

Australians at War Film Archive

Terry Fairbairn - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:35 **Could I ask you where you were born in that kind of condensed version I was talking to you off camera about? If you'd like to start that, where you were born and then we'll take it from there?**

You want me to start now, do you?

Yeah, please.

Well I was born in County Louth in Ireland in, my gosh I've forgotten the year, 1918.

01:00 **And yeah tell us about your early life and then coming to Australia?**

Well my father had a farm actually when I was growing up my father, had a farm in [County] Monaghan near Carrickmacross and he bred all sorts of things, grew all sort of things, but mainly he was a man who bred hunters, horse hunters and they were lovely animals, really are lovely animals.

01:30 **Tell us about coming to Australia then?**

Well, he'd been in the British Army in World War I, and for some reason I don't know what unit he was in. If I ever knew I've forgotten it, and for some reason or other he became unpopular with the then political crowds in Ireland and there were a stack of political crowds and he actually lost his property. It was 776

02:00 acres. They took that off him, leaving him 100 acres and the house, for which the offer came to 100 pounds, and he wouldn't take that money for a house and the land, so he left and he came to Australia with his family and he became a dairy farmer here, and he'd never been a dairy farmer before.

And tell us about your early life in Australia then?

02:30 Well my early life in Australia basically began I think when I joined the New South Wales Scottish Battalion, which was attached to the Black Watch, the Scottish Black Watch Battalion, in 1936, and then in 1938 I joined the regular army. A new unit was formed called the Darwin Mobile Force, which is a regular force, and it had all sorts of people in it, such as, apart from myself, there were

03:00 people who became machine gunners, artillerymen, mortarmen and infantrymen. But it was only 270 people, troops and the officers, and after we were formed in November '38, we were taken to Darwin in March '39 and we trained up there, and when war broke out some of us were made

03:30 instructors and I was one of those made an instructor. I was sent back to Sydney as an instructor at the Eastern Command Officers Training School at Narellan just beside Campbelltown, and then the war was on of course and then through all sorts of secret methods

04:00 I had to join the AIF [(Second) Australian Imperial Force] because regular soldiers were not allowed into the AIF officially but you had to dodge that to get in so if any regular soldier wanted to be in it, and I got my documents all signed and sealed and secretly and became a private soldier in the AIF, and that was on the 5th of January 1940. I became a member of the AIF

04:30 2/1st Battalion and on the - that was the Thursday - and on the following Saturday, which was the 7th of January, I was commissioned just because I'd had a lot of, been well trained, and I was an officer of the 2/1st Battalion. We sailed from Australia on the 10th of January 1940.

05:00 I was given command of ninety-odd troops who came into camp the previous day. They'd never been trained. They'd just been put into uniforms and I had them all on board the SS Otranto when the battalion was on board a ship called the Orford, the Royal P&O ships, and we sailed directly to Palestine.

05:30 **You were in Palestine? Tell us what you did there briefly.**

Well, I did something there for my CO [Commanding Officer] that I wouldn't dare tell you about. I'd be shot by somebody, some of his people. He was a very great man. What did I do in Palestine? The first leave we had in Palestine was a one-day visit to Jerusalem, which was an amazing visit. All the

06:00 soldiers wandered around all the places that Christ had gone through, or it's said He'd gone through, and it was an amazing day. We didn't talk about it there; we talked about it back in the mess and back at the barracks. The barracks, by the way, were tents. We didn't have any huts and I think everybody including those who didn't believe

06:30 were very interested in historic things that we saw in Jerusalem. It was a lovely city and I've no doubt it's still a lovely city. From there of course we continued our training, which, some was done with units from the British Army, including the 2nd Battalion of the Black Watch, and we trained on there until September

07:00 '40 when we moved to Egypt to a place called Helwan just south of Cairo, and then we went into the desert to fight Mussolini's soldiers, particularly at Bardia, and that really was the start of the war for us or apart from training.

And after Bardia?

Well after Bardia we went straight ahead to

07:30 Tobruk. We took part by the way in three days and we went straight from there to Tobruk, the whole of the Australian 6th Division plus some British troops and we attacked Tobruk, and we took that in three days the first time, and that was all in January-February 1941. After the Battle of Tobruk, our brigade, the 16th Brigade, was rested because we'd

08:00 been in the field for a long time. In fact, the whole of the 6th Division was rested and we had a few days of doing absolutely nothing, and then of course we had to start training again, and we were refitted with uniforms and cause we'd been in the one uniform for about six months and the shirts and shorts and so on wear out very quickly in the army. And we were eventually sent to

08:30 Greece in March 1941 to fight the Germans, or stop the Germans from attacking Greece. We couldn't stop them but we had a hell of a battle and we had to withdraw from Greece because we simply just didn't have enough troops there or enough ammunition and guns and so on to fight the Germans in Greece. And some people were taken back to Palestine and back to Egypt

09:00 but some of us were taken to Crete and we defended Crete against a terrible attack by paratroopers, German paratroopers, and I was in a place called - my gosh it's gone. Isn't that strange? The name has just disappeared...Retimo, a place called Retimo, which was fairly central in the north coast of

09:30 Crete and the 2/1st Battalion was there and the 2/11th Battalion, which was from Western Australia, plus a few artillerymen also from Western Australia and South Australia, and we were the only people on the island to defeat the Germans on that attack on Crete, which was lost in fact, and the other area west of us, sorry east of us

10:00 was a place called Heraklion [or Iraklion]. All the troops there including Australian 2/4th Battalion were withdrawn and taken away, and down on the western side, which was Suda Bay area, they crossed the mountains to a place called Sfakia and a tremendous number of them were taken by ship to

10:30 Cairo and, or sorry to Egypt. We were left; we didn't know this was happening. Nobody sent us a message. We didn't have a wireless. We never had a wireless. We didn't have any telephone contact with anybody else and we were just left there and, when the Germans attacked us on the 30th of May, but still they attacked us on the 20th, but on the morning of 30th May

11:00 we had three rounds of ammunition per man. Well, I wasn't in the fight that morning. I'd been wounded and I was in the ambulance station but it didn't take us long to find out what was happening then. The CO, Lieutenant Colonel Ian Campbell had to retire, had to just pass it all off, which was terrible and of course

11:30 we ended up as prisoners of war.

And we'll talk a lot in detail about you being prisoner of war, but just briefly, where did they take you then?

They took us from there to the town of Retimon or Retimo, and 'Retimon' is the Greek pronunciation. We were there for two or three days in that school

12:00 and then from there eventually to a hospital in Athens, but oddly in this place at Retimo, which was supposed to be a made-up hospital, it had been in fact a school. We old soldiers were lying on concrete floors, wounded soldiers lying on concrete floors. My great friend Patrick Campbell Lawrie was next to me.

12:30 He was very badly wounded and two Germans came in both with rifles and bayonets and tried to take his wristwatch. Now he was semi-unconscious or half asleep but he really was in a very bad condition. He'd been blown up and I didn't want this to happen cause he was next to me, so I grabbed his hand

and his watch and

- 13:00 guarded it with this hand, so the Germans decided that well, if they can't get that watch at least they can get mine, which was a watch oddly I'd brought in Palestine, and oddly, I've always remembered the name and number of this, an Arcadia watch made in Switzerland with number 2323 in here, in that area there, and the bayonets
- 13:30 came down slowly to my belly and one of the other patients said, "You'd better let them have your watch, Terry, otherwise you might be bayoneted." They had the watch, that was it. From there, we were flown to another school in Athens and the first Australian voice we heard there apart from
- 14:00 those that had been with us in that hospital in Crete in Retimo, or that old school in Retimo, was a doctor from Bathurst in New South Wales whose surname was Brooke-Moore, Brooke hyphen Moore. I've forgotten his Christian name and the words we heard from him, he was talking to a German officer and he
- 14:30 said, "You want me to take command of all these soldiers who are wounded and all you've given me is a damn knife?" And that's all he had cause we saw him shortly afterwards and that's all he had. He had no, they'd given him nothing. No bandages, no medicine, absolutely
- 15:00 nothing, and he didn't get any while I was there and eventually I was taken away to another place because I was getting better and I was taken up to Salonika in northern Greece with a lot of other men. We did most of that, a lot of that by marching and when we got to Salonika, we marched, we had been on a train for the
- 15:30 final journey. We marched to the camp, which was a very ancient army camp in Salonika built, I believe, by the Turks some 400 years previously, but as we marched up some young Greek people threw cigarettes to us, which soldiers grabbed. One of the girls who were there throwing cigarettes
- 16:00 got a kick in the crotch by a German soldier who was one of our guards and she fell with a broken crotch and then he killed her. She was about 14, perhaps 15, and that was quite typical of what the Huns [Germans] did in those days. From there on
- 16:30 we lived in this place, which was full of fleas and bugs. The bugs used to climb up the wall and across the ceiling and drop down on you or drop down on somebody else, but they always dropped on you, having climbed up, and we used to spend a lot of time killing those things because they were very nasty and the bites were horrible. And eventually I was, the Germans made an,
- 17:00 when we got to Salonika they announced, the Huns announced outside that anyone born in Ireland should report to gate number eight and then we were, having said that, we were loaded through one of the gates, so we're in between two great barbed-wire fences and at the other, through the second barbed-wire fence, my CO Ian Campbell was there,
- 17:30 Colonel Campbell, and I asked him what he knew about this Irish business and he said, "Nothing Terry." He'd see what he could find out, or words to that affect, and I went to this bench eight which was controlled by man in a British Army uniform as a warrant officer in the Tank Corps. I don't think he was British. I think he was a Hun, a German in a false uniform, and they wanted to know all about you.
- 18:00 Well, most of us said, I only said, "Born in Ireland." and my name, rank number, and, "Born in Ireland." That was it. We were called, a lot of us were called up some time later to a man called, name's gone, it will come to me shortly, a German captain, and he was a very, very nice man indeed apart from the fact that I looked upon him as a horrible
- 18:30 Nazi, a Gestapo man [Nazi secret police], which I believe, I really believe he was that from his actions later and he wanted to know all about me and I wouldn't tell him anything apart from what I was supposed to tell him officially, which I did. My name, my rank, my number and, "Born in Ireland." and after that, the next time I saw him
- 19:00 was in Wustermark in Berlin, a so-called Irish camp, when he knew everything about my family in Australia. He told me that two of my brothers, Wally and Bill were in the Australian Army and in the Middle East with the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion, and that a brother, another brother George, he was a policeman, had left the police and joined the AIF and been called back to
- 19:30 the police or been put in jail, and they told me my father's name, my mother's name, my name, my sister's name, their name, where I was born in Ireland and when. Everything, they knew everything. Now that was the, again the name's gone, but that is the spying German crowd that existed worldwide.
- 20:00 You'll find the actual name of that, it was in the matter I've given you but the Huns knew more about me than I knew myself. They knew more about my family, my brothers, than I knew. It was a strange situation.

We'll just briefly, we'll come back to a lot of POW [Prisoner Of War] stuff, but just briefly, what was the experience over those couple of years as a POW?

- 20:30 **What was your experience for two years as a POW? Not two years, for more than that, but for**

the time as a POW?

Well, I eventually was sent to this camp at Wustermark just outside of Berlin, which was very, very close to the Olympic arena of 1936, and the treatment we got there when we wouldn't,

21:00 when I got there and I wouldn't work for the Huns, I wouldn't become a traitor to the Australian Army or the British Army or any other army, they treated me most evilly. I was jailed but I was belted first of all by the Germans, German soldiers.

21:30 I was taken into a cell and stripped and shaved. My whole body was shaved with an open blade razor. They...

We'll come back to it later. I think we'll talk about it after lunch or something.

22:00 **Tell us about the end of the war for you and...?**

Well, I did escape from the Huns to the Americans and I fought with them for a few days and had a great time with them, in fact, but I ended up eventually in an American hospital because I passed out and I was out for five days and then I was flown

22:30 to a hospital in Britain and I was there - I don't know how many days I was there, I've forgotten, but roughly a week, and then I was flown to, taken from there to a place called Eastbourne in England. We were (UNCLEAR) towards the Australian camp. Oddly, I was very surprised about being told to leave this hospital. The British people in charge

23:00 of the hospital, cause it was a British hospital, gave me, I had no pay book by the way, it'd been lost in Germany, and they loaned me five pounds, in that big white English five-pound note, they loaned me that and gave me a railway ticket to London and said I had to go to Australia House to find out where to go from there, cause they didn't know where

23:30 the Australian ex-prisoners were going and I eventually got to, that's right, I got to the railway station in London. It was raining cats and dogs [raining heavily], terrible rain, and I didn't know where to go, where this Australia House was and a policeman arrived, no doubt looking at a strange character in a strange uniform, if it was a uniform. I did have a slouch hat and I did have my pips on

24:00 but the rest of it was absolutely a filthy uniform and he asked me who I was and where I was going and I told him what I was looking for and he said, "Well, Australia House is just a little walk down the road. Here, I'll take you down there." And eventually, in the rain, he said, "Do you have any money?" And I said, "Yes, the hospital gave me five pounds." And he said, "Well, come in here." And we dived [went] into a little shop in this street

24:30 in London and I purchased a beautiful khaki Burberry trench coat for five pounds. The policeman had spoken to the shopkeeper and told him who I was and what I was and where I'd been, so the shopkeeper gave it to me for five pounds and then the policeman took me to Australia House, who didn't even know where the Australian, where the camp was that the Australian

25:00 soldiers were going to. They had to get on the telephone to find out, and that astounded me with, public servants at that stage didn't even know where it was and I was given, told it was at Eastbourne and I was given a railway ticket to get to Eastbourne from Waverley Station, I think it was. I had to walk to Waverley Station. I got to Eastbourne about nine o'clock at night, pitch black.

25:30 I had no idea where this place was but an army truck arrived and drove me to the Red Cross place at Eastbourne, the Australian Red Cross place, and they looked after me for that night, so some people in England didn't care and some Australian people in England didn't care a damn about their own soldiers. I was astounded.

And then tell us about coming home to Australia?

26:00 I'm trying to think of the name of the ship. Isn't that funny I haven't thought of that ship for years and years and years, but we came home by ship via the Suez Canal and landed in Sydney. I still can't think of the name of that ship we were on, and we were kept onboard for an extra two hours

26:30 while the Australian Governor General, who was then the Duke of Gloucester, came onboard to make a speech of welcome and from there we were taken to Sydney Showground and we met all family people and so allowed to go home. But in the meantime, of course, I'd bought a new uniform in London and I was pretty well dressed by those days. I'd put on some weight too.

And what did you

27:00 **do in your post-war years?**

Sorry?

What kind of work did you do in the post-war years?

I first of all started off to be a clerk with Hastings Deering, the Ford motor company people in Sydney, but I got called, one of my old army friends who was mixed up with the Royal Blind Society was vice-

president of the Royal Blind Society. He, by the way, became, he was

- 27:30 Paul Cullen, who was a colonel. He ended up as a major general, Major General Paul Cullen [later commanding 2nd Division (CMF/Army Reserve) and member of the Military Board], he had commanded my battalion up in New Guinea in fact and he was a vice-president of the Royal Blind Society and on 19th April '48 Helen Keller was going to arrive in Australia. You know about Helen, you know Helen Keller, do you? The blind
- 28:00 American lady that every blind person worshipped. And this was the day he called me up, it was a Tuesday, and I went up to his office at five o'clock as I'd arranged. There was another gentleman there called Bridges who was a politician and we had a talk and he told me that Helen Keller was arriving the
- 28:30 Thursday. They'd employed a person to arrange this Australia-wide tour for Helen and discovered that he had broken all the rules they had made or given him. Helen was 68 years of age then and had said she could only work every second day and this man had arranged for her to be out for over 10 hours every day, travelling and talking
- 29:00 to people. I never met him so I don't know anything about him, but they wanted me to do the job and I said, "Well, I can't give up my work with Hastings Deering." They said, "We've fixed it with Mr Davey. You're fixed." They took me up to the president, Mr Justice Maxwell, at the Supreme Court. He was sitting there waiting to see what happened and I became the person who conducted Helen Keller's tour, but I had to break down all the arrangements the other fellow had made
- 29:30 and have her work in fact four hours every second day, and that's what they had arranged originally or wanted to arrange originally, and when that tour was over after three months they found that there was some troubles within the Blind Society itself and they asked me to stay and examine those things and see if I can
- 30:00 help solve the problems, which I did, and said to them, "Well, I've solved the problem, I'm going back to Deering's." They said, "No you're not, you're going to stay with us now and become the big chief." So we sacked, because of that we sacked, they sacked, I didn't sack, they sacked 13 people on the staff of the Blind Society at that time who'd just been doing the wrong thing and we got the radio
- 30:30 station 2UW [Sydney commercial radio station] to put a day on for a money-raising day and we raised 26,000 pounds in one day and all of a sudden the Society was back in the black instead of the red, which was good, and I stayed there until 1954 when I was asked to take the job of Australian
- 31:00 Lions International man, the first man, the first Australian to do any work for Lions International in Australia, and I became their representative until 1960 and I travelled all over Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand for all those years and I didn't have a friend there. I didn't have a friend in Sydney left. I had nobody, but I just got fed up with it and left it. It was too much,
- 31:30 far too much. I didn't even have a secretary in those days. I couldn't afford it. So I was forming Lions Clubs madly, which was very good because Lions Clubs do a wonderful job. They're pretty much like Rotary and Apex and so on.

OK, great. Alright, well we'll come right back to the beginning. Tell us about

- 32:00 **your memories of Ireland, if you have any?**

My memories of Ireland. I've never thought of it from that point of view.

Growing up in Ireland?

In Ireland, in those days, I think they're a bit mad now, but they were certainly very mad in those days - politically mad.

- 32:30 And there was a lot of nonsense between people who were Catholics and people who were Protestants, and I happened to be a Protestant and I was at the one school, I don't know why we were there, but we were at school in County Monaghan for about four or five weeks - myself and a brother and my sister in
- 33:00 this little school at Drumluskey was the name of the place, a little tiny school, and every Wednesday the local parish priest arrived there because it really was a Catholic school, and we had to sit and face the fire so we couldn't see the priest and actually what the kids did while he was doing the service
- 33:30 and when you think of that today, it doesn't, it wouldn't happen today. Things have changed vastly. The Irish people in those days did, I think, take religion very seriously. My father was a very serious Presbyterian. Here in Australia, his best friend in Campbelltown just south
- 34:00 of Sydney, his best friend at Campbelltown turned out to be the Roman Catholic priest, which was great. We got rid of all that rubbish in Australia. I still think it goes on in Ireland to a certain extent but it's a much better place from that point of view now than it was in those days, except up in Northern Ireland where there's still a lot of nonsense of that sort going on.

What would be said to you as a kid? What would be

34:30 **said to you as a Protestant kid in Ireland, what kind of things would they say?**

I don't remember what was said but I remember stones being thrown at me, well, not just me, my brother and sister. I remember that happening. I've forgotten what was said as a kid and yet people that did that in those days as kids, on visits to Ireland since then, I've met a few of them and they were quite nice. They

35:00 shake hands with you and welcome you and buy you a porter and, sorry, a Guinness, a Guinness porter and they were quite welcoming. They'd been brought up that way, which was just nonsense, and it's still going on with that man Paisley [Reverend Ian Paisley] in Northern Ireland. Thank God he's a bit quiet at the moment, but in my view he's an idiot, a very complete idiot and he's

35:30 supposed to be some sort of Christian religion man. I don't know what religion he belongs to, but I don't what church he's supposed to belong to, but it's certainly not the Presbyterian or the Anglican Church or the Methodist Church, not one of those. Something he made up himself and he says he's a minister of religion, and he is not a minister of religion. He did a written educational thing with the Bob

36:00 Jones Theological College in Missouri in the States [United States of America] and he did six weeks written examination with them and that was it. He became a minister of religion.

Tell us what your father, your parents were doing in Ireland?

My father was a farmer. I only remember Kiltybegs, the main place in County Monaghan near the village of Kiltybegs, and about four miles from Carrickmacross.

36:30 He grew barley and oats, potatoes of course, other vegetables, but he also grew, his main thing was hunting horses, beautiful hunters and he'd train them. That was his main task training them but he lost the farm over political nonsense.

What was that political nonsense?

37:00 Well, there was a lot of political nonsense in Ireland at that time, both north and south, but in the south where we were, Britain had control of Ireland for so many years and the Irish wanted that to cease and in doing that, of course, they wanted to get rid of people like my father who had fought in the British Army, and I'm not certain what unit, I don't know what unit he was in, and

37:30 they wanted to get rid of all sorts of people like that and take over the properties and give them to their Catholic political friends. Not the Catholic friends, Catholic political friends, as the farms that they could use. But the farms that my father had 776 acres, 771 acres, and they broke this place up into five-acre blocks,

38:00 and whether they sold them off I don't know, but certain people did get some of them and they were supposed to make a living out of it. Five acres. I don't think it would work, but they left my father with 100 acres and a double-storey house for which they offered him 100 and he refused to accept the 100 pounds and eventually, after some days of fighting,

38:30 fighting politically, I suppose you'd call it, not physically, he decided, "Well, I'm not going to get this property back, ever." So he left and eventually came to Australia, which was the best thing he ever did.

And was there any trouble with the Irish Republican Army?

Well, the people who first came and took the property over were

39:00 supposed to be members of the Irish Republican Army. Now whether they were or not, I don't know, but I believe there were members of the Republican Army because some of them were in uniform. But it was a dreadful political day. It was all dreadful political days in those days.

Tape 2

00:35 **Can you tell me about your education in Ireland? What the schooling was like and that sort of thing?**

Well, I did mention earlier this one time we were at this little public school at Drumluskey I don't know why we were there. It was only five or six weeks. It was quite amusing. The rest of the time was in Carrickmacross, which was a grammar school, very good grammar school,

01:00 and all sorts of people went there, including Protestants and Catholics and so on, and that was all the schooling I had apart from what mother and father taught me.

What did they teach you?

They taught me how to behave and so on. I often got a slap across the face or the backside, which unfortunately doesn't happen today to today's kids. I wish it did, they'd be better behaved.

01:30 **What sort of misbehaviour would lead to that sort of thing?**

I'm not really sure now cause I don't even remember being slapped. I know I was but I don't even remember what for. I can't answer that question.

And what was it like, I guess, growing up as a child or into teenage years? What sort of friends did you have, and what sort of, I guess, games would you play together and this sort of thing?

The main

02:00 games that were played in Ireland those days where I was, was soccer, and everybody played soccer. No doubt there was bowls played and the other game that I played was croquet, and as a kid I did play croquet. I haven't played it here in Australia but hockey was played of course, but again I didn't play hockey, but soccer was very important and it's a good game because you don't have any contact with the other person.

02:30 You just simply don't contact the other player.

In soccer?

In soccer, yes. Haven't you seen soccer?

I have I've just seen it where maybe they do have a bit of contact...

The other football games, to me there's too much body contact compared to soccer. Soccer really is a, it's a tough game, but it's I think a better football game than many of the other games.

03:00 I'll probably get killed for saying that.

A cleverer game in a way?

Mm.

And during, I guess, your teenage years, did you have any sort of, was there any knowledge that you might have to, I mean, as a young person in a family were you aware of any troubles that was going on with your father that...?

Not really. My father for instance, in the lounge room at home, always sat in a particular chair,

03:30 and I knew that there was a pistol, a revolver there behind that chair, but I never knew quite why it was there and neither did any of my, neither of my brothers or my sister.

Did you have any suspicions or...?

No, not really. Things when I was a kid, things that Dad did were proper. You didn't question anything that Dad did, whether the question was there or not I don't know,

04:00 but we certainly didn't question things that Dad did in those days. It just simply wasn't done. But perhaps we should go back to that type of thing where your father and mother treated you correctly but strictly, and, of course fondly.

So what sort of plans did you have for the future before you knew that you would come to Australia?

I had none personally,

04:30 and I don't even know what my father had, except I'm quite certain he knew he would go onto a farm somewhere or other, but I had no plans at all really. Young people don't really have plans. I was only 16, only a kid.

And so can you sort of take me through the, I guess, days or weeks when you had to leave and how did the family pack up to go and

05:00 **this sort of thing?**

Everything was packed up. I think mother and father did it themselves, in great cases, and it was all shipped, moved to Belfast where the ship was going to leave so it could be loaded there. It was just a normal moving thing excepting they did it themselves and probably they saved

05:30 a lot of things, leave some of the so-called experts today to pack what's there, for instance, half of it would be broken because it's not packed correctly or safely enough, but it arrived safely in Australia.

And so what were your

06:00 **feelings at the time when you...did you know that you were coming to Australia?**

Yes, we did. We all knew that, but we had no real feelings about it because we were with Father and Mother, and as kids in those days that was terribly important. Father and Mother were wonderful people and to every kid in those days, in my view, and whatever decision they made we accepted without any fighting or disagreement

06:30 or talking about. We never had any troubles of that nature.

What were your expectations of Australia before you arrived?

We knew nothing about it. We hadn't been taught anything at school. We sort of knew it existed but didn't know anything, didn't know even where it was.

Had you heard any sort of, I guess, tall stories or superstitions about it?

No, no we hadn't.

07:00 We arrived in a country that certainly I knew nothing about.

What did your parents know anything about it? Why had they chosen Australia?

My father never ever spoke, even to the day he died, he never spoke about the reasons why he was leaving or left Ireland, never. It was finished and he put it completely behind him, and I think it went right out of his brain as

07:30 much as that was possible.

How about your mother?

Don't know, but she never mentioned Ireland, never. She's gone too, of course, now, but she never mentioned Ireland. Odd.

Do you think that they missed it? Was there any?

Possibly, I don't know. It's possible. I think you do miss

08:00 land originally, but not for long as long as the family is together. I think people who, say foster children, they might think about it when they've left and gone to some other country, and a lot of the children were sent from, after World war II, were sent to Australia because their parents had been lost and their families had been lost

08:30 and they came here to that Doctor Bernardo's places [Dr Bernardo Homes, charity schools] and places like that. They were looked after but I think they'd have probably wondered who their mother was, or why their father had been killed and so on, but not with families such as us that were all together.

What was the trip like on the ship, from Belfast, was it?

Yes, from Belfast.

09:00 No, I'm sorry. We went from Belfast to Liverpool and got a ship at Liverpool. Don't ask me the name of the ship at Liverpool. I couldn't tell you the ship from Belfast to Liverpool, I couldn't tell you because all the way I was sick and I was sick all the way to Australia.

All the way?

All the way.

What was that like?

And I was never seasick again, but I was sick all the way to Australia and never seasick again on three other boats that I've been on.

09:30 **So what are your memories of that trip, apart from throwing up?**

Pretty much none. I do remember we called in at Cape Town. I remember going ashore at Cape Town and feeling quite well, and I remember that my father, I don't know what he bought for the rest of us, I remember he bought me a hat, and we were one day out of Cape Town

10:00 and the hat blew off into the sea with the wind and that was that.

What was the hat like?

Just a normal little kid's hat, you know, a young feller's hat. A little felt hat. But it'd gone in the sea and that was that. My father didn't say a word. He was there when it flew off, but he just knew the wind had got it and he saw it happen, in other words.

What was life like on the ship? Did you interact with the crew or...?

I think it was

10:30 pretty much the same as any ship today. We talked to the crew and they were good to kids and so on.

I've never really been on a ship so...?

Haven't you?

No. So what sort of things would you do?

Well, as an adult on the ship, of course, you get dressed and go to special dinners and that sort of thing, or you dance and so on, but on that little ship, forgotten the name of it, we had special little lessons of history

- 11:00 and so on and all sorts of things worldwide by men and women which - I've no doubt they were also passengers who decided to look after the kids onboard.

Do you remember anything that they taught you, any strange facts?

Not really, no. No.

And how long did the journey take?

Six weeks, around South Africa. A pretty slow voyage in those days, but it was six weeks.

- 11:30 **What was it like, was the weather rough or were there any?**

I don't know. I was sick all the damn time, seasick, yeah.

And what were your first impressions of arriving in Sydney?

The thing I remember about it is looking at this harbour which we had entered and going round a corner and seeing two arms of a bridge

- 12:00 like this. The bridge had been built but it hadn't been completed and I still remember that sight of that, wondering when it was going to be finished and so on. I can remember that easily.

Was it an odd sight or...?

Yes it was. Well, of course I didn't know what was happening. I didn't know what it was at that time. I assumed it was going to be a bridge but I had no idea. But I was interested to go under it or through it and

- 12:30 have a good look at it and see men working on it up top, very interesting. But Sydney is a beautiful and it really is a beautiful harbour.

And what was Sydney like in those days in comparison to what you'd grown up with?

A strange city quite different to say Dublin or Belfast or the little town of Carrickmacross, of course, but

- 13:00 interesting. I remember we stayed in a place for two or three days at a place in Chamber Street, which is in Redfern today, and I remember going for a walk one afternoon and seeing a pile of newspapers on the sidewalk or footpath. I remember picking one of those papers up and taking it home, taking it to where we were living, taking it to

- 13:30 my father, and when my father got the paper, he said, "Where did this come from?" I told him and he said, "You didn't have any money to pay for it." and I said, "I didn't know it was for sale." I just saw it was there, so I'd stolen something without knowing I was stealing it. And my father did go up and pay for it, and I think it cost a penny in those days.

- 14:00 At least that's what he said, but he did go up and pay for it. I had no idea that there was that sort of thing happened.

And where were, I guess, the places that you stayed for the first little while and how did you sort out where your life was going to be?

Well, my father did this of course and he went to a dairy farm out at a place called Teresa Park, way out west of Camden.

- 14:30 Do you know Sydney? Do you know Teresa Park? Do you know Camden?

Camden.

You do, well, it was roughly eight or nine miles west of Camden on the way to a place called 'The Oaks' and a huge farm, which went right down to the Nepean River. It was a dairy farm.

And you mentioned that he didn't really know anything about dairy farming, so...?

No, but he,

- 15:00 well, he had of course, but everybody, every farmer back in Ireland had cows to milk for their family and so on and people that worked there, so he could milk anyway and so could mother, so we, it was easy to get 40 or 50, I don't know how many, cows they'd have had. I don't think I ever knew what cows they had, but it was easy for them to milk and then of course machines came in quite quickly.

- 15:30 But Teresa Park was a very lovely place right on the Nepean River and then he came to Campbelltown to a farm of his own, which wasn't on a river but it was a very nice farm, and there he grew things like lucerne, some oats, but mainly grass lucerne and oats. I don't think ever we had wheat or barley,

16:00 and every farm of course had its own garden, not just for flowers, but every farmer grew potatoes and the cabbages and the lettuce and tomatoes and everything for themselves. You never bought any, you didn't had to buy any of those on the farm. You made them, you grew them, even strawberries.

And during this time, what did you think of Australia?

16:30 I would say that right from the start every member of the family thought it was a great place because it was so different. There was none of this anti-religious nonsense that you would find that we discovered. It was a pretty open sort of a place. You didn't have to lock a door at night,

17:00 or when you went away, say, to do the shopping, which was very good. Unfortunately, you've got to do it today but you didn't have to do it then, which was wonderful. Have you ever experienced that, not having to lock the door? You have, wonderful.

There's always a door open in our house, probably not the safest thing, but that's...

17:30 **Anyway, how did your father, you mentioned that he wouldn't talk about Ireland, but how did he fit in, was there an Irish community or anything in Australia?**

No, he didn't, no, he never bothered with it. He didn't, the only thing he did was go to church and of course do all the things with the farm, selling cattle and buying cattle and so on, but he never belonged to any Masons or this sort of thing.

18:00 He just didn't do it. Now whether he didn't do those things because he was sensible or not, I don't know, but he certainly didn't do it.

Do you remember any of the sort of Protestant-Catholic thing being, like, in Australia, like, semi-Irish?

No, not in Australia. From that point of view, Australia has, I think, probably that was the first thing that hit father and no doubt myself

18:30 in a slightly different way, that it was such a refreshing sort of country, that you didn't have people spitting in the street because you were a Catholic or a Protestant or a Presbyterian or something else. There was no 'anti' feeling that we discovered in Australia, and thank heavens it's still gone. I've never experienced it and certainly

19:00 I don't know of anything at all that or any religious fighting here or arguments.

And how old were you by this stage?

How old was I? It depends what time we're talking about. I suppose I was...

I guess in the first sort of year or so that you were here?

16 or 17.

And at this stage did you have any sort of thoughts or plans about what you might...?

19:30 No, not really. Mind you, most kids of that age even today are wondering what they'll do. No.

Was it likely that you'd work on the farm with your father?

Well, we all worked as kids to help Dad do this and that. We weren't paid, by the way. We were looked and fed etcetera and clothing bought for us and so on, but the first job I got in fact

20:00 was to be a truck driver down at Port Kembla at the steelworks. I've forgotten when I learnt to drive a vehicle, I can't remember, but there was, suddenly somebody offered me a job down there that was, I think it was five pounds a week, and I used to, I rode a bicycle from Campbelltown to Port Kembla and back every day, and I drove this truck

20:30 for eight hours a day, so all told I worked about 12 hours a day with the bicycle, peddling the bicycle up and down, but I was a very fit young man and that was it.

What was this kind of work like?

Very good. The people were good. I think it taught me a lot of things about men, particularly men.

What sort of things did it teach you?

How you treated other people. How you regarded...I remember

21:00 the boss that looked after me or ordered me around down there was an engineer who I met later on in the AIF, by the way, and he was a very, very nice young man and I think he was, as a youth, if you don't learn about other people, like older people and what they do and what they want, I think you're making great errors but, and I think you

21:30 take some ideas from them and you use some of them yourself as your own method of doing this and that.

Do you have any examples?

I'd have to think about that for a while. I couldn't tell you offhand, but I know you watched other people and what they do, and I suppose an example would be how to drive correctly and keep on the side of the road you're supposed to keep on and how to back a truck here and there and do it correctly.

22:00 But it didn't matter. I eventually stayed in a boarding house down there and living with people in a boarding house, including one American Negro who was working down there as a welder, and I'd never met an American Negro before, or any other Negro. He was a

22:30 very nice man, delightful character. I think this sort of thing taught me, anyway a lot of it, how to treat people.

How was this American guy treated?

Extremely well, absolutely extremely well. I've never heard anybody say a word against him. I can't even think of his name now, but it's a very long time ago. But he was treated very, very well at work and in the boarding house.

23:00 No, he was good.

So living in a boarding house with these other men, what sort of lessons of life would you learn in a way or hear stories from them or anything?

I can't really remember any of that, but in those days you mainly slept out on the veranda at night. You know, you had a place to put all your clothes and so on but you would, I don't remember, really remember, those days from that point of view.

23:30 **I guess did you sort of learn how to drink or anything like that?**

No, I didn't drink until after World war II at all, but I like to have a drink now. I'll give you one if you'd like it.

It's a little early in the morning for me. And so around this time,

24:00 **when did your interest in the military start to develop?**

My interest in what?

In the military? In the army?

I honestly can't tell you because I don't really know except I must have read it somewhere in the newspaper, the Sydney Morning Herald. I must have read something of a newly formed unit called the 30th Battalion, Black Watch Battalion.

24:30 No that's wrong, the 30th Battalion Scottish, the 30th Scottish Battalion affiliated with the Black Watch, and I must have read it in the Sydney Morning Herald because it'd just been formed, and at that time I was back in Campbelltown and working in Sydney and I just joined and that was it.

What were you working as in Sydney?

I was

25:00 doing a job with Hastings Deering as a trainee salesman, and I went back to them after the war too so.

What sort of, your father had served in World War I. Had he ever spoken about it?

No, he never spoke about it. I don't really know. I think it was a regiment called the Inniskillen Fusiliers, but I've got no proof of that

25:30 and I don't know why I think it was that, but he never spoke of it, never. Now he may have spoken to adult men but he never certainly spoke to his children about it, and I never heard him talk to Mother about it.

Why do you think that is?

Well, even today a lot of men don't talk about their war experience. They'll talk about men and good times and so on, but they won't talk about the fighting and so on. I don't know, but they won't talk about it.

26:00 **Had your father's involvement in World War I...what ways had it sort of influenced you to join the army?**

No, not really. No. I wasn't really aware that he'd been in the army, been in World War I in those days. It was a thing I learnt afterwards, something he said to me after the war, after World war II, made me know he'd been in the army, and I asked him questions but he wouldn't answer anything. He just didn't talk about it.

26:30 Now why I don't know, but there are Australian men who don't talk about it anyway.

And so what?

By the way, there are Australian women in the army or were in the army in those days, they don't talk about it. It's what a person thinks or decides.

What was the procedure that you went through

27:00 **to join up with the militia? Where did you go to sign up, were there medical checks or...?**

What, do you mean in the AIF?

No, no, in the militia when you joined the Scottish regiment?

I read something. It must be an advertisement or some such in the Sydney Morning Herald, and it told me to go to the drill hall at North Sydney, no, sorry, North Sydney at Miller's Point in Sydney, which I did, which is almost underneath the bridge and

27:30 I just joined and that was it. It was no trouble. There was no advertising; I remember, I think it was just a story about the formation of this unit.

And what did you do as part of this unit? How often did you train and...?

We went one night a week, it was a Wednesday night, to a drill hall at Rozelle. I was put in

28:00 a company called Don Company, and Don Company met at Rozelle and we went every Wednesday night. I was still living in Campbelltown, and every night I went from there and trained and came home, but while I was working in Sydney in the city I'd have to get into my uniform, which was a kilt and spats and sporran and tunic and so on, and take the rifle down with me and

28:30 take it to the drill hall and then take it home to Campbelltown and eventually get it back to work, but it was good fun. We all enjoyed it.

This might seem like a silly question, but from an Irish background, what were your thoughts on being part of a Scottish unit?

I don't think I thought of it from that point of view, but Fairbairn in fact is a Scottish name,

29:00 and a way back we came from Ayrshire in Scotland so we were part of that mob that came over to Northern Ireland many, many years ago in eight, 17th century or something, and I had no, it didn't trouble me at all and incidentally, away back in the 11th or 12th century, one of the local Scottish kings in

29:30 Ayrshire was being attacked by the local British king across the border and the Scottish king, and I don't know his name, I've forgotten it, was unhorsed and his offside was a man called Fairbairn, who bent down and picked him up by the scruff of the uniform and dumped him back on his horse and the king said, "Fairbairn, you have a strong arm." and that got rid of the name Fairbairn

30:00 in that section. That name became eventually Armstrong and the Fairbairns were overruled by the Armstrongs from then on. That's a historic fact.

Fascinating. And so what were the initial things that you learnt in the Scottish regiment?

Drill, mainly,

30:30 and of course how to treat other people and how to salute people, how to stand to attention to this one and that one.

What did you think about this sort of training?

I loved it, and in those days everybody liked it.

What did you love about it?

That's a good question. I've never had to answer that question before and I've never thought about it, but it was...

31:00 if you didn't like something or love something, you didn't do it, you'd get out, and now you mention it a few people did disappear very early on. We didn't think about it or worry about them. They were gone. I liked it and I stayed, and that old gentleman over there, he liked it and he stayed too.

Tell me about meeting him?

Well, I met him at the drill hall at Rozelle and we were in the same company in

31:30 30th Battalion, and we just got to know each other and then we ended up at war together in the same battalion and we're still friends.

What was it about him that you got along with?

Again, I don't know the answer to that one. We just did. How do you make a friendship? I don't know, it just happens and we became friends,

32:00 or liked each other or whatever, and we've just got on ever since. I don't know any particular reasons for becoming friends together but we did.

And so how did you move through the militia? Did you how were ranks established and...?

Well, I ended up in the Don Company of the 30th Battalion and have been promoted to the rank of corporal

32:30 and heavens above that was really something.

How did that happen was there a ceremony?

There was. Somebody had left, or gone out, I don't know what happened, but I was promoted in this thing.

How did they promote you? Was there a ceremony or...?

No, no. No, they just say, the company commander just says, "From now on, you're a corporal." and that's it. You put the two stripes on. He gives you the thing to put on, but I left the 30th because the Darwin Mobile Force

33:00 was formed. There was 250 men in the Darwin Mobile Force and I think it was 11 officers, all of whom were staff corps officers, and the major in charge called, a man called Bandy McDonald, he was the man in charge and this came out, it must have been the Herald because we didn't have a radio, or I didn't, so it must

33:30 have been in the newspapers, and we probably heard it too through the 30th, and I decided to join that and I was one of many hundreds of men who wanted to join it and didn't or couldn't or weren't selected. I was one of those selected and I was taken to, that was in late in October or early November '38, and we went to Darwin in the March of

34:00 '39 and there was 250 of us all told [altogether] and we lived in the old slaughter works up at Darwin. They were the barracks, the old slaughterhouse.

How had you managed to leave your work in Sydney?

Well, you just retired and that was it. Once you joined the regular army, you had to retire.

Right, so just explain, I guess, a bit more for me what the Darwin Mobile Force

34:30 **was. So it wasn't a part of the militia in the way that...?**

No, the Darwin Mobile Force was a newly formed regular army unit, absolutely newly formed, and it contained artillerymen, which I didn't become, it became, there were infantrymen, which I did stay as. You had motor transport men who drove trucks and you had signallers

35:00 who did all the signal work, but they came from all sorts of militia units and we just formed a new, a brand new Australian regular army unit.

So regular army as in AIF or...?

No, regular army as in the regular forces today. The AIF didn't exist in those days. The AIF

35:30 only existed in World War I at that time, then when the war broke out in October the 2nd AIF, the Australian Imperial Force, that's what AIF stands for, the 2nd Australian Imperial Force was formed in October '39 and I joined it from the Darwin, no I joined it, in the meantime I'd been promoted to the Australian Instructional Corps as a warrant officer and

36:00 I joined the AIF in the 2/1st Battalion as a private soldier on the 5th of January, 1940. Regular soldiers were not officially allowed to join the AIF.

Why is that?

They wanted you to stay and be a regular soldier and teach other people to be soldiers and go to war. They wanted you to stay all the time, and you had to be - cunning I think

36:30 is the best word - to get out of that into the AIF and I managed to do it. I won't tell you how but I did.

We might come back to that in a while, but just tell me a bit about the Darwin Mobile Force. What were the differences between your time in the militia and then your time in this force?

Well, in the Darwin Mobile Force, you were a soldier all the time, 24 hours a day, in uniform 24 hours a day.

Was this a shock?

- 37:00 Well no, not to people such as me in those days, because there were a few regular soldiers around. We already knew what a regular soldier was, perhaps you should say old-time soldier instead of regular, but regular just means old-time anyway. It didn't cause any troubles for anybody, I don't think. You just
- 37:30 joined and continued to learn how to be a soldier and how to treat other people.
- What was your father and your mother's reaction to you becoming a regular soldier?**
- I think it was a good one. Somewhere or other I've got a photograph of both of us together, the three of us together just before I left for Darwin. I never heard either of them complaining about it.
- 38:00 No, I don't know but I think they were quite happy about it, but I don't know.
- You said just before that you were learning more things about how to be a soldier. Can you take me through some of the things that you were learning at the Darwin Mobile Force?**
- Well, you had to learn how to dress correctly, how to march, how to salute, how to treat other people decently.
- How do you**
- 38:30 **treat other people decently?**
- I treat everybody decently unless they want to be rude, and if they want to be rude I just throw them away, or walk away, and don't really bother with them again.
- How did the army teach you these lessons of, I guess,**
- 39:00 **how to be...?**
- I think it's the same really as a young girl of 16 who leaves school and gets a job in an office and has to learn how to become a typist and how to deal with all the members of the staff and how to treat them. I think it's exactly the same as that. There's nothing special about it, it's just being ordinarily decent, preferably not being rude to somebody cause if you're rude,
- 39:30 a young person in an office, if they're rude to the boss they can get sacked easily. The same doesn't really happen in the army. You get punished in one way or another or you might get held up on a court charge and fined 10 dollars, or in those days 10 shillings. It depends on what you've done. No, the army isn't much different to civilian
- 40:00 life except that you're there all the time and in a particular form of dress which is your uniform.

Tape 3

- 00:36 **Do you remember the declaration of World war II, where you were and what you were doing?**
- Yes, I do. I was on parade in Darwin with the Darwin Mobile Force when Mr Menzies, the Prime Minister, made the declaration and it was a horrible thought really when it happened, and we were on parade and heard it there. Now whether the CO, McDonald
- 01:00 knew what was going to happen, I don't know, but he must have known otherwise we wouldn't have been on parade specially for that event.
- So what kind of thoughts were you having about this?**
- Well, I think most people like myself knew a fair amount about the Nazis in Germany and what they were doing and whom they were killing, and it didn't worry
- 01:30 us, didn't worry me anyway at all, excepting I knew at that time that I would have great difficulty joining the AIF when it was formed because as a regular soldier, one was not allowed officially to join the AIF and that did worry me cause I did, most young people wanted to join the army or the navy or the air force.
- So tell me how did you manage to**
- 02:00 **change from regular army to the AIF?**
- Well, I was sent down to Sydney. I was promoted to the Australian Instructional Corps as a warrant officer class two, and I was sent to Narellan, which is south of Sydney, training other people to be officers in the AIF and I made some inquiries about how one did things and I met a gentleman whom I knew in the 30th
- 02:30 Battalion and he asked me if I wanted to join and I said, "Yes I do, but I can't at the moment because of such orders." and he said, "Well, I'm looking for a certain type of men such as you, a position that you

might fill. I'll do all the work to get you out of that nonsense." And he did and all of a sudden I got information by a letter to report to

03:00 Victoria Barracks in Sydney and to report to a certain officer, which I did, and I found myself as a member of the AIF as a private soldier and I went down to Martin Place that afternoon and saw the battalion I then belonged to, march through Sydney for the first time. It was very interesting. I was standing on the steps of the GPO [General Post Office].

03:30 **What had he done for you to get it through?**

I must admit I don't know all of it, and I don't tell you in case those things were needed to be done in the future. No, that wouldn't be fair, even though he's no longer here, it wouldn't be fair to other forthcoming characters who want to be in the AIF.

Fair enough, and so tell me about those first few days of joining the AIF?

04:00 Well the first day was a Thursday and I didn't get into the camp until roughly half past five in the afternoon and I found where the battalion was and I reported there as a private soldier. I was told to go to a certain hut where I could find a bed for that night

04:30 and I walked in there and it was a hut for sergeants at that time. They were all sergeants in there and they even took me to dinner in their mess, the sergeants' mess, and the next day I was, Friday, no I'm sorry it wasn't the next day, it was two days later, Saturday, I was paraded

05:00 before the brigadier and walked out of his office as a lieutenant. Suddenly I was commissioned, don't know why, I don't know how and I'm not certain that he did the right thing.

Must be some kind of record?

It probably is, yes it probably is.

So tell me how you were feeling about being in the AIF and being a lieutenant?

05:30 Very happy in fact. Most young people in those days really wanted to be in the army or the air force or the navy. Anybody who really thought much about Australia, I think, wanted, felt that way and wanted to be in one or the other. The most important thing earlier on, of course, was training other men who had never been trained

06:00 and when we were ordered to board a ship on - I boarded a ship on Tuesday the 9th of January - on the 8th of January, which was Monday, 88 men came into the camp, I think it was 88 came into the camp as new soldiers completely untrained.

06:30 They were issued with uniform and shown how to put them on and wear them etcetera. The next morning about four o'clock in the morning, which was the Tuesday, they were handed over to me to march them down to the railway station at Ingleburn and taken down to the wharves by train and board the ship the Otranto so two days after being, three,

07:00 one, two, three, four, five days after being appointed as a lieutenant I found myself onboard a ship with 88 men and I didn't have any NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] or anybody to help me. I had two other officers attached to me but I was in command because the man in charge, Colonel Eather [later Major General K. W. Eather], he knew my background and even though we were not in the same ship as the rest of the battalion, he

07:30 obviously was testing me out to find out really what sort of a character I was and how good I was at training people, and he sent on the Wednesday morning, he sent a captain, I won't name him, he sent a captain on board to me with a letter addressed to me and he said, "This man officially is in charge

08:00 but I've told him that you are in charge and you will stay in charge all through the voyage." And that happened. He had an officer, he'd been an officer had been posted that he didn't want and was a nice man, but a useless man, and he then made me handle him on the way up, so I just went training. I didn't have any NCOs but I found two in the crowd. One was,

08:30 he'd been a British soldier in the Gordon Highlanders in World War I. His name was McIntosh, and the other feller was...name's gone, he'd been in the militia in Australia some years before and I made them both sergeants and they helped me a lot, they were good. McIntosh ended up as a brigade sergeant major towards the end of the war,

09:00 which was a big step forward and a very great job by the way. He did a wonderful job, really good.

He would have been quite old?

Yes, he was twice my age, been to World War I, he was at least twice my age. I've forgotten in fact what he was now, but he was a very delightful man and a very, very good soldier, but he didn't want to, he wasn't making any

09:30 effort to let me know or anyone else know that he'd been in World War I. He was just glad to be a soldier and continue working like that, but I found out about it and promoted him so.

How did you find your command, how was it for you? Was it easy, was it hard commanding these?

It was hard work on board with men that had never been trained. It was hard work

10:00 and I would have them on parade every morning onboard at six o'clock every morning for fitness training, then we'd off and have breakfast, then they'd be back on parade at eight o'clock in the morning to be broken up at roughly 12 for lunch, be back on parade from two o'clock till four o'clock and I was just training them (a) how to

10:30 behave, how to use a rifle or a machine gun or a Bren gun [Bren light machine gun]. It was something that just had to be done and McIntosh wasn't much good with the guns because he hadn't used them. He'd only used rifles before but despite that, he and can't think of the other one's name, he and the other character did a very good job for me and with me.

What kind of training did you do on board?

11:00 **what kind of training did you manage to do onboard?**

Basic, really basic training. First of all you had to make them very fit. Second, you had to make sure that they could handle their weapons all the time correctly. It was all to do that and when we landed in Palestine, we got off the ship in port on that, again the name's gone, the -

11:30 what was the name of the place in? I can't think. We went by train and landed in the camp at Julis. All the rest of the battalion were there, and I marched my men in because I'd been on a different train and I marched my men in to the delight of the CO to see such miserable-looking characters who had joined sort of four weeks earlier who'd never

12:00 done any work with, apart from McIntosh and his other friend, had simply never been trained and they were well trained and they did a very good march into the camp, and the old CO was very pleased about it, so he checked me out too. All the people in ahead of you, captains or company commanders and brigade majors and colonels

12:30 and so on, they always keep checking you to make sure you're doing the right thing and doing it well. He was quite happy with me.

How did you manage to achieve this with your men, how had you managed to achieve this result?

I suppose it was by just hard work. You know, eight o'clock in the morning till 12 and two o'clock on the afternoon till four, just hard work really, and then say, "Well, if I don't

13:00 improve, I'm going to do more of it." But anyway, the average soldier wanted to do things correctly. Very few wanted to do them incorrectly. They wouldn't have joined if they hadn't been like that. The average character just wants to be a well-trained soldier.

What did they think of you, do you think?

I was given, a couple of days after

13:30 we got to Palestine, I was given 18 Platoon in Don Company in the battalion, that was 30 men, and gradually they'd all drifted right through the battalion to 18 Platoon and they hadn't had an officer in that platoon and never did have an officer in that platoon until I came along, and they were all very tough characters, those 30 men, were very tough men, and they came from all over New South Wales.

14:00 I was handed them over at two o'clock one afternoon, and the first thing you do when you take over a group of men like that, in those days anyway, was to inspect all their equipment, make sure it was correctly treated and held and so on, and then you had them take their boots off so you could inspect their feet to make sure that they didn't have anything wrong with the feet such as tinea and so on,

14:30 and I did this and then I took them out to start training, with them doing rifle arms and so on, just ordinary things, and at four o'clock I had to tell them to do what we called 'pack drill'. Nobody had done pack drill in the battalion before and I asked,

15:00 I went up to the company commander and told him what I wanted. He didn't have anybody that knew how to do pack drill, so I had to do it myself. So I changed my uniform the same as theirs, borrowed a rifle from some character, and I did this for 45 minutes at the double, not just at normal pace, but at the double, and when it was all over the troops had done a hell of a good job

15:30 actually, but they hated me and so did all the rest of the platoons, and they called me, they called me then, or named me then, the 'Irish bastard' and that name stuck with me for quite a long time until one day, on a long training march in Palestine, I noticed very early in the morning that the troops were a bit offside. There was something wrong with them and I watched them carefully, and after

16:00 a few minutes in the next spell, we used to stop marching at 10 minutes to the hour, and the second time I noticed that none of them were smoking. I thought this is odd, nobody smoking. I didn't smoke. I

made a check quietly and nobody had any cigarettes, nobody had tobacco, nobody had cigarette papers and they weren't available in the canteen.

- 16:30 I found out, so the next day I got a motorbike from the transport section and I went all over Palestine, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and every British army unit I could find looking for cigarettes, tobacco, cigarette papers and matches, and I couldn't find any for sale in
- 17:00 Palestine. They simply had run out, and I got back about 10 o'clock that night and my batman was waiting for me. He's in that photograph over there, Lachlan, and very worried where I'd been and what I'd been doing, and I told him. He said, "You remember buying cigarettes on board the ship?" and I'd
- 17:30 had them in my big case and I'd forgotten all about the fact that I'd bought cigarettes and I said, "No." and he got them out and here I've got two packets of 500 cigarettes, 1000 cigarettes. They were Capstans, and that's the one with the sailor, and I said, "OK, go down and get the sergeant, bring him up here and don't say a word to him about what this is about." So he came back with Sergeant
- 18:00 Manton and I told him that I wanted to give, I've forgotten whether it was three cigarettes for two days or five cigarettes for three days, I can't remember, and I said, "Now, I don't want you to tell anybody where these cigarettes came from, anything about them, just hand them out." But of course, being an idiot, he told them. The next day there was, soldiers said to all the other soldiers,
- 18:30 "We can call him the Irish bastard but you can't." And the term of the Irish bastard became a favourite sort of thing, a pleasant sort of thing. Odd, soldiers are odd people.

How did you hear news, how did the word of your nickname the Irish bastard get back to you?

- 19:00 **How would you hear this?**

I'm not certain. My batman, I don't know how it happened. I can't remember, but I know it, or perhaps other officers told me what they were calling me. I honestly don't remember, but it did come back to me.

But what did you think of that?

Usual things that soldiers do. You accept it and you have to overcome it, of course, eventually.

I just wanted to ask you about the trip over on the trip. You mentioned a lot about the training

- 19:30 **but what was the trip like apart from training?**

Very good. It was first of all the Otranto was a passenger liner run by P&O and had not been altered for our trip. I was in a lovely cabin, a single bed cabin all by myself, a beautiful cabin. Probably the next time that ship sailed it might have four or five beds in there, so I had my cabin, my shower, my

- 20:00 everything on B Deck, up, almost up top. The soldiers were in normal passenger cabins all over the place. They had a very safe and very good trip and a very enjoyable trip in fact. None of them were way down in the hulls. It was very good, but all those ships eventually just became troop ships instead of passenger ships.

And what were your meals like and...?

Normal, just normal

- 20:30 meals. It was a, the first night I was on duty there, the first night I was on board that trip, Wednesday we left Sydney, we had a normal sort of dinner and after dinner somebody asked me if I'd have a liqueur, and I had never had a liqueur in my life, and I think the first liqueur was a port
- 21:00 and these two characters were 10 or 12 years older than I was and they'd had a lot of experience. I know one was in the advertising business and I've forgotten what the other fellow was in, and I told them this is the first time I'd ever had one of these things so they kept buying other ones for me. I ended up with 27 drinks
- 21:30 that night and I had to keep doing them because there were things you had to do otherwise people looked at you and said, you know, "You're a clot." or something. And I ended up with all these 27 of them and I was in parade the following morning to do my six o'clock fitness training and make sure that all the troops did them. These two characters, other two characters, didn't show up till 12 o'clock.
- 22:00 They thought they were clever. I was very lucky. For some reason the alcohol never worried me, never. I've never been drunk in my life, not that I'm a big drinker, but I've never, ever been drunk in my life, which is, perhaps I was wrong. I don't drink a great deal. That's the most I've ever had, all of the things that you have as a spirit.

So tell us about disembarking. You told us a little bit about it

- 22:30 **the march and stuff but tell us after that at Palestine, your first impressions of Palestine?**

Karachi was the place where we got on board. I was appointed by the OC [Officer Commanding] of the ship who was Colonel Wootton, who ended up as Major General [George] Wootton, and I was appointed

to make sure that every troop was off that ship that night and every bit of luggage belonging

23:00 to troops and the battalion was off, so I was the last man, in fact, to leave that ship that night and it was about, the troops got off about quarter past eight roughly, and it might have been about quarter past 12 when I got off and I hadn't had any dinner cause I'd been busy, so I was hungry and when I got off, I said, "Is there a meal anywhere?" They said, "Yes, it's in there"

23:30 but you have to be quick because we've got to board the train in half an hour's time." or three quarters of an hour's time. I went in to have this dinner, which was given to me. The British Army NAAFI [Navy Army Air Force Institute - the British canteen service] had provided the dinner and I took one mouthful of it and dashed out and was violently ill. It was camel, roast camel. Now they eat a lot of camel in the Middle East.

24:00 I never tackled it again. It just made me sick. And that was my arrival in Egypt, and eventually we got on the train and went through to Palestine, but I didn't eat anything that night.

What was the train journey like?

Good. It was a pretty rough old train but it was a good journey, all at night of course, a good journey.

24:30 **What were your impressions of Palestine when you arrived there?**

We were lucky, I suppose. The British Army had set up this camp at a place called Julis and the battalion looking after us, oddly enough, was the 1st Battalion of the Black Watch, no, 2nd Battalion of the Black Watch, and they just knew we were Australians coming in. They'd built all, put up all the tents and built all the trenches and so on.

25:00 They did a very good job and had all the kitchens prepared. It was very, very good but the first time we really had a chance to visit any place was a visit to Jerusalem, about a fortnight, three weeks later, and would you like a story of what happened before that?

Absolutely.

I was out on parade and training one

25:30 morning. It was a Tuesday and I got a message to report to Colonel Eather, our CO, so I reported to the colonel wondering what it was all about and I walked into his office, taken into his office and he said, "Fairbairn, go to your tent and get out of that garb you're wearing and get into your uniform and come back here." and I did this and came back and he said,

26:00 "We're going on leave on Thursday to Jerusalem." He said, "Oh, will you be going on leave?" I said, "Well if I'm not on duty, I'll be going, Sir, yes." "Right." he said, "the British Army were supposed to supply us with certain materials for all the soldiers and they've run out." And he put his hand in a gadget, produced a great wad of money

26:30 and said, "Take this money and go to Tel Aviv in my car out there with Dawson the driver and come back with 3,000 French letters." condoms probably to you, and I said, "Where do I get those?" He said, "I haven't got the faintest clue but go to Palestine and buy them." So we got in Palestine and I said - got into Tel Aviv and I said to Dawson, "Find the main shopping centre and

27:00 business centre and we'll drive around that a couple of times and I'll tell you when to stop." So I picked out the biggest chemist shop in the place and I told him to pull up. It was about one o'clock roughly, and I walked into this chemist shop and the lady behind the counter and I said, "Could I speak please to the male chemist?" "We don't have a male chemist, Sir." "Can I speak to a male employee, please?" "We don't have a male employee, Sir."

27:30 So I turned to go out and I thought, "This is silly. If I go out, I'll still be looking for somewhere." So I turned round again, and as I turned, she said, "What is it you want, Sir?" And I said, "3,000 French letters, please, Miss." and she looked up and answered, "Ooh, la, la, what a man." That story's never been printed anywhere, and she, of course, couldn't provide them and I

28:00 said, "Well, where?" She said, "You'd better to up to the British Military Police office, it's round the corner up so-and-so, and they might know." So I went up to that police and I found the British Army Lieutenant whose name I've forgotten, and he said, "Yes, of course. We go down to Jaffa, we visit all the brothels and we get them there from the brothels." And we did, and I got back to the camp that evening or that afternoon, handed this great box of things

28:30 to the old colonel and this great lump of cash, because I only paid tuppence for each of those damn things and each soldier was given three of them to take into Jerusalem. So there's a story you can't print.

What were the brothels like; what were your impressions of them?

I was only ever in one, which was in Alexandria,

29:00 and I was the orderly officer, not the orderly officer the, can't think of the name. I was on duty looking

after troops making sure they were behaving and you had to visit these places to make sure there was no trouble and the only time I'd ever been in one was in doing that visit and this was in Alexandria.

29:30 They were quite good places. One of our men, I won't mention his name, he's still alive, had one when we were in Egypt, he had one place in Alexandria, and he used to go there and have one of these girls sit on his knee until she was called away to do a job with some other character, and he just liked to talk to a woman who spoke English, and that's all he did.

30:00 As far as I know, they were basically fairly decent people, but I never touched one of them. I wasn't that way inclined in those days.

And so what impressions of Palestine did you have with the land or the people?

Now I'll be perfectly honest with you. In Julis, or beside Julis, we

30:30 had a lot of Arab Palestinians. There was one orange grove and one place with dates. I've forgotten what the date thing was called, and that was all that those Arabs did, oranges and dates, apart from roaming around on camels or donkeys. All the men

31:00 rode the camels or the donkeys and the women and the kids walked behind them carrying the tents. Not far away from us, just on the other side of the place, over the opposite side, was a Jewish settlement with...I don't know how many people there were, but there were literally hundreds of them. The kids went to school and when they came back they helped plough or plant things or

31:30 get things off the vines such as tomatoes. They were very clean people. They were very good people, very decent people. They worked very hard, men, women and kids although the children were educated. They worked and grew things, where the Arabs certainly didn't do any work except every 12 months,

32:00 pulled oranges off the tree and dates and so on and sell them. The average Australian soldier had very little time in my view for the Arab people, particularly Arab men. They did absolutely no work and up near Hebron, which is mentioned quite often today in the news, we were training

32:30 and the Arabs fired at us with rifles. We couldn't do anything about it. We just had to withdraw. It was an official deal, you couldn't reply. Now Jerusalem and Tel Aviv was full of Jews and Arabs. We never saw any, I never saw any fights in there at all between them but my own opinion is that

33:00 the Jewish people worked hard, and after all they hadn't had to work because they'd been thrown out of Europe or they'd fled from Europe, and the Arab people didn't work anywhere. If anyone did work, it was the women, and that was that.

What was your training like in Palestine?

Magnificent. Colonel Eather was a very tough man but a very,

33:30 very good colonel, a very good commander, a very decent man, but he was tough and he trained all the time, never stopped. He ended up as major general, the last one to be appointed. He was, and he died what, four or five years ago? No, that's wrong, it'd be 12 years and he really was a very good man.

34:00 And how prepared did you feel the men were for their first battle?

Very. When we went into action at Bardia, they were very well prepared. They were very well trained; they were very fit. Their equipment was first class. No, they were very, very good soldiers, and I doubt if anybody really could ever criticise an Australian soldier of that period, whether it was there or

34:30 up in New Guinea or anywhere else. I don't think you could really criticise them. There was the odd individual who did stupid things and the odd individual who fled from the enemy or, and even myself, but and deserted his troops, the odd officer who fled from his troops because of fear, but in general terms our Australian soldiers were great soldiers and still are.

35:00 So tell us about leaving Palestine for this first action?

Well, we left Palestine, I've forgotten the date it was, but it was some time in September. I think it was in 1941. We went to a place called Helwan just outside of Egypt out of Cairo and we did our final training there and then moved up to the desert and we attacked Bardia on the 3rd of

35:30 January, 1941 but we'd been all that time in the desert, training still, to ensure that we could defeat any enemy, which of course we did do, although they were Italians in those days. They weren't the best soldiers in the world, but we did defeat them easily.

What were the Italians like?

I couldn't tell you because I never had to speak to one of them,

36:00 but as soldiers they were, there was the odd one amongst them no doubt that was a good soldier, but as soldiers they were useless. They fired a couple of shots and then raised the white flag.

How did they compare to the Germans as fighters?

As fighters, the Germans were tremendous soldiers, but I just mentioned

- 36:30 the white flag on Crete. On several occasions the Germans would raise a white flag meaning they were surrendering. The first time this happened was on the third day of the battle and an officer Charlie Stanton saw this. He was the platoon commander immediately in front of them, up
- 37:00 went this white flag, so he got up and waved them to come in and then a sniper they had placed in a certain place shot and killed him, and the Germans did that several times before we realised what was happening. The Germans were very good fighters, but they were also dirty fighters. That was a very dirty thing to do, was completely, just,
- 37:30 the British Army wouldn't do it and we certainly wouldn't do it. The New Zealanders wouldn't do it. It was a dirty thing to do, but the Germans did it four or five times before we realised what was going on. I got wounded by exactly the same way a couple of days later, and this the reason I wasn't killed was, instead of being on my knees, I actually stood up and I got hit down here
- 38:00 instead of up here, and my platoon went down that valley and killed 17 Huns, the valley below Crete area, to clean it out and get rid of these idiots, but they did, they killed 17 of them. In war, there was no real forgiveness. You didn't
- 38:30 let a man live if he was going to kill you the next moment, you couldn't.
- How did that make, what did you think about this kind of tactic, like you mentioned it was dirty but...?**
- What, the Germans? Well, we never did it, none of our people ever did it. I doubt if any Australian soldier ever did it anywhere, but
- 39:00 it disobeyed every regulation, not only Australian regulations but even in the German regulations. They weren't supposed to act like that even though you were fighting, you were supposed to act decently. Crazy isn't it?

Tape 4

- 00:38 **This was your first experience of battle. What was that like?**
- Well, it was...we'd been very well trained for it and we expected what was going to happen to happen. What was it like? Exciting. I was in charge of
- 01:00 blowing up the wire at Bardia in fact. Officially there were a group of engineers and my mob, my platoon were to do it and the engineer officer was to be in charge, but we had done some training together and he was knocked out about 300 yards from the front line, from the fence we had to blow up, and I was then in command.
- 01:30 We had 14 Bangalore torpedoes [tubular explosive device], which is a thing like that except that it was an old galvanised iron pipe, three-inch pipe. They were 12 feet long, each of them. They were packed with explosives and of course detonators, and you shoved one right through the fence and leave it in half way and then put another beside it and it had to be lit, so
- 02:00 we had six lots of these in six different gaps to blow up that fence and I had to make sure that everybody put their thing in correctly and that they're all touching each other so they'd all go up together, and a whistle blown by me made the men light their fuse and then race back into the trench out of the way, and suddenly "bang." 40-
- 02:30 50-odd yards of galvanised iron, barbed-wire fence was destroyed and we just raced through it and got the Italians and just captured them. We didn't kill any Italians. There were a few killed, but they were retiring very quickly and that was it.
- How did they surrender?**
- They had plenty of white flags,
- 03:00 which they rose very quickly. The only lot that didn't surrender easily was the artillery mob. They were a long way away so they were firing still, but the moment that we got close to them, and it wasn't only just my battalion, but the moment the Australians got close to them up went the white flags. They didn't fight very hard. They came out fully dressed just obviously ready
- 03:30 to go into a prisoner of war camp.
- What was their attitude like? Were they amiable or...?**
- I never actually handled any of them personally. They didn't seem to worry much about it. A lot of them

of course came to Australia eventually as migrants, no, as labourers, were sent here, used as labourers,

04:00 and they wanted to stay here when the war was over. They wanted to stay here as migrants, but no, they had to go back to Italy and then come back as migrants. Hundreds of them came back here as migrants, but the Italian isn't really a soldier and he didn't fight very well at all.

You showed me that picture before with Trixie?

Yes, the dog.

What's the story behind that?

Well, it was just when the

04:30 battle was over this little dog was wandering around alone and lonely and so on, and we had never had a dog in the battalion. That's wrong, we did have one very early but we hadn't had a dog in the battalion for months and this one just latched itself on to me for some reason or other. Perhaps she wanted something to eat, I've forgotten, but she was a lovely little dog and we called her Trixie but then we had to let her go eventually because we were leaving for Tobruk,

05:00 so what happened to her I don't know. We couldn't keep her with us but she was a lovely little dog. She seemed to understand English, as well as she must have understood Italian.

What was Bardia like as a place? What was the physical environment like?

Lots and lots and lots of sand and a little harbour, which wasn't much good, a few buildings; a few houses.

05:30 I didn't see anything growing or been growing there. I didn't see anything at all been grown there, so it was just a seaport as far as I was concerned and a place for soldiers, but I didn't see any of that.

In that first battle in Bardia, did you lose anyone from your...?

Yes, we did. I think it was, well,

06:00 those Bangalore torpedoes as we advanced, one of the torpedoes, one of the Bangalores were hit with something or other and it exploded and it killed four of the soldiers, two of mine and two of the engineers. I sided in Johnny Fitzgerald, and he was on my left side, and I was very close to this thing that went off and

06:30 I was lifted up in the air face down and he was lifted up in the air face up and I don't know how high we went but he said, Fitzgerald said to me as I passed him, "Don't go too far, Sir, it's a long way to fall." But we got back down to earth with a bit of a bash. But we went on to the fight and it didn't worry us.

He literally said this to you?

Yes, he did say as I passed him,

07:00 going up quicker than he was going, he said that to me. He was a very funny man. J. J., John Joseph Fitzgerald. Now there's a very Irish name for you.

What was going through your head as you were?

I haven't got the faintest clue, I really don't. I've got no idea. You don't remember things like that really, but it didn't hurt anybody. It didn't hurt he or myself, but four men were killed, two of my men and two

07:30 were engineers.

How did you and the men sort of deal with these first losses?

We had expected it, naturally, so you didn't take any notice really. All you could do in fact was turn the rifle upside down and put the bayonet into the ground, leave the stock up there so that eventually somebody would pick up the body and have it dealt with properly. That's all you could do.

08:00 **Was there any particular...you said that you'd expected it...was there any way that you prepare for that sort of thing, or that you had prepared your men for these...?**

Never really talked about it, but I'll tell you about a man later on at Tobruk. D. L. J. Evans, who had become my batman.

08:30 He was a very kind; he was a lovely man. He was about 42. How he got into the army, I've got no idea, and before we started the day, before we went into Tobruk or we advanced on Tobruk, I'd said to all my men, "If you want to write a letter home, you can do so now on this special letter that won't be...

09:00 just go through without being looked at." and Evans came to me with a letter like this addressed to his parents, who oddly enough were in Melbourne, and I said to him, he was called 'D.L.J.' by the way, and I said, "D.L.J., you don't want a letter like this, you know, just put it in your pocket." "No." he said. "I want you to keep it." So I said,

09:30 "No, put it in your pocket, old boy, you'll be right." He said, "Please Sir, take it, because I'm not going to be here." And he wasn't. He knew he was going to be killed. D.L.J. Evans, and he was my batman. Very funny man, but he knew.

And what happened to him?

He was killed; he was shot.

How did he know?

I saw him.

But how did he know?

That's another kettle of fish. He probably would have told me that God

10:00 told him, I don't know, but he knew. He did know, most odd.

Did you ever come across any, I guess...?

No, that's the only one that I know that did that sort of thing.

Was there much before battle or during battle, sort of, superstition amongst men, lucky charms and, you know, rituals that you'd go through or...?

No, you had a church parade of course whenever possible,

10:30 but no, you never dealt with this sort of thing and you never, very seldom heard about it. I'd never heard of anything like that before or afterwards, although I could tell you later on about a prisoner of war man who committed suicide quite deliberately, but I'll tell you about that afterwards.

Just out of interest, these letters, can you just explain to me. I thought all the letters were read and...?

Well, franked is what

11:00 had to be, franked like all the letters that my men wrote had to be, it's called 'franked' by me, and you had to sign them having written them or having read them and if there was anything in them that could be of interest to the enemy, if the enemy got the letter, then you had to cut that out and franking it was called, but there was the other letters in a different envelope that went straight through knowing that there'd be nothing there that was

11:30 wrong and that the enemy could deal with, so poor Evans's letter just went and that was it.

And did his parents get the letter, did you ever?

I suppose so. I never heard from, it's very difficult at times to decide whether to go and visit somebody, and after all it was five years really after he was killed that I got back to Australia, certainly four and a half years, and the parents might not want to see you

12:00 at that time, after all that time, and it's a decision you have to make for yourself whether you go, and I decided no. First of all, I had to find out where they lived and if they were still alive and then go there, but apart from that, you had to think they've probably got over their sorrow to some extent. Why bring it back? Why enlarge it? And for a couple of the men in Sydney,

12:30 sure, I went and visited their widows and so on, but you had to be very careful about it.

Was there some responsibility you felt towards the men in a way? Was this a carry on of the responsibility that you had?

Yes, yes it is. After all, you're leading the men and they were killed. Of course it was your responsibility to a great extent. You had to do whatever you could do. I did in Sydney with several families

13:00 after I came back, but they had been prisoners and some of them were killed as prisoners and you made your own mind up whether you should see them or not see them. If you found somebody had remarried then you didn't bother, or you wouldn't go to the parents because the parents would be upset, but if it was nobody had remarried or the parents, he hadn't been married and the parents didn't know anything,

13:30 they'd be happy to talk to you, but some of them wouldn't be happy or weren't happy in fact to talk to you. It was a judgement you just had to make yourself, and, right or wrong, do it.

How did you deal with during the war, this responsibility that you felt towards the men pressure wise?

Say that again, please?

14:00 **It just seems that having a great sense of responsibility towards the men. Does it, I guess, put extra pressure on you or how did you deal with?**

Well, actually, you never thought of it until it was time to write a letter or go and visit somebody. During action, you never actually thought about it at all. It never entered your head. You were too busy doing other things, things

- 14:30 in fact were much more important at that particular time, but when that particular battle was over you'd make notes in your notebook and so on and then do it whenever you could. Writing letters to parents was a very simple thing to do even, though it was a hard thing to do to write the right letter.

What sort of things would you say in those letters?

Well, you'd never criticise a soldier by way of a start, and perhaps you'd say a few things that weren't correct

- 15:00 in praising him so the parents wouldn't be upset, but it was very few people that you had to be careful with in my view and my knowledge. You just wrote a sympathetic type of letter telling them how it happened so they'd know how and where it happened and why. You know how was he shot? Was he killed by
- 15:30 a mortar bomb or artillery shell or a bullet? Parents would want to know that, at least, I always thought that, anyway.

Was there any, I don't quite know how to...being responsible for the men would they also, I guess, come to you for advice about things in life or was there any sort of paternal or

- 16:00 **avuncular sort of relationship that developed?**

When men, the only ones it really happened with was when men got a letter from home saying the wife was playing up. The first thing they'd do was get drunk, if they could without...they couldn't get drunk when they're anywhere near the battlefield because there wasn't any grog there, but if you were in a camp that would happen, and

- 16:30 apart from that they would come to you and tell you. They wouldn't tell their other friends who were just ordinary private soldiers. They wouldn't tell them, but they'd come and tell the officer concerned, knowing that he wouldn't say anything to the men anyway.

What would you say to them if they told you that?

That'd be an individual matter. What sort of a character he was, and how, what sort of things you knew he would take and wouldn't take or couldn't take, and

- 17:00 you had to make that decision about the man concerned. There was nothing that would suit him. They're different people even though they're strong soldiers or young soldiers, they were different.

Did this happen a lot to guys they'd get letters about...?

No,

- 17:30 not really; well, not to my knowledge.

Who would send these letters if the wife had been playing up?

I honestly never asked them that, but it'd be a family member. We had an officer who was a prisoner of war. He was told that his wife was playing up and that of course was heartbreaking for him, but he said to himself, "Well,

- 18:00 I've got to accept it." And the moment he got back to Australia, he divorced her and that was that. He made an inquiry, of course, and that was that, but whatever love he'd had had gone. Whatever he'd thought of her was gone anyway, and it's an individual matter of how people think. And I don't think that men think much different to women anyway and vice versa, but they do get over it eventually.

- 18:30 **I guess just a little bit more about that relationship with the men. Were there ever any occasions that, where your people would be frightened and you'd sort of help? Before going into battle or something, for example, and any advice you'd give them?**

No, it never got, that sort of thing never happened to me, but I know of a man from the battalion who was sent back to

- 19:00 Sydney in June of 1940; he left Palestine as an unwanted soldier. I can't think of the correct name, people that just shouldn't be soldiers, and he arrived back in due course, went to his home in Sydney, discovered his wife and mother-in-law were running a brothel and

- 19:30 that she was one of the women, and he went back to Ingleburn camp and got his 303 rifle and he came back into Sydney and he shot the wife and he shot her mother and he ended up in jail for life. I'll not mention his name either. He did have a good Irish name by the way.

Gosh.

- 20:00 But that was his reaction. Nut he wasn't, he certainly was not a good man, and probably he should have

been in jail instead of being in the war in the first place. He was a very unpleasant man, very nasty character, and I knew him quite well because he was one of my originals in Palestine. I knew him very well.

Did you have to have anything to do with or have to have anything to do with him being

20:30 **sent back to Australia as an...?**

Well, you always had to make reports about all your soldiers, so yes. The answer would be yes, I had to, but I didn't make any recommendation that he be sent home.

Just a question about I guess any of the times in North Africa, did you ever hear Lord Haw Haw [William Joyce - radio propagandist for Germany in World War II] at all on the...?

Yes, on the radio, yes, we did. Yes, yes.

What did you hear?

21:00 I couldn't tell you, but it was all pro-German and anti-British, of course. The words I wouldn't even remember, but was he killed by the way, or was he...he was hanged, was he? Well, he should have been hanged many years earlier. He was Irish, by the way, he was Irish. I've forgotten his real name, and he was later just Lord Haw Haw.

William Joyce?

21:30 William Joyce, yes, William Joyce he was, but he was obviously a nasty character.

What was the effect of hearing this broadcast?

None. People laughed. And people said, "The horrible so-and-so." Called him all sorts of filthy language.

And so...

Or do you want the story about the man who

22:00 committed suicide in Germany?

Yes, but maybe when we get to Germany. We'll finish up with the time in North Africa and then get to Greece and sort of make our way along. After Bardia?

Tobruk. We went to Tobruk.

What was Tobruk like at the time?

22:30 It was a very large town full of Italians, had a very good harbour. There were a few ships shelled and sticking out from, nose or tail still sticking out of the water that had been bombed by the air force, but it was the same sort of fight as we had in Bardia with the Italians. It didn't

23:00 take very long and when it was over the 60 Brigade was put into, taken out of action, and my battalion was placed in command of Tobruk for about 10 days.

What did this involve?

Well, you had to make sure all the prisoners were out and correctly treated in there. You had to make sure that all the ammunition was discovered and done away with,

23:30 one way or another. I was put in charge of the wharf, the main wharf at Tobruk, and that meant that naval, all sorts of ships came in and unloaded stuff and took troops away, and it was a huge shed down there and one day my Sergeant said to me, "You know what's in that shed there?" and I said, "Yes, there's meat in there." He said, "How do you know?" I said, "Because there's an open door down there. It's not locked.

24:00 It's kept closed, but it's not locked, and I went in to help find out what was in there." He said, "Supposing we can get it." he had a look and he said, "can we get a side of beef for the platoon?" I said, "Well, how are we going to do that?" And he told me that he'd think about it, so he came back some time later and said, "Well, look. We can get in there, Sir, but why don't we do this and that?"

What was this and that?

No, never mind about that. I said,

24:30 "OK you can do it, but I know nothing about it." So the next day, there were two lanes that led down to this wharf, and the next day they arranged for somebody to start a fight up in this particular lane and that attracted the British Military Police and the Australian Military Police that were with us there. In the meantime, down came a truck with about four men on it,

25:00 this way straight behind the shed, into the thing and out the other lane with a side of beef. That evening, no it wasn't evening, the next morning my colonel, Colonel Eather, said to me, "I went for a walk yesterday evening where those men of yours are staying, Fairbairn." he said, "and I

- 25:30 could smell freshly roasting beef of some sort, do you know anything about it?" I said, "Roasting beef? I'd love that." You know, you had to put it on. He said, "Now, I know about it, Fairbairn." and he said, "but I think I know how it was done. Just arrange a few fellers to do it and get a couple into the officers' mess." So I had to do that the next day for the officers' mess, but we knew nothing about that,
- 26:00 completely unofficial. That meat, by the way, was from Brazil, all Italian meat imported from Brazil.
- Were there any other sort of...?**
- We had never had meat, we hadn't had fried meat probably for six months, anything fresh we just didn't have it.
- What did you have?**
- Tinned stuff, bully beef, herrings, soup.
- 26:30 **How was the bully beef?**
- Dreadful, well at least it was tasteful and in those days you had to put holes in the tin to let all the grease get out of it first, the oil, and the worst was the herring, herrings in tomato sauce. I won't even eat them now, and no, it was rather odd in a way.
- Were there any other sort of interesting**
- 27:00 **or quirky things that the Italians had in Tobruk?**
- Yes, and Bardia. Stacks and stacks of wine. Huge, huge casks of wine, and in fact, at Tobruk, we had to break down the barrels. The troops were drinking the stuff. They'd been without a drink for an awful long time and that's
- 27:30 wrong, they had a drink on Christmas Eve, but having a drink nearly every day was something dreadful and they just got onto the wine and the wine casks had to be destroyed and let the wine actually flow away and down on the wadis [dry watercourse/ravine in the desert] where this happened, a huge army truck got bogged on it. There was thousands of
- 28:00 tubs of wine in there.
- Why was it destroyed?**
- Well, there was nothing you could do about it. Wasn't anything to do with it except for troops getting drunk when they weren't supposed to be drunk, so it had to be destroyed, and a truck did in fact get bogged in one of those places where it was destroyed.
- Did the troops get cranky about it?**
- No, they knew what was happening, and on Christmas Day
- 28:30 outside of Bardia, the Comforts Fund made sure that every soldier there got a bottle of beer. It wasn't cold, of course, but it was a big glass bottle of beer and my sergeant and I, Percy Gosper and I, were sitting going to have lunch and we opened one bottle and put the other one away
- 29:00 and we were in a hole that was made by an enemy shell earlier. We were just there resting and he had to go and get something, forgotten what it was, and I was left holding this bottle of beer and Percy came back eventually with whatever he'd gone looking for and just as he did an aircraft flew over and dived down and fired at us and it blew the top of this beer bottle in my hand. Never hurt anybody,
- 29:30 but this shell just blew the top off and that was it, odd. We both could have been killed, that damn shell, but it hit the bottle and just skidded off.
- Did you get to drink the beer in the end?**
- We drank what was left of it, yes. Made sure there was no bits of glass in there but we did drink it. I would say we hadn't had a beer for about probably three months, certainly two months.
- 30:00 It was a long time. No, you didn't get beer with the Australian troops, except before you went into action we were given a shot of rum, Jamaican rum from the British Army. That was very good.
- Actually while you mention the British Army and you mentioned the British Military Police, what was it like working for the British?**
- Good. They're very tough troops, the British. They're very good, very tough.
- 30:30 Nobody liked the Military Police, Australian or English or whatever. Nobody like those much, but they were just very unlike our police here, for instance. No doubt they did many good things, but sometimes they did stupid things. I mentioned Charlie Stanton being killed. I took Charlie into Jerusalem the day after
- 31:00 he was commissioned, took him in so he could get some officer equipment, and when we got there, there was the King David Hotel which was for officers only, and the bus that we were on pulled up

outside that and we got out and I said to Charlie, "What would you like to do?" He said, "I'd love to go into that hotel at 10 o'clock in the morning and have a cup of tea." See, he was an officer; in we went. Couldn't go in before, but he could go in today. We hadn't been there more than 10 minutes

31:30 when an Australian military [police] captain walked in, took one look at poor Stanton - he had no pips on his shoulder because we didn't have any spare ones to give him; he was in to get pips and other stuff - oh and boy did this policeman hit the roof and he ordered us out and so on and I told him what we were doing and why we were there and Stanton in fact was an officer without equipment at the time; we were in to buy it. He wouldn't believe that at all, he ordered us out of the hotel,

32:00 so I went to the telephone and called Colonel Eather and he eventually said, "Where is he?" and I said, "Not far away, I'll get him." Well, did Eather set him off, and he walked out and left us alone but that was how some of the policemen did their job. Now that character ended up behind the counter in the RSL [Returned & Services League] Club in Canberra and that's all he ever did. He was an RSL Club man,

32:30 a staff club man making you sign the papers as you went into that club. He should never have been an officer in the first place, let alone been a policeman, and there's odd police characters even today like that in the police force, but there's stacks of them walking up and down the street that aren't policemen. People act like that.

How would you describe the interaction between

33:00 **the Australian and British troops?**

We had a great time with the Black Watch. We went into Jerusalem, they were wonderful, no, there was no brawls that I know of between the British troops and us, none. There may have been elsewhere but I don't know of them.

What was I guess was there still a sense of fighting for the Empire being part of...?

Well, we never talked about it.

33:30 You may hear the odd thing on the radio now and then but we didn't have many radios. I don't think that was ever mentioned. No, I don't think it was.

Were there any like you know, not relationship differences or anything, but any differences between the way I guess the way Australian troops were or the way British troops were and...?

Well, yes. The British...the Australian troop soldier,

34:00 and I would say airman and sailor, relaxed much more easily much more quickly than did a British army man. He'd talk much more freely to anybody. He'd make friends much more easily than an Englishman or a Scotsman. I think the Australian abroad as a soldier

34:30 was very much as he is out somewhere in the country in the bush where, if he walked into a shop or a motel or a hotel, they'd talk to you immediately and expect to be talked to, wouldn't have to be introduced. I think that was the basic thing of the Australian soldier and the Australian today is pretty much the same. I go for a walk every day as a rule and meet people I've never seen before in my life,

35:00 but they all say, "G'day." That might be just because I'm old, I don't know, but they do say, "G'day." There's an outgoing friendship. The only thing I object to is when they call you 'mate'. They've never seen you before in your life but they go, "G'day, mate." I don't like that, but that happens.

35:30 **And so the British weren't quite as...?**

I don't think they were as free to speak as we are, or we were. I certainly became very free to speak here in Australia as an Australian. I think the Australian soldier just feels that he's another human being who can talk to anybody at any time, but the

36:00 Brits [British] are not trained that way, or don't grow up that way as we do. Now our soldiers weren't trained to do that, but they did it. It's an easygoing matter I suppose, really, where they, the British, aren't easy going. They're tough at times. You can meet an Englishman or a woman and go for years before they'll say they're friends,

36:30 and that doesn't happen here in Australia. We say we're friends within two days.

Were there any other troops in Tobruk at the time, or was it only Australian and British?

No, no, no. No, the New Zealanders were in Egypt but they didn't come up to that battle at that time.

Did you have anything to do with the New Zealanders?

No, no. We did have in Greece but not then.

37:00 **Now that you mention Greece, we probably should head there at some stage. When did you get the word that you were going to be going there?**

Again, we boarded a ship to go there. We weren't told.

What did you know about the situation there?

We didn't know anything about it. We'd been up in the desert, as I said, for at least four months without even a radio except a local radio to get all the

37:30 divisional news and the orders and so on. Like there wasn't any radio to give you the news of what was happening elsewhere. None of us had a radio. There was no pocket radios in those days.

How did you think that the war was going?

Well, you might read about it if you ever got a newspaper. You'd read about it here and there, or somebody would say, "I had a letter from so-and-so that things are going bad in France." which they were of course, but that's how it was done.

38:00 We had no radio information. It did exist in Cairo and Alex [Alexandria]. Some soldiers down there could get it eventually and it would leak out to the desert, but it took a long time. You might hear news that was three weeks old.

And so heading to Greece you

38:30 **got on a ship and what happened after that? I mean, when did they brief you about where you were going or what you were doing?**

On board the ship. I've forgotten the name of the little ship. It was a tiny little ship and that's all we knew, and we were right at Alexandria harbour at the time when we were told we were going to Greece and we didn't know anything about it

39:00 prior to that.

What did you think about going to Greece?

It was just another visit. After all, it's a lovely country. We knew it was a nice country and the people were nice, but we discovered you couldn't save the damn thing because we didn't have enough troops. The Germans attacked Greece with 15 divisions and we had one, the New Zealanders had one, the British had half a division and the Greek army

39:30 was all tied up in north-western Greece against the Italians. We had no hope, none at all.

So where did you first land in?

In Athens, Larisa, which is like the harbour in Sydney. You know, Botany Bay, a place called, not Larisa, gone but it's right next to,

40:00 it's a couple of miles from the city of Athens. Can't think...

What was the weather like?

Beautiful, except when we got up onto the mountains it snowed, and it snowed and it snowed and it snowed, and we were not dressed for snow country. No soldier had long underpants on, for instance, or to put on.

Were you still wearing your desert...?

Yeah, oh yeah. Still wearing

40:30 the old desert khaki uniform, yep. And later on we all got some new uniforms, but it was when first we went we were completely in the snow. We did alright; we were OK. We were very fit.

And cold?

It was cold but we were very fit, and night was the worst time. Or if you wanted any sleep, then you really felt

41:00 the cold, but in daytime walking around or doing the job you had to do, it didn't matter much.

Tape 5

00:36 **Can you tell me where you were first set up in Greece? Where you arrived to fight in Greece?**

In the first place we went to was a camp at Daphne just outside of Athens, and then we moved up to a place beside the, what's that river I mentioned earlier...names

01:00 disappear. It was only a camp for three days and then we moved up to an area overlooking the Veria Pass looking straight down to Yugoslavia, which was about two miles away waiting for the Huns to

come.

What were you expecting at this stage?

Well, we hadn't, as soldiers, hadn't really been told,

01:30 excepting people said the Germans will probably attack Greece but that's all we knew, so we didn't know whether we were going to be bombed or attacked by ordinary soldiers. Tanks wouldn't be much good because there was eight or nine feet of snow all over the place and we're up in mountains anyway and the little road or lane really was covered in six or eight feet of

02:00 snow, so the tanks weren't much good.

How were you set up defensively?

I think the area my battalion covered was four miles in width. That's 800-odd men defending an area four miles wide. I could check it in that book there to make sure that's the right figure. So it wasn't really a defence.

02:30 You're too few people, too few guns and far too widely spread out. It was all based on hitting anyone on the road but it wasn't very good and it wouldn't have been successful.

So what happened here?

The attack came in another area to our left, which was in

03:00 central of the mountains, and we were ordered to retire and we just kept on retiring and retiring and we hit that river thing.

How do you move, how do you retire? Take us through...

Well, if you're on roads of course and trucks you can retire on trucks, but we retired on our feet. Retiring means going backwards sort of thing, but we marched all the way back to the Aliakmon river which we

03:30 crossed. I told you about the Aliakmon elsewhere, didn't I? And the whiskey, did I tell you about the whiskey?

No.

I thought I did.

You did a bit, yeah.

Yeah and we crossed the Aliakmon River on a small bridge and built by the engineers, Australian engineers. It was only that wide, a little footbridge on two great

04:00 steel ropes and we were met by Padre Paddy Yuill and Salvation Army man Harold Hosier with tea and coffee and biscuits and so on and plus a mug of Johnnie Walker Black Label Whiskey for every soldier, which they had carried up the mountains from a NAAFI, which had been left by the British, and they'd carried it up on donkeys which they'd got.

About how far

04:30 **had you travelled?**

I'm not certain. I think it was 38 miles and over long mountain areas, so when you judge an area it goes up and down it's very hard really to get a correct distance, so that 38 miles that I've read may be a straight line from there to there when, instead of going up and down the hills and they were huge hills, but I understand

05:00 it was roughly 38 miles at night basically in the snow and the rain.

How long did this take you?

I've forgotten when we retired. It certainly took about 20 hours all told. It was very tough. We were carrying all our equipment and we

05:30 were walking in the dark without lights, just using compasses. It was somewhat difficult but I think it was about that number of miles.

I was just thinking that's really quick. And so how many of you were travelling? Was it 400?

Roughly 800. A full battalion.

And what was your role in

06:00 **this withdrawal?**

I was just a platoon commander in command of a platoon of troops, making sure that they were OK and that they were marching OK and carrying stuff OK, which was at times some of them had to get some help because the soldier does break down every now and then or at least some soldiers did break down every now and then, and they have to be assisted by other people

06:30 and somebody has to carry his rifle for a start and the anti-tank rifle, which is called a Boyes anti-tank rifle, which was useless by the way, but it was as long as from here to the door. It must have been seven feet long and boy was it heavy, and it took a lot of, it took two men to carry really, but we had a man who turned out to be a world-class wrestler. Heaven's above,

07:00 his photograph's in that book there. Huxley. He was a wrestler, and he carried this rifle just over the back of his shoulders. He was very strong, he was a very good bloke, a very strong man.

How were you encouraging your men during this time?

It's difficult to say how an officer

07:30 encourages his men, but I think the main thing is you move up and down slowly, talking to them to each of them. You make, if somebody's not well, you carry his rifle or whatever, but basically the men were pretty fit anyway and they knew that they didn't dare stay there. They had to come with us so they were doing their best but nobody fell out. They were all pretty fit.

Did you encounter any

08:00 **Germans during this withdrawal?**

No, no none at all.

You mentioned padre, was there any other padres helping you?

Padre Yuill and Salvation Army man Harold Hosier, but they were down at the other end of the, the other side of the river when we got across the river. Do you want that, do you?

Talk about them, yeah?

Well, these two men were actually very good

08:30 friends and most of the battalion, which were a mixture of Protestants and Catholics and so on, thought both of those men were tremendous characters. At no time did they preach to us, those two, but they were always there to help or write a letter for somebody who couldn't write and give some advice about home matters, but they were never

09:00 banging your head to get down and kneel on your knees. They weren't doing that, and I think everybody thought they were two great men and when we crossed the river, the name of the river's gone, isn't that stupid? When we crossed the river, they were there and we were very, very tired, but they were there with

09:30 stuff they'd brought up from a British NAAFI, which is a canteen, and it had been deserted, and they brought this stuff up and they had cups of tea and coffee for us. They'd carried all this up, by the way, on donkeys, but the first thing they offered to us was a, they said, "Get out your big mugs." which was about this high, enamel mug, and they filled each of them full with Johnnie Walker Black Label whiskey for every soldier. We all had a shot.

10:00 **Were they the same denomination or...?**

Well one was Salvation Army, one was a Roman Catholic, so they weren't really the same but in fact officially they weren't the same, but in fact they were two great Godly men, which was important, and the troops thought they were great and they had done ever since the time we went to Palestine. They were just very decent good men. A lot of

10:30 padres can't be called that in my view.

And how did they get along themselves?

They were great friends. They were very great friends, yep.

No issues of different...?

No, no.

What did each man carry with them in the withdrawal?

Ninety pounds of equipment, clothing, guns,

11:00 bullets, etcetera. Ninety pounds in weight was the total weight. What's that in kilos these days, 90 pounds? Roughly 75.

40, 42 kilos?

Forty-three kilos. I think the present soldier carries 45 kilos, it wasn't far much different, but 90 pounds is a big weight and an officer has to, with a bit of luck, an officer has his batman

11:30 carrying, or it's on a truck, but on a march like that you have to carry it yourself plus all your maps and so on that's necessary. You can't leave them behind anyway, so you've got to take them with you so we were all very, very fit and we proved that on that march.

And where did you get to at the end of the march?

Across that river I mentioned.

Yeah, I mean for the withdrawal, describe where you had to go to get

12:00 **away?**

Say that again, sorry?

Describe where you had to go to, to get away from the Germans?

There was a road or a lane. You couldn't call it a road. It was uncovered and just a lane used in donkeys carts used by the Greeks and we had to basically follow that road right down to the bottom of the mountains, and if there were Germans on that road anywhere, we'd have ducked aside if we

12:30 could but we didn't have to.

And tell us about the withdrawal from the Greek mainland?

Well, before that, of course, we had a battle at, gee, names have disappeared from my brain, overlooking Larisa, isn't that stupid? Can you hang on a minute please and I'll have a quick look at that book, it'll give me

13:00 the name.

So where did you encounter that first battle?

At Brallos Pass down towards Athens in the Thermopylae area where Alexander fought the Greeks, what 4,000 years ago or something? In that area.

Describe that battle for us?

13:30 We were attacked coming to Brallos Pass through the little town of Larisa; we were attacked all the time by German tanks from the rear and German aircraft. The famous German Stuka aircraft, Stuka [Junkers Stuka Ju-87 dive-bomber], you've probably heard of that, and they made an awful noise and dropped a lot of bombs and machine guns and so on, but once that stopped we were able to get up into

14:00 Brallos Pass and to position ourselves in the cliffs of the mountains or lower part of the mountains and dig trenches and so on, or it was only a little weapon post. There wasn't a trench or thing that two or three men could get into and we fought the battle there, but again we had to withdraw by orders because the Germans had got around us on the western front and were cutting us off

14:30 and then we were ordered to leave there. We climbed half way up the mountain on the road, there was transport waiting for us and we drove straight down to one of the beaches to get off Greece altogether, a place called, gee, all those Greek names have left me, isn't that odd?

15:00 Where did we go? Megara, M E G A R A and we got on a boat there, which was a little destroyer, the [HMS] Wryneck and we were taken to Crete. They went back to Greece to get another mob and was sunk by bombs.

15:30 That ship was sunk by bombs, so we were lucky.

Describe that battle for us from your point of view. What were you seeing?

Which battle is that?

The battle at the Brallos Pass.

Well, we were seeing a great team of enemy in all sorts of wagons and motorbikes with sidecars

16:00 attacking us and of course with aircraft shooting at us. We could see them because we were looking down at them and eventually when they got onto the big road, and there was a big road there, we had no option but to get away and get the hell out of the place. We were ordered to withdraw actually, but we had no option but to do that.

What kind of force did they look like?

Well, it was a complete division, the Germans; it was at least one

16:30 complete division. In other words, they probably had 12 battalions and a couple of, perhaps three artillery units, and that's a very big army against two battalions. That's all we had, the 2/11th and the

2/1st battalions.

What were you thinking, seeing this sight?

I don't think any of us were thinking about getting out of the place. You'd have to be a nut to be doing that. I think most of us were thinking, "How can we stop these

- 17:00 fellers?" because we didn't have much respect for the Germans, because all the things we knew they'd done in Germany. In fact, we had little respect for them. I don't think any of us were thinking about what would happen to us, apart from being wounded or killed.

Was there any fear of this awesome kind of...?

No, no not really, no. The odd man might

- 17:30 have had that fear, but if he did, we didn't know about it and he certainly didn't show it. If a man did show fear before an enemy attacked, the doctors would usually try and get them out of the place because that fear could pass on to others. They'd talk too much and occasionally that could happen, and in fact on one occasion it did happen up at, on the far

- 18:00 end at the first place we were in, but apart from that it didn't worry us about what the troops were thinking about the Germans or anyone else, which was you don't think about the enemy really except to kill him or wound him, get rid of him one way or another.

And what was it like facing German (UNCLEAR) and tanks?

What was it like...?

Facing the German tanks and...?

Well, we knew we couldn't win,

- 18:30 and once we'd been told we had to withdraw, we knew we were going to have to withdraw. We didn't know we'd ever get off Greece, of course, and we thought people thought we might all become prisoners, but you don't think much about that anyway. You don't want to think about it.

What did you think of the Greek campaign as a whole?

It shouldn't have happened in the first place. It was a political campaign, arranged I think

- 19:00 probably by Mr Churchill because he had a lot of thought for the Greeks in one way or another. He didn't have much thought for Australian soldiers, by the way. I've read six of his volumes, stories, I've got the sixth one in there now and only once does he mention the Australian soldier, so he didn't think much of us.

How do you feel about it being a kind of political decision and a small force against such an awesome

- 19:30 **force?**

Well, at that time we didn't know that, of course. It's only afterwards you realise what in fact caused this to happen. When you read a book or you read one of the books written by Churchill himself, or you read a war historian, he'll have it in there somewhere, so it didn't ever worry us really during the war itself, but afterwards you think, "Well,

- 20:00 this shouldn't have happened in the first place. We shouldn't have been there in the first place. They knew the Germans were going to get it eventually so why try to save it?"

And what do you think of that from the perspective of using the Australians for this British idea?

Well, there were some British troops there, not a great number, and there was a New Zealand division there as well,

- 20:30 or at least portion of a New Zealand division there. Actually, we really were the only army people available at that time in the Middle East to send to Greece. The New Zealand division hadn't been in action before then, so they were available. The British divisions were all in contact

- 21:00 with the enemy in the Middle East. We, the 6th Division, had been put into reserve to build themselves up again because we'd been through a big war, and while that was going on, you get the sudden call to Greece, so who do you send? "There's a division there sitting there re-training, we'll send them." It was sort of luck in one way and bad luck in another.

Is there any, I don't know, resentment

- 21:30 **considering it was a bit of poor planning or...?**

Not really, no, not really. Things that happen in wartime you accept, I think. We all do. Alright, some idiot made a mistake so you've got to put up with it.

Ok, and tell us about the evacuation onto the ships. What happened at the beaches there?

Well, we were down at where the Wryneck was or where the Wryneck came in, and we had to

22:00 wait for about 16 hours all told, including nighttime of course, and all of a sudden we got an order to get down to the wharf and we marched down to the wharf fully laden with all we could carry, but all our trucks had to be destroyed, all our artillery weapons had to be destroyed cause they couldn't be carried onboard a ship

22:30 like that and you couldn't get them aboard in any case so they were, tried and made quite useless to the enemy when they got them.

How?

Well, an artillery weapon you stick one weapon down the front of the muzzle another up the blast and blast it off and it just goes boom, you just explode it all. Machine guns were taken off, but a lot of the

23:00 tripods for the machine guns were left behind by other troops. If you didn't have enough troops to carry things like machine guns then you had to either leave them there or take them away, or forget them, but the gun itself can be taken without the tripod but it's not much good without the tripod. It's very hard to use unless you use it in your arm, have it over one man's shoulder while you shoot.

I think I might have seen that in a Rambo movie?

Yeah.

23:30 **And what about the cars? How did you destroy the cars?**

Hit them with sledgehammers and crack the engines, destroy the tyres by slashing. Smash the wheels with a sledgehammer and so on, and then burn them, set fire to them, but it was all trucks. There was the occasional car but it was all trucks that we destroyed. That, of course, let the enemy know where we were because of the smoke,

24:00 but still it had to happen.

And so tell us about the trip to Crete. What were you thinking of your travels?

Well, we were, most of us were onboard the Wryneck and in fact the whole battalion was aboard the Wryneck and I was one of the men taken down below and we went to sleep, had a beautiful sleep until

24:30 about three o'clock in the afternoon when the bombs started to fall around us and the ships started to shell things. I just woke up and, "Holy hell, the war's here." you didn't, you'd been asleep a wonderful sleep, which we needed, but we had that bit of a battle on the way to Crete but we weren't hit or anything at that time. The ship was destroyed, it was sunk the next round, the next voyage...

25:00 **How chaotic was the scene?**

Onboard the ship? No, no, it wasn't chaotic. The navy don't let anything chaotic on board their ships. They're very good, they really are, but very severe and if they tell you to keep quiet, you keep quiet; otherwise you might get thrown overboard.

So you describe it as, the withdrawal was fairly...?

Fairly easy, yes. Fairly easy. No, no great trouble at all.

25:30 We were a bit hungry, of course, but that was all, and we were sleepy. In fact, when we got to Suda Bay in Crete, we marched off miles into some scrub. It was actually a plantation and we slept for 36 hours, just laid down went to sleep, and we did sleep for 36 hours

26:00 so naturally we were very, very tired.

So take us through where you went in Crete?

Well, we went to Retimo, which is almost...it's on the north coast and almost in the centre of Crete. The 2/11th Battalion was sent there. There were two Greek battalions there but they were untrained. There was a police battalion there, Crete

26:30 Greek or Crete Police Battalion, which were trained as policemen and they were very good. They did a very good job but we didn't have anything like a mortar bomb or a mortar gun. We had some old artillery guns that had come from the Middle East without sights. We had a few artillerymen there so they had to use these guns without any sight

27:00 and we were just badly armed and badly provided with ammunition. We didn't have enough of anything and as for food, we had very little food, but there was some fruit we could eat around the place. Admittedly, it was food the Greeks would be selling, but then if we didn't eat it, the Germans would eat it eventually. But we ate all sorts of things and some of the Cretan people came around selling

27:30 us eggs and so on and that was quite good, because we hadn't had eggs for months and months and

months. In fact, one fellow, Brian Cook, he was a lieutenant same as I was, and I went down to see him one day at Retimo because I could see he was cooking, I went round to see what the hell he was cooking and he was cooking, had a tin of bacon that was provided by the army

28:00 in a big pan and he had 13 eggs from a Cretan in another pan, and he was going to have that for breakfast and he hadn't eaten eggs for about five months. He didn't give me one so that was the sort of thing happened, it did happen with him and nobody ever objected to it. He bought them, and he hadn't had an egg for months and months and months and we let him eat them. We could have insisted on having one, but no, we didn't,

28:30 but he had 13 eggs with a tin of bacon. The tin of bacon was roughly a quarter of a pound, was just a roll of bacon. Brian's no longer with us either.

So tell us where you went to set up defences, or where you went in Crete.

Well, it was in Retimo, and what we did there was an air land in there,

29:00 an airspace landing, and it was the third one in Retimo, in Crete, and some of the air force men were in fact using it, including a man called Digger Fry, who was an Australian with the Royal Air Force, and so it was a pretty, the ocean was there, a pretty flat area there and then the aerodrome or the airfield came up and then into cliffs of

29:30 trees, fruit trees and so on, lemons and oranges and so on, and out in the open before these rises of soil we dug trenches for the Germans to see, but came right back onto the various trees and dug our own little tiny holes to use and the Huns used to come along with the aircraft and shell these things in front of us that we'd dug

30:00 thinking we were there, and of course they didn't kill anybody cause they simply thought all the Australians were in there and that was it.

So tell us about what happened, the initial contact action with the Germans?

Well, we saw the first lot of planes come in at about roughly nine o'clock in the morning in the Suda Bay area. We saw them at sea.

30:30 At about 12 o'clock roughly, we saw the same planes coming in to bomb Heraklion, which is two hours east, and at three o'clock in the afternoon the same planes came back, Ju-52 German aircraft [Ju-52 German bomber], to bomb us and they came in from sea and turned right, came over to the roughly 100 feet high, dropping paratroopers,

31:00 and all the time this was, they were dropping, we were sniping them, shooting them from the bottom, and when those planes had left and all the paratroops had fallen, my sergeant, Percy Gosper said to me, "I'll never go duck shooting again." He didn't. He was killed the next day. But it was quite a statement to make about this type of shooting, and he was a great duck shooter in civilian life,

31:30 and that's what he said, "I'll never go duck shooting again." So most of the Germans in Retimo, roughly 700 of the 1300 that dived on us or fell on us, roughly 700 of them were either killed or wounded as they fell. General Freyberg [General Sir Bernard Freyberg, VC] who was in command of the island, a New Zealand

32:00 general and he was in command and he was up at Suda Bay, I understand that he issued an order that said not to fire at the Huns as they fell through the air, only shoot them on the ground. He thought it was wrong to shoot anybody attacking you before he hit the ground. Silly, but he was an elderly, a nice man but an elderly man. He won a VC [Victoria Cross] at Gallipoli, no, in

32:30 Dardanelles, in World War I, 1915, but he was with the British Army in those days and he'd gone to New Zealand and eventually became the commander of their division, but he was too, I believe he was too old, but that's what he said.

Did you follow this order?

Good God no. No, he didn't issue or we couldn't get an order from him. He only issued it to those around him. We couldn't get an order from him. We had no connection whatsoever

33:00 outside the city of Retimo. We had no connection with the Australian brigadier, Brigadier Vasey, who ended up as General Vasey [Major General George Vasey], no connection with him. He certainly had no connection with us, although we did send Captain Lergessner, Tom Lergessner to see him up in that area, and he didn't see Vasey but

33:30 he did see Freyberg, and this was three days before the complete retirement of New Zealanders from that island, and when they were retiring he told Lergessner that we were quite safe and the battle was going very well, but he knew damn well that they were retiring to Sfakia to get a ship to take them to Egypt

34:00 or somewhere else along that coast, but he didn't tell us. The crowd at Heraklion, the 2/4th Australian battalion and I've forgotten the other battalion, or British, it was the 2nd Battalion of the Black Watch. They were taken off Heraklion two nights before we were captured so they were in contact

34:30 by somebody, probably Montgomery, not Montgomery, Wavell, General Wavell in Egypt, but we had no radios and nothing at all, just there on our own.

Why didn't they work out a way to contact you?

That's a good question. You could ask some ghost. They're all dead now, but, and you wouldn't get an answer probably. They would have said they didn't have any use for, and you didn't have any material.

35:00 We had a radio that they gave us that simply didn't work and we told them at the time it didn't work. It was useless and it didn't work at all, so our CO, Colonel Ian Campbell, was just left there holding up the Germans while the rest of the people got away. There was no thought at all of getting rid of the 2/1st Battalion or the 2/11th Battalion, none. We weren't very happy about it but there was nothing we could do

35:30 about it. Some of the men didn't, our CO told them to take to the hills to escape if possible. Seven people did escape from our southern beach area by submarine to the Middle East but all the rest were either killed or captured and that was it.

I think you mentioned before that you also were bombed

36:00 **here personally, can you tell us that story?**

That was in the Western Desert.

That didn't happen in Crete?

No, well we were bombed once. No, that happened in the Western Desert.

OK, yeah, I just thought there was a second time. OK, you also told us the white flag story where you were shot so tell us about when you had to surrender?

Well, officially, I didn't have to.

36:30 It was done, I was a wounded man and in the 7th Field Ambulance Hospital just back a little bit from the, up towards the mountains, and I couldn't move anyway so we were just told that the surrender had happened and we were prisoners and that was it, and suddenly we were surrounded by Germans anyway. Now, oddly enough the doctors in that field ambulance, and they're all West Australians by the way, they

37:00 had German soldiers there who were wounded badly same as us. They treated them extremely well, extremely well, so our MOs [Medical Officers] didn't, medical officers didn't look at anybody as a friend or foe. They just, they were wounded and they treated them, so they were good.

Well take us through when you first saw Germans taking over this field ambulance,

37:30 **you were in bed or...?**

We were underneath a tree. We didn't have any tents or anything. There was none available, but we were just lying under this tree and suddenly the Germans arrived fully armed and shouting and bawling and yelling and took over and that was it, but we knew what had happened because we knew what they were doing. But we didn't know if they were going to kill anybody or not. They didn't, as it happened,

38:00 kill anybody.

What kind of thoughts were going through your head at this time?

All sorts of stupid thoughts, "What am I going to do now? Can I ever escape? Will these so-and-sos shoot me?" You know, all sorts of things, but I couldn't escape. I was wounded up here. The old Pat couldn't escape. He was wounded in the chest and the neck and a leg. He was badly

38:30 wounded and no, no, I think people just had to say, "Well I'm here, and if you kill me, you kill me, and if they don't, they don't."

You mentioned you were shot up here. How bad was the wound?

It's still painful, but there's no bullet there now and so, but I still get a pain in here and it's

39:00 there now, it's there all the time, but I was walking within three weeks roughly. Even by the time we got back to Athens, I was walking with the aid of a board, stick or something I'd got, and then I just walk pretty naturally today but I do have to use a stick.

What kind of thought goes through your mind when you're shot?

39:30 I don't remember mine, I must admit. I don't remember mine. I can't answer that question cause I don't remember. I probably said, "The so-and-so so-and-sos."

Tape 6

00:36 **So you were in the dressing station when the surrender happened. What was your first knowledge of the surrender?**

When the Germans walked in. There was nobody else to tell us. Everyone else had been caught or else were busy trying to escape and had no chance to talk to us, so when the Huns walked in

01:00 and we, just hit us like a bomb. "What the devil? What's happened?" You know. We knew, of course, what happened but didn't know the details.

How did they walk in? What sort of attitude did they have and...?

They were marching and all armed; of course, ready to kill anybody who couldn't...

Did they kill anyone?

Not in the hospital, no. But they had 1200-odd people, men, and we'd killed over 700 of them in the fights

01:30 so they could have easily shot us.

Who was in hospital? Was it all Allied troops in the hospital?

All Australians and of course Germans themselves, but our men were all Australian men.

There were Germans in the hospital?

Yes, yeah, wounded Germans taken into our hospital and our doctors treated them.

Did the relationship between them change when first they

02:00 **were there as essentially prisoners and then as captors?**

When the doctors with the German regiment were captured, they too were taken to the hospital and ordered to look after their men, so they did, so that didn't, that worked easily. Nobody cared about it but it did work quite well.

And what did the Germans say to you? Or what did they make you do as they came marching in?

Well, they didn't make us do anything because we had nothing to do anything with.

02:30 They wanted us to get up and, of course, we couldn't get up anyway, so they just let us lie there and eventually, I think it was two days, they took us down to the town of Retimo into the town hall or an old school.

Did the conditions in the hospital change as the Germans took over?

No, not really, because the Australian man was from Western Australia whose name was [Major] Palandri and he was in charge all the time and he continued. They didn't

03:00 alter him. They knew he was doing a good job, and he didn't care a damn who it was as long as he did his work and I think most naval and military and air force doctors are like that. They'll look after the enemy if he's there. We'd have even looked after Japs [Japanese] in New Guinea if they'd been decent, which they weren't.

And so they took you. When did they take you from the hospital?

03:30 It was the second day after that and they took us down to Retimo itself in some sort of a truck and into a school, lying on the floor, which was bare, no mattress, no nothing.

What were you feeling at the time?

Well, you were, some people like my old friend here, he was too damn sick to feel anything except illness or pain. I had pain, but I was able to think and wonder what would

04:00 really happen, where we'd go and what the result would be. You didn't know whether you were going to live or die at that stage.

How did it feel to be a prisoner?

Terrible, terrible.

Can you describe that?

No, not really. I can tell you about being a prisoner later on, or do you want to cover that later?

We'll come to it. I guess we'll get there. I guess I mean morale-wise?

You were down,

- 04:30 you really were down, but you're wounded like that, you know you can't escape then, but the moment you started to get better, you'd be wondering, "How can I get out of here and get away?" I think everybody thought that, and some people did get away but they didn't get very far. The Huns were very good at tracking people down.

In those first few days, the time

- 05:00 **when you were in the town hall, how did they treat you?**

Fairly well, excepting on one occasion when two Germans came in. They were Austrians actually, and they attacked my dear old friend Pat Lawrie. He was lying on my left side and he was so ill it didn't matter, and they had a bayonet and they wanted his watch and the bayonet kept coming

- 05:30 down, and I covered his watch with my hand like that and talked to them. I couldn't speak German of course in those days, and they did a sudden switch to me to get my watch cause they could see my watch on my other hand and another patient said to me as the bayonet came down nice and slowly, as a threat,

- 06:00 "Give us the watch." the other gentleman, who happened to be a captain said, "Terry, you'd better give them, let them take that watch otherwise you're going to get bayoneted anyway and you'll be dead." So I let them take it.

But you saved Pat's watch?

I saved Pat's watch, yes. I did get my watch back.

How?

Germans are funny people. An officer

- 06:30 came in that evening and asking, it was quite dark of course, there were no lights, he came in, he had a torch, and he asked if there were any complaints and I said, "Yes, there's one complaint." And I told him about the watch and how it was taken and what they'd done to Pat and to me, and he said, "What sort of watch was it?" And I told him what it was, an Arcadia 2323, and he went away.

- 07:00 And about an hour later he came back and flashed the torch around. He said, "Where's the gentleman who lost his watch?" and I said, "I'm here." "What's the name of the watch and the number." and I told him. He said, "We just found a soldier with it. Did you hear a man crying a while ago?" I said, "Yes." We all said, "Yes, we did." He said, "Well, we've beaten him." Now, he was a first-class front line soldier who did a terrible thing, so they'd beaten him. Strange isn't it,

- 07:30 that they could beat their own man, and they did, but I got my watch back. Most odd.

What did this do for your attitude towards the Germans?

Well, it made me admire their front-line officer a little bit. I didn't think much of the other front-line soldier who did the stealing, but yes, it made me admire him a little bit. Obviously, he was a regular soldier, well trained and so on, and he didn't expect that sort of thing to happen in the front line.

- 08:00 Certainly we wouldn't expect it to happen in our front line either, so you treat soldiers concerned to, in certain ways, and we wouldn't beat them but we'd treat them in other ways.

And so when did they move you from the town hall and where to?

They took us down to the airport at,

- 08:30 if you call it an airport, it was an aerodrome airport, and put us onboard an old Junker 82, no not 82, 52 [Junker Ju-52], and flew us on to Athens to the hospital over there. Some of us were lying down some of us were sitting down and we were flown to Athens. It took about an hour and a half to get there in this great big galvanised-iron plane and that's what it was. It was all galvanised iron the outsides of it.

- 09:00 It's the same aircraft as Kingsford-Smith flew across the Pacific, exactly the same aircraft and they used it for troop transport and delivering all sorts of things to all over the German empire as such. Odd, but they all worshipped Hitler of course. Didn't matter a damn about anything but they all worshipped Hitler.

- 09:30 **And so they flew you to Athens to a hospital?**

Yep.

What was Athens like under occupation?

Well, we didn't really see it. We saw it but we weren't down there to see it. We saw it as we landed and we were taken through the streets to this so-called hospital, but we didn't know what Athens was like, but we know

10:00 from later on that Athens went through a very troublesome time. The Greek people were fighting each other there because they wanted to help, some wanted to help the Germans, some wanted to be in command, and some were very angry against the Germans, so there was a bit of fighting amongst themselves. In fact, I think it might still be going on in the political world over there.

And how long did you spend in this hospital?

10:30 Now that's a good question. I'm not certain. I think it was nine or 10 days, by which time I was able to get up and walk, and then they took me, a few of us up to Salonika by train, although we had to do a lot of marching in between. We went by train, go from Athens to another train spot by train, and have to get out and walk a few miles. Some reason was,

11:00 some reason why because the train lines had been very badly damaged and others we didn't know why. We think the Huns were just punishing us anyway and we did it on the odd slice of bread. We weren't fed. The Huns didn't feed you. You wait till you read my trip from Salonika to Athens. No food at all, nine days. It was typical.

Why didn't they feed you?

11:30 Well, we were just useless objects, I think, but oddly they were taking us to a camp in Ireland, an Irish camp in Berlin, hoping that we'd transfer to them, and yet they wouldn't feed us in the train. The Germans think very stupidly at times.

And so what happened when you arrived in Salonika?

12:00 We were marched from the station up to the horrible, very horrible old Turkish camp, which was about 400 years old. There were two great fences there and we had to stop way back from the first fence gate, and while we were there, there were only about 25 of us all told at that time, young Greek girls started to throw

12:30 cigarettes to us. Now I didn't smoke, but you did pick up a cigarette for somebody else and suddenly one little girl who I think was about 14 got kicked in the crotch by a German and Germans wore boots that came up to here and there was a steel thing across there inside the leather. I know that because I tested a few of them afterwards when I escaped

13:00 and I was with the Americans. And this man kicked this young lass straight between the legs and we actually heard the bones break, and she fell weeping and wailing, and just marched away and we were all on the guard, of course, armed guard and we were marched away leaving her just lying there with her pals and that was common the way the Germans treated

13:30 young people and treated a lot of Greek people - very, very badly.

Was this the first real act of German brutality that you'd seen?

It was, yes, the first real act of German brutality, yes. And whether that little lass was Jewish or not, I don't know, she could have been, but...

And how did seeing this change your attitude to the situation or the Germans?

Well, we didn't like the Germans in the first place,

14:00 even then, but it horrified us. It horrified every one of us, and those people inside the prison wall camp that saw what happened and a few of them, as some of them did, they were horrified too because they hadn't seen anything like that happen and it made you very careful of what you said to the Germans or how you talked to them at any time.

Did any of the other German troops respond to this German that had done it, so there was?

No, no,

14:30 the man that did the kicking? No, not a word was said by anybody.

And so what was this prison like in Salonika?

It was a filthy, disgusting place roughly 400 years old. I understand it was built by the Turks way back in those days. It was a horrible place and it was full of fleas

15:00 and bed bugs and anything else that could bite you was there to do it. It was a horrible place, absolutely terrible.

What did it look like physically?

Large buildings with lots of barbed-wire fences. Probably hadn't been painted for 40 years. It looked ugly. The buildings were well built and they were quite wide barrack walls but, and of course barbed wire fences,

15:30 all around it 10, 12 feet high and eight or nine feet wide. No, it wasn't a nice place, but then, no prisoner of war camp was a nice place.

And how did they house you there? Where did you sleep?

I was inside in a big place and there were beds there

16:00 with no mattresses, just the old frame and the wire thing, but there was no mattress to lie on so you might as well be lying on the, probably better lying on the big stone floor than on wire, and the bugs used to come across in the daylight. The bugs would walk across the ceiling and fall on you. They were quite good animals though. They knew how to get up the wall and across and 'boing' down they went, so you killed as many as you could of course.

16:30 **How did you kill them?**

Just slap them with the hand, with the boot or whatever.

How many people to a room?

I honestly couldn't tell you, but I think there might have been 40 in the one I was in, and of course you were very close together, and there we got a loaf of bread. It was about nine inches across and perhaps four inches high and it was one loaf of bread to nine men,

17:00 and it was very careful cut into nine portions of course and it was issued in the morning and I never ate mine of a morning. I felt better if I could eat it at night, and we were out on parade one day and I don't know what the delay was, but there was some delay, and I walked off the parade ground and came back into this hut and there was an

17:30 ex-army padre eating my bread. He was so hungry, he stole it. He knew I did it, he knew I kept it, but he ate my bread.

What did you say to him?

I slapped his face and walked away. A Scots Presbyterian. His name was Clarke.

Did he apologise?

He did later on,

18:00 he did, but he did stop apparently stealing other people's bread because of that, which was very good, but he, I think if you're dastardly hungry, you'll eat anything you can see or know you can get, and that's probably a stage, you probably have to do that to realise what you've done. Steal somebody's food and then realise what a bad thing you've actually done.

18:30 and it just happened, that was it. There was nothing you could do about it. He'd eaten the bread. I had to wait till next day.

How would the prisoners, sort of, in your room or around you, how would you support each other?

Well, you really had nothing you could support them unless by speech, ordinary chatter. If you could tell them a story

19:00 and give them a glimmer of laughter, for instance, if there was such thing as a glimmer of laughter, but you know, a little sense of humour was a bit helpful, but that was all. We had no food to share.

Do you remember any of the stories that you might have told or been told to sort of, little humorous anecdotes or...?

No, no. I wasn't told that when I told you just then. I wasn't told that poetry I told you.

19:30 **Would you talk about people at home, or wives, girlfriends, your life at home, with the other men?**

Yes, it would come up in conversation. Normal conversation was held with normal people really, but there was nothing secret about what happened at home or what was at home, what you knew about it, because we didn't get many letters. In fact, after that, once I was a prisoner, see, I got no letters at all so we couldn't talk about home,

20:00 but yes, you shared a lot of things with people if you could and talked. If you knew their wife was sick and so on, you'd ask them questions what the news was and so on. If you were sick and you wrote a letter, you never told anyone at home you were sick. They'd have had enough worries without that.

Just how what was the situation with mail and communication?

With mail?

Yeah, with letters and communication?

Well there

20:30 was absolutely none until you got to your place in prisoner of war camp in Germany. You had no mail at

all before Germany, and then it was months and months and months before any one was delivered because people in Australia didn't know where people were and how to address a letter to them, and or even if they were alive. I was captured what on the 13th of May, and some

21:00 time in August the Sydney Morning Herald said they thought I was a prisoner of war. That was some time in August. I've got that front page somewhere, God knows where it is now, but I still have it somewhere.

I'm interested in, I guess, the protocol that took place if someone was taken prisoner. Would the Germans notify

21:30 **the army somehow that there was prisoners or...?**

Well, officially they were supposed to notify the Swiss Red Cross, and they did that at their own leisure and how quickly I don't know. The Swiss Red Cross did a pretty good job, all told, and they visited us roughly twice a year. It might be three times in two years,

22:00 but they did visit us now and then accompanied of course by Germans who would allow them to talk to some people and not to others. We had a doctor from Melbourne, Doctor Carter, in one camp. He wanted, the Swiss came in to see if people were sick enough to be sent home, and at one camp called

22:30 Rotenburg, he certainly wasn't sick but he was very cunning, and he dressed himself up in a pair of cardboard slippers which he'd made himself and he asked to be paraded to the Germans and the Swiss and the British agreed to parade him and he got into them, asked him what he wanted and he said, "I want to be allowed to return to Australia,

23:00 I'm not a well man." He said, "Besides which, I can't get any shoes." and he held up a foot showing these homemade cardboard slippers and they said, "He's mad." so they let him go. They said, "He's nuts." and they let him go. He was there for another couple of weeks and off he went to Switzerland and eventually back home to England then back home to Australia. It was a very cunning, very cunning thing. Another

23:30 bloke in that particular camp, an old Welshman, British Army bloke, and he was in his 50s and he asked to be paraded in the same way, and I was one of those who helped him be wrapped up for the occasion. From Red Cross we got a small tin of, what's that milk you get in Red Cross?

24:00 **Condensed milk?**

Condensed milk and we stripped him off poured it down the cheeks of his backside and then made him pull on one of the pants, on the clothes he had and put his pants on, and when he got into the Germans he said, "I've got something wrong with me and I don't understand what it is." And they said, "Well, let's have a look." so he dropped the pants and turned his backside to them and there was this horrible gooey mess

24:30 and they said, "Well, go away." and he went home. So there were a lot of tricks of that nature done letting people get out of the place. He'd been in World War I, that character, but it was his idea to do it. He thought it up.

Was there any, when we were talking about how you'd chat and talk among

25:00 **you, you had very little food. Was there ever any sort of talk about the things you'd most like to eat or the places you'd most like to be and...?**

Well, I didn't. I don't think so. You'd think about home a lot, of course, but not to mention to someone else, you never knew how that was going to affect them and it could affect people badly or nicely.

In what way?

Well, supposing

25:30 I spoke to Major George Hooper, who like me was from Sydney, and mentioned how much I loved the harbour and he might be very upset because he loved it too and he wanted to see it and he was missing it etcetera and he'd be very upset and he wouldn't talk to anybody for three or four days and that's the sort of thing that could happen. And one thing we always did if we got angry with anybody or with ourselves or upset, you'd go for a walk and you wouldn't talk to anybody

26:00 for all day or two or three days, you wouldn't talk to anybody and everyone would leave you and you're OK, but once people knew you were feeling that way then they wouldn't say anything to you, not even good morning.

Was this a good thing?

Yes, it was, yeah. Leaving you alone was a good thing; at least we discovered it was.

26:30 **You having been an officer, still an officer, we were talking earlier about how the men would sometimes talk to you about things and that sort of thing. Did this carry over into some of the camps?**

Well, we were officers, were parted from the men entirely and put into what was called offlags, officers' laagers [quarters], and they were alone excepting

- 27:00 British were sometimes allowed some private soldier ranks to come in and do the cooking or so on. We weren't allowed that, we never got that. If we had British people in the camp, they'd do the cooking for us anyway, whatever was there to cook.

Why was that?

I don't know why the Huns wouldn't allow us into the private camp to, I don't know. I think they didn't trust us because they'd got a lot of word that we'd fought very well in Greece and particularly in Crete

- 27:30 and of course in the western desert where we'd beaten the Italians, I think, but that may not be true, that may not be right, rather.

And so how long did you spend at this camp in Salonika?

Well, I was only there for I think it was five weeks.

And then did they put you on a train?

In the meantime, they'd interviewed me twice

- 28:00 and then put myself and a total of 98 men, including five officers, on a train to Berlin to Wustermark, near the old Olympic Games site at Wustermark.

Why had they decided to take you there?

They wanted anybody born in Ireland who was in the British and Australian and New Zealand army to

- 28:30 leave those armies and become disloyal citizens and form a Berlin or a German Irish Brigade. That had happened and they'd attempted to do that in World War I and it failed miserably, although an Irishman who was an officer, and I can't think of his name at the moment, he was an officer in the British Army and in 1916 he had been in Germany and

- 29:00 came back and landed in Ireland by sea by the Germans to recruit Irishmen there to join the German army. But the British Army, Britain of course controlled all of Ireland then, and they caught him and he was hung. I've forgotten his name [Roger Casement], but the same thing,

- 29:30 the Germans were trying to do the same thing with us as had done with him, excepting that they wanted us to get Australian soldiers, New Zealand soldiers, British soldiers to turn over and form an Irish Brigade. They proved in World War I it wouldn't happen really, and here they were going at it again. It was odd.

So can you take me through when you first became aware of this? When, like,

- 30:00 **how did they know that you were Irish, for one?**

Well, we were specially interviewed in Salonika - it's all in that thing there, you've got it there - by this character, and all we'd tell them, we'd only tell them our name, our rank and our army number, and I could tell them,

- 30:30 because CO's permission, that I'd been born in Ireland to find out what the devil was going on. And twice only I told them that and the third time they saw me they told me more about my family than I knew myself. They told me that my two brothers Bill and Wally were in the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion and were in the Middle East. I didn't even know they were in the army at the time. They told me that my brother who was a policeman in

- 31:00 Sydney had left the police force and joined the army, been taken out of the army by the police force and put back in the police force and told, "If you go to the army again, we'll put you in jail." They told me that. They told me my father and mother and where they were born in Ireland and that he was a strict Presbyterian, even though he was an Irishman, all this sort of nonsense.

How did they know this?

Well, the

- 31:30 German spy agency, and I can't remember what it's called, was functioning very well in Britain and Ireland and no doubt Scotland, but boy, was it functioning very well in Australia. Do you remember there was an article, a famous admiral; a German admiral came here in '36 or '37 in his big yacht.

- 32:00 He was here, same as the Japanese were here in their ships finding out all they could about Australia and how they could attack it, so he was here getting news and getting people to be spies and so on. Without a doubt that was true. He was a German admiral.

So what was your reaction hearing all this about yourself?

I was astounded, but when they asked me

32:30 a certain question, I rebelled, or they rebelled really.

What question?

Well, I was in this place at Wustermark, and he asked me some question I've forgotten what it was. I've never remembered what it was, but behind him on the wall was a

33:00 pencil thing of Hitler, a sketch, and on the wall over here was one of von Brauchitch, the German field-marshal [Field-Marshal Walter von Brauchitch], and I happened for some reason or other to glance up at this thing of Hitler and I then turned round and looked at the one of von Brauchitch and he said, "You're an artist are you?" And I said, "No, I'm not. I'm anything but an artist." He said, "Which of those two do you prefer?" And I said, "I prefer von Brauchitch."

33:30 He said, "Why?" And I gave him an answer he didn't like very much, so I was belted and belted and belted.

Tell me your answer?

I've forgotten the exact words, although they're written down there. I am, I can be very forgetful. They're written down there in that thing leaf [loose leaf] you've got, wherever the devil it is, and I think I said roughly that he was a more interesting character than Hitler,

34:00 von Brauchitch, something like that.

What was your motivation for saying that?

I couldn't really tell you. I probably wanted to get him mad, but I didn't think he'd get as mad as he got.

How mad did he get?

Papers, please old boy? You can read it and ask questions from that.

Well no, I kind of know it, but

34:30 **me reading it doesn't let the audience hear it, so if I can get you to relate it then we communicate it?**

Well, how mad did he get? Well, I was belted and belted and belted. I had fingers stuck up into my anus. I was

35:00 shaved, all my body, eyelashes were pulled out, eyebrows gone. Every hair in my body went with a blade razor. I was told to get dressed, which I did, and when my boots were on, my boots were wired round my ankles, trousers were

35:30 wired around my ankles. The trousers were wired around my waist and I was given a great big mug of castor oil and belted a few times from here up to here, front and back. The door was locked and that was at eight o'clock in the morning and the same thing happened at four and it happened

36:00 for 12 days, every day, so I've never set foot in Germany ever since. I've been in Europe seven times, but I've never set foot in Germany and I never speak to a German if I can avoid it.

Why did they give you castor oil?

Just punishment,

36:30 it was punishment. Normally, when I was in, became a prisoner, I'd have weighed six stone, six or seven, sorry, 12 stone six [six pounds] or 12 stone eight [pounds]. When they'd finished me, I weighed six stone two [one stone = 14 pounds].

Did they give you any food?

Yes, they gave me a boiled potato, which I couldn't eat. I just simply couldn't eat anything. One boiled potato, a little

37:00 small one, but I couldn't eat it, I just couldn't.

What did you do in that room for all those days?

Made a lot of mess. There was nothing you could do. There was no toilet; there was no bucket, no nothing. Besides, I couldn't get my clothes off.

What was your state of mind like?

I might have been crazy,

37:30 I don't know, but I certainly was very angry with them, not with me, with them.

I guess what sorts of things happen in your mind when you're stuck in a room in that situation for so long?

You think of people at home and you think of what would they do about this if they knew about it, and which they didn't, they never did know about it. I only wrote it. The last thing I wrote was

- 38:00 two or three years ago, the first time I wrote that and I wrote it only just trying to get rid of the damn thing, but I haven't got rid of it and no, there was no sense in telling people about it and they wouldn't even think that I was being treated like that and so on. I was the only one in that camp that I know of that was treated like that, because I'd criticised Hitler. Quite astounding. And they belted me
- 38:30 several times in other places after that. I was in handcuffs for nine months at another camp and I was only selected for that because of what I was and because of what I'd done. It wasn't the best experience of my lifetime, but certainly it proved to me what the average German was like then and can become like now in my view.
- 39:00 **When you were held in this room, was there interaction with the Germans aside from them?**
- No. They belted me at eight o'clock and left, and belted me at four o'clock and left. And that was it. At four o'clock, they came with a spud, a potato, which, I couldn't eat it. You fancy a mug of castor oil going down your throat,
- 39:30 or what you swallowed of it, and then be expected to eat a potato afterwards.
- What does castor oil taste like?**
- Castor oil. I don't think it's got any other taste, but it's horrible, it's a terrible taste. I couldn't tell you what it's like, except for castor oil, but it's a very nasty flavour.
- What sort of things does it do to your body if that's the only thing that you're ingesting?**
- 40:00 It fills you full of all sorts of liquid and makes the poor bottom very sore and the stomach very sore because eventually there's nothing in there to go through except the castor oil and it just keeps going through. What effect it has eventually, or totally, I don't know, but I know that I, no matter what happened, I would never trust a German again no matter what he was,
- 40:30 and oddly I...

Tape 7

- 00:37 **You mentioned they picked you out because of your Irish background. Can you tell us how they found out that you were Irish?**
- No, at Salonika they were asking us to join a table in English, they were asking us to join a table number eight,
- 01:00 anyone born in Ireland to report to table number eight, and my CO was inside the, Ian Campbell was inside the great big wire fence and I asked him if he knew what this was about and he said, "No, see if you can find out." And I went up, that's why I went up and I found out things that I didn't want to know.
- What expectations did you have before this what this could be?**
- No, I was just wondering what it was all about. I didn't
- 01:30 know anything about that other character I mentioned earlier, who was killed in Ireland eventually. I knew nothing about that because I hadn't read about it, and so I just went up to find out and it all happened from there, but when I got inside the other main gates I couldn't tell my CO anything. I had nothing to tell him and we didn't know anything.
- 02:00 **Now did they try anything at first, which wasn't so brutal, to try and convince you to join the Germans?**
- Which wasn't what?
- Brutal?**
- No, no it was all questions. No, they weren't brutal at all till I offended Hitler.
- How were they before then?**
- Quite good. Rheinhaus the officer was quite good. He was quite kind and he was the only one I spoke to, actually,
- 02:30 and he was quite a nice man until suddenly, when you see somebody get angry all of a sudden, you see that sudden switch. Have you ever seen that by the way in anybody? Yes and no.
- Describe for me what you saw?**

They do a very quick switch from being kindly and smiling people into a storm of terror, and they don't care a damn what they do from thereon,

03:00 they just don't care.

What's it like to see this change?

It's frightening at first. You wonder what the devil's going to happen, cause I didn't know what he was going to do, I had no idea, but suddenly the door behind me burst open, on my left side, actually burst open and I was belted immediately, so then I knew, but I didn't know originally or immediately.

03:30 **And so tell us about the trip to Wustermark. How did you get there?**

Well, they put us on a train at Salonika. There were 98 of us and there were two truckloads, just cattle trucks, and there was one window which was barbed wired off very carefully so you couldn't get out and it was so

04:00 high you couldn't even see out unless you were in a mountain area and you could see part of the mountain. They never fed us. The only place I remember on the way was at Budapest. We pulled up and we were there for several hours, but when we first pulled up, there were Yugoslav people outside because the Germans opened the doors of these two caravans or whatever you'd like to call them

04:30 and we could see out then and were Yugoslav people there with food for us. They knew, one way or another, we were there, or prisoners of war were coming through, and there was food. The Germans threw most of it away. We didn't get any of it at all. They made sure of that, stupidly. Here we were, soldiers going to Berlin to be turned into

05:00 German enemies as Irishmen that would fight for them. In other words, not German, English enemies, and yet on that train they wouldn't even let somebody feed you. They were quite crazy. Now, probably the men in charge of that train didn't even know where we were going or why we were going or what they were going to do with us, but they should have known if they were going to do what they wanted to do, so that was the main thing. And the people from Yugoslavia or from

05:30 that area were doing that were abused by the Huns, but they weren't touched to our knowledge but we certainly never got any food from them even though they had it.

What was the journey like?

Well, we were packed in this great compartment or carriage and it was a very slow journey. It was nine days from Salonika to Berlin, which was roughly, I think it's 700 miles or thereabouts.

06:00 It wasn't a good journey and of course there was no toilet in the train either.

What were your first impressions when you got to Wustermark?

When we got to Wustermark? I don't know really, excepting it was a huge railway yard with people working on it.

06:30 I think the first big impression was: at least we were breathing clean air. But we had no impression, really, I had no impression about Germany itself or Berlin or Wustermark, because most of us couldn't even walk from the train into the prison camp. I did, I was OK, but most of the men couldn't. They had to be helped one way or another, and the other Australian, O'Brien, and I were the first two to,

07:00 there was a long tap in the area about that high, and we were the first people to strip off and wash. They just weren't able to do that. They were too weak and sick. They were all very sick. I suppose O'Brien and I were the, not O'Brien, name's gone, but I suppose we were the only two that were really pretty well, or we were the best of the lot of them.

07:30 It took about two days for them all, I think, to have a wash underneath that tap, but there was no shower in that place. There was supposed to be a place to get men to change their thought about a nation. The Huns do things in a very strange manner when they do that sort of thing. "We'd like you to become one of us but in the meantime you can't have a shower."

08:00 Bit crazy, isn't it? Bit odd.

And so what were the first things that they took you through in Wustermark?

For several days we didn't do anything but to eat the food we were given and continue to get ourselves clean, and of course clean the uniforms, the clothes we had and of course the clothes I had, I think I wore for five years, or nearly five years,

08:30 so they weren't much good but they did need cleaning those early days, and they didn't do anything else apart from that. They really didn't do anything for us.

What were your impressions of the surrounding area?

When we got to really look at it, or what we could see, there were thousands of prisoners of war

working the rail line, including some of the men that came with us eventually,

09:00 they were working, and behind us at an area that we could only see a bit of, we realised, I realised anyway, that these were Polish people who were also working in the railway yards and they were working six o'clock in the morning till about six o'clock at night. Now, whether they were fed I don't know. We could only see them; we were never near them,

09:30 so we don't really know how they were treated, but I don't think they were treated very well like a lot of people in other places weren't treated well.

In these early days, did you have any interactions with German locals apart from military?

No, we never had, I never had anything with locals at all, although in one camp, the last one I was in, Rotenberg, on a Sunday some of the local villagers would come

10:00 past the prisoner of war camp and peer at us through the wire and we just ignored them. They weren't there as far as we were concerned. If we were walking around the place, we'd just keep on walking. We'd never talk to them; never say hello or anything of that nature, cause you didn't know who they were in fact. They might be somebody there that would turn you in if you said something wrong. There might have been the odd person who would have helped you,

10:30 but you couldn't tell so we just never spoke to them, but most of them, I think, were just there to have a look at us. "Come and have a look at the British, look at the Brits [British]."

So you mentioned to Naomi [interviewer] before how this man treated you when you said the comment about Hitler. Where was this?

At Wustermark.

Wustermark. Now you mentioned,

11:00 **you took us through a bit of that treatment and the castor oil. What did they do to your uniform again?**

Well, I was wearing, the uniform was covered, when I had the uniform to wear and it was cold, I put it on at night it was only a jacket I had. No, I'm sorry. The uniform and my jacket and my socks were left on the bed where I, in the

11:30 bed I'd been in before this, they kept that and folded it up and left it there. All I had was my trousers and my underpants in that place so they didn't have to take anything off to belt me, just didn't have to do that.

But you mentioned something about them sewing it?

They put wire through the trousers round there and tied it down like that.

12:00 They had wire through my boots and tied it too and it was strong wire. I couldn't (UNCLEAR), my hands did exactly the same. They put wire around here where my belt is and tied that on completely so I couldn't touch it. It was just wired on so I couldn't strip myself, so everything I had on just became filthy.

Why were they doing this?

Punishment. There was no reason they could be doing it for,

12:30 because I wouldn't become a traitor and I wouldn't do what they wanted me to do, so they were punishing me. They never told me what they were doing or why they were doing it, but that's obvious why they were doing it.

And how long were you forced to wear this?

10 days, a long time, and then...

13:00 **What kind of benefits were they talking about would come to you if you joined their Irish?**

That I'd be a very brave German soldier, I'd be well treated, and like every other German soldier I could go to bed with any of those German girls that were in uniforms etcetera, and they were for the soldiers and particularly the officers.

13:30 That was the sort of thing basically.

Anything else they promised?

No.

And were they saying this in the lead up before you said your comment?

It came out in all sorts of bits of conversations, yes, what they could do and what a wonderful time we would have and

14:00 what a great life I would have from thereon. No matter what happened, I would have a great life in Germany and I'd be well looked after etcetera, etcetera, and of course they said exactly the same thing to the other characters involved, and oddly enough, we never talked about it. When you were interviewed first, you'd had enough and when you'd got back you'd had enough. You didn't really want to talk about it anyway, but

14:30 it was a promise that I doubt if they'd have kept in the first place once the war was over, even if they'd won.

Were you aware of any which would have agreed to this?

No, no.

You mentioned before that they would shave you. Describe how they did this?

They just

15:00 stripped all my clothes off and just shaved me with a blade razor, held me down and shaved me and that was it. There were four of them holding me, and a fellow with a razor, and you have to stop, a certain time comes when you have to stop wrestling.

What were the effects of this?

I don't even know why they did it. The effects of hair growing back was an itchiness

15:30 and that's why I never shaved my moustache off again. I made sure it grew and it stayed there no matter how bad it looked.

There was no, was there any soap or any...?

No, no soap.

So what was the effect on your skin?

It was all sore. It was harsh, very harsh for days, but then other things were harsher than that so you didn't really...I didn't really notice it. The castor oil was

16:00 much more harsh than the shaving.

What would the castor oil do to your insides?

You're always in pain, but that was it and a tremendous wish to splurge it out. It just happened, it had to happen because I couldn't stop it and I couldn't do anything to get rid of it properly.

How would they make you take it?

16:30 Just hold you down and pour it down, that was it whether you were standing up or lying down, it didn't matter. Down the throat it went. Now, whether I swallowed half of the thing or the whole or three quarters of it, I don't know, but in it went and no matter what you take, some of it must go down.

What was the feeling like of this going down?

I've never eaten or drank anything else that was terrible, so I can't really tell you

17:00 anything.

I mean were you always choking or...?

No, not really, no. I probably coughed a few times, I don't know.

How would they communicate to you during this time?

In English and in German. I learnt a bit of German gradually, but basically in English. But it was pretty rough English, anyway, and the officer bloke never came near me at all, but the mob, just a big gang

17:30 did this, not him.

And how would they speak to you?

Usually in German, but there was always an interpreter called Unterfuhrer, God, that's...I'm remembering something, Unterfuhrer, he was always an interpreter and there was always one of those around as a general rule, but this mob, they didn't, I don't think they really wanted to talk to me after that. They just wanted to punish me.

18:00 **What was their tone like?**

Anger, toughness, just anger.

And what would they hit you with?

Fists, mainly fists. Elbows, but mainly fists.

And so once you mentioned you were in solitary confinement. How long for again?

18:30 What, did I say was it 12 or 14 days, 12 days wasn't it? The old memory is going to hell.

And what were you doing during this time?

You mean while I was tied up in wire? Nothing. There was nothing I could do.

What would you think?

All sorts of things, all sorts of things about Father and Mother and so on and my brothers and sister and all our friends and what

19:00 the other Irish characters were doing, but there was nothing you could really think and you certainly couldn't tell a story.

What kind of things would you think that would help you get through this time circumstance?

The best thing I think was not to show anything towards the Germans, not to show fear or anything of that nature. Just to

19:30 curse them when you could and make sure make them know that you weren't giving in. That's all you could do.

And what was the lighting like in this?

There wasn't any.

How does time feel when you're in this situation?

I don't know

20:00 if I ever thought about it. I don't think I ever did. I may have thought, "Well, it won't be long now till they come back." But I didn't have my watch then. They'd taken that away so I couldn't tell exactly when they were coming, but you'd guess. That's about the only thing you thought about, "Are they going to do this again." I suppose is the main thing.

Did you think you were going to die in this situation?

No, I never thought of dying, no. I never thought of that.

OK, and tell me

20:30 **what happened when you came out of solitary?**

Well, they stripped off the wire of course and I was taken down to have a bath, which was there full of water, and I got in and had a bath and cleaned my, in the same water cleaned my trousers and underpants as far as I could, and my boots, which angered the Huns, the fact that I cleaned my boots,

21:00 bathed my boots. That angered them very much.

Why?

God knows. I don't know, but it did anger them, and they still stank, of course, but there was only one lot of water so it got pretty filthy in no time at all. Odd, very odd.

And where did you go from here, I mean?

Well, when I was finished, then I was

21:30 taken back to my original room and there on my bed was my hat and my shirt and a few other things that I had. My shaving gear, that was there; it was all there. I had a blade razor and it was all there on the bed, so they'd kept it all, including my watch. Very odd people,

22:00 very odd people.

What was it like after all this that you'd gone through, to see, like, your watch?

Surprising, and yet you were glad about, of course, about it. At least I could tell the time if the damn watch would work, windable, or could be wound up. I never really thought about those things, about what it was going to be like or what happened afterwards. I never really thought about it. I probably had too much hate,

22:30 and I had good reason to hate, of course.

Did you speak to the other guys when you came back?

No, we never talked to each other about what might have happened. Some prisoners of war talked to each other about certain things, others didn't. I was one of those that didn't, and most of us thought

that if somebody wanted to talk to somebody, he would talk to you, but only if he wanted to,

23:00 and to ask a question was a bad thing. It might upset him etcetera, etcetera, take him back to some family problem and so on, so we never interfered with anybody to cause any trouble, so I never discussed it. I don't know what happened to the others. Whether this sort of thing happened to the other four officers, I've got no idea, but we never talked about it.

What kinds of things would you talk about?

23:30 Whatever news we could hear, if we had any news to be told. There was, you told what happened at home and perhaps who was winning the football or the cricket and how the army might be going, and then finally we heard eventually there was a war with Japan and of course that was of great interest, and where they were and what they were doing. We talked about that. I remember one day in Warburg, talking to a man called Burge, a British army captain

24:00 from the Warwickshire Regiment. We'd heard on the news, we used to go for a walk after we heard any news at all, and this particular day somebody came and read the news that they'd heard, and the last thing was that a man called Montgomery [General, later Field-Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery] had been appointed to command the army in Egypt. I'd never heard of Montgomery and naturally when we were walking with Burge, I asked him eventually what he

24:30 knew about this fellow Montgomery. He said, "We'd better walk for a little while Terry and I'll tell you about that in a minute." and he walked for 20 or 30 yards and said, "In India in 1937, I was in the Warwickshire Regiment as an adjutant and Montgomery was there as a colonel and.," he said, "We're on parade one day

25:00 with Brigadier Gough.," I've never forgotten those names, "And we're out in front of the battalion on our horses and down this road came the brigadier with all his staff, pulled up, and looked at the whole brigade on parade and he and Montgomery didn't get on well, so he said, 'Colonel Montgomery, you are not in the centre of your battalion, Sir,' so Montgomery took a look over his left shoulder and a look over

25:30 the right, looked straight to the front again and said, '3rd Battalion and 1st Battalion, to the right, shun, one pace right close march'." he said, "and that's Montgomery. That's the sort of thing he does." And that's the best story I've ever heard about Montgomery by the way, and that's the sort of character he was. He was a strange man.

OK, were there any occasions where the Germans would try and

26:00 **extract information from you through tricks or through infiltration?**

Not that I remember, no. No, not that I remember. They'd always ask you after an escape what you knew, or if you did know, but of course nobody ever knew. But as far as I know, that's the only time they ever, they may have asked other people but that's the only thing I know about after escapes,

26:30 and on one occasion at Eichstatt, we had 57 men escape. I did a bit of helping to dig the place out but wasn't a member to go, and all 57 were finally recaptured. And another camp, I wasn't there, 81 I think it was escaped and 81 of them were shot, all British Army people,

27:00 shot for escaping.

Tell us about the escape plans you were involved in?

I was involved with dozens of them but usually you had to think up an idea first and then put it forward to an escape committee who'd agree with it or not agree with it. If they didn't agree with it, you could try and do the escape yourself, but if they agreed with it then you had a lot of help.

27:30 And mainly the thing I was involved in - I did escape eventually of course - but mainly things I was involved was digging tunnels or watching while tunnels were dug, you watched as a spy to make sure that no German came close to the area or, if they were coming close, you could close the whole thing up and have nobody down there in the tunnel. It was quite an interesting thing to do. Kept us busy and

28:00 put a sort of a wish within our hearts at the time, "Well, perhaps I'll get out." But when I escaped on the march from this place Rottenburg, I just saw, one evening about seven o'clock, I saw the chance to dive into a ditch. It was full of water, but I did dive in and nobody saw me and I got away with it. Escaping is a matter of luck. We had one man early on in

28:30 Warburg, an English officer, he escaped and actually got across the Swiss border and sat down, immediately had a smoke. The Germans came across and grabbed, put the guns up and said, "Come across." and he went, they went across the wire and escorted him back again, but he was actually in Switzerland and had he not stopped to have a smoke, he'd have been in England within three months, but he stopped to have a smoke,

29:00 odd. Silly, but he didn't think. He thought, "I'm in Switzerland, I'm OK." He wasn't, but escapes just were, you were either lucky or unlucky. Half the time, of course, you're born lucky, or perhaps more than half the time, but they're all sorts of escape attempts and the famous British air force Squadron

- 29:30 Leader Beattie, not Beattie, it'll come to me in a minute, he...one-leg character [Douglas Bader]. He used to join escape things and nobody could say "no" to him. His name was with me this morning and now it's gone, and he got out on this particular day from Warburg, which was across a big fence,
- 30:00 and stupidly he went into a German latrine to have a piddle. He was followed in by a German soldier who saw him walk in with his great big limp. Bader, Bader was his name, and he came alongside him and he too had a piddle and then said, "Bader, you'd better come back with me." and of course he raised the alarm for the big escape. He didn't know how big it was, but he raised the
- 30:30 alarm, there was an escape, and Bader only did that for notoriety. He was a very unpleasant man actually, Bader, but he was a famous man for flying with one leg. He lost his leg in a crash, I think it was, late in 1937 in an aircraft crash.

So tell us where you

- 31:00 **went from Wustermark? Or how long did you spend there in Wustermark?**

From Wustermark, I went to Eichstatt down near Munich. That's where we were in chains and anchors rather, and the Huns wanted to put us in handcuffed chains and there's one more historian who says we were allowed and we accepted handcuff chains, which he's utterly wrong about that.

- 31:30 The chains, the handcuffs, started at Dieppe, after Dieppe, when the Canadians attacked Dieppe in '42 and the Huns said that they'd found a couple of dead German soldiers with their hands tied behind their back, though the Canadians always said this didn't happen. They always said that, but the Huns then got all the Canadian blokes
- 32:00 and the British blokes who were at Dieppe into handcuffs. The handcuffs were tied with ropes and Britain very stupidly put another group of German prisoners into the same thing in handcuffs, which means that others such as I were handcuffed, and I naturally was selected from about 361
- 32:30 of us, I think it was, and the senior officer was a bloke called, he was a naval bloke from Dieppe called Parker, a very nice man, very funny man, and one day the Huns decided to have a parade at three o'clock or four o'clock in the afternoon or some time in the afternoon and they brought in several cases of things with them. We didn't know what the hell they were.
- 33:00 The Commandant came in, so did the Unterfuhrer, who was an interpreter bloke, and one of these cases was opened and handcuffs with a chain about 18 inches long was produced and shown us and the Unterfuhrer, through the commandant, the commandant through the Unterfuhrer said, "We are changing your handcuffs. We are giving you the handcuff. When you receive this handcuff, you see with the chain on it." All it meant, they didn't want a man at the toilets
- 33:30 on watch, you see, while we were there, that's all they wanted, and in the middle of all this silly speech Parker, who spoke German and understood it very well, suddenly bellowed out in English, "Herr Commandant, when we want lessons from you in progressive barbarity, we'll send for you. Dismissed." And they were dismissed; they went,
- 34:00 taking the handcuffs with them, and we never wore the chains, the handcuffs or the chain handcuffs. He's a funny man, old Parker, but strange.

How long were you wearing the handcuffs for...?

Nine weeks, all told, nine weeks, but we discovered ways of getting the damn things open but we

- 34:30 had to wear them for at least 12 hours every day and we'd always get one hand out and you'd always wear the other one at night anyway in case the Huns, which they'd do the odd examination at night, you'd have to be handcuffed otherwise you'd all be in trouble so, but you could belt your handcuff when you found a stone or something else to hammer down the edge and it wouldn't catch too well, but you had
- 35:00 to wear it in the daytime.

How did you manage to get out of them?

Well, you know how a handcuff has got teeth things? You hammer them with a stone or a brick or anything to break them down a bit and that made them loosen on the keys or on the lock. If you'd had it like that, which was roughly what it was, you could hammer that one down and it'd slide over.

- 35:30 **What was it like wearing handcuffs?**

We were like that during the daytime and when you wanted to go to the toilet you had to have a man at the door of the toilet to unlock one handcuff to make sure you could use the damn thing and there was a lot of this going on. And there was another time when that camp where that happened, where they ordered us

- 36:00 all to salute every German no matter what rank. There were just over 2000 officers in the place from America, Canada, England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and we all had to salute these characters. Private soldiers, no matter what rank, you had to salute a private soldier, so the British

officer whose name was Higgins said, "Alright, well, remove, don't wear your hats and caps." because you

36:30 don't salute with a hat and cap on. The Americans do, we don't, we never did, so we did this and of course that ended up really angering the Huns, but they knew they couldn't do anything about it so they ordered us then to bow to every German no matter what his rank was. When you passed him you bowed, so then Higgins, our big chief, he was a major in the Welsh Regiment,

37:00 he said, "Well alright, from now on, we'll be out every morning, all of us marching up and down, and every damn Hun that comes in will have to serve us and we'll bow all the time." So we had 2000, over 3000 men walking up and down this avenue thing at a common bow and the Huns would salute and that stopped them doing it. They had to stop, because they all had to salute for about half a mile, so we did that with them.

37:30 **And what's it like wearing handcuffs for nine months? What's it like on your wrists and...?**

Irritating, and you sort of felt your shoulders coming in like this. Yes, it was irritating, and if you lay down in the daytime you could rest like this, and of course it did hurt your wrists,

38:00 but we got used to it I suppose and just accepted the damn thing.

What about eating or dressing?

Well, originally, before we could undo one wrist, it was very difficult to eat. Your fork, but you didn't get much to eat anyway to get it down, or if it was in a bowl you'd lift up the bowl and eat straight out of the bowl pouring it out as a bit of a soup, but

38:30 it was a bit funny I suppose, but you couldn't really unlock one arm to eat because the Huns might be in within two seconds and you'd be caught and you'd be in jail again, still in different handcuffs that time. Yes, eating wasn't easy but it didn't worry us much, and we hadn't much to eat anyway.

What about clothes? Dressing

39:00 **and...?**

Well, you were allowed to take, you were supposed to take one off some time in the morning and they allowed us to get dressed, but I've forgotten those hours but you could get dressed but often, particularly wintertime, you didn't get undressed at all because that's to keep anything warm you just had to keep everything but your boots on, and you'd tie your boots together and sleep on the

39:30 boots in case somebody stole them.

And just before the end of the tape, this is at which camp again?

This was at Eichstatt, what was it, 9AZ, I think it was, but it was at Eichstatt.

Tape 8

00:39 **So how did they move from Eichstatt to Rotenberg?**

We always went by train no matter where we went, unless you were to be taken to jail or perhaps a hospital, you went by train under guard of course, and people did escape at times

01:00 from trains so they were very careful.

On those train trips, did you get any impression of what wartime Germany was like?

The only time we had, I only went through Berlin once, and that was very early and we saw some of the places that were damaged badly by bombing. The answer to the rest of the places was no. Because we didn't go through say Munich or any other big town during daylight to see

01:30 damage. No, I didn't see anything, and the farming, the farms were beautiful absolutely gorgeous. Everything was green.

How about were there any impressions of the morale of the German people or anything like that?

From about early '44, the morale started to go downstream. We were quite confident they were going downstream.

02:00 **How could you tell that?**

The way people spoke and rough, crude people became slightly different. You know, my nice kind man became a horrible man, but towards the end of the war no doubt he became a very nice man again knowing that the war was not going their way. And I suppose the worst time was after,

02:30 and it was late in the piece, when their own people tried to kill Hitler, and that would have turned a lot of heads away, and their famous man Rommel [Field-Marshal Erwin Rommel] was killed because of that. Officially he died, but actually he was killed. When I say killed, he was forced to take a tablet.

Would you hear anything about this

03:00 **while in the camps? Did you have any...?**

Yes, we heard lots of rumours.

Well, what did you hear?

Well, we did in fact hear that he had taken a poisonous pill, and he'd been given it and forced to take it.

What did you hear about the plot to kill Hitler?

We didn't hear that until it was over. No, then the plot did exist, but we didn't hear about it at all until he had been, until it was over, the bomb went off

03:30 and didn't kill him, and yet he committed suicide of course. Odd.

Did you hear in the camps anything at all about the Jewish situation in Germany?

No, very seldom, but in Rotenberg we had one Jewish man, I've forgotten his name. He was from the Palestinian

04:00 Port Shipping Company and he was a very big man. He was a captain and one day the Huns called a special parade for us at eight o'clock in the morning and the guards came in, including the SS [Schutzstaffel] guards, which was very unusual, and we each of us ended up with a pistol or a rifle or a Tommy gun [machine gun] in each kidney

04:30 and they took this Jewish man out into the middle, we were in an empty square and they took him out into the middle of the empty square and for 12 hours they bashed him with rifles, with fists, with boots and so on, just bashed him. The only reason is he was a Jew in the British Army or in a unit of the British Army. The Palestinian Port Operating Company, that was the name of it.

05:00 **Did you know why they were bashing him at the time?**

Yes, just because, we knew they were bashing him just because he was Jewish. He hadn't done anything. He'd been a prisoner for...he was a prisoner from Greece so he hadn't done anything.

How had they found out that he was Jewish?

It's easy to mostly, it's easy to tell a person who is Jewish. It's just by looking at them you pretty much know he's a Jew, the same as you know an Aboriginal is an Aboriginal, but you can't tell an Irishman, of course, apart

05:30 really, but they just knew he was Jewish and they belted him. He came to Australia some time in '52 or '53 and he telephoned me. How he got hold of my name I don't know, and I still can't remember his and he just talked to me and I said, "Well, look, do you know the GPO [General Post Office] in Sydney?" He said,

06:00 "I've just been there." I said, "Well, go back there and I'll meet you in 10 minutes time and we'll go to lunch together." So we met there and I took him up to the Imperial Services Club for lunch. I was a member there and we went in. I used to sit at a round table. We sat down at this round table and it was about 20 past one I think when we sat down, and I looked at the menu and it had pork chops on it

06:30 for this lunch, amongst other things of course, and I said to him in a silent sort of voice, "Would you like a pork chop?" He said, "Any other Jews in this place?" and I had a good look around and I said, "No, I don't think so." "Yes." he said, "I'll have one of those." So I asked the waitress to get the largest pork chop she could for him. I ordered one for myself but the largest she could get for him, and the plates were 14 inches wide,

07:00 and she came out with his lunch eventually with two huge pork chops on it plus the vegetables in another bowl. I've never seen someone enjoy pork so much in all my life and we talked about it afterwards and he said, "It's just an old fashioned thing that in the Jewish faith that you don't eat pork chops, and of course we don't breed pigs because of that." but he loved it. He

07:30 was a great, I can't think of his name, delightful man and we talked a bit about Germany, not very much, and he was out here collecting money for Israel from all the Jewish people in Australia and I asked him how he was going. He said, "Well, I landed in Perth and I've been there, been in Adelaide, been in Melbourne, been in Hobart, now I'm in Sydney." I said, "How are you going?" He said, "The Australian Jews

08:00 are more lousy than any other Jew in the world." Now, how much money he got, I've got no idea, but that was his answer, but the Huns belted him that day, it was just terrible. And when you've got a gun on each thing, there's not a thing you can do about it, so they made up their mind to do this very, very

early in the piece and got all these SS people to make sure we didn't interfere.

08:30 You can't interfere when you've got a gun in your kidneys, impossible. He suffered terribly from that for quite a long time, but a delightful man, delightful fellow.

And so tell me what it was like at, was it Rotenberg?

Yeah, Rotenberg. Rotenberg Umfulda, just south of Kassel, but Rotenberg, we all called it Rotenberg.

09:00 What was it like? There were 360 of us there, mostly characters who weren't very popular with the Germans for various reasons. It was an old girls' school as a matter of fact, I've forgotten the name of it, and there were several escapes from there by various characters who managed to get away.

09:30 It was probably the best camp I was in, even though I was amongst 360 or 359 other so-called escape artists and other officers such as myself that did all sorts of things, but it was quite a nice place in fact, but we had a man there who, his name escapes me, a British Army brigadier,

10:00 and he, his name will come to me. I wasn't there when this happened. I got there; I think it was two years after it happened. He had great correspondence with a friend in England and his wife, and they had a method of conveying news to each other and they conveyed things to him

10:30 about the British Army and the war etcetera, etcetera.

How did they do this?

They had a code of some sort they had arranged some time or other. I don't know how they arranged it.

Do you know how the code worked?

No, I don't. No, it was a family code and he, one day, he was in a little tiny room all by himself. It would only hold one person and he was suddenly raided

11:00 for no reason at all, he was just raided, and he decided that what the Huns wanted was his code. Somehow they'd been told about it. That night he was playing bridge with my CO, Ian Campbell, and Kennedy the big boss of the place and somebody else, and he left the place about, the bridge about 11

11:30 o'clock, went out through the toilet area, opened a window and was sitting up on the window when Kennedy had decided he'd better go and find him, what happened to him, and he went out and there was this character, name's gone, sitting in the window and he, Kennedy walked up and asked him what he was doing, and he told him what had happened. He said, "I've told you what happened and the Huns have got the code. Whether they know it or not, I don't know,

12:00 but," he said, "When anybody dies, they send all the mail from that person to that person back to the Red Cross in Switzerland and that must happen to my mail otherwise a lot of people are going to be in a lot of trouble." and he fell down through the window 60-odd feet and he killed himself deliberately to stop the Huns getting the code. Odd, but he did it.

Did Kennedy try and stop him?

Well, he was

12:30 sitting here in the windowsill thing and the square in the window. His feet weren't hanging out the window. Kennedy was here talking to him and he just went 'boing' down. There was no chance of Kennedy stopping him, and he was a top ranking British brigadier who just did that to make sure the Huns didn't get the code.

What happened to the letters?

All the letters that arrived in the mail after he died were sent back to the Red Cross in Switzerland

13:00 to be returned to the family and after a couple of days no others came in. They were stopped in Switzerland. The Huns were funny. They informed the Red Cross in Switzerland immediately of anyone's death, any officer's death. I don't know about troops but any officer's death anyway, and I don't know about just ordinary soldiers, and that happened and the mail stopped and apparently they didn't locate the code. Odd.

13:30 **Do you know what kind of information was getting in to him?**

No, I don't know. That wasn't passed around to be passed around to the escape committee and perhaps to Kennedy, but no, not to young characters like me and we had another bloke there, again his name's gone, he was playing, he was a British officer in the RASC [Royal Army Service Corps], the Royal Service Corps and

14:00 he was telling the Germans quietly about people who were attempting to escape and so on, and the Germans discovered one day apparently that we had found this out, so they took him away and I saw him in Waverley Station in London after I got home or back to England, in a train in Waverley with a big guard, handcuffed

- 14:30 and being taken away obviously under close arrest and to be tried for working with the Huns. There was the odd character like that and he did, that was Rotenberg to me, and the next, I got there about a week before his anniversary arrived, his death anniversary arrived,
- 15:00 and one night about 10 to 12 I got up, I had to go to the toilet, passing this area where he'd gone out the window. I got into the toilet, came back out and he was standing in the square. A huge, it was completely black. Everything was blacked out by the way. In every camp the lights went out at a certain time, different times in each camp, and here was this huge shrouded character
- 15:30 standing in the cross of a corridor and I had to go that way. It frightened the life out of me and I ran through it and I was aglow with light. I almost fell through the door I had to go in and bashed into my bunk and the fellow in the bunk said, "What's the matter?" And they went and had a look and of course they couldn't find it, and the next morning just after parade, Kennedy the CO called to me to report to him afterwards
- 16:00 and he said, "Do you know what day it is?" and I said, "Well, I think it's such and such a date, Sir. Why?" He said, "12 months ago last night, he committed suicide." Most odd, but I did see that shrouded figure and it was exactly 12 months and I wasn't even there at the time he committed it. I knew nothing about it. I knew it happened and I'd met him at a previous camp at Warburg, but young lieutenants didn't speak
- 16:30 to brigadiers except to say, "Good morning, Sir." or something of that nature and salute, so odd, most odd. I don't know whether they saw him again, but I didn't, but now that was '44 so we weren't there for his death, for his anniversary. We weren't there in '45 for it, odd.

Gosh, just...

I've forgotten all about that.

- 17:00 **God, how astounding.**

Yes, it is amazing.

So just tell me what you saw?

I saw some great tall, shrouded, must have been 12 or 13 feet high in a great big white shroud completely alight. More alight than you've got on you now from that light there. The thing was all alight and there was no lamps in the area because the power was switched off in the German section of the building and you couldn't switch

- 17:30 a light on anyway. It just didn't work once they'd switched the power off.

And you had no idea what had happened...

No, I had no idea.

a year earlier?

I knew, didn't know that, I knew he'd committed this suicide, but I didn't know the date. I had no idea of the date. Odd, and they said to me, "You've got to be an Irishman to see those sort of things", some of the characters.

What did Kennedy say to you exactly

- 18:00 **when you told...did he believe you?**

Yeah, he did believe me. He asked me what happened. He said, "I've been told last night that you got some sort of a fright and you burst in through the door back into your cabin area and flopped onto your bed and then jumped down to find out what the hell was the matter." and he said, "Now tell us what happened." And I told him. He said, "Do you know what date it is?" I said, "It's such and such a date." whatever it was, some time in June or July, and, "Yes." he said,

- 18:30 "exactly 12 months ago, Brigadier so-and-so committed suicide." It's extraordinary, extraordinary, so there we are.

Gosh, that's amazing. Just a question - that's kind of come up from what you've been mentioning, can you tell me about the hierarchy that existed

- 19:00 **within the camps, was it...?**

What the German hierarchy?

No, amongst the prisoners. You said that you'd never spoken to like, he was a brigadier, you were a lieutenant even in...?

Within the British Army, very senior officer, very senior and doesn't like junior officers speaking to him unless he wants to talk. The Australian Army is quite different,

- 19:30 very different indeed, but senior officers talk to anybody and you can talk to any senior officer. For

instance, I'm a very junior man, but I know Peter Cosgrove, General Cosgrove, very well and if I meet him at Victoria [Barracks], I go to Victoria Barracks every Tuesday and every Thursday for the RUSI [Royal United Service Institute] up there, and if he happened to be there for some reason or another, he'd say, "Hello, Terry, how are you?" There's this Australian habit. In the British Army, it's different.

20:00 **I guess I mean, was this hierarchy still in place in the camps when you were all prisoners?**

Yes, well again, the British officers all looked to their big chiefs as somebody special and they treat them as somebody special all the way. We treat our chiefs as somebody special, but we talk to them differently, but the British Army it's just a completely different army in that way and

20:30 you've got to accept it. There's nothing you can do about it.

And were you on any sort of working parties or any labour that went on?

No, no, we were allowed out. There was an officers' party that was allowed out once a week to go cutting timber in a nearby forest and

21:00 in that forest they might collect mushrooms and things and sneak them back into the place. I was only allowed out once and I think somebody made a grave error, a grave mistake by allowing me to do that.

21:30 **Why did they make a grave mistake?**

I don't know, but I think allowing, they had to put the names forward to go out, and I think the Huns that agreed, that said I could go, I think they made an error. They didn't realise that this is the bloke they don't like particularly, but I was never allowed out again, just once, and I didn't do anything out there really.

22:00 I watched some wood being cut but I didn't cut any, I wasn't going to, it was good exercise for them of course and it was out of the camp, which was completely different, so it was almost like a holiday for some of them, but I didn't do any work, I ate with them.

Can you tell me what a day-to-day life routine would have been like I guess? We'll use, not Rotenberg, as an example.

22:30 **What was your day-to-day routine?**

You mean ours?

Yeah, yours personally?

Get up.

What time?

It depends on how; I was always up before six o'clock. Get up, if you can, wash the face and hands and visit the toilet or whatever you want to do, get dressed and be on the parade at seven o'clock, which was a counting. The Appell [muster, parade (German)] they called it

23:00 and that was to be counted. Then you'd break off and you might go and make yourself a cup of tea if you had any tea and somebody would boil some water or whatever. You'd have breakfast if you had anything to eat but there was no special thing worthwhile doing really.

How would you fill the rest of the day?

Walking around, having a snooze, playing bridge, almost anything that would just fill the day in,

23:30 day after day after day.

Are you a good bridge player?

I wasn't bad, but I've never played bridge since. Odd, but you had to do things just to fill in time. I played in a chess competition once and I got beaten in eight moves by an Indian doctor, oddly enough, who was there. A very nice bloke and a very good

24:00 chess player, and that was the only time I played. I've played a lot of chess but I don't ever remember ever being beaten in a game in a competition, because I've never played in a competition since then.

So tell me about the food? Where would the food come from, who would prepare it?

I don't know where it came from but I suppose it came from local farms or perhaps the army, some of it. It was all done by British people in Rotenberg; it was done by British officers

24:30 who just loved cooking and some of them probably had restaurants when they got back or started restaurants when they got back, but that's a guess, but it kept them busy all day, which was good for them.

What sort of food would they cook?

The main food we got was spuds, mashed potatoes, hash brown potatoes, boiled potatoes, and

25:00 I still like potatoes by the way, but potatoes were our main dish.

And obviously you were prisoners, but what sort of freedom did you have within the camp? I guess, what kind of scrutiny were you under by the Germans?

Well, there were always huge big sentry boxes up 30

25:30 yards high watching the complete area so you were always, no matter what you did generally speaking, you were always on the watch. They always looked at you day or night, you were, and there were sentries walking up and down outside the big fences. The fences by the way were roughly nine to 10 feet wide and 10 to 12 feet high so you had

26:00 two fences, really, say 12 feet apart and inside was all filled with barbed wire so almost impossible to escape through and it was guarded very carefully by the sentries who were changed every two hours and they marched up and down the fence all day and all night and there were fellers up in these great big baskets up top in the corners and they had machine guns, those fellers. The others had rifles,

26:30 but up in the boxes they had machine guns so you had to be very careful, particularly if you're escaping or trying to escape.

And towards the end of the war, did they march you a lot around?

Yes, they did. They marched, I've forgotten the date, I think it was early in February and

27:00 they marched us out and we went first of all towards the Russians, and the Russians came a bit close to us, so they marched us closer to the Americans. The Americans came close we went back towards the Germans. We did almost a circle, and one evening about seven o'clock, I just saw an opportunity to dive into a bit of a ditch and I did so and escaped. They didn't see me.

Walk me through that. How did you see the opportunity, what was...?

Well, I happened to be on the outside

27:30 of the parade, the outside flank of one line of four, and as we came up to this ditch thing, I just saw the hole that I could dive into and that was it, I did.

What went through your head?

"Get out of here. Escape."

Were you thinking about being shot or...?

No, no. Escape is just a thing you do if you can, and you don't think of being shot

28:00 and I wasn't, of course. They didn't even notice I was gone, luckily. Probably if they'd known I was gone, they'd probably bayonet me, but they didn't, so at that end of the war they might not have done anything either because it was for them a terrible end to the war. For us, it was a gorgeous end.

What did you do? Like, walk me through it. Exactly how long did you spend in the ditch, where did you

28:30 **go after that?**

I spent until it was dark, I spent about two and a half hours in there roughly, and then I decided to go to where I, in the direction I thought the American Army was, quietly, but the first thing you do really is get out of an area, the ditch thing like I was in, and go to the nearest bunch of trees and hide in trees and sit and think for a while. That's the first thing you have to do.

What did you think about?

How I can get to the Americans, I knew the American Army was fairly close to us, how quickly can I get there

29:00 safely.

Was there anything that was a part of your uniform, I've just heard about some of the air force guys whose buttons could be turned into?

No. I didn't have anything. They had all sorts of escape things inside. No, I didn't have any of those. I don't know any army people who did, but the air force characters flying over Germany at night, they always had them.

And so did you have any means of navigation or idea of...?

Not really, I didn't have any

29:30 compasses or anything. You had a vague idea of the land area and what might be the nearest town. In this case, I had the vaguest of vague idea where the American army was and I was heading towards them.

How did you have any idea where the American Army was?

All sorts of tales you hear, and something a goon [German guard] might say - that's a Hun - might say and you listened to all these sorts of things and decided, well,

30:00 from the noise, that the army's close to us or from what they're saying, the army is close to us or the Americans are coming our way, something of that nature.

What were you wearing?

Just the old stuff I had, my old tunic and my trousers and my old boots that still stank.

And how long did it take you to...?

I got there in two days to the Americans. I was very lucky.

Can you tell

30:30 **me about the process? How would you travel, where would you sleep, what would you eat?**

You walked and you slept perfectly under in trees or in a hedge, but you walked quietly along a hedge or through the forest and so on, and that's what I did and I got to a little town called, wasn't Polsfeld, Polsfeld was near it, gone, and I hid there, and

31:00 the following morning the Americans came in.

How did you make yourself known to the Americans?

Well, I was wearing a slouch hat, which of course the Americans didn't know, but I had my hands up like this because otherwise I might have been shot, because any soldier can shoot anybody, and I was eventually questioned by an American officer and I told him who I was and

31:30 what I was and I'd just escaped from a prisoner of war place, or a prisoner of war on the march and some way or other he believed me and I was led to a jeep and away, was good.

What did he say to you, what was his...?

Well, what he said to me when I'd been in the jeep for a little time, he asked me if I spoke German and I said, "Soldaten Deutsche." which is soldier's German, which wasn't a good

32:00 German, and he handed me a Tommy machine gun and he said, "With this Tommy gun, your language will be perfect, so you can question any German you like." But the Americans were strange in the use of guns. We went into

32:30 Gotenfeld, where the American hospital was, which I ended up in, not Gotenfeld, can't think of the name of the town [Gottingen], it's in that form you've got there somewhere and the colonel was in front, the driver was in the left-hand seat driving and I was sitting in the back, and he told this

33:00 driver to pull up and across the road going in the opposite direction, sorry the same direction as us, were two American soldiers in full uniform and they were both Negroes and he picked up this gun and he shot both of them dead, this American colonel, and it frightened the life out of me and I asked him what he was doing. He said, "This place is out of bounds to American Negroes." He just killed them.

33:30 **What did you think about that?**

I was horrified. Thank God everything in America's changed today. They don't do that to a Negro but in those days a Negro was nothing, absolutely nothing.

Did you say anything to him?

No, it wasn't worth...he might have shot me, too. They were odd people in those days, very odd.

What was your

34:00 **feeling?**

What, about that?

No, being with the Americans as in not being a prisoner anymore, I guess.

Well, I felt grand to be out of being a German prisoner, but after that situation I was very careful about what I said to the Americans, very careful, and in Polsfeld when we got there where it was on a river, I think it was the Saal and

34:30 across the river easily seen were German soldiers in uniform. There was aircraft there and there were guns there and that evening the Americans of course put on dinner in a house and the general commanding the division was in this particular room that I was in at that time and

35:00 we talked about this and that, and about nine o'clock, they'd given me various things and a haversack

and so on, and I put it all away and I put it all down and I said, "Well, good night gentlemen, I'll see you in the morning." And the general said, "Where are you going?" And I told him I was taking off to the bush and he said, "What's the bush?" and I said, "Timber, trees." He said, "Why?" and I said, "Sir, you and I walked around this village this

35:30 afternoon. We saw what the Germans had across the river. I think about 12 o'clock tonight they'll bomb this place, so I'm not going to be here. I'm going out about four miles, now." He said, "Are you serious?" I said, "Yeah, I'm deadly serious, I'm certain they're going to bomb it." So he called the whole division out and we marched them off and they hated me. Here's an Australian ex-prisoner of war forcing them to be moved. I was very unpopular and about 12 o'clock the

36:00 bombing started and we saw that village at eight o'clock in the morning. It was as flat as that table and I did this because I knew what the Huns were like and the guns were just over there and the aircraft were just over there. The Americans were prepared to accept it. The Germans were being defeated and defeated and defeated, so he's not going to fight us any longer. That was their attitude, but it didn't happen that way so I became a very popular man with all the American people that morning,

36:30 otherwise a lot of them might have been dead.

What did you do with the Americans?

What did I do with the Americans? I ended up as an interpreter first of all, and then I ended up leading a company across that river in one of the battles. It wasn't a real battle, but their officer had been injured and I ended up leading them across the river and I was commanding them for two days even though I

37:00 weighed six stone two and was an Australian, and that was that. And then I got very sick, very sick indeed and ended up in hospital at Gottingen, an American hospital.

Just a question about being an interpreter. What was your role as an interpreter, what did you do?

Well I didn't do anything, in fact. Officially, he told me I was the

37:30 interpreter because I spoke as I called it Soldaten German, soldier German, but I didn't have to do any work on that line at all. I didn't try to speak German to any person; I didn't have to.

What was your interaction with the Germans while you were with the Americans?

Well, I didn't kill any of them as he did or as others did. I never really thought of it from that point of view. I just hated

38:00 the Germans but I never took any unfair advantage of them. No Australian soldier or British soldier would do that. I had no reason to do it anyway. I was filled with hatred but I wasn't filled with that sort of hatred. In other words, I wasn't a murderer, because that's really what it would be.

What was

38:30 **it like for you, I guess, emotionally if that's the right word, suddenly being on the other side? You were the one with the gun now?**

It was a great feeling, a magnificent feeling to be free, to be able to walk over there for no reason at all and look at something. It was a great feeling.

Is there any particular thing that you'd do to make the most of the freedom, like for example, go for walks

39:00 **or...?**

What, in those days? No.

In the immediate time?

No, no.

How about in later life?

I found being able to walk around London a bit odd, and at one stage another character and I were walking down a street in London and a bus or a truck or something backfired and we both hit the ground and very quickly, because you know, it was a thing you did, throw out

39:30 all of a sudden, so we ended up getting up and dusting ourselves off again but that certainly only ever happened to me after the war over there, was pretty much finished. The war wasn't ended when I got to London, but to me it was finished. No, I don't think there was anything else that would puzzle me or worry me.

I guess any little freedoms that you particularly enjoyed?

40:00 Just being able to go for a walk or be able to go into a shop and buy something, being able to get on a

bus and go for a trip. It was wonderful, and yet some people from Eichstatt, from England in that, name's disappearing,

- 40:30 where we were camped. They went up to London and came straight back because London was so strange and they felt they had to be with a group of Australians at that time. Pat Lawrie is one of those blokes, my old friend. I suppose it was whatever happened was probably an individual matter. I don't think any group of individuals felt the same sort of thing, but I never had that trouble apart from when
- 41:00 that thing backfired and we hit the ground very quickly.

Tape 9

- 00:36 **I read in your information that you heard this screaming from a tent and you were called over...?**

In the hospital.

Yeah, can you tell us about that?

Well, it was in fact a terrible experience, this woman, female screams that I heard and eventually a doctor came in or a hospital attendant

- 01:00 came in and asked me if I spoke German and I said, "Soldaten German." soldier's German. "Please come with us." And I did, into the tent, huge American tent next door. It was built specially for hospital purposes and this poor soul, I was taken in and this poor soul was lying there on a hospital stretcher with just a sheet
- 01:30 over her, an old, old, old white-haired woman, weeping and wailing and shouting and so on, and they pulled the sheet right off her and there was nothing to tell me she was female except her voice and this long hair and it wasn't very long
- 02:00 because the Germans had cut it off anyway. There were no breasts there at all and just teats and I sat down on a stool and did a tremendously wrong thing. I started to speak to her in German, telling her she was in an American hospital, she was OK, but it was all in German and this just, the German made her even worse than she had been,
- 02:30 and suddenly I realised what I'd done wrong, and I changed and use one word: "American ich er." "American ich er, American ich er, American ich er." "I'm an American, I'm an American, American ich er." And gradually she stopped weeping and she started to talk
- 03:00 and I asked her how old she was and she said she was 23. Now, I at that time weighed six stone two and she was a damn sight thinner than I was, just skin and bone. What happened to her I don't know, I've got no idea. She was Jewish and been in one of the Jewish camps nearby, the concentration camps and that, that
- 03:30 was bad. That was a terrible thing to see so closely and so on, but the doctor that brought me in just stripped the sheet off her and there she was, just an old woman in her 80s somewhere, turns out to be 23. Terrible. And at the same time prior to that, a nurse in this hospital, I'd been out for five days and the day I woke up
- 04:00 it was morning, I asked for a glass of water and an American patient next to me handed me the water and I had a sip of course and he said, "You're the luckiest goddamn guy in this hospital." I remember that and I asked him why and he said, "There's a nurse on duty every day here and every night she sits at your bed and looks after you."
- 04:30 And I said, "Well, where is she?" Eventually I said this, cause I was very ill and he said, "Out having morning coffee." and I went back to sleep. I did wake up a little time later and there was this very lovely American nurse called Ruth Johnson, she was a very lovely person and I told her what this character next door had said to me and I asked her
- 05:00 why she did it and she said, "I got a telegram from America saying that my husband had been killed in the American Air Force in New Guinea. I got that telegram about half an hour before you arrived here and when you arrived, you were the spitting image of my husband." Most odd, and she was a lovely girl. She came to London on one occasion and I took her out to dinner. They had a special place for American nurses to live
- 05:30 in London up on Sloan Square and I was at the Claridge Hotel, yes it was the Claridge, and I'd stayed there and I'd arranged for dinner. The dinner turned out to be spam. Do you know what spam is? That's all they had, this spam, but I talked the waiter into producing a bottle of wine for us and he did this, a lovely bottle of French
- 06:00 Cognac, not Cognac, one of the wines, and we sat and talked and nattered [chatted] for a long, long

time about this and that and the other and then I walked her home to the place where she had to stay. I never saw her again, but she was a lovely, lovely person and here I was reminding her of her husband, most odd. 'Spitting image' she said.

06:30 Strange world isn't it? But that poor woman, that poor Jewish woman that was in that hospital in Gottingen, I don't know what happened to her at all. I wish I did really, I suppose, but she'd have been gone now. I would think she lasted that long, if she ever recovered, but she had no breasts to see except small teats, just skin and bone. Every hair in her body was white. She'd been

07:00 starved and starved and starved and no doubt beaten. I didn't ask her what they'd done to her. I didn't want to raise that problem with her just to find out for myself. And I suppose I talked to her for an hour. I never timed myself. I never even looked at the time but these are things that today very few people know what the Huns did, this sort of thing, or that an Australian character would have seen it happen, or not seen it happen but seen the result.

07:30 **So just a reflection to that, I mean, some people you talk to say that the Germans treated people, well, not the Jewish, but the Germans treated prisoners better than the Japanese?**

In general terms, that's correct, but they certainly didn't treat the Russians very well. They certainly didn't treat the Polish prisoners well. They didn't treat the French well. They did treat the British well.

08:00 They did treat the Australians and New Zealanders and Canadians and the Americans well, but the Poles and the French and the Greeks, for instance, they got a very, very bad time from the Huns, but certainly none of us were treated in any way similar to what the Japanese did to our soldiers.

Well what about you personally, though?

Individually, yes. There were odd cases and there must have, there's probably many odd cases such as mine,

08:30 but as a group of soldiers, no, the Japanese were terrible, really terrible.

Did you see any other evidence of the treatment of the Jewish people apart from this woman like when you were with the Yanks [Americans]?

Yes, down near Nuremberg, I was with the Americans and I passed a Nuremberg concentration camp and they were just digging up

09:00 huge holes with what are they called, those things that dig holes up?

Bulldozers?

Yeah, bulldozers. Digging up huge holes and shoving bodies into them, and I stood at the gateway to this place and there were a man and woman at that gateway, Jewish men and women who wouldn't even, couldn't even talk. Now I, as I said,

09:30 I weighed six stone two and they were probably, if they were five stone that'd be all they were and they'd been there for, I don't know, years because the Germans put Jewish people into prisoner of war in 1934 originally, so God knows how many years people, some people, had been in prison and ill-treated like that, terrible.

What did their faces look like?

Just a staring

10:00 face, just a big staring face. I made a terrible mistake in Double Bay in Sydney once in 19, I think it was 1956, I was a Lions International and I had to go down to Bondi to Double Bay to a special function being run by the Woollahra Lions and somebody asked me to look after a place,

10:30 a stall, while they went and had a cup of tea, and this stall was a fishing stall. You paid, I think it was a florin [two shilling piece] for a fishing line to get a bottle of something out from the water down below and a woman started fishing right opposite me or where I was standing. I wasn't fishing, I was just standing there watching and taking the money and suddenly I saw on the inside

11:00 of her arm her number that the Huns used to place on women, just inside the arm, and I stupidly said to her, "Wie geht...[es ihnen]?" German, "How are you?" And she fled. I chased her and caught her. She was Jewish and I apologised and told her what I'd said was wrong and I was Australian, I'd been in Germany as a prisoner and so on and I'd just made a terrible mistake,

11:30 and she came back. Now this is nine years after the war ended roughly and she was still in terror of somebody speaking to her in German and here she was a migrant in Australia, so people don't forget very easily.

What about yourself?

No, I've never forgotten. Never. And I will never set foot in Germany.

12:00 And in Crete, when we were in Crete two years ago for the sixtieth anniversary, there were a lot of

Germans there, and I never spoke to one of them. Crete is full of German holidaymakers. I never spoke to one. I never went near one of them, never will.

How often do the memories come back to you?

Every day, every night, and sometimes I have terrible dreams but there's nothing you can do about it.

12:30 The doctors can't really do anything about it anyway. Perhaps I'm mad, but if I'm mad that's too bad.

How do you deal with this situation?

At night, I'll get up and have a glass of water and go back to bed and lie there and go to sleep again and it's alright then. During the day, I'll just go for a walk. Sometimes

13:00 I have a drop of that. I don't drink much. I drink about three cups of that, no more than that. I don't drink beer. I'm not a great drinker, but I often have that sort of thing or have a whiskey, and while you're having a sip of whiskey, well, you can relax and chuck it away, but it's there for you to talk to and listen to and think about all the time, all the time. That Jewish woman

13:30 in Double Bay, I was horrified at what I'd done myself and I had done it without thinking, but just from a friendly point of view, a friendly thing. It was, to me it was just a friendly action. I've never done it since, never said anything like that since.

And what kind of dreams do you have?

Horrible ones at times. Sometimes I chase a lovely girl fairy, but

14:00 that's old age galloping on.

Do any of the German officers come into your mind, their faces?

A few times yeah, yeah, particularly in a dream, particularly in a dream. It might hit me tonight too after this chatter. It did when I wrote that other stuff too,

14:30 but what the heck. I'm not going to change it and I've got a magnificent, lovely wife that cares for me very much, really she's wonderful.

Can you tell us where you were and how you felt? Just quickly, sorry I have another question about the Jewish camps. You saw...

15:00 **No, I'll just move on. Can you tell us where you were and what you felt when you heard that the war was over?**

Actually, I was in England. I got back to England; I've forgotten the date. It was some time in late April of '45 and the war was over. No, I'm sorry, I was in the hospital

15:30 up in the Three Counties Emergency Hospital up in north of London and I was there. I couldn't do anything about it but the doctor that was looking after me, he went to London that night to celebrate and told me it was a great thing, the great celebration they had in London that night. Yes, that was quite astounding, the Three Counties Emergency Hospital, a very nice hospital.

16:00 **Did you speak to anyone about your experiences as a POW?**

No, no, until I wrote that first thing there, I'd never said a word. The reason I wrote the first thing, by the way, was when that book The First at War about my battalion was being put together, a man who didn't like me wrote a story about the Irish camp, and I was

16:30 sent a copy too, and the editor asked what I thought about it and I called him on the telephone and I said, "Withdraw it immediately, because if you print that I'll sue you, I'll sue the whole association and everybody concerned, because what Kennedy has written is completely and utterly incorrect. He'd never been in an Irish camp, he never spoke to me about it and he's just

17:00 guessing." And he said, "Well, you write your story, Terry, and we'll print that." So I wrote my story and that's it there. Oddly enough, the bloke Kennedy never spoke to me ever again. There was no reason for me to speak to him anyway, cause I wasn't in the same area as he was, but I did see him in the Imperial Service Club from time to time

17:30 and the first time I saw him, I said, "G'day." or something, and I never spoke to him again because he didn't reply.

And just tell us about coming home from England after the war?

Well, we came home by ship. It was a South African ship, not The African Star,

18:00 the African something or other, and in the little cabin I was in they had six ex-officers, ex-prisoners of war all coming home. It was delightful, but one little thing about that was to be awake, dressed in daylight as the ship moved up and down outside Sydney Harbour. They wouldn't let them in before

dawn and we came in just

- 18:30 as the sun rose and I was standing beside a gentleman, George Hooper, a major whom I knew very well. He was in the battalion with me and he was waving away at Mosman. I said, "What are you waving for?" He said, "You see that top house." I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, come right down for four streets and you see my wife waving to me." and sure enough there she was waving a great flag to him and it was a magnificent trip. The food was dreadful,
- 19:00 absolutely dreadful, but that didn't matter at all, didn't matter, and we just landed in Sydney and got away and that was it. Now, for us, there was no welcome despite what the poor Vietnam soldiers were saying, we weren't welcomed back to Australia except by the stupid Duke of Gloucester who was drunk when he spoke to us, 11 o'clock in the morning. He was supposed to be there at nine o'clock. He didn't turn up
- 19:30 till 11, and when he did he was drunk, but then he was a drunkard anyway, and they took us to the showground. There was nobody there to greet us and meet us and wave or say cheerio etcetera and these poor fellers from Vietnam, they are going through a different type of hell at not being welcomed home to Australia and I know a few of them that are. I know a man that was in Concord, not Concord, in the hospital at Greenslopes with me,
- 20:00 he lives down at Yamba. He can hardly speak because of throat cancer, which came from that Agent Orange that the Americans used to destroy various timber and grass and so on, but it hit a lot of their troops and it hit our troops, and a lot of them had some form of cancer. This poor man, all he does all day, by the way,
- 20:30 down at Yamba is fish, but he can't eat fish because of the condition of his throat and the operations. He can't eat fish in case he gets a bone, but he fishes all day and gives the fish away. Poor man. I can't think of his name.

So why wasn't there a proper welcome for you?

Well, I don't know, but is it necessary? You know it's...

- 21:00 We didn't ever think about it, the need for a proper welcome, or we should have been properly welcomed. We, to me, to us I think, we didn't even think about it, it was stupid, I think, so we certainly didn't worry about it.

And tell us about the upcoming years after the war, how you settled back into civilian life?

- 21:30 Well, the first thing, of course, I wasn't discharged from the army because of my ill health. I wasn't discharged until the 30th of July 1946. I spent most of that time in Concord Hospital, which was the repatriation hospital, and so I was still in uniform and then I was discharged from the army and I had to buy some suits.
- 22:00 So I, because I knew I was going to be looking for work, I bought three suits with two pairs of pants. I bought a sports coat and four or five other pairs of pants because I had this terrible fear that what happened to me previously was going to happen to me again at any old time, when I had that castor oil, and it just developed that way, and I still wear three pants a week. Mai [Mrs Fairbairn]
- 22:30 today brought three back from the drycleaners, and on Monday or Tuesday three others will go the drycleaners. They haven't been dirtied, but I've got to send them away. Now I know that's stupid, but I have to do it. The welcome home was, I suppose, I was lucky. I got my old job, previous to going to the Darwin Mobile Force, I got my job back with Hastings Deering,
- 23:00 but then in April of '48 a gentleman I knew in the army very well from the 2/2nd Battalion, Paul Cullen, he ended up as a general later on, he called me on the telephone one day and said, "Terry, what are you doing when you knock off work?" I said, "Nothing really, why?" "I want you to come to my office." So I went up to his office and he said, "We're having trouble in the Royal Blind Society." and I said,
- 23:30 "What sort of trouble?" He said, "Well, Helen Keller, the famous blind woman from America, is coming and she's coming here next week and in January we employed a man to arrange her three-month tour of Australia. We've now sacked him because we've found out from him that he's disobeyed all the rules that she was only to work four hours every second day.
- 24:00 After all, she was a blind woman, a bit feeble and 68 years of age and we've sacked him and we want you to take over Helen's tour, go up to Newcastle with her first, then straight down to Melbourne and in Melbourne get all these other people changed, all the arrangements. You can by the telephone, do it by phone, cancel it all and you arrange four hours every second day, and you'll have to please
- 24:30 get all the other people that he's got involved, involved in one four-hour trick." And I did that and I ended up doing that successfully and they wouldn't let me go when I got back because the Blind Society was in financial trouble at that time and they asked me to investigate it and I did and I resigned then to the general, who was a Justice
- 25:00 of the Supreme Court, Justice Victor Maxwell, he was the president, and they wouldn't accept my resignation but they sacked 13 of the other staff. One cedar table 13 feet long, a dinner table 13 feet

long and five feet wide had disappeared, been got rid of by some staff member,

25:30 the things that they did was terrible and the Society was actually broke, and I arranged a meeting with 2UW, the radio station [Sydney commercial radio station], one Saturday and we got 24,000 pounds in one day, put us back in the black one day, but I got fed up with doing that work because of various reasons.

26:00 But I was offered the job of the Lions International representative in Australia with Lions Club because it was quite new in Australia then and I went over with Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand forming Lions Clubs, and every time I got back to Sydney I didn't even have a girl that I could take out to dinner, because they were all engaged doing other things, so I gave that up, but I've

26:30 had a wonderful life really.

Tell us about your meeting with the Prime Minister and when you were chosen for the Crete...?

You mean that photograph over there? Well, this was down in Melbourne the day we took off for Crete, Greece and Crete.

What was this first, before we tell the story?

It was the sixtieth anniversary of the battle of Greece and Crete, and 20 people Australia-wide were selected

27:00 by the government to go over there as their guests and I was one, there were 13 soldiers and I was one of the 13 soldiers involved and that's sheer luck, but I went and the Prime Minister was down in Melbourne to wish us farewell and of course we all met him and I told him the story about Bob Menzies [Sir Robert Menzies, then Prime Minister of Australia] visiting Tobruk in 1941 with Tom Blamey [General Sir Thomas Blamey, then Commander AIF Middle East] the

27:30 general and examining or inspecting a troop of soldiers of ours as a guard of honour, and as they walked away back to their car having done this inspection, the troops who were in fact on retirement sort of leave, they'd been busy for three months and were just relaxing, they were looking out all the windows and broken-down buildings and sitting on top of walls and they started to sing a song

28:00 to Bob and Tom as they walked away and the song was, "Goodbye Mr Blamey and Mr Menzies too, since we've joined the AIF we've been buggered about by you. Recruiting was a failure and our training is a farce, so you can stick the AIF right up your..." And I told John Howard [current Prime Minister of Australia] that in Melbourne and sang it to him and you can see in that photograph he's laughing.

28:30 Menzies, by the way, I met him in 1948 in Sydney at a function in which he was a speaker and I had to move a vote of thanks to him and he was a magnificent speaker and in moving my vote of thanks, I couldn't think of a word to say, so I got to the microphone and did this to the mob and they all stood up. There were about seven or eight hundred people there

29:00 and I just said, "Three cheers for Mr Menzies, hip-hip-hooray, hip-hip-hooray." and bowed to old Bob and then sat down. Afterwards in having tea or coffee or a drink later on out the back, I was introduced officially to him and he said, "I normally don't like votes of thanks." he said, "but yours is the best I've ever had. Thank you very much." And so we got talking like and I sang that, I asked him if he remembered being in Tobruk and he said, "Yes." and I said, "Do you remember

29:30 the song the troops sang to you as you and Tom Blamey went away from the inspection of our guard of honour?" And he looked at me with a bit of a funny eye and he was a strange, to me he was a strange man, and he looked at me and said, suddenly a smile appeared and he said, "Yes, I remember it." and he started to sing it, so it went down very well with old Bob and from then on he turned out to be a warm-hearted character rather than an aloof character to me,

30:00 so there you are.

I'm just starting to wrap up. How do you feel each Anzac Day?

I think Anzac Day is a great, great day and I think the best thing about it today or next Anzac Day is that so many young people including all sorts of migrants and Chinese, Japanese, no matter where they come from, and by the way I always go to Sydney for the Anzac

30:30 Day march for my battalion, what's left of us down there, the members, and Sydney is packed with all sorts of people, but I'm delighted to see these people and young kids lining the streets. I understand the same thing has happened in Brisbane on Anzac Day and in Cairns I'm told it's the same. I think it's great for Australia's future.

What kinds of things do you think about yourself on that day?

31:00 Old soldiers and old friends, and, "I wonder what happened to Tom? I'm sorry old what's-a-name was killed, etcetera, you know, nothing else really.

And just finally, do you have any final words about your experience in your life?

Well I, frankly think I was very lucky in many, many ways. I wouldn't have been surprised had the Germans killed

31:30 me anyway, so I was lucky to escape that and I've been lucky ever since really and I'm very lucky to have a wife such as the one I've got. It's amazing; I'm very lucky.

Thank you very much.

Thank you, old boy.

Thanks for telling your story which was at times very hard for you, I'm sure.

INTERVIEW ENDS