or six years ago, and I went to his funeral, yeah.

**What would you say is the most important thing you learnt from the war?**

Friendship.

23:00 Yeah, friendship is a thing that lasts forever, yeah. See I've got friends that I'll go to their funeral and they'll come to mine, that I know. Somebody said to me once about how many friends you got. I said, "Well, you come to my funeral, see for yourself."

23:30 **Did you or anybody you know keep diaries while you were away?**

No, no. I suppose some did but not to my knowledge. No, I never thought of it, I should have. Still I've...

**You've got it up here though.**

Oh thank God

24:00 I remember quite a bit of it, yeah.

**Did you feel like you missed out on certain parts of your youth or your young adulthood by being at war?**

Oh well, it took the best years of my life but no, because I would've missed a lot by not being in the army. I mean it's an experience that you can't pay money for,

24:30 and getting back to friendships, it's friendships that you can't buy, they're lasting friendships, yeah.

**Did you get homesick while you were away?**

Oh yes, yes, oh yes, yeah. I love to be home

25:00 but then there was always the thought, well there's leave coming up and you'll get home, yeah. I, my mum used to write to me, she was a good letter writer, and dad occasionally but mum more so and my sister, she used to write letters all the same, about her husband and her two

25:30 sons, yeah. Yeah, see they didn't take any part in the war, pardon me.

**Did that create any distance between you and your sister?**

A big distance. Yeah, when my mother was getting on in years she said, "I know when I go you won't see your sister",

26:00 and I haven't seen my sister, oh God, oh 20 years or more, but still that's just the way it is. Just a little



story as regards her, I had an aunty, there's another thing

- 26:30 too yeah, Tokyo Rose used to come on the air and she'd among other things send messages from prisoners of war, and anyway there was occasion when she came on and she said about Private J Mounsey of Croxton to his parents that he was well
- 27:00 and, Gladstone Avenue, Croxton, yeah, and my aunty lived in Gladstone Avenue, so I wrote to my aunty and told her to tell the Mounsey's the message, and when the war finished some of them that were in Changi came home through Borneo and stayed the night with us. Some stayed longer because they weren't fit to
- 27:30 fly on further, and this Jimmy Starr, Jimmy Mounsey was one of them, and he'd evidently been in touch with his people and I identified myself and he was so grateful for me giving them the message because it was the only message they got. They didn't know whether he was dead or alive, so I was so glad I was able to give them the message. Anyway time went on and
- 28:00 I went back to work at the Tramways in Preston workshops and of a Friday we used to go over to the Junction Hotel for lunch, counter lunch and Jimmy Mounsey used to run this SP bookmaker there, and I'd walk in, "Give that man a pot of beer, every time", and anyway they'd,
- 28:30 you know, do their business with the betting, go home, have a few beers and work out who they owed and who owed them and this time they're in the kitchen and he went up and he said, I said, "Come on, where are you?" "Oh", he said, up "Here, come up here." He said, "The bloke went up, said, what's wrong?" He said, "Pull the blanket over me." He pulled the blanket over him.
- 29:00 He said, "I'll be down shortly." So his wife came home, came in the back way and she said, "Where's Jim?" They said, "He's laying down", so she went up and he was dead.

**From what?**

Eh?

**What did he do, what happened?**

I think a heart attack or something, yeah, but that was him, yeah, and I was always so glad I could get the message. But this aunty of mine, I always used to reckon the only one I'd get a

- 29:30 quid out of was my fat aunt, and anyway one occasion she was going to England and going by boat, this is after the war, she went across the Bight and got terribly sick and got to Perth and got off the boat and came home by train, and my mum wrote, we were living in the Cobden then and mum wrote and told us and
- 30:00 anyway we said to mum about how would she, aunty like to come up and have a couple of weeks with us for a holiday. So mum said, "Well next time you come down go and see her." So anyway we came down, went and saw her and she put on a lovely lunch for us and had some gifts for my wife, and anyway one fellow that lived next door to her I used to work with in the
- 30:30 Tramways, and I went in and had a beer with him and he got talking and he said, oh, he said, "You're the big man in the will." I said, "Oh yes." He said, "Yeah, that I know, I witnessed it." And anyway I told my mother because as I say it was just a joke with me, the only one I'd get a quid out of was my fat aunt. Now my sister wouldn't have a bar of Aunty and
- 31:00 anyway, mum told my sister. The next thing my sister and her husband are taking her around here there and everywhere. Anyway Aunty finished up in the nursing home in Collins Street, Thornbury and we were going out to visit friends in Ivanhoe. I said to the wife, I said, "We'll go half an hour early and go and see Aunty", so we went there and saw a nurse and I said, "We've come to see",
- 31:30 mentioned Aunty's name, and she said, "Just a minute", and the matron she said, "You're asking for Mrs so and so." I said, "Yes." She said, "Are you related?" I said, "Yes, I'm her nephew." "Well" she said, "She died two months ago", and my sister never mentioned to her, to us that she died, and also nothing came of the will. My sister went under my neck for the will.
- 32:00 Yes, so no wonder we're distant, yeah.

**Just a couple more questions here about your life. It's so interesting though. You were in the Ambulance Unit, I was wondering did you ever cause to pick up a weapon?**

Oh no. No, the non-combatant you weren't issued with weapons, no.

- 32:30 **They were very strict about that?**

Oh yes, yeah. I mean you had, if a necessity or somebody with a weapon well they'd get somebody from the infantry or we had our transport, the ASC and they were allowed to carry weapons, but no, it's one of the conditions of the Geneva Convention, you don't carry weapons.

**Did you ever feel like you'd missed out**

33:00 **not getting to quote 'fight' unquote?**

Well no, no, because I was, you know, did a, I thought did a good job what we were doing. Takes all sorts to make a world, all sorts to make an army.

**Absolutely. I hope you didn't get teased about it or anything like that.**

God no, no.

**Did the men understand and respect very much to your role?**

Well they respected, yes, we, I mean to say

33:30 God, they were sick and we'd look after them or wounded and they appreciated it, oh God yes, yeah.

**What was the contribution you felt that those famous doctors made, Walker and Dr MacIntosh?**

Well, their skills

34:00 as surgeons, yes. I mean they were very skilful men and very good men, very friendly men, yeah. I remember after the war, although Colonel MacIntosh had polio, I think I told you, Colonel Walker, Major Walker brought MacIntosh down to a reunion we had

34:30 at South Melbourne Town Hall, and I remember Walker saying to my wife, "I've had a lot of fun with this old bugger", yeah, yeah.

**Great. I'll just swap tapes here.**

## Tape 8

00:32 **I'll just ask you a few more things if that's OK?**

Certainly.

**In retrospect some of the islands that you were on in the Pacific were some of the worst hit, worst battles of the war.**

Yes.

**Can you describe to me what morale was like maybe at different times?**

Well it was never low. I mean to say our blokes were crook on the Japs and

01:00 wanted to see them defeated, and as regards weather for instance, I think I told you Morotai it would rain spot on 4.00 o'clock in the afternoon. You could set your clock by it. Now Borneo was different, Borneo was good and I liked the climate too. As a matter of fact

01:30 they, as I said, it was the second largest oil port in the world, Balikpapan, and there was talk of recruiting soldiers as supervisors because of the language, and anyway I did think Shell Oil Company wanted recruits and I did think of being part of that but

02:00 then I met my wife and that was it, yeah.

**Was morale different on the different islands, say better at Borneo than New Guinea?**

No no, because you was with the same blokes. Oh no.

**You mentioned the weather. Did that contribute to or affect morale?**

Well, it was dirty on getting wet through, yes, yeah, but

02:30 you just had to dry out and go on with life, yeah, but as I say Morotai, it was a darn nuisance because you'd just get cleaned up and showered and clean clothes on down it would come and you'd have to wash up the next morning and of course the sun was pretty strong and you'd get your washing dried and then bang, down it would come

03:00 again, yeah. And just a thing there on Morotai, there was a raffle went on a night with a Yankee WAC [Women's Army Corps] and there was two Yanks and this Yankee girl and I had a ticket but

03:30 I didn't win it, but I remember and it was drawn at an open air, you know, like a pictures, see they put up a screen and then you'd go in there, sit on trucks and drums and that, and anyway it was drawn this night and the bloke that won it, you bloody beauty, and he ran down the front and they reckon that

04:00 the three of them got the equivalent of £1,000 each, the two blokes that run it and the girl, yeah.

**Do you reckon you had a lucky war?**

Me personally, oh yes, yes. Yes, because I didn't get injured, I didn't get malaria. I got tinea but I got over

04:30 that. Oh yes, yes, because I know there was some blokes came out of it not so good. You know, there was berri berri and things like that, different skin things and it got into your body and oh yes, there was two types of malaria. There was malaria that you got and got over it and there was another type of recurring one and there's blokes to this day still

05:00 get the recurring malaria. So no, I was lucky, yeah.

**When was the last time you played your bugle in service? Can you describe that?**

Oh yes, yes. It was at Balikpapan, I think about a little while after we,

05:30 after the Armistice, yeah, yeah, see and I knew, I think I told you I played at the night of the Armistice and put my bottle of beer there and my bugle and when I finished the bugle for all the, the bottle of beer had been pinched, but I went you know, it wasn't long after that the unit was disbanded. Of course I handed the bugle in

06:00 then and I think I told you the story about it coming up, only a bit over 12 months ago.

**If you wouldn't mind telling us again because I don't think the camera was running when you told us.**

Well I handed the bugle in at Balikpapan and it was given to us by the original 5th Field Ambulance of the First World War and it was presented

06:30 by a Dr Parkes who was a member of that. It was presented at Puckapunyal to our unit in 1940, and it was used in the First World War so it was probably, well that '14 to '18, so it was probably made around 1913 or 1914, so that's the dear thing we have now.

07:00 And that's it and it was, as I say it was presented to us at Puckapunyal and I handed it in at Borneo, yes, sorry, and I, at the reunions

07:30 they used to say that I'd hocked it or sold it or something and where was it, and it was always the butt of jokes. Anyway a bit before Anzac Day 2002. Excuse me, I want to blow my nose. Before Anzac Day 2002 our

08:00 reunion secretary Alan Eldridge rang me. He said, "What would you give for the bugle?" I said, "Oh no." He said, "Yes", and anyway it appears that a fellow that was in our unit and left the unit before I joined it, he lived, his daughter lived in Rutherglen out of the town on a farm and she was moving

08:30 into the town and was going through boxes of tricks and keepsakes and she found the bugle, so she rang our secretary and sent it to him and he got it for me, and there is just a rough thought that at Bandiana there is a medical

09:00 museum, and it's the thought that we might present it to them. Now our annual meeting is Caulfield Cup eve and we're going to discuss it then and it's, my thought is that we could have a day trip to Bandiana, have lunch there and present the bugle there, yeah, and the dear old thing as you say, you can

09:30 see it's all worn and battered but it still plays.

**That's great, that's just great. I think we might have to stop there.**