Australians at War Film Archive

Archie Burton (Duke) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 6th May 2003

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/97

Tape 1

01:00 **Would you be able to tell me firstly where you where born, what year you were born, where and which school you went to and sort of like your family and what your family was doing in your early childhood years up to your late teens?**

I was born in 1920 in Elsternwick, which is between here and Melbourne.

01:30 I went to school, I started school at Caulfield State School and then from there we shifted up to Glenhuntly, during, I can't remember exactly, it must have been about the second or third year of schooling. And then we shifted up to Glenhuntly and then I went to Caulfield South

02:00 State School. It was a brand new school, the opening of the school. From there, I think we shifted back and we went down and lived in Elsternwick and I went back to Caulfield were I started. And when I finished there I went to Caulfield Tech., which is now Monash University.

02:30 Caulfield Campus I think they call it, anyway the buildings are still there, but of cause they have expanded now, since the University took over there's a lot more buildings. While I was at Caulfield Tech. I think they had a company of school cadets and

03:00 I got involved in that. My father was a returned solider from the First World War and….

Which regiment did he serve in?

I was in artillery, 2/14th Field Regiment.

That was you?

That was me.

What about your father?

My father, by a strange coincidence, they didn't call them regiments in those days, they called them Artillery Field Brigades. He was in the 14th Field Brigade. I followed on in the 2/14th, not by any design it just happened. So that was a bit of a coincidence. And then after that, what happened. Oh, he was serving in the, what they called the Militia in those days, Citizen Military Forces

04:00 and he'd been more or less continuous since from the early 1920s I think, he was involved with it. And when I was about 14 years old I got myself into the Senior Cadets in the artillery up in Chapel Street,

04:30 they were still called artillery brigades then, 4th Field Brigade it was. There was no proof of age; they didn't want birth certificates or anything like that. You just said "I'm 16", you had to be 16 in the senior cadets, I'm only 14.

So did people lie quite frequently about that?

Did they lie frequently?

Yeah, about the age? Was there many underage people?

No, not a great number.

05:00 Well there was probably more than me but I didn't tell anyone how old I was. I didn't tell a lie, nobody asked me. I might of at the beginning. Anyway two years in the Senior Cadets with the Militia and I might of automatically, I've served my two years as Senior Cadet, I'm automatically into the, transferred into the Militia,

05:30 I'm only 16, and you were supposed to be 18 but I still didn't tell anyone. I don't think it was a serious crime, not an offence they'd hang you for.

With your father, I'd like to ask you a few questions did he actually talk much about his experiences in the First World War to you when you were young?

Oh, more or less. He didn't,

06:00 he told me he nearly got killed once, he wasn't, they were in dugouts he said and about a 5 inch shell landed square into his dugout were he used to sleep, but he wasn't there at the time, he said had he'd been there at the time it would have been the end of him and it would have been the end of me, I wouldn't of come into existence.

Which fronts did he serve in?

He was the baby of the family,

06:30 he had four brothers that were older then him.

And they also served in the war?

Yeah.

Any of them serve in Gallipoli?

Yeah two of them out of, counting my father there were five altogether. Two of them were on Gallipoli, no it might have been three, I think three were on Gallipoli. His first taste of war was in France, he wasn't old enough to get to Gallipoli.

07:00 There was, at home where I used to live, he had a big photo with the five brothers with their uniform and so forth, it was a large photo in a frame about that big, with the whole five of them there.

07:30 **And how often did he recount his experiences with, on the front line?**

In the war?

Yeah to you. Did he talk about it often; was he very open about it?

No, no, not often. Now and again he would tell me one or two things.

How would he talk about it? What instances would he bring it up or would you have to ask him?

No I think he volunteered the information,

08:00 I didn't ask. I don't remember asking, well I was curious, I suppose I might of asked a question. You are going back what, seventy odd years. I can't remember what happened, exactly what happened back seventy years.

Was he awarded any medals?

No, only campaign medals, that was all. You mean did he win a Victorian Cross?

08:30 **Well if he won a Victorian Cross I'm sure you would tell me.**

No, no just an ordinary campaign medals.

What about his brothers, did they talk about the First World War to you? Your uncles?

No not really. One of them lived with us for a short period, for six or twelve months or so.

09:00 But no, I didn't ask them about the war. I don't recall asking them any questions. Not that I wasn't interested, but I just can't recall any occasion where it arose. You read about fellows that don't discuss the war,

09:30 for some reason, I think they get a bee in the bonnet that war is terrible and that they can't bring up the memories and so forth, but no that didn't happen with me.

10:00 I don't know why, they just think war is terrible and had some terrible experiences and seen terrible things. They just shut it out of their lives they won't talk about it. Between me and my farther, there wasn't anything like that, he used to tell me occasionally, he'd say

10:30 different experiences he had through the war. But that stands out in my memory about the shell bursting in his dugout where he used to sleep. I remember that.

What about in your early schooling days, your secondary school, early schooling, what can you recall about the times

11:00 **as far as the depression effected your life? Where you effected by the depression in a serious way?**

No, not really. When we still living down at South Caulfield, and I used to walk to Caulfield Tech. which is a pretty fair walk which, it would be a best part of three kilometres, I suppose, I used to walk to

school. I've got vivid recollections of hundreds of men chipping weeds out of

11:30 gutters. There were no concrete gutters then, they were blue stone gutters and they were all on the dole. But they didn't get money for nothing on the dole in those days; they had to work for it. All gangs, you'd strike a gang of a hundred or two hundred men all chipping away

12:00 at weeds in the gutters. And they used to get, used to go to the Town Hall was a distribution points and they used to be handed out food and meat, and of cause depending on how many dependants you had you got that much more. But I don't think there was any money involved, they didn't actually give them money, they gave them food.

12:30 **How many brothers or sisters did you have?**

I'm the eldest of; I've got one sister and a younger brother. I'm the eldest of the three. They are still living. My sister lives over in Mulgrave. And the youngest of the family, my young brother he lives near the Gold Coast up in Queensland.

13:00 **Your general situation during the depression was okay; you had food on the table?**

Yeah, yeah.

You didn't have to struggle?

My father was a dental mechanic, that was his trade and they must have been hard times I suppose, when he didn't have as much work as he'd like. He wasn't working for himself; he was working for a dentist. He was employed by the dentist.

13:30 But and he used to push, he'd ride a bike to work, the ol' push bike. I can't recall anytime where he was actually out of work. He had work right through the depression. I suppose people like undertakers they were never out of work and either are dentists, I suppose. You've got to have fangs to chew with, haven't you? Although,

14:00 I haven't got many, I've only got five left and I can manage all right. They only thing I can't do is eat an apple I can't get a grip with my top jaw on an apple. I can manage if I cut it up, no worries.

What was it like at Caulfield, is it Caulfield Tech. were you saying?

Yeah, Caulfield Tech.

And what years did you do there? Years 7 to Year 12?

14:30 No I didn't finish one year because I went to work. I was offered a job, a bloke, one of my mates in the same street; his father ran a clothing factory up in Melbourne. It was up near in Lonsdale or La Trobe Street up the north end of the city. So, I was offered a job there,

15:00 so I was highly excited. I left school against; I think my mother didn't want me to go. Any way that was the end of my schooling, I didn't finish the first year.

Was your father encouraging of this?

I can't remember what his attitude was. To me, leaving school to go to work, I can't recall what his attitude was

15:30 towards it. So, anyway, that is why I didn't complete my first years of education at the Tech.

But your mother was supportive of this; oh no she wasn't, she was against it?

She wanted me to stay at school.

And what was this job that you applied for again?

No, I didn't apply for it. It was offered to me. It was just sweeping

16:00 floors, if I remember rightly. It wasn't nothing. Well I'm only, what, a fourteen year old and there was nothing brilliant in it. Anyway the outcome was I wasn't there so I don't know whether I had twelve months there. The out come was that the inspectors

16:30 discovered that he was employing too many juniors to seniors. You're only allowed a certain percentage I think. So, I got the bullet, because he exceeded the quota. And next thing I got a job with a mob making brass plates

17:00 and rubber stamps. I was there for, I don't know, I can't remember about six months, I suppose. In the mean time I had put in for a job with the railways and this is a very funny incident in my life. One of my uncles who lived in South Australia

17:30 after the war, had had a mental breakdown. One of the questions was when applying for the railways was, "Has there been any insanity in your family?" And me being very naïve, I put "Yes". So, my mother

had about three trips into the railway medical offices

18:00 and had to do some serious talking and tell them it wasn't, it was just a mental breakdown he'd suffered and there wasn't insanity in the family at all. I'd nearly, by answering a question with stupidity; I'd nearly wrecked my railway career and never got in the railways. But anyway, she'd convinced them. That was a funny incident,

18:30 putting yes to a question like that.

So your mother generally used to do, as far as what she used to do was she a housewife, or was she working?

Yeah, yeah.

What did she do to keep herself busy and earn some money as well?

She was a very good cook and she decided, this would have been about

19:00 1928, 29, I think. She decided that she would open up a homemade cake shop and that's the reason why we shifted up to Glenhuntly. She brought a shop up there, two shops in fact. We'd live upstairs of one which was the main shop and there was a shop next door which we knocked bricks out of the wall to make a door and that was the bake house. And

19:30 Oh, she was going very good; and I think before she finished up and opened up another four shops. But I remember they'd ring up, there was another shop in Elsternwick and another one up near Balaclava Junction up at North Caulfield, I suppose you'd call it North Caulfield. They'd be out of a certain line of cakes and it was my job, not when, not in school time, of course, but when I was home,

20:00 I had to jump on the tram with two or three trays of cakes and take it down, down to Elsternwick to the shop in Elsternwick.

This is before the war of course?

Second World War?

Yeah.

Yeah this in 1928, 29 and 1930.

What sort of personality did your mother have, what was she like?

She was

20:30 always happy to have a lot of people around her. She had a sort of an outgoing personality I suppose you'd say. She was always having parties, they'd have parties. When I was growing up, there were always parties at my place where I'd lived. She was a very good cook; well of course she'd have to be to

21:00 open up a home made cake shop. Not only that, when we lived in Glenhuntly she had about three or four others as well.

Which, where did your Mum grow up?

Where?

Yeah, which town?

Melbourne.

She was from Melbourne as well?

Yeah, both of my parents come from Melbourne.

And your father, what sort of religious background does he come from, was he Protestant?

Church of England, I think.

21:30 **Church of England?**

Yeah, I think.

And your mother was also the same?

Yeah, yeah, as far as I remember. Yeah that's right.

So when you were going to Caulfield Tech., what were the traditions there as far as Anzac was concerned? What did Anzac mean to you all?

Didn't mean anything.

Didn't mean anything?

Well as far as the school went, I can't recall.

I suppose what I am trying

22:00 **to say is that, with your friends, when you were going to school. How did the school generally perceive Anzac day? What did Anzac mean to you? The fact that there was an Australian/New Zealand army called into the First World War? That Australians went overseas, what did it mean to you?**

I can't remember anything to do with the school. Of course I was only there for one Anzac day. Well I can't remember exactly what time,

22:30 well it must have been in the start of the school year when I enrolled there. But I don't think, I can't recall anything about Anzac day, as far as the school went. I knew a bit by talking to my father about what happened in the First World War. But that's about all. I can't, I've got no recollections about what happened at the school.

23:00 I don't know, I don't think anything happened at all.

Tell us about your mates at school, who were your best friends, your closest friends?

No, too long ago.

You can't remember?

Nope. There was one incident at school we were doing black smithing on this particular day. And in the Blacksmith shop you got all these fires,

23:30 well each student more or less has got his own fire. The instructor went out, well he was away for some 10 minutes, 15 minutes I don't know where he was. Might have been fronting up to the headmaster, I don't know. Anyway, he was always screaming out at us about having, creating smoke with what they call it, I think they call it a green

24:00 fire. You pile a lot of coal on and the smoke is going up the chimneys. And we, I don't know who started it but we had that much smoke in the school, out in the schoolyard it was like a fog. Anyway when he came back we all got the rounds in the kitchen. And I remember that. So it was only schoolboys' pranks, I suppose.

24:30 That, I can remember that pretty vividly about how we stirred up the fires and poured coal on the fires and all this smoke went out into the schoolyard. So, that's about, oh and going to school with all these unemployed fellows

25:00 chipping weeds out of the gutters, hundreds of them. That's about all I can remember of school up at Caulfield Tech. I wasn't there for any particular trade; it was just a general education, of cause they teach you, you dabble in all sorts or bits of trade. Woodworking and black smithing

25:30 and all sorts before you, I didn't know what I wanted to be. I wasn't there for anything in particular, to learn a trade. I suppose after you've been there for two or three years you've got to make up your mind in what trade you wanted to follow. But that's more or less the whole idea

26:00 of the whole business I suppose. But as far as I can remember, I didn't know what I wanted to be. I wanted to be an engine driver like all kids. Drive engines. Well when we were kids we used to play with trains on the floor. This bloke, his father, they owned the rag factory, he had a good train set

26:30 and I used to go over and spend hours with him. Maybe that's where I got the leanings towards the railways. Because I finished up in the railways, I was in the railways for 45 ½ years before I finished there.

So tell me, you joined the Militia in the nineteen thirties, which battalion… you joined up firstly as a Senior Cadet.

Yes.

You said you were 14?

27:00 I went into the Militia when I was 16 and I should have been 18.

That's right you were telling me.

That would be, what was that, I was 14 when I started, so that would be 34 or 36. I was into the senior soldiers in the Militia so that's, what, three years before the war had actually started. Before that

27:30 Second World War broke out.

So what was the battalion you actually joined, the Militia battalion?

Field regiment, 4th Field Brigade Artillery.

That was the Militia Unit you'd joined?

Yeah, yeah only part time soldiering. Not regular army like they have today.

What year did you join there?

In the Senior Cadets?

No, the 4th Field Brigade?

28:00 Well that was part of the 4th Field Brigade, the Senior Cadets section. Yeah that was in 1934. So I'd had five years soldiering although we didn't do anything serious in the cadets. But I had had five years army service before the war started.

So what was cadetting life like? Why did it appeal to you?

28:30 More or less because my father was in it, and you go into camp once a year and you go into weekend bivouacs, the used to have weekend training. I don't know, you're plumbing the depths of my feelings now.

29:00 Why did I join the army?

Well the Militia?

Part time soldiering.

What motivated you at the time, can you recall?

Only because my father was in it probably.

So you were very proud of your father's service in the war?

Yes, yeah. He'd been through the First World War and he was soldiering on in the part time army.

29:30 **Which Militia, he was also in the Militia Unit?**

I was in the same unit as he was.

I see, so you wanted to be alongside of him? Is that one of the reasons, with the 4th Field Brigade?

Well, I wasn't really along beside him, but I was in the same unit as he was. He kept going, of course he was too old to,

30:00 he soldiered on right through the war with the Volunteer Defence Corps which was more or less sponsored by the RSL [Returned and Services League], I suppose. He finished up as a lieutenant, he got a commission out of it during the Second World War, in the VDC, Volunteer Defence Corps they called it.

30:30 So, I was in the Second AIF [Australian Imperial Force], and he was in the VDC right 'til, well more or less until the end of the war. Well I was. I can't remember when they disbanded the VDC; it would have been 1945. I don't think they would have saw the whole war out.

So as a senior cadet, what was the training like?

31:00 **Tell us about the training?**

Well, it was rifle drill, foot drill. They wouldn't allow us to ride horses, or cause it was all horses in those days. I don't think they allowed us onto a horse.

That was for the Artillery?

Yeah, they were all horse drawn vehicles. A horse team to pull and gun and a limbo

31:30 was six horses and with three drivers.

What sort of guns were these?

We'd look at them now and think of them as popguns. 18 pounders, First World War vintage. When we went to Darwin that was all that we had in Darwin. One of the guns in Darwin, they were all 18 pounders of cause,

32:00 one of them was that old it had fired at Queen Victoria's jubilee, they told us. So that's how old they were.

So what was it like, they didn't let you use horses in the…?

In the cadets, they wouldn't allow cadets to ride the horses. We were just training to foot drill and rifle drill, for the rest of things that soldiers do.

32:30 **Was it hard training?**

No, I wouldn't say it was hard training.

Did you have a lot of fun?

Well yes. Well that's the reason you join the army for, just to have fun and an adventure. We thought it was marvellous.

So, did you make good friends in the cadets, because you stayed there for quite awhile in that unit?

Yeah, we had our friends,

33:00 but I haven't got any of them now. I don't know where they are now. But no lifelong friends, they were just your mates and that was all.

Can you tell me more about your mates at the time when you were in the cadets? Any of them that you were good friends with at the time?

I can't even remember who they were.

What comes to your mind when you think of the cadets?

33:30 What comes to mind? Well I think mainly that comes to mind, that they wouldn't allow us onto the horse. That sticks in my mind, I suppose, we were only kids in their eyes and they didn't want the responsibility if we fell off a horse and landed on our head. That was one of the main reasons, I presume, that we weren't allowed to ride the horses.

34:00 **So I understand towards the build up to the war in 1939, did you have a sense that war was about to occur before that in 1938, 37?**

Yeah, by reading the news, of cause there was no television then, and by listening to the news on the radio, you knew that war in Europe was

34:30 what was going on, was building up to the start of the war, because Hitler was really carrying on up until the commencement of war. He was, invaded a bit of land here and a bit of land there. But of course, when he invaded Poland, that was, who was the British Prime Minster

35:00 in those days? Betty, who was the Prime minister? He was the bloke who said "Peace in our time", waved a white sheet of paper.

Neville Chamberlain.

Was it? Betty! Oh, she's not there. Oh, I think it might be ol' Chamberlain yeah. You know more about it than I do. You must have heard blokes tell you in previous interviews.

35:30 Yeah it was Chamberlain. He flew to Germany and he was going to confer with Hitler and he came back and he gets out of the aircraft and he's got this piece of paper, and peace in our time. Chamberlain, yeah that's the bloke.

So you remember all these things. So you felt that war with Germany was inevitable? The tension was very high?

Oh you could see it gradually

36:00 building up. And the army that Hitler was building up. Everyone else was disarming and he was going flat out arming, building up his navy and his army and his air force. Yeah, you could see the writing on the wall, yeah there was no doubt about that. And of course things were getting serious, as far as we were concerned

36:30 and the army. We were, they were teaching us a lot of things, starting to teach us a lot of things that they hadn't taught before like gas drill, and all this sort of thing. 'Cause gas was pretty big problem in the First World War.

Were they getting very strict on discipline as well?

No, not really. I can't remember and change in discipline or orders. Oh, at the outbreak of war

37:00 all the, instead of going into an annual 14 day camp where you went into a months camp. It was not very soon after war was declared and then after that we went in for 3 months. And that was how fair dinkum the Government was getting about the war. And well it was during one of the first 3 month camp that

37:30 I decided to enlist into the AIF.

Tape 2

00:35 **You were talking about the training, that they upped the anti on the training. What was the initial training period per year? How did the Militia system work?**

14 days camp, that was the main camp.

Every year?

Each year, yeah.

And were did you go for that camp?

Up Seymour, ol' Seymour.

01:00 it's out the east of Seymour.

And what sort of training took place there, at the 14 day camp?

Oh, we'd have live firing. We'd be firing shells over a period of two or three days in that fourteen days. We'd have a shoot, an artillery shoot. The rest of it would be exercises and we would probably go on a bivouac somewhere.

01:30 We didn't have one-man tents on those days, like we had in the Second World War. We'd sleep out.

So what were the weapons that you were trained to use?

Eighteen pounder field guns.

What else were you trained to use? Were you actually doing live firing with the 18 pounders at Seymour?

Yeah, life firing, yeah.

So what was it like to operate,

02:00 **what was your exact position?**

My position?

Yes, in the gun group?

I was a Sig, a signaller.

Oh you were a signaller? So each gun crew... how did it work with the artillery? A signaller? What was the role of the signaller in the artillery? Was he assigned to a gun crew?

No, no. The actual man on the gun never, very rarely sees his target. The only time

02:30 he sees his target if he is shooting over on open sights. Well it's like firing a rifle, you see your target. But 99 times out of a 100 they don't see their target. They are firing over a hill. You'll have an officer in an observation post who's directing the fire. Now what the orders he gives to the guns, he could be 5,

03:00 10 kilometres, a fair way away, in front of the guns or to one side of the line. But quite often the shells go over his head. And the signaller has got to transfer those orders back to the guns. Yeah, that's what the signallers do. They provide the communications to those;

03:30 we'd often used to say to the gunmen, "Without us you wouldn't be able to fire a shot". We'll they could but they wouldn't know what they were firing at.

I can see that you played a very important role in communications?

Yeah, without communications they can't, they are not very effective.

So tell me, who trained you? Were there very experienced veterans that trained you out at Seymour, in signalling?

Well, they had been at it

04:00 for a fair while. Well they'd had, except for my father; well he was a signal sergeant. I have more or less followed in his footsteps, in my army career. He was in signals in the First World War. Well, he was a sergeant of signals in the Militia

04:30 in the unit that we were both in. At home we used to practice Morse code on a buzzer and sending one to the other. And how did I get it? Well that's how I got into it I suppose. More of less followed his calling in the Army, which were signals.

05:00 **Was he encouraging of you to do that?**

Yeah, yes. He encouraged me, yes.

To join his unit and to do sort of like, to do signalling?

More or less, yeah. I thing he had put in a word before I have even joined, because I was in the school cadets when I was going to Caulfield Tech.

05:30 So that was actually the very start of my army career, the school cadets. And he had put in a word with the regular army; they weren't called the regular army. They were called the Australian Instructional Corps, [AIC]. But there were two or three of these fellows. They were regular army; he had one there a mate of his

06:00 so I think that's how I got into the senior cadets when I was only 14. I think he had a bit of a word in his ear and more or less I got the go ahead from my father to go in. Well I wasn't dragged in, kicking and screaming I went in voluntarily.

06:30 Not only in the 14th Artillery Field Brigade I was also in the 2/Field Regiment, which was the same numerical regiment as my father had served in the First World War. They only difference is that they changed their name from artillery brigades to artillery regiments.

07:00 **Now, in the training, were you actually given some sort of, well I suppose, training when it came to firing the guns as well? Just in case of the placement that you might have needed?**

Well, as a cadet we weren't involved with firing the guns.

What about in the actual Militia, when you went to Seymour?

Yeah, when I was in the Militia, yeah.

So you were trained to fire the guns as well?

No, I've been in the artillery for how many years, for 5 ½ years

07:30 and the Second World War and about 5 years before the war and that's what, over 10 years I had never been in a gun crew in all my life. Never.

And you have never fired an 18 pounder?

Never.

Did you ever what to?

No, no. I was quite happy doing what I was doing.

Is it a fairly safe job do you think, signalling?

08:00 What, my job?

Yeah.

Well it depends on the situation. There were three of our blokes who got military medals for repairing cables under mortar fire. They were raining mortar bombs down all along the track and these blokes were just ignoring the fire and repairing cables, that these mortar bombs were cutting the cables.

08:30 Once your telephone line has cut, you have no communications; you can't retaliate because you can't get the orders through to the guns. Anyway they finished up; what about three of them I think got military medals.

Before we go through the war area, were you also trained with the weapons? You said you were trained with the weapons and drill in cadets,

09:00 **what sort of rifle did you use in the cadets?**

Just the ordinary .303 Lee Enfield, which they had in the First World War. And Lewis guns and Bren guns. We never had any Bren guns in the Militia.

None?

I don't recall any, no. They were more or less introduced in the Second World War.

09:30 **Now Lewis guns, they were used in Anti aircraft roles as well?**

Yeah, light anti aircraft gun was the Lewis. But you could use them on, other than anti aircraft. Oh there were plenty; they were the gun with the circular drum on the top. They were the Lewis gun.

10:00 We still had them in Darwin. We were using Lewis guns when we were shooting at aircraft in Darwin. So that's….

So you would, were trained to fire the Lewis gun and the .303? As a signaller, did you always have to carry your .303 with you?

Yeah. That was only means of defence that you had. It was no good throwing a telephone at them. It wouldn't hurt them too much. They would only jump out of the road. Every sig.

10:30 had his personal weapon which was a rifle.

What was like the first three month camp you had at Seymour like?

The first?

When they extended from 14 days to 3 months?

That was after the war had started.

Oh, that was after the war is it? I see.

Yeah, they had put us into camp for one month to start with. Oh, I can't remember.

11:00 When did the war start? September.

1939.

It would be somewhere about… I can't remember when the first month's camp came about. I can't recall, but it was some time, when they put us into three months continuous camp that was somewhere about March / April I'd say.

11:30 Or May, it might have been May. We went into the camp for 3 months, for continuous training. Of course this is, this was very disruptive on industry, because you were only part time soldiers, everyone had their jobs. To take a man out of his job for

12:00 three months you're upsetting industry. But of cause, those times Hitler was overrunning country after country. What was taking a man out of his job for three months worth? So, they were pretty stirring times

12:30 when you look back at what was going on in the world. It's like taking you out of your job and putting you into uniform and sending you to camp for three months. Well, plenty of others all taking over a wide sphere of industry, it really upsets industry, doesn't it?

So where were you when the war started?

I was home with my girlfriend in Middle Park.

13:00 I vividly remember who, was old 'Ming' Menzies, he made an announcement. There was a thing on telly the other night about oh, love letters from the war or something. And they had Menzies' speech on but it was broad daylight. When Menzies made his speech it was about 9 o'clock at night, it was dark.

13:30 This was country Victoria up near the Murray River, or on the Murray River and it was bright daylight. They made a booboo there. Menzies was the Prime Minister of Australia and he'd made this speech, something about Hitler had invaded Poland and

14:00 Chamberlain had given him 24 hours to get back out of Poland or else a state of war would exist. As a consequence, Hitler hasn't abided by that ultimatum, and as a consequence Australia was at war with Germany. That was the gist of the speech that he had made. But, I remember it was about 8 or 9 o'clock

14:30 at night, it was dark. But this program on the telly was talking about; it was bright daylight when the speech was on. I said "Hello, that's a bit of a booboo that they have made there". That's a job for the continuity girl isn't it, that's her job to make sure that they don't make booboos like that.

15:00 **Tell us what was actually going through your mind?**

Then?

When the declaration of war came? Was it a surprise?

No, not really. It was expected, it was expected.

How long was it expected for? In your mind?

They had been gradually building up in the past, well in the previous 12 months it had been building up for, well accelerating.

15:30 But of cause when it came it, it came as a bit of, well this is it, sort of business. But it wasn't unexpected.

Were people talking about it a lot before the actual war had started?

Yeah, the newspapers were full of it, full of it. Were did he go into? He invaded, what was it? I think it was part of Germany in the

16:00 first place, the Rhine, the Rhineland [Hitler remilitarised the Rhineland in March 1936], wasn't it? The Ruhr.

Both were part of Germany.

Yeah, and I think they had taken it away from Germany at the Armistice after the end of the First World War. Anyway he had just marched in and took it back again. But nothing happened over that except for a lot of criticism. But when he went into Poland something did happened. But of course

16:30 they probably said, the English, the government in England probably said "Right, if he is going to do that, well if they were going to do that….." And they weren't in any position to do that. As I said everyone was disarming and Hitler was flat out arming as fast as he could go. Then of course, that is why we still had 18 Pounders at the start of the war.

17:00 In our case we had 18 Pounders right up to half way through the war. It wasn't until we got back to Sydney that we got 25 pounders.

Were you actually using these guns in combat? In combat?

No.

The 18 pounders?

No.

Even during the war?

No.

What sort of guns were you using in combat?

25 pounders.

From the start of the war?

No. We didn't get into combat

17:30 well after until the war was half over.

Okay, that's why. So what took place once, when you were with your girlfriend you said, how did your girlfriend react, how did the people around you react?

Alright. I didn't know that I was going to enlist in the Second AIF then. I was in the army, the part time army then. Well, it was a bit of,

18:00 I don't know, not exactly trepidation, but you didn't know what was in front of you, in those times. You were ready for the worst to happen, I suppose. It was a Sunday if I remember correctly, a Sunday evening. That's was why I was down, she was to become a future wife,

18:30 that's why I was there because it was the weekend. This is down at Middle Park, at her parents' place of course. That sticks in my mind, that speech on the radio that Menzies was delivering to the nation.

19:00 **Do you remember that clearly?**

Hey?

Do you remember that clearly?

Yeah, oh yeah. Yeah that's one of the things that sticks in my mind, about the night Australia declared war on Germany. Yeah, that's very clear on my mind. And they printed a newspaper, I'm pretty sure it was a Sunday night, but they brought out a

19:30 special edition of The Herald. The Herald was the evening paper then. They put out a special edition, rushed into print because I remember we went out to, oh about 10 o'clock, we went out to buy a paper. Special edition of this newspaper, that war was declared.

20:00 **You were saying about the actual beginning of the conflict, the war. How did your parents react to this? Can you tell us what they thought, your Mum and your Dad?**

Don't know.

Did your Dad say anything?

Well, I wasn't there when

20:30 the news broke. I wasn't at home. No, I don't, no I've got no recollections of anything that they said or didn't say. Well I suppose all mothers all over the country that had sons of military age; I suppose that they were all thinking the same.

21:00 She had already been through one war and this is the second one she is going to experience. So, what her thoughts were, I don't know. But I presume they were the same as every other mother in the country that had sons of military age. There was no thought then of any conscription

21:30 in the country, but they, they started to enlist soldiers into the Second AIF pretty, within, well a matter

of a week or a couple of weeks, I think to enlist into the 1st Division, which was the 6th Division.

22:00 Because of them, I think some of them set sail, I don't know whether some of them set sail in 1939 just around about December 1939. Certainly by January in 1940 I think they were on their way. And of course after that there was the 7th Division;

22:30 they started to, because the volunteers were rolling in the hundreds, wanting to fight for king and country in those days. That attitude just doesn't exist in nowadays.

Is that what you felt, that you were fighting for the Empire?

I was fighting for myself.

What do you mean for yourself?

To keep my own tail dry. No, I often think,

23:00 I hear people say that we fought for that flag, but I didn't fight for any flag, I just fought for myself.

So you didn't feel a sense of patriotism like that?

Not to that extent. I didn't fight for any flag, no.

So the word Empire, what did it mean to you?

Well the Empire, they used to say that the sun never sets on the British Empire, which it didn't either. Because it was always shining on some part of the

23:30 British Empire, which was almost all right around the world, in different colonies. Australia, I suppose Australia, no India, is India bigger than Australia? Well certainly in population it is. But wherever you go, the sun never set on the British Empire, which was quite true.

So you thought it was something worthwhile? What the Empire stood for?

No, no,

24:00 I didn't. I thought well, Hitler's gone mad and he wants to rule the world, so he has got to be stopped. Well that's about all that I thought of. He had to be stopped somehow or other. What are we going to do to stop him with when he has got the best armaments in the world and we have star pickets? Which we did have in Darwin. It was only about one in three, one in four soldiers who were issued with a rifle, in my unit.

24:30 Infantry would have been alright, but we were artillery. The rest of the blokes got star pickets, the star pickets was a fence post, little short ones.

Tell me again about, after war was declared, your unit was called up, mobilized?

The Militia Unit?

25:00 **Yeah, your unit. When did it become the 2/14th Field Regiment?**

Oh, that didn't. No, no that went right through the war. Oh they changed the name. It became the 4th Field Regiment.

4th Field Regiment?

Yeah, 4th Field, it was the 4th Field Brigade before the war.

Oh I see.

And at the start of the war, or shortly after the start of the war there were no such things as artillery field brigades. They became

25:30 field regiments; they changed the brigade to a regiment. When I enlisted into the Second AIF, well even then that unit wasn't even in existence then. I went into an artillery training depot. When was that, that was about July 1940

26:00 and it was down near Geelong Racecourse. And when they were forming this new artillery regiment I remember that they came down as another artillery training unit out at Colac. They came down to Geelong and selected candidates to start this new

26:30 regiment and also down to Geelong for the same thing. And the unit was formed at Puckapunyal. So next thing that I knew I'm transferred out of Geelong to Puckapunyal into this new unit, 2/14th Field Regiment. Of course down in Geelong we had,

27:00 I remember we had some old telephones, I can't, we didn't have a telephone switch board, I don't remember one. We had a little bit of cable and I think we had a couple of radio sets which I can't recall any radio sets in the

27:30 Militia at that stage. And to do gun drills, teaching blokes' gun drill, they were doing rifle drill with broomsticks and drawing a gun, a gun and limber on the ground, scratching marks in the ground. And all these blokes were doing gun drills

28:00 with no guns, they didn't have any guns. Just got a diagram drawn in the dirt. So that was the state of Australia's war preparations at the beginnings of the war.

Did you feel confident?

Confident?

Yeah, confident. That if you did fight against the Germans that you would….

What hit them on the head with a, with a ……no this didn't happen until we got up to Darwin. Where we were issued with short star pickets,

28:30 but of course it wasn't Germans then it was the Japs.

Regardless of the equipment that you did receive, did you feel that the training that you received, did you think it was adequate?

Yes, as good as they could provide at the time. How can you train a bloke if you haven't got the proper equipment? How can you train a bloke to do gun drill on scratch marks on the ground, in the dirt? No you can't. You can give him an idea at what's to be done but that's about all.

29:00 **What took place after the 2/14th Field Regiment was formed and you joined up?**

Yeah.

You went to Geelong for that, you enlisted?

No, no. I was at Geelong at an Artillery training unit, Reinforcement, Artillery Reinforcement camp it was. So, I could of finished up in any

29:30 regiment as a reinforcement. But instead of that I finished up as an original member of the 2/14th Field Regiment. This was the 8th Division; this is just forming the 8th Division you see. And I was chosen to become a member of this new regiment.

So what took place after you got chosen?

Oh we transferred to,

30:00 transferred from Geelong to Puckapunyal.

To Puckapunyal?

Yeah

What was Puckapunyal Army camp like at the time?

It was only formed at the start of the Second World War. There was no Puckapunyal in the early stages of our Militia training. It had only been started up in the start of the Second World War so you might say in 1939.

30:30 Well now, there is not much left out at Seymour, which was the main camp, that would have been one of the main camps from the First World War, I suppose. But that was the main camp between the wars, and now if you go up there, there is very little left of the old campsites,

31:00 out at Seymour, that's out the east of Seymour. Puckapunyal is out at the west.

What was the training like there?

Oh, it started to intensify. We did have equipment there; we did have guns even though they were only 18 pounders. We didn't see a 25 Pounder until we

31:30 came back from Darwin in 1943. The war was more than half over then, but nobody knew it of cause. In the beginning of 43 before we saw any 25 pounders, we had seen them on the movies. They were a very good gun. They were a combination of a howitzer and a field gun. They had the best features

32:00 of both guns were built into these 25 pounders. But the Germans had an even better one. They had what they called an 88 mm which is a bigger bore then the 25 Pounder, but it could be used as an antiaircraft gun as well. So they had three in one, the Germans. The 88 mm.

32:30 Well we had never seen any of those except on the movies. So Puckapunyal in 1940, '41. Oh we had several, we did a lot of training,

33:00 intensive training, bivouacs on the move. We had a big march, parade through Bendigo while we were there. Up until July, early July I think it was, we got our movement orders. It was all hush-hush. No one

knew where we were going.

33:30 It wasn't until we got to Alice Springs did it really dawn on us where we were going, we were heading to Darwin. But when we left Seymour railway station, nobody, well I suppose the CO [Commanding Officer] and the 2IC [Second in Command] might of known but they were all hush-hush. We thought we were on our way to Malaya where the 8th Division was. But we never got to Malaya.

34:00 As things turned out, lucky for me, I might not be sitting here talking to you now.

Most of the 8th Division was captured, wasn't it, in Malaya, Singapore?

They were all captured, the whole lot. They didn't have the whole division there, only two thirds of a division. The other third was spread from Darwin to right across to Rabaul, which is North of New Guinea.

34:30 Well as things turned out, they all got captured as well. The three battalions and the brigade that we were supporting, we were part of, all got captured. It is only by the grace of God that I am sitting here talking to you now because as prisoners they had lost about one third

35:00 of all of those that were on the railway died, either through starvation, medical conditions or overworked. They worked them until they couldn't stand the terrible, what went on, really terrible.

35:30 And by the grace of God we had dodged all that, and yet we were part of the 8th Division. We didn't see any Japs in Darwin.

So when you went from Alice Springs to Darwin, what was your role in Darwin?

Supporting the 23rd Brigade, artillery support for

36:00 the brigade we'd belong to.

What was the atmosphere like in Darwin, amongst the soldiers and the civilian population?

Oh when we first got there, Darwin was just like a big country town. I have been back there two or three times since. Now they have got traffic lights on every corner, when we went there; there wasn't a set of traffic lights in the whole place. When we first arrived there,

36:30 of cause Japan wasn't in the war then, we got there in July and Japan didn't come into the war until December when they hit the Yanks in Pearl Harbor. That was the start of the Japs entering into the war. It was a rough and ready town, I can tell you.

What do you mean by that?

37:00 The, one incident that I remember was the Don Hotel in Darwin. It had the swing doors, the bat wing doors, the doors swing out, the doors swing in. You had to look over the top of the door to see that nobody was being thrown out of the pub when you were trying to get in, inside. She was a rough old place, I tell you. That was only

37:30 the Don of course. The toffee pub was the Hotel Darwin but of course the officers used to patronize the Darwin. But the Don, she was the working class pub. All the wharfies used to drink in there, a lot of wharfies used to drink in there; it was rough as bags, rough as bags.

38:00 Of course China Town, well China Town the place stank, you could smell it as soon as you…. That was Cavanaugh Street in those days; well it is still Cavanaugh Street but there is no China Town there anymore, not as it was in those days. I think they tried to burn China Town down at the start. After the first raid

38:30 I think they went in to deliberately fire to it.

Who did?

Nobody's owning up to it but they just went mad.

Do you remember seeing that, do you remember seeing, like the fires?

No but I saw the after results, after the place, a lot of the shops were burnt.

Were Aussie soldiers involved in this?

Probably,

39:00 probably but we don't know. They are not going to own up to it if they were. So that's why you don't know.

What was the size of the population, well the oriental population in Darwin? Were there many oriental people in those days?

There was a lot of Chinese, a lot of Chinese. And that was, Cavanaugh Street was one of the

39:30 main streets in the town itself. It was all nearly all Chinese shopkeepers and that's how it got its name, China Town. Oh there were others there; there was Japs, or descendants of Japs there. You see, that was, when the pearling was at its height

40:00 it was just leading up to the war, when the pearling fleet was….. The Japanese proved to be some of the best divers and that's how certain Japanese population were in the place, although Broome was a bigger pearling port than what Darwin was.

Tape 3

00:33 **We were talking about Darwin before, about your interaction with the population and how Australian soldiers, well some Australians, maybe soldiers, had been involved in some sort of arson attacks on the Chinatown area of Darwin.**

Oh yeah, well I wasn't mixed up in that but they did torch a few of the shops, yeah.

So were Chinese looked at as also potential enemies

01:00 **or were Chinese looked at as friends?**

No, no, no, no. Well I didn't think of them as enemy. Well Japan wasn't in the war then. As I said, I'm talking about between July, July and December when the Japs hit Pearl Harbor.

So this

So everything, we were only at war

01:30 with Germany at that stage.

So you're saying that basically the Chinatown district of Darwin was only burnt, parts of it attacked only after the Pearl Harbor attack?

Yeah, yeah.

Was after? Once the Japanese started attacking Malaya, was it?

They, well I'm not sure of that. No, I don't think it was, it was really after the bombing I think that somebody decided

02:00 they'd best get rid of Chinatown so they tried to burn it down, but prior to that they'd set fire to the Victoria Hotel. They tried to burn that down, drunken soldiers.

That's in Darwin?

Yeah.

Victoria Hotel?

Yeah, one of the pubs in Darwin. There was Victoria, there was only about three pubs in Darwin. The Darwin

02:30 was the posh pub, the Don was the rough as bags pub.

That's where the wharfies used to go as well.

Yeah and the Victoria. There was another one just out, just out of Darwin, the Parap.

So did you go to the one that was rough as nails? Did you hang out there much or…

No, no, no, just went there more or less to have a sticky beak that's all, just have a look see, see what it was

What was the rough

03:00 **one called, sorry?**

The Don.

The Don.

It's not a rough one now. It's, well it's not in the same location. It's, I think it's in Cavanaugh Street now, but of course Cavanaugh Street's not like it used to be.

So was Darwin like, you know, you said it's all like a large country town.

Was then.

Yeah, at the time.

Yeah.

So when you were there was it rough? I mean is that the sort of

Oh yes, yeah,

pretty rough?

rough, rough as bags,

03:30 rough as bags. You see, the outback west towns on television because that's in America, something after that style, real outback rough as bags town it was. In fact some stage they had a riot in the town. Troops,

04:00 drunken soldiers went mad and that's when they tried to burn the Vic down, the Victoria Hotel. They set fire to it.

Do you know what that was all about?

No, no. Just boredom I think, just boredom. Everyone was bored out of their minds and you get a few beers in and they just go berserk. I think that's all it was,

04:30 boredom.

Did you feel bored as well in Darwin?

Yes.

What was your daily routine when you were there?

Oh, road building, a lot of road building and then they decided, we were under canvas at a place called Winnellie, that's on the main road into the town, about seven mile, everything in miles in those

05:00 days, seven miles out of town, and they decided they'd build a proper fixed camp at a place called Nightcliff. So we had an architect in our unit, one of the officers was an architect and he designed this camp that we were going to build. It

05:30 was built of concrete foundations for the floor and steel and corrugated iron walls and roof, and the windows, you just pushed. The windows were corrugated iron, you just pushed them open because up there it's that hot that you, we didn't have any glass as such in the windows. They were just,

06:00 they were covered with corrugated iron but you pushed them open with a bar, just pushed them straight out and let the air flow through the hut, door at each end. Sidney Williams huts they were called and I suppose they'd be 25, 30 foot long and

06:30 room for, room for beds down each side of the hut. Of course in those days we were sleeping on the, on palliasses. Palliasses are, about a chaff bag, a long bag and you fill it up with straw and that's your mattress, and you just sleep on the concrete on these palliasses.

Was it very comfortable at all?

Well,

What sort of

07:00 **comfort was there?**

Well a bloke could be reared in a nice feather bed, comfortable mattress, it was a bit rough. Some blokes used to sleeping out, sleeping on the ground. I remember my father telling me one of the men things is to dig a hip hole and I'd say, "What's a hip hole?" He said, "Well your hip is lying on the ground and it gets sore, so you dig a, scoop a bit of a hole

07:30 where you hip goes, lying on your side of course." No, it was, it was, maybe I was lucky because I can remember going out to a weekend camp out at Broadmeadows, a bivouac we used to call them, and I, there were no mattresses, no palliasses

08:00 at all. We just got up and I slept on wire, it's a mesh wire and I slept on that all night long. I woke up in the morning, all my skin's all got this mesh pattern that I'd been laying on this wire. So, and we thought that was fun. Distorted sense of humour I think. So

08:30 **You said you were building all sorts of things in Darwin. What other, what did you do in your spare time to socialise?**

Spare time?

Yeah, whatever spare time you had.

We had a, we had a recreation area which we used to call the beer garden and at that time I think, I

think there were two bottles of beer per man issued per day

09:00 which wasn't too bad. You'd get two large bottles, I don't think stubbies were invented in those days. It was only one bottle of beer and that's the full size bottle and the issue was two bottles per day per man, which wasn't too bad. And they had a,

09:30 it was a belt, this beer garden, there was a stage there. They used to put on, now and again they'd have a bit of a concert there. They'd had this stage built for this purpose and it, at that stage we had a sort of a advance party coming back, a lot of

10:00 6th Division soldiers up there went, sent to the Northern Territory and I remember the senior officers giving us talks on Tobruk. They'd been in Tobruk and they were telling us all about the campaign in Tobruk, how they held Tobruk.

So you said the 9th or the 6th?

6th Division.

6th.

6th. The 9th, the 9th, they were the last to come home.

10:30 They came home in, oh when was it? About February '43 I think the 9th Division came home. I nearly got a divorce over that.

Why is that?

We, my wife and I were down at, gone down to Lakes Entrance for our second honeymoon. I'd just come back from Darwin and we had

11:00 about, I forget how much, around about three, four weeks leave and her brother was in the 9th Division and while we were down here we heard on the news that the 9th Division had arrived home in Melbourne and I said to her, "We'll cut short our holiday and we'll go home and see Tommy", and oh, all hell broke loose. Was her brother, but she didn't think

11:30 much of cutting short our second honeymoon to go home to talk to my brother, so what's the old saying? Something like, no, no wrath like a woman scorned or something.

Hell has no fury.

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. I'd said the wrong thing. She wasn't

12:00 going home to see her brother even though he'd just come home from the Middle East. She was going to finish her holiday. Well it was our second honeymoon. Yeah, that was Tommy coming home from the Middle East. Of course I saw him, they, they went to, well I'd seen a fair bit of him before, before he went away. He was in the

12:30 2/23rd Battalion, which was Albury's, own and that brigade marched from Seymour to Albury. I don't know how many pairs of boots they wore out on that exercise, but it's a fair march, Seymour to Albury, from Puckapunyal to Albury. And here he is, he's just got back home from the Middle East and of course I wanted to go and see him and

13:00 exchange war stories with him and I'd said the wrong thing, so I thought I'd better, I'd better bide my time. Never mentioned it again. You married? No, well this is all in front of you. This is all in front

13:30 of you, you'll cop it.

I'll learn from you then.

Oh, you'll learn from me?

Your advice is important.

Yeah, don't do the same mistakes I made, yeah. Now where are we, back in Darwin.

Darwin. So tell me with, when you, you said Darwin was, you know, rough as, rough as bags as you said.

A real typical outback town way out west,

14:00 out the back of Bourke wherever that is.

OK. So how did you find that the locals treated you?

The locals?

The local Darwin population.

They more or less suffered us I suppose. Of course there wasn't a threat, there wasn't any threat, direct

threat from Japan

14:30 in those days. We were just tolerated, that about all.

So what about say for instance when Pearl Harbor was bombed by the Japanese in '41, what impact did that have on everyone in Darwin?

Well they started to get women and children out of the place.

So the moment Pearl Harbour was bombed, that's what happened?

No, not the moment, no, but

I mean within the after effects

15:00 **of it.**

Yes, they started to evacuate women and children out of the town.

I see.

Get them down south, down to Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, wherever they were going to put them.

OK. So everyone felt, but this is before the fall of Singapore, right?

Oh Singapore, yes, yeah, that's

Now some people were leaving Darwin even when the Pearl Harbor was bombed, after that? After Pearl Harbor was bombed?

From when, 7th of December

15:30 until the 15th of February was the surrender at Singapore.

That's right.

19th of February they hit us

That's right.

with nearly 200 aircraft.

Now you were stationed in Darwin at the time?

Oh yes, yeah.

OK, I don't want to sort of like talk about that just, that just yet. What I want to talk about is how the fall of, well the Malayan Campaign was going

16:00 **on in December and January '41, '42.**

Yeah.

What was the perception at the time when you were in Darwin amongst the soldiers and the civilians about the conduct of the war in Malaya? I mean I'm not sure if you fully knew what was happening.

Only what we read in the newspapers.

So what impression did you get?

It's going from bad to worse.

So you knew that in the newspapers that the situation in Malaya wasn't good?

Oh bad, extremely bad.

16:30 **OK.**

Especially when they got onto the island of Singapore. They'd come right down, they landed right up in the top of Malaya, right up near the border. What's the border? Thailand isn't it, at the top of Malaya? And they'd had a rapid progress right down the whole of the Malayan Peninsular and when they got on to the

17:00 island of Singapore, the impregnable Singapore, impregnable, as things turned out, those, those naval guns couldn't fire inland. They couldn't turn around and fire backwards; they were designed to fire out to sea. So they used to tell us that Japanese, oh they were very poor pilots and all sorts of rubbish and their

17:30 eyesight was poor and

Who used to tell you this?

Our own intelligence corps.

So they'd come and do talks in front of you?

They'd give us talks, yeah. Educational sections of the army would give us talks, and this is all the sort of rubbish they're talking about. We soon found out how poor, how poorly trained they were,

18:00 their pilots. It turned out, we didn't know at the time, but we found out since that the mob that hit Darwin was the same taskforce that had hit Pearl Harbor, the same mob, and they claim, I've heard it said and I think I've also read it, but more bombs hit Darwin than

18:30 what hit Pearl Harbour although they did far greater damage in Pearl Harbor. They sank battleships and goodness knows what in that first raid.

So when Singapore was taken,

Yes.

there was a tremendous surprise?

Oh yes. Well I don't know whether it was a tremendous surprise but it was gradually building up.

Towards the capitulation?

Yes, yes.

So you felt the days before that Singapore was in real trouble?

19:00 **You felt that?**

Oh yes, we knew that before the actual surrender. Yes, we could see what was, reading the papers you could see what was going on.

So what were the papers saying? What were the articles in the papers, the headlines about Singapore?

I can't remember the particular headlines but it was saying that they'd crossed the causeway and they were fighting on the island itself and

19:30 oh I'm, at that particular time, I've since read military history, I'm very keen on reading military history, but of course that's all in hindsight. But you asked me what were the headlines, I can't remember what the headlines were, but they couldn't, they couldn't hide it, they couldn't hush it up about how bad things were going in

20:00 Malaya. And especially the surrender, well that was 15th, 15th of February. It was the 19th of February when they hit us, about what time was it, 10.00 o'clock in the morning. A day like today, beautiful blue sky.

That's when Darwin was hit?

Yeah.

That was only a few days after the surrender at Singapore.

Four days.

That's right, 19th wasn't it?

20:30 19th.

Of February.

Yeah.

Singapore surrendered on the 15th.

15th.

OK, so

Four days later they hit us in Darwin.

Australia wasn't ready for, I mean I suppose the series, the sequence of events that took place, you had the Malayan Campaign which failed, that was the first defeat really. Then you had the Singapore fortress taken, then you had all sorts of islands taken, Timor, Ambon, very rapidly within a short

Yes, very rapidly, yes.

So Darwin was hit, you know, consequently

21:00 Four days after the surrender at Singapore.

So was there an expectation of an air raid when that took place?

We didn't know what was gonna happen next but we knew, we thought they were going to land at Darwin. Had they done so they would've gone through us like a hot knife through butter.

You think so?

Yes.

Why do you say that? What made the defences of Darwin poor?

Well we didn't have any equipment to start with. We got old World

21:30 War guns to defend, to hit naval guns, anything from five inch upwards. They come in and they'd land, their taskforce would be division strength about, landing against battalion strength. That's what happened in the islands of Timor and Ambon.

22:00 Two of the battalions in Darwin, 2/40th Battalion was a Tasmanian mob, they were overrun in Timor, and the 2/21st Battalion which was a Victorian Battalion, they were overrun on Ambon and the naval taskforce they landed against them, they had no hope. They were just swamped with numbers, just crushed

22:30 like beetles underfoot. So, and we were waiting fully expecting a landing at Darwin, they were going to invade Australia. Well as things turned out they say they had no plans to invade Australia at that time. That's what we read now, but you don't know. They could've made plans and they said "This is such an easy pushover we'll,

23:00 we'll have a go", but they'd bitten off more than they could chew on the Kokoda Track and they might've found Australia a pretty tough nut to crack too, with distance had they landed in Darwin. There's nothing much between Darwin and Adelaide except Alice Springs. Well even in those days

23:30 Alice Springs was only a bit of a outback town, that's all it was. Not like

What was the state of defences in Darwin?

Woeful, woeful. The, our main source of food, food supplies was right in the town itself, or almost in the town. It was a,

24:00 it was a disused slaughter house, a factory, what was the, an English company had built it and they were going to slaughter beasts from all around Darwin and I'm trying to think of the name of that place. We had a name for it, but that was our main source

24:30 of food and supplies. Of course the day after the raid we all moved out into the bush into prepared positions. We all had gun positions already dug and telephone lines already laid. We just moved straight out into the bush and took up defensive positions in the bush.

So not around Darwin immediately?

Oh, not far out of Darwin.

OK.

Only,

25:00 only, only a few, only two or three miles out of Darwin but it was still in the bush.

OK. I want to try and jog your mind here a bit. You were, you said the air raid took place about 10.00 in the morning.

Yeah, that was the first one.

The first big one.

Yeah.

That was the biggest one, wasn't it, this one?

Yeah.

OK. Can you walk us through the day you got up that morning?

Yeah.

What you did, what took place

25:30 **throughout the morning and what you saw in the aftermath of the day, of that fateful day on the 19th of February?**

It was a day very much like today, blue sky. Of course it was in the middle of the wet season, but not on this particular morning it wasn't. It was a lovely blue sky morning. I think I was at the rear of,

26:00 this is at Nightcliff, we didn't, we weren't actually in the town, we were at, we didn't get bombed but we got strafed with aircraft. I was, I was, I think I was in the area like our wagon lines were just at the rear of the camp where I think we had the battery charging going on there and

26:30 the, it was our unit reported dog fighting out over the sea. They could see these aircraft and a parachute came, one of the pilots, one of ours, a Kittyhawk pilot I think, parachuted into the sea and we rang up brigade headquarters and gave them a warning that

27:00 there was aircraft dog fighting and a parachute coming down, and the first sign of the air raid I can't remember what it was. We didn't have a siren in the camp, must've been, must've been machine gun firing that attracted my attention so, and we looked up and I could see these, oh they were 18,000

27:30 feet up, 20,000 feet, silvery wings, big formation, big V formation aircraft, and in the wet season we had slit trenches dug but they're all half full of water you see. Anyway I just dived straight in, never mind the water, just straight into the trench, of course you're

28:00 sitting up to your waist in water. And I remember looking up and I see this object coming down. It looked as though it was gonna come right on top of your head, 'cause it's a long way up and it's got a white vapour trail behind it and I thought it was a bomb and it fell just over, just missed the camp, just fell over the

28:30 cliff down onto the beach at the base of the cliff. Anyway we're all trepidation, waiting for this bomb to go off and of course nothing happened, and after the raid's all over some of our blokes climbed down the cliff and it's a belly tank off a

It dropped down, did it?

Yeah, off a Zero, 'cause as soon as they go in action that's the first thing they do is drop the belly tank, get rid of it. It's only

29:00 causing drag I suppose, and that was the white vapour was the petrol streaming, what was left in the tank is streaming out of the tank you see, and it's creating this white vapour I can see. And that was my first impression of that first bombing raid. We didn't get bombed that day; they never dropped a bomb on us. All the bombs were on the

29:30 harbour and on the town which is four or five miles away, but they certainly created havoc. The official figures are 300 [actually was 243 killed, 300-400 wounded] but we reckon, we always reckon they were much more than that. There was

Killed?

Killed, yeah.

When you say much more, what are you thinking in terms of?

Well we were talking about

30:00 600 killed, but they wouldn't, the official figures only said 300 and something I think, but of course that was all hushed up. They were frightened Australia was going to panic if they had have printed the real truth about what happened up there, and they came down and strafed the camp with machine gun

30:30 that low that you could clearly see the face of the pilot and he stuck his finger up as he went past us.

The Japanese pilot?

Jap pilot, yeah. Gave us the thumbs up sign.

After he dropped the bomb?

No, he didn't drop a bomb, he was machine gunning.

Oh, you're, OK.

Yeah.

So you were getting strafed?

Strafing, yeah. So,

31:00 and then about an hour after that, an hour and a bit after that raid there was another raid but they concentrated mainly on the aerodrome and they certainly plastered that, and they more or less panicked.

Who panicked?

The Air Force more or less panicked and the commanding officer said,

31:30 a mile, evacuate the aerodrome a mile down the road and half a mile into the bush. Well they caught

one bloke in Melbourne, that's how far he went down the road, but it turns out that instead of giving them, see they were after tradesmen, and never mind about military training, as long as they could do their trade.

32:00 Was just the opposite to the army where we're trained to defend ourselves and then attend to your trade, but the Air Force had the other view and of course they just panicked. They more or less went to water. There was a big inquiry in there, well I've read it, read it in history what happened and

32:30 everybody's ducking for cover and blaming the other bloke.

So when you looked into the horizon you see all these ships burning. It must've been a terrific air raid. I mean

Oh, it was, it was.

Can you describe to me the sort of

It was well over 100 aircraft involved, bombers, fighters, dive-bombers.

What was the noise like?

Well as I said we were five miles away from

33:00 it, except when the bloke came down to strafe us. Oh we could, you could hear the noise going on, bombs. The first bomb had landed before they even, before the siren went, the first bomb had hit the place and they attacked ships. Of course the harbour was packed with shipping.

33:30 We'd sent a convoy over to Darwin, over to, they were on their way to Timor and they were bombed, they were severely bombed about half way over and it was only the cruiser called the Houston, heavy cruiser I think it was, that saved the convoy. They put up so much anti-

34:00 aircraft fire that kept them well up and of course they're zigzagging all over the place. Anyway the orders came for them to turn back, back to Darwin. So they'd only arrived back and got off the ship the day before, the day before the raid. Anyway the ship was tied up, she blew up loaded with all ammunition and

34:30 fuel and that. They got a direct hit and she, she just disintegrated, the whole ship. Nearly disintegrated the town with it. But most of the soldiers, all the soldiers were off, or most of them, and there's oil floating on, burning oil on the water and they dropped a

35:00 bomb. It was a peculiar sort of a wharf, it was a right angle shaped wharf. They dropped the bomb almost right on the right angle and blew, blew a large section out of the wharf so the wharfies and those working on the wharf were more or less trapped, they couldn't get back. It's either stay where they were or jump into the burning, burning oil. So it was a pretty

35:30 dicey sort of a situation. There was another ship there, a destroyer, Yankee destroyer, the Pirie. That went straight to the bottom, they dropped one down the funnel or something, that blew up and went, sank.

How many ships were sunk in Darwin? Do you recall?

There was six or eight sunk [actually was 8]. There was three or four run aground to save them sinking

36:00 and I think, and hundreds of sailors were killed although the official figures don't reflect that and there was a lot of burning oil all over the harbour. Of course oil floats and when it ignites it's floating on the top of the water and if you get tangled

36:30 up in it well it's goodnight nurse.

Were many Japanese planes shot down over Darwin?

No, not many but there were some. Of course our anti-aircraft defence they were all militia soldiers. We didn't have any, to my knowledge we didn't have any AIF anti-aircraft there, but it wasn't until,

37:00 oh, some weeks after that that they really got their eye in because I remember a raid. It was either Anzac Day or Easter, I can't recall. It was about, a formation of about seven or nine bombers in a V formation coming over and they opened up with a salvo, boom, straight, and these shells burst right in amongst them and

37:30 four air, four bombers started to trail smoke straight away and of course we were out in the bush and we were all out cheering and yelling and see this four Jap bombers start to, been hit, and we were running around up top and next thing and aircraft, Jap Zero, I presume it was a Zero, came over strafing us and it was the funniest thing I've

38:00 ever seen in my life. Only a split second to see all these bods heading head first into trenches. So the cheering smartly stopped then, but it was a wonderful sight to see when they opened up their first shot right in amongst them it was.

Tell me what,

38:30 **tell me what it's like, I mean this may sound like a sort of a silly question, but not everyone gets strafed by aircraft. So what was going through, can you walk us through sort of what the experience was like to be attacked by a Japanese Zero on the ground? Seeing these bullets coming your way?**

What was it like?

Yeah.

I can't

39:00 describe it, except to say that you get your head down. You're sitting in a trench, we weren't out in the open, we were sitting in slit trenches.

Was it terrifying?

Oh more or less, more or less I s'pose. It happened so fast but I remember the, our anti-aircraft

39:30 in, this particular bloke, well we had more than one, they were only old Lewis guns but still, I remember him after the plane had gone he's waving his fist and screaming out, "Come back and fight you B..." He's screaming out the top of his voice. I thought that was very funny,

40:00 but

The Japanese pilot had put his thumb up, has he?

Yeah, that's, yeah.

After he strafed?

Yeah, he'd gone through, yeah. So I just caught a glimpse of it as he shot passed, but that's what he was doing, he had his thumb up at us, and, well I thought that was funny after. I didn't think it was funny at the time.

40:30 **We might stop here for the tape change.**

Tape 4

00:30 **Our last tape Archie, so we can**

Does that mean I can jump up and cheer and wave my hands about because it's the last?

No, last tape for today, but you're most welcome to gesture like that if you want. I just, when you were in Darwin one thing I hadn't asked you before was that what rank had you started at and at the time of Darwin what was your ranking?

01:00 I was, I was a bombardier right from the time I joined the unit because in Geelong which was an Artillery Reinforcement Depot there was only one, he was a Scotsman I think, but he was well into his 40's and me that knew anything about signals at all. So the

01:30 bods that we had knew nothing about signals and we had to try and teach them Morse Code to start with and teach them how to operate telephone and pass Artillery orders and all this sort of caper. So I was a bombardier.

Bombardier.

Which is equal to a corporal,

02:00 which is

OK.

two chevrons on your arm.

And a gunner is a?

Gunner is just no chevrons, he's just

He's like a private.

That's equal to a private in the infantry, yeah.

I see.

A gunner, and if you want to go into the other corps, trooper in the Armoured Corps,

That's right.

tanks and so forth, they're called a trooper. Gunner, private in the infantry, a gunner in the artillery.

02:30 In the, in the workshops that's what they're called, they're called craftsmen, that's their lowest rank, craftsmen. It's workshops and so forth.

So

03:00 **after, how long**

Sapper in the Engineers, he's called a sapper.

That's the private, is it, in the Engineers?

Yeah, equal to a private or a gunner. He's called a sapper, that's what they're called in engineering.

OK. Now you ended up being a sergeant, didn't you, at the end of the war?

Yeah. I promoted to sergeant, I think I was a sergeant in Darwin. Yes, I was, yes.

So at the time of the air raid you were?

03:30 Yeah, I was a sergeant then, yeah.

Now after the first bombing what was running through your mind? Can you tell us what you expected to happen after the bombing in the next upcoming weeks?

Well, for weeks after that we expected an invasion force to be attacking us.

So you were in a sense of

04:00 **panic?**

No panic, no, no, but a sense of what was going to happen in the future. We didn't know but that's what we expected, that they were gonna land, and of course as I said before they would've gone right through us because we couldn't have, they would've landed thousands in an

04:30 attack on Darwin and we didn't, all we had, as I said before soldiers that never had a rifle had a three foot star picket and we had old 18 pounder guns against firing, firing well the minimum size calibre gun on a naval vessel is about five inch, anything from five inch upwards.

05:00 We wouldn't have had a chance. Luckily they didn't, as things turned out they claimed they had no intentions of invading Australia, but it's hard to believe just the same because they nearly got into Moresby, Port Moresby. They were within 30 miles of Port Moresby before they started to fall back.

So what was life like after

05:30 **the raids? I mean I understand Darwin experienced almost 60, 60 odd raids**

Yeah.

until '43, '44.

Yeah, we would've seen about 45, 45 of those 60 odd raids before we got out of the place. But they weren't big raids.

They were smaller raids, were they?

They were only one aircraft of a night time. About 1.00 or 2.00 o'clock in the morning there'd be,

06:00 the telephone would go and they'd say air raid yellow which means that they're anything up to 100 mile out, and then next thing the telephone would go and the siren, we'd hear the siren going in the town, air raid red. Well air red is when you take cover.

06:30 Half the time we didn't bother getting out of bed. Well that's all. One aircraft, he'd come over and drop a couple of bombs and then he'd mizzle off out to see again and he'd disappear for a short while. 10 Minutes, 15 minutes later he'd be back and then drop another couple of bombs. Was only keeping us out of bed so we'd be tired in the morning through lack of sleep. Harassing,

07:00 that's all they were doing.

So only like a few planes would come? So after the first air raid

Only one sometimes, only one aircraft, most of the time.

Really? Quite often there was just one aircraft?

Yes, yeah.

So after the first big raid what was the sort of raids like after that? Was all small?

Oh, we copped a few after that.

Big ones?

Not as big as the first raid. We'd have about seven, nine bombers accompanied by fighter aircraft.

07:30 They weren't nowhere near the size, I think, I think there was 180 aircraft in that first raid and the second raid there was a fair number. Not as big, many as that but somewhere around about 100 in the second raid. That was the same day, and no, we didn't see any more that size.

So after the second raid

08:00 Yeah.

they started to become very small?

Compared to, compared to the number they had in the first raid, yes, yeah. 27, 27 Bombers I think in a couple of raids not long after the first raid, but they'd go home and lick their wounds by the accuracy of our anti-aircraft gunners.

08:30 As I said, that one I just described, I can't remember if it was Easter or Anzac Day but they'd always pick a holiday, a national holiday to put on a raid, and they, of course it's excellent for our morale to see four bombers start to trail smoke. The first shot, they hit four of

09:00 them in the first, first opening round. Imagine what that does to your morale, yeah. Imagine what that bloke come down machine gunning us did to our morale, and I remember, I've got vivid memories of backsides in the air and heads down heading into slit trenches.

Full of water as well.

No, I don't know whether that, that, the wet season had finished by then. Was

09:30 Easter, I can't remember when Easter, what part of the, time of the year it was, early or late.

So after a while you essentially got so used to the bombing that you didn't even bother to get out of bed.

Sometimes, yeah, but one of our blokes, not right with us, but over on the other side of town he got hit in the backside with a shell splinter. He was crawling in, I think they had underneath the house I think, I think they had a bit of a,

10:00 bit of a cubby hole dug under the house. We were all living in houses at this time and you read about all the, all the soldiers thieving stuff in Darwin. All our soldiers all had a single bed to himself, or you're not issued with beds on active service, so

10:30 all the civilian population had all gone, so our blokes just got a truck and went around the town and they'd go in, into a house, all the houses are empty, single bed, they'd just grab it and in the back of a truck and take it home.

So how long did you stay in Darwin for at the end of it?

19 Months we had in Darwin. We thought we'd been forgotten, 19 months,

11:00 just going on for two years.

So that's about '44, isn't it, 1944?

No, no, we came out, we got there in July 1941, we left in January 1943.

January 1943.

January '43, we came back to Sydney. Came back to Sydney, most of the time, oh, that's why we were issued with 25 pounders. We dumped

11:30 our guns in Darwin but the mob that relieved us, they brought their own 25 pounders. They'd come back from the Middle East, 2/11th Field Regiment relieved us. A funny thing, a funny thing, the advance party, they send an advance party which is a few senior NCOs [Non-Commissioned Officers] and officers and

12:00 we got two sergeants and we're in this two storey house and we're sleeping upstairs and we get an air raid, air raid this particular night and these blokes shot down those stairs, these two blokes, advance party blokes, they shot down the stairs and went for the lick of their life, and breakfast next morning I, we were sitting there eating our breakfast and I said, "You blokes were a bit toey

12:30 last night", and they said, "Well the nearest air raid we've seen". I thought, we all thought they were real crack hardened soldiers, you see, been come back from the Middle East, and they said, "The nearest air raid we saw was 30 miles away. That's the only air raid we've ever seen." I said, "Well you

better start getting used to them here, you'll get one nearly every night." I often laughed over that.

13:00 **So what happened after that?**

Where are we? Back in Sydney.

'43.

We got leave, within the week we were all home. Of course my unit was formed from Victoria and South Australia and we'd all gone on leave. That's when I had my second honeymoon down at Lakes Entrance

13:30 which is down, you know where Lakes Entrance is, down Gippsland? Yeah.

And how long is your leave for again, sorry?

Say that again.

How long was your leave for?

Oh, I can't remember now, but it was at least three weeks.

Three weeks.

Yeah.

OK.

Well we'd been away for nearly two years, 19 months in Darwin.

So you didn't get, without any leave at all, you were in Darwin all the time?

No, no, no leave there.

So what was it like to, you came, you proposed,

14:00 **you got married**

No, I was married before I went to Darwin.

Before you went?

Yeah.

Right, sorry, my apologies.

Yeah, second honeymoon I said. We went to Lakes Entrance.

Right.

That was a second honeymoon.

So how did you feel when you came back? Can you tell us when you saw your wife and you went on your second honeymoon?

How do you reckon you'd feel?

I dunno. Never been through it so far.

You've never been through it. You just want to

14:30 drain my brain, hey?

That's my job. No really, just, I'm thinking in the war context. Like with everything happening

Oh, a great sense of elation, a great sense of elation. We're battled, almost battled hardened soldiers. Well certainly we're gone through a large number of air raids and we've all survived

15:00 and, well not all of us but we did have a few casualties up there.

Your unit, the 2/14th lost a few men up there in Darwin?

Yeah. I've been up to the Adelaide War Cemetery and there's about four of our blokes buried there. Not all due to enemy action.

In Adelaide War Cemetery?

Yeah. Adelaide River, Adelaide River War Cemetery.

15:30 That's where all the casualties of the war are now buried. When you're killed in action you're buried where it happens. It's after the war that they dig all these graves up and cart them all away and put them into a proper organised cemetery, which is, that's the job of the War Graves Commission to administer theses cemeteries.

16:00 They're kept very nice, very nice indeed.

Any of them your good mates?

Hmm?

Any of them your good mates?

Good mates?

Yeah.

No, not really, no. What were, what died and got killed?

In Darwin, yeah.

No, no. Of course there's about 600 bods in a regiment, 600 or 700 personnel, so

Yeah.

No, none of my mates, no.

16:30 Oh, in New Guinea, yes. There was one good mate of mine, was, he was killed in a motor vehicle accident but not due, not directly

Not directly to the war.

due to enemy action.

So can you tell me, tell us about your honeymoon? Was it

Oh, you want to know the bedroom secrets, that's what you're after.

No. What was Lakes

17:00 **Entrance like during the war?**

Well we were up there at the, one of the most amazing things, we were in the pub having a few beers and this bloke, a local, he said, he said, "You've never seen water burn have you?" I said, "What are you talking about, water burn? How can water burn?" He said, "Do you want to have a little wager?" I said, "No", I dunno whether I had a little wager with him or not. Anyway,

17:30 we go down there and he gets a, down to another pub further down and he gets a newspaper and screws it up and puts a match to it and goes out the front and turns the tap on, and sure enough water did burn. It must've, it was the gas. Of course that's all oil down there, all oil bearing country and it's the gas that was burning, not the water, but, he showed me how water

18:00 would burn. Just straight out of the tap. I didn't believe him. I thought he was pulling my leg.

You must've got a bit of a surprise?

It burnt alright but the water wasn't burning, as I said it was the gas that was coming out of the tap with the water. Well that was a beautiful holiday; we were lazing on the beach. It, what time of the year was it? Oh, it's in

18:30 March, that's right, February, March. We left, we left Darwin around about the third week of January, we would've taken a week to get to Sydney or longer. Yeah, it would've been in March I reckon when we were on leave down at Lakes Entrance, yeah. What was it like?

19:00 Glorious. In one word, glorious. Next question.

And what did you do after that, after the honeymoon where did you go back to?

Back to Sydney. We were camped at, you've heard of the National Park in Sydney, Sydney National Park.

Can't say I have, no.

Royal National Park, Royal National Park, where they have big bush fires there, a couple of years back.

19:30 Well that's where we were camped and

And what, did you retrain...

Oh yes, yeah. Well gunners had to start training on the new 25 pounders. See, they'd never seen 25 pounders before, and well as far as signal training went it just continued on. A lot of wireless, wireless work.

How long did this training go on for?

20:00 All the time, all the time.

Like when you got back?

All the time.

Right, for a few months you're talking…

Well that's when we weren't loading ships. While we were in Sydney the wharf labourers decided to go on strike and a lot of the stuff is ships loading for New Guinea. So what do they do, they put the army in to take over from the wharf labourers and

20:30 we've loaded up in trucks and we're rolling down, down towards the wharves and there's all the wharfies standing in the pub doorways. Never said boo, they wouldn't say boo, I think we would've been out of the trucks and into them.

Did that really make you angry to see that they were going on strike?

Well yeah, yes. Well it gave me a very poor opinion of their attitude. I wouldn't say it made

21:00 me angry but I didn't think much of them because the nation's, the nation's fighting for its survival and these, these wharfies decide to have a strike.

Do you know what the strike was about?

No, but probably it would've been over pay. They want more money or something. We're, we're in the AIF

21:30 and we're getting five bob a day or the ordinary soldier is getting five bob a day. It went up to six, six shillings a day late.

So unloading ships must've been a very tough job, laborious?

Well we were, we were shifted from, we were out at a place called Loftus was the, was the nearest railway station where we were

22:00 into the racecourse, one of the inner city racecourses in Sydney. I forget what the name of it was now, and we've just got our palliasses and blankets and we're sleeping in the grandstand, all open of course. Not like the race, the grandstand at Caulfield Racecourse, all glassed in.

22:30 And the wind that used to whistle through there, and this is, this is in wintertime. You can imagine what it was like, the cold, and the wind used to whistle in along those grandstands. We were just sleeping along the seats, the benches and it was a bit of a, bit of an experience, and of course that was to save travelling time. Loftus is an outer suburb of Sydney, right

23:00 down past, a southern suburb. That was to save travelling time. Randwick, that's the name of the racecourse, Randwick, yeah.

So Sydney must've been a very busy city during that period. Must've been a lot of military activity.

Oh Queensland was the place.

Queensland was also

Poor old Queensland was on its knees, there was that many service personnel, with Australians and Americans.

Did you come into

23:30 **contact with any Americans in Sydney?**

Only, only, only in the street. No, we didn't, we didn't mix with them, no.

No?

Hank the Yank.

I'm sorry?

Hank the Yank.

Hank the Yank. Did you dislike them?

24:00 I had great admiration for the American Navy. I had lesser admiration for their Air Force and for the American Army, none, no good.

None? Why is that?

Very little.

Why is that?

Well if

24:30 we did some of the things that those Yanks used to do we would've been court martialled. Up in New Guinea we'd get an air raid yellow and all of a sudden there's machine guns firing going mad, the Yanks. If we did that we would've been court martialled, 100, air raid yellow they're 100 miles out to sea and the way these Yanks used to, and they're no different today by what I

25:00 can read in the news. All this friendly fire that's killing, killing not only their old, own soldiers but, but British soldiers as well and I laugh every time, although it's serious, I laugh at the term friendly. There's nothing friendly about it, it kills you just the same as the enemy fire. You're stone dead, bang, finished. So

25:30 **Were they notorious for that in the Second World War?**

Oh yes. They shoot first and then ask questions after. That's about the opposite to what we do.

So Aussies had been killed by American friendly fire in the Second World War? You've heard stories of that?

Not really, but we used to treat them with, with not respect, with, not

26:00 fear either, but I'd say if you're in action with Yanks you'd be very cautious, very cautious indeed.

Do you think they were pretty trigger-happy?

What else can you describe them as? Trigger happy, that's all they are, and they haven't changed to this day. They're still the same. I bet all this finishes up on the cutting room floor. No, I,

26:30 the way they used to go berserk and firing machine guns. You see, you see over in Iraq now they're all firing guns in the air and all this rubbish. They must have a wonderful ammunition supply to be able to be wasting ammunition like that. As I said, if our blokes did it they'd get, they'd be court martialled, but

27:00 I'm only putting my war time experience to what's going on today over in Iraq, and I say to myself well they haven't changed, they're still just the same.

Did you have any encounters with American servicemen during the war, whether they be negative or positive?

No, only in the pubs.

What were they like in the pubs?

They used to have little piles of salt all along the bar,

27:30 the Yanks, and when I first saw it I thought what the hell's that. They pick up the salt and drop it in the beer and as soon as you put salt in beer she all foams up, and that's what they used to do. They must've used to think our beer was pretty flat so they'd liven it up, and all these little piles of salt all along the bar. I soon found out. Anyway you go and try it yourself. That's what happens, the

28:00 beer all foams up as soon as, only a little pinch of salt.

Did it taste better?

No, no. Doesn't do anything to the taste except make it, make it a bit more salty I s'pose, but you can't taste it.

So what was the pub like?

We had during the war, you might've heard, I don't know whether you heard about it, but somebody's going to tell you about it, we, the battle of Victoria Bridge in Queensland. There was one or two

28:30 killed there, and that was between Australians and American servicemen.

That was in Brisbane I understand, wasn't it?

Brisbane, yeah.

Got some very big fights in Brisbane.

Oh yes. Well as I said that's, poor old Queensland was on its knees with the number of servicemen it was, had in Queensland. I remember coming home, the beer, I was a hospital patient but

29:00 I'd been evacuated out of Rabaul. The war was finished, it was over, but I had dermatitis on both feet and I had the toe, both boots the toe caps were chopped clean off so as my air, my toes could get the air, the air could get at my toes. Anyway I'm coming home, being evacuated out of the tropics because of this condition, skin condition I had

29:30 and we used to get in Brisbane, where, what was, Greenslopes I think it was called, the big hospital in Brisbane. Oh, it's the rubbish cart.

Tape 5

00:37 **Archie, we were talking about beforehand your deployment in Sydney and unloading ships from the harbour**

Yeah.

because of a wharfies strike. Now you also then said that you went to Queensland. Could you tell me what you did in Queensland?

We went to Queensland by train.

01:00 The unit started to get split up here because one battery had already gone to Queensland and they went to a place called Redbank, no, that was in Cairns that right. They didn't go to Brisbane, we went to Brisbane. They were at, up in Cairns at a place called Redbank.

This is a part of your unit?

Yeah.

01:30 Well in Darwin the unit, we had two batteries originally but at the stage in Darwin the powers that be, the British Army, they decided to increase the number of batteries in a regiment from two to three and whereas we had 12-gun batteries,

02:00 they didn't increase the fire power of the regiment, they only increased the, they reduced the number of guns per battery and created an extra battery, so then it became three battery regiments.

So what happened to you in Brisbane?

In Brisbane we, where did we go to? We went out to; we were camped in a public park just

02:30 on the northern outskirts up near Eagle Farm it was. Eagle Farm's famous for its racecourse these days, but Kalinga I think it was, Kalinga. I'm not too sure what the name of the place was. It was a suburb, a northern suburb of Brisbane. It was right at a tram terminus. We only had to walk a few hundred, a few hundred yards to our camp from

03:00 when we got off the tram. We were there for, oh, for some, some; I suppose we must've been there about two months. I think it was Kalinga the name of the suburb, and from there we shifted down south, way down south down near Victoria Point

03:30 and we were camped in a paddock there, just an ordinary paddock, a grass paddock and we pitched out tents in there and we were doing barge training. It was right on the coast almost. When I say right on, we weren't right on the beach but it was only a few hundred metres, 100 yards to the beachfront and we did a,

04:00 I dunno how long it took, over a period of time we were down there. I can't remember exactly. It must've been, must've been a month, six weeks or so we were camped down there.

What was Brisbane like at the time?

Brisbane?

Yeah. What was the atmosphere like in Brisbane? I understand there had been a lot of American sailors and soldiers there.

Yeah. There were, there were over a million servicemen

04:30 in Queensland at that time.

Throughout the whole war?

That's why I said, yeah, poor old Queensland was on its knees because it had so many servicemen stationed there.

So how did that affect Queensland

Well.

when you say that it's on its knees?

What, financially?

Financially.

How did it affect Queensland?

Well not financially, but when you say it's on its knees what were you referring to? Were you saying that socially

Well there was

05:00 beer rationing to start with and if we get, go into town, get a days leave to go into the, leave to Brisbane you couldn't buy any beer. There was only beer on between 12.00 and 1.00 pm and between 5.00 and 6.00. That's the only time you'd get a beer.

Must've been huge crowds there?

Yeah, 10 deep at the bar battling to get in to get a drink and get out again.

So were Australian

05:30 **troops and Yankee troops all go to the same bars or did they**

More or less, yeah.

They did?

Yeah.

Well how did they interact? Did they interact well? I understand there was a lot of (UNCLEAR) there.

We didn't, we didn't have a great deal to do with them. We might say, G'day and that's about all. You didn't really interact with them at all.

What did you think of the Yankee troops you saw in Brisbane?

Oh, there was a

06:00 certain amount of animosity towards them I suppose. They were far better dressed than what we were and their pay was about twice as much or three times as much as what we got, and they could, they had a lot more, lot more freedom in their canteens. They called them PXs [Postal Exchanges] I think

06:30 they called their canteens. They could get a lot of stuff in their canteens that we couldn't. Of course they're coming direct from, the only good thing about the Yanks is we were, we'd go to the movies, army, army open air movies, take your own seat to sit on, and they got movies brand new straight from Hollywood, even before they'd been released in America, we'd be and of course we were

07:00 looking at these straight hot off the, hot off the press movies that haven't even been released, let alone in USA. They hadn't been released in Australia, well of course they'd been released in the USA first. But that was the only good thing about the Americans being here.

The only good thing?

Well as it turned out if it hadn't have been for the Yanks we would've gone under. That was proven at, well

07:30 with their equipment. They've got, we were jealous of their equipment. We're building airstrips with picks and shovels and they're got all the top high quality gear in the world, and

So do you remember seeing any fights between Australian soldiers and Americans?

No, no.

In Brisbane?

No, never mixed up in any of that. Only because I wasn't, didn't happen to be there at the time.

But you must've heard of that?

Oh, yeah, heard about it alright,

08:00 it was in the newspapers.

Can you tell me what you heard about?

There was two or three blokes killed in the fighting, the battle of Victoria Bridge I think was the main one.

What happened there?

Oh, we had a big stoush in Melbourne as well when the 9th Division came home from the Middle East, Australian Division. They got stuck into the Yanks, good and proper, but I don't think there was any deaths out of it but there was in Brisbane.

08:30 **Why do you think they got stuck into the Yanks?**

Because, what did they used to say about the Yanks? They're overpaid, they're oversexed and they're over here. Of course they're pinching the girls you see. So the Australians decided, especially when the 9th Division came back from the Middle East, they reckoned that we'll have to teach the Yanks a bit of

a, bit of a lesson and

09:00 was a decent stoush in Melbourne in Collins Street, and of course the

Are you saying a huge brawl?

Yeah, that's all it was, a brawl, great brawl, and the battle, the battle, I think the battle of Victoria Bridge it was called.

That's in Brisbane?

That was, yeah, that's a bridge over the Brisbane River.

09:30 **I also heard there was a shootout on a train between Australian troops and American.**

No.

Did you hear anything about that?

No, I don't think, I don't recall anything of that nature. If it was, it was, it would've been hushed up.

Yeah, a few people got killed.

No, I don't, you're not going back to the First World War?

No, the second.

No.

I don't believe American troops came to Australia in the First World War.

10:00 No, no, but there was a big in, where was it? Broken Hill.

Yeah.

They, that was Turkish immigrants. I think he was off his rocker, he shot and killed a few people going to a picnic. I think it was Broken Hill it happened.

Was this during the Second World War?

First World War.

OK.

Yeah.

Right. So

10:30 **you did a bit of training there and**

In Brisbane?

Yeah.

Yeah, from there

You told me about the additions, putting on the extra battery to the

Oh that happened in Darwin, that was long before Brisbane.

I see, right.

When I say long before, the previous year.

In the army which was the most respected division? Was it the 9th Division?

Most respected?

11:00 **Yeah, like amongst the troops. Archie, yeah, we were talking about the most respected division in the Australian Army at the time.**

Yeah.

Which one was it, was it the 9th Division?

Well there was, there was a certain amount of jealousy between the, there were four

11:30 divisions in the Second AIF. One less than the First AIF, they had five, and the First World War they started off one to, one to five and the Second World War they carried on. 6th Division was the first, first formed. That was early in the war. I think they set sail somewhere,

12:00 January, about January 1940 they set sail. Of course they hadn't finished their training. They finished

their training in, over in Egypt. And then they formed the 7th Division and away they went and the next division was the 8th Division but they never went anywhere near the Middle East. Malaya's as far as they got.

The majority of the division got captured.

Yeah.

That's right, yeah.

The lowest part

12:30 of the 8th. But we didn't go to Malaya. We were as I said, told you before, we were spread from Darwin to Rabaul across the top of Australia. And then the 9th Division, well the 9th Division was partly formed in here and I think they took a brigade away from 7th Division I think to, as part of 9 Div. So it was formed

13:00 overseas really, the 9th Div. They were the last to get home. 6 And 7 came home. Of course that's when the brawl with Churchill, between Curtin and, Curtin was the Prime Minister of Australia.

Is that when the 9th Division was coming across the Indian Ocean?

No, they were still in the Middle East.

Which division are you speaking of?

I'm talking about the 6th and 7th

'Cause that's, they finished Syria.

on their way home.

Yes.

We got the Japs

13:30 nearly into Port Moresby and Curtin wanted our soldiers home and he's squabbling with Churchill. Churchill wanted to send them to Burma and here's the Japs nearly on our back door, nearly into Australia. He thought, I've often told my missus, Churchill thought more of the Indians than he did of the Australians. 'Course that stirs her up a bit.

14:00 But some of the prisoners taken were 7 Div, nearly a, well equal to a brigade were captured in Java, Java.

A brigade of the 7th Division?

Yes.

Really?

Yeah. They finished up in Changi with 8th Division prisoners and of course they went, oh they scattered them [The troops referred to were 'Blackforce', an ad hoc, composite force comprising several AIF units]. Some of them went to Japan. Most of them went up on the railway, building this railway, and some went

14:30 to Japan. Of course I had a cousin, the US submarines were pretty active at this stage, they were sinking Jap ships. Of course there's no indication they've got a boatload of POWs [Prisoners of War] so the whole shipload of them went to the bottom and of course they couldn't get out. They're all battened down in the holds. They drowned, just drowned like rats. No hope.

So you were saying about the tensions between the divisions,

15:00 **between the 6th and 7th and the 8th and 9th.**

There's no, wasn't, I wouldn't say tensions, just a certain amount of jealousy I suppose. 9th Division seemed to get more publicity than any of the others.

Is that because they were the most experienced troops?

No, no. They were the least experienced. When I say least experienced they were in Tobruk.

That's what gave them the sort of fame?

Yeah, yeah,

15:30 but the 6th Division, 7th Division was in Syria, 6th Division was in the early battles. They were mostly fighting Italians, and the 9th Division, they went in, end of Tobruk, and of course I'm giving you military history just off the top of my head, but 9 Div was in Tobruk. They hung on, the Germans couldn't dislodge them.

16:00 They were surrounded except on the sea. They were surrounded at Tobruk and they just couldn't

dislodge the Australian troops out of Tobruk so we hung on there. Oh, what was it? Must've been a year, year or more. Wasn't till after they were relieved that Tobruk fell, so

16:30 that was 9 Div that was relieved out of Tobruk.

So because of that publicity

Mostly by British Army I think.

So because of that publicity the 9th Div

No. They had a battle at Alamein which was a pretty really ding dong go and they got more publicity than any of the other divisions.

So that was the sort of jealousy you were referring to?

More or less, more or less.

Yeah, recognition?

Yeah, yeah. Everything was 9 Div, 9 Div,

17:00 9 Div. My poor old division was chopped to ribbons, what weren't chopped to ribbons died as, under slave labour.

Was the 8th Division rebuilt after that?

No, no.

It wasn't?

No. They formed up in Darwin, they tried to reform, well they did reform the 23rd Brigade, which belonged, which was part of 8th Div, but the division

17:30 as a whole was never reformed.

OK, so it remained

But our colour patches got a grey bar down the middle and that was to represent the broken 8th, they called it the broken 8th.

The broken oath?

8th, 8th.

Oh, the broken 8th.

8th Division.

I see.

Yeah, the broken 8th.

So that was after the actual 8th Division was lost.

Yeah, that was after the surrender in Singapore, yeah.

OK, so how big was the division after that, after

18:00 **the surrender?**

A division is about 20,000 all up. Now in Malaya there wouldn't have been, I don't think there'd be much more than 15,000 you see, only two brigades and supporting, supporting troops to a division. Would've been roughly about 15,000 soldiers. The other 5,000 were in Darwin

18:30 and Rabaul.

You said Ambon as well?

Yeah, they, they'd left, they were over, left before the first raid. They were over there before the 19th of February, both in Timor and Ambon, and of course they landed assault naval, assault forces against them and of course just overran them. They had no hope. Be,

19:00 up against about 800 or 1,000 soldiers in a battalion and they'd land about 10 or 15,000 Japs against them. Of course they had no hope, they were just, just overrun completely.

So tell me before, I'd like to move on from Brisbane but before I do that, I'd like to sort of like go back to the Darwin period when you were there.

Yeah.

There's two questions I really want to ask you,

19:30 **or maybe a bit more than two. Firstly I understand that soldiers who served in Darwin, some of them felt they were forgotten soldiers.**

Yeah, well we certainly did because we thought we were on our way to Malaya and when we weren't shipping out of Darwin we thought we'd been forgotten, but of course now going back into history, we weren't forgotten. We were there for a purpose, that was to defend the northern islands of Australia

20:00 because apparently there was a, there was an agreement between the Dutch and the British government that we would, we would help defend the Dutch East Indies as it was called then and the islands,

20:30 Rabaul, we had a battalion out of my brigade, 2/22/Battalion was sent to Rabaul straight from Australia. They didn't send them from Darwin, they went there independently and we were sent to Darwin. So the three battalions formed the 23rd Brigade.

OK.

21:00 And we were the 2/14th, we were Artillery supporting that Infantry Brigade.

Now, your unit, were there any conscripts within it?

No, no.

That's AIF, isn't it?

Yeah.

AIF has no conscripts.

No.

Only Militia?

No, only Militia.

Right.

Oh well, they were all volunteers to start with.

Militia?

They brought in conscription.

When did they bring in conscription in Australia?

Well now you're testing my memory, aren't you? It came in,

21:30 it came in about I would say late 1940.

OK, and there would've been conscripts stationed in Darwin?

Oh we had them, we had them with us and they told us straight out that if the Japs landed they were off. They weren't staying, and they're supposed to be, they're our infantry protection for the artillery.

That's what they were saying, openly?

Yeah, they openly

22:00 said that they're conscripts, half of them never fired a rifle. That's how poorly trained they were.

Were they, sorry go on?

They just conscripted them, 18 year olds, put them into uniform and gave them a rifle and said, "Right, away you go, you're off to Darwin", and they'd had no training. This is shortly after they arrived of course.

Why did they say that they'd take off? They didn't feel

No.

passionate about defending Australia?

22:30 No, it wasn't that. It was self preservation I think.

They really felt they were no match for the Japanese?

Well you can imagine the confidence they instilled into us. "We were gonna be, we were there for the last man". That's, Billy Hughes said that in the First World War, to the last man and the last shilling. Anyway they openly

23:00 admitted, not officially, just talking to them, that they'd pack up and clear out quick smart.

What would you have done in your unit, what was the feeling then at the time? That if the Japanese attacked Darwin, would you have, I mean of course you've been an AIF unit; you're better trained and better equipped.

Yeah, yeah.

What do you think the general feeling was?

We were a bit disgusted when they said that. It wasn't said, it was only said individually.

23:30 Like man to man.

The officers said that?

No.

Militia officers?

No. A lot of, a lot of those officers, senior NCOs that came back from the Middle East, they were put into these militia battalions to give them a bit of backbone, and they were disgusted because they enlisted to serve in the Second AIF, not to be

24:00 backbone to militia soldiers.

What were the names of the battalions? Do you remember the names?

No. I'm not naming them, no. No, it was only one battalion and they were direct, they were our direct defence, ground defence for the guns. Of course, of course we support infantry, that's the idea of artillery, and we're shooting over their heads. But in a position like that

24:30 perimeter positions, we've got guns and gunners and infanteers all mixed up together in a perimeter and it's all around the fence, you see. So you can be surrounded but you're still fighting, but of course

Just so you're aware Archie, that if you do wish to say anything and sort of like wish to place some limitations on that

25:00 **we can also deal with that.**

Well I don't, you said, you said what, who were the battalions. I don't want to name them.

We can embargo, we can put an embargo so

Yeah, yeah.

whatever time you choose still.

There were probably some good soldiers in that battalion so I don't want to, I don't want to denigrate the whole battalion just because of a few silly statements from bloody conscripts, bloody just been put straight in the army into uniform and sent

25:30 north.

I don't think you'd be denigrating the battalion.

Well they'd feel, they'd feel that. Anyone looking at this would feel that.

OK, that's alright.

If they were in that unit, that is.

This is a militia unit you're talking of course?

Yeah, yeah.

So, now Darwin of course has a fairly large Aboriginal population in proportion to

Not when the first raid started. We were denuded straight away of any Aboriginal large populations.

26:00 They just took to the bush.

When you say the row?

First what? Raid.

Raid, sorry.

Raid, air raid, air raid.

I was wondering what you were talking about, sorry.

19th December.

OK.

Yeah, they took off, took to the bush very quick smart.

OK.

They didn't hang around. That's the Aboriginals I'm talking about.

Yeah, did you have any contact with Aboriginal civilians?

In Darwin, no.

In Darwin.

Not really contact, they were there

26:30 but we didn't bother with the

I understand that there were a few thousand Aborigines who were used as soldiers in special units in the north.

We had, we had Saunders, he rose to the rank of captain. He was an Aboriginal.

That's right, I've heard of him.

Yeah, Saunders. He was, he was in, I think he was in 7 Div.

27:00 I'm not too sure.

He was quite respected, wasn't he?

Oh yes, yeah.

But do you remember seeing

We had plenty of others. Oh, you're talking about,

Those special units that were formed with Aborigines.

yeah, North Australia Observation Unit they were called.

Oh, is that what it's called, OK.

Yeah, something.

Did you have any contact with them at all?

No, no. They were, they used to go out, they were like, something like, something

27:30 like commandos. They'd be operating for weeks at a stretch away out of the place.

In the bush, yeah.

Yeah, patrolling, patrolling all the coastline and that. They did have Aboriginals I think in there, just for probably, for local knowledge.

Like scouts sort of thing?

Yeah.

And what was, I mean you said that you didn't take

28:00 **much notice or your soldiers, your friends, your mates, didn't take much notice about the Aboriginal population around there. You didn't have much contact with them so to speak. What was the sort of like general atmosphere towards Aborigines at the time? I mean you had sort of like, how would you say, the White Australia Policy was functioning then?**

It was in effect prior to the war and during, even after the war we had a White Australia Policy. I don't remember when that

28:30 was abolished.

'71.

'71, as late as that was it?

Yeah, I think so.

And we, well that was the law of the land so if you, if you never had a white skin or near white skin you couldn't immigrate to Australia, that's all it meant. Well as far as I was concerned it didn't concern me greatly.

Did it make much sense to you at the time?

29:00 **Do you think it was something necessary to have?**

Well it was, it was brought about by the fear of the Asian hordes, what they used to say in those days, millions of Asians right to our north, they're going to come in and flood the country. Well the country was founded by white people in the first place even though they did have chains around their necks and ankles when they first arrived here. So

29:30 that was why the law was there, it was a Federal law, the White Australia Policy. That was the policy of the country just to keep the Asians out, and of course

So at the time no one paid much attention to it. They just accepted it?

No, you just accepted it. You didn't worry about it. Anyone trying to get into the country from Asia would worry about it,

30:00 but we used to say, "Well if you haven't got a white skin, you can't come in." That's it, finished. Of course most of our migrants all coming from the British Isles.

Did most of your mates feel that that was a thing that was OK, like to let in people on the basis of skin at the time?

Didn't worry, didn't worry about it. We didn't never ever discuss it I don't think. I don't remember much discussion about

30:30 it. Just accepted it, that was the law of the land and so you didn't argue over it. Of course things have changed today. I've got, I'm now married to a UK, she's waiting to get permanent residency here now and her youngest son is trying to get out here with his family, you

31:00 see. Now he's got to get in a queue with all bloody Asians, the Japs and the Chinese and your mob from India and all this. He's gotta get in and take his place in the queue and he's getting a bit upset about it. Well they told him, he rang up as soon as he put his papers in, he rang up and they said he'd hear something in six weeks. Hell That's bloody four months

31:30 ago. So that's what it amounts to, he's just got to take his turn. He's not gonna get any preference because he's got a white skin. That's what it amounts to.

So you said that you did some amphibious training in preparation for your deployment in New Guinea in Queensland.

Yeah, that was in Brisbane.

That's right.

South of Brisbane.

Tell me

32:00 **what you did there? Can you give me a little bit more detail about what exactly you did in those training exercises for instance?**

In the barge training?

That was one aspect of it, was it?

One aspect. They used to, oh this went on for a week or ten days or something. There was a lot of little islands just off the coast. When I say just off the coast, within a kilometre, a couple of kilometres of the beach.

32:30 And they used to take us out on these islands and drop the ramp and we'd race, race out with fixed bayonets yelling and screaming. Of course that wasn't our role, that was infantry, but they thought well that can't do any harm, they'll teach artillery men the same. But in New Guinea, a place called Madang, that actually happened.

33:00 Supposed to be Japs there and we came tearing out of, as soon as the ramp hit the sand. Of course they go down with a whop and you just race out yelling and screaming and the top of your voice, and we're gonna shoot the first Jap we see and the first bloke we see is the Salvation Army set up with his, with his coffee brew going, waiting to serve us a cup of coffee. So that was a bit of a,

33:30 we were highly deflated when that happened. I'll never forget that, yeah, waiting to serve us hot coffee.

Was there an intelligence blunder or something?

No, no. They thought Japs were there, well there probably were some Japs inland a bit but there weren't, certainly weren't on the beaches.

So you did your training basically in Brisbane,

34:00 **did the amphibious training?**

That was amphibious training, yeah.

Right, what was the other training you did? You also did some jungle

We had, some of them went to the jungle training school that was at Canungra. Some of them, of course they didn't take the whole unit through, you just pick out certain individuals and away they go to this jungle training school at Canungra. That's, oh it's south, south of Brisbane inland from the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast is what,

34:30 80 kilometres south of Brisbane, and up in the hills, that's where Canungra is. Still there today. I think

What was it like at the time?

I've never been there, not to the jungle training school, no. I never went, no.

And after that when were you first deployed to New Guinea?

When?

Yep. Was it '44?

Yeah, it was

35:00 about the 2 January 1944. We embarked on a ship in Brisbane, in the Brisbane River. That's where the docks are for Brisbane, and got on, it was a liberty ship.

Yeah.

The liberty ships were welded plates; instead of riveting they welded the, Henry Kaiser I think was the bloke who invented this. He was a big ship

35:30 builder in the United States.

Yeah, they were short term ships, weren't they?

Oh yeah.

They only lasted a few months?

Oh no, they'd last longer than a few months but if they got in real heavy seas, in the Atlantic a couple of them broke their backs. Like they couldn't flex like riveted plates, mostly they'd just crack apart I suppose.

They were just quick, quickly made ships?

36:00 They were building one a day, and

These were mainly for transport purposes, weren't they? Troop transports?

They were only cargo ships.

Yeah, and troop transports?

No, no, not for troops.

Not for troops?

Just cargo ships.

OK.

But of course our main troop carrier, well the Queen Mary I suppose is the most well known troop carrier, but that couldn't come into Port Phillip Bay, couldn't get through 'The Heads'.

I see.

Too much draught. Heads are not, that's what they talk about now,

36:30 dredging to bring bigger ships up into, up into Port Phillip Bay. That was the main, that was a passenger carrying ship of course and it was taken over by the British government and converted into a troop carrier, but not only that, there were plenty of other passenger ships that had been commandeered for the duration of the war.

Which ship were you put on?

The name of it?

Yeah, or what type

37:00 **of ship?**

A liberty ship.

Liberty.

Cargo ship.

OK.

Yeah.

Some of your unit was put onto that liberty ship?

Yeah, the whole of our unit.

OK. Now,

When I say the whole of our unit, one battery was already in New Guinea I think, they went straight to Lae.

That's right, Lae Campaign.

Yeah.

So where did you end up being deployed firstly?

Oh, we went straight to Finschhafen.

OK, that was straight after Lae, wasn't it?

37:30 Yeah, a bit further north than Lae, yeah, yeah.

On the coast.

But the first battery that went was the 64 battery. They were already in New Guinea before we left, before we left Brisbane, and that's where we landed at Finschhafen and of course the big battle, the 9th Division mainly involved in that

38:00 battle at Finschhafen, Sattelberg, you've heard of Sattelberg? That was all around Finschhafen, but it was practically, it was just finished and we went in there and we relieved, we relieved a regiment, all the fighting was finished, we relieved the 2/12th Field Regiment who was part of 9 Div. They were all coming back to Australia.

38:30 **OK. So you didn't participate in any of the fighting? You were just deployed once at Finschhafen?**

Not then, not then, we started to move further up the coast.

OK.

We were moving up the coast and firing a few shots here and there.

So tell me what it was like to land in Finschhafen? What was the place, obviously it's mostly jungle and stuff, but what's the general explanation?

They were, they were forming it into a

39:00 proper port for military purposes. They were busy building roads, they were putting up poles to carry telephone lines and electric lines and so forth, but there was still a terrific amount of mud about, and I remember the jeeps, we, they used to get four miles to the gallon of petrol with a jeep. Of course they're in

39:30 four wheel drive permanently all the time. They wouldn't get anywhere unless they were driving all wheels. And the mud, well the mud's up to there, up to our hub caps mostly, driving through this mud.

Was this a fairly large port? I mean like in the sense of a natural

It finished, yeah, after we left it, it turned into a fairly large port.

So it had a natural harbour?

It was, they were just developing it then when we arrived, started to develop

40:00 it.

And what stories did you hear about Finschhafen, about the battle around that area, Sattelberg and Finschhafen? What stories did you hear from the troops you met? Because I heard this fairly savage fighting took place there.

It was, it was, because the Jap is, he doesn't believe in surrender, he'll die, it's an honour to die for the Emperor. It is an honour, it's the greatest honour they can have and they'll fight to the finish.

40:30 But of course very few of them surrendered. The blokes, the ones, the ones that had a bit of nous would say, "Well, this is a hopeless situation we're in, we may as well surrender." They'd come out waving a white flag, but after we got news of what they'd done to this Catholic mission up in the hills in, it was,

41:00 that was long before Sattelberg, before Finschhafen. Our blokes just refused to take prisoners even if he did come out waving a white flag, bang, shoot him stone dead, finished.

Tape 6

00:31 **Archie, we'll, I want to get back to the, what you were talking about at Finschhafen,**

Yeah.

about what you heard about Australian troops and Japanese POWs. Now

This happened long before, long before Finschhafen.

OK. So you're talking about after Milne Bay sort of, after the Australians won.

Yeah, this is during the fighting on the Kokoda Track I'm talking

01:00 about. Now that was what? That was mid 1942 I think. That's when it happened.

So up until the end of the New Guinea campaign you said they were, that Australian troops had to be told to bring back POWs.

Bring back a prisoner, yeah.

So if Japanese actually surrendered the Australian troops would not take prisoners. Is that what you

No. That's, they brought it on themselves after this incident

01:30 at this mission. They murdered the priest and raped all the nuns and then murdered the nuns, slit their throats, and of course that spread like wild fire through the Australian Army.

And how did, amongst the people you came across, the other soldiers, you must've discussed this of course. You know, what was the feeling? I mean of course

No, no, not really.

You didn't discuss it?

No, not really.

But when you heard it what sort of, I mean obviously

02:00 **it's gonna disgust you but**

Well, when you heard it

Yep.

you just said, well they're animals, why bother about them, just kill them. It's either kill or be killed. They'll kill you quick smart. In fact, in fact they talk about the suicide pilots, the Kamikazes towards the end of the war, they used to play, lie doggo and

02:30 make out they were lying their unconscious wounded and as soon as you, you thought they were dead, as soon as you turned them over there's a grenade there. He's pulled the pin out of the grenade and the only thing stopping it going off is the lever. He's laying on the grenade itself and the lever can't come off but as soon as you pull, turn him over onto his back or if he's on his back vice versa,

03:00 bang, the grenade goes off. Well that's the end of him and the end of you as well, so you've got no hope.

So that happened quite often, did it?

Yes, yeah. That was one of the tricks they came at.

These are injured Japanese soldiers?

Yeah. They'd pull the pin out of a grenade and the weight of their body on the grenade is stopping the pin flying, the lever flying off. So that was one of the tricks they got up to,

03:30 or if, if you thought he was dead and you went, stepped over him, went past him after you'd gone he'd up and he'd shoot you in the back. That was another trick they used to come at.

Did you ever see any of this in combat?

No. No, I was in the artillery.

OK.

This is infantry tactics.

Yeah, so amongst the infantry there was a very strong view against the Japanese?

Well, well, before, before you walked past a body

04:00 you'd put a bayonet into him or put a bullet into him just to make sure he was dead. You didn't take any chances. You don't want a bullet in your back after you walk past him, but that's the sort of thing, and you didn't roll them over to see if they were dead because there might've been a grenade underneath him.

So was this sort of like after, was this sort of like unofficial policy in a sense? Like Australian troops in every other campaign, like Lae,

04:30 **Finschhafen, Sattelberg,**

Oh, there was communications between, between divisions.

But is that sort of like what they were told?

Yes, yes. This is

The officers would tell them OK, look, to minimise losses

No. It came out, what happened in different patrols in the Middle East and Malaya and so forth. That was one of the reasons why Gordon Bennett got out of Malaya and back to Australia. He's allegedly

05:00 said that he wasn't going to go into the bag, which means taken prisoner, and he came back to Australia. He's a major-general and he did get back to Australia. Well it was pretty rough at the start, they just got onto a motor boat and eventually when he got down this end of Java I think they got an aircraft and flew them out,

05:30 but he was severely criticised for leaving his troops and he never got an active command after that. That was the end of him as far as his army career was concerned. They sent him to Coventry.

Do you think he did the wrong thing by leaving his troops?

Well he was, he was the general officer commanding my division so I thought he did the right thing, but since

06:00 I've, sort of on the fence, I don't know whether he did the right thing or did, but he left his troops to it. They were all captured and as things turned out of course he wouldn't have been sent to the Burma Railway. He would've been gathered up and sent to Japan I think. Most of the officers, there was some camp they sent all the officers. It happened in my brigade, reading the history of

06:30 the 2/21st, they gathered, separated all the officers from the rest of the soldiers, and I forget where they went to, Formosa or some island near Japan. They were all congregated there, prisoner of camp, war camp.

2/21st was your brigade, that's right?

Yeah.

And you were the 2/14th Field Regiment, that's right?

Yeah.

OK.

2/21st Battalion, 2/40th Battalion, oh, 2/22nd

07:00 were in Rabaul and the 2/40th Battalion was in Darwin. So we had two battalions in Darwin.

What other atrocities did you hear that the Japanese committed against Australians, in New Guinea that is? Did you hear of any other things?

Not off hand, I can't think of any. They

Were you aware what they were doing to

07:30 **any of the POWs, the Australian POWs?**

No.

Was there any awareness of that?

No, nobody knew, nobody knew. It was just as though they'd fallen off the edge of the earth, all the news that we got back in Australia about what was going on.

So you didn't know if they were dead or alive, nothing?

No. Even their families, the International Red Cross used to have a sort of a mailing service and very few of their letters were getting back,

08:00 and of course the Japs would've severely censored everything that was written so anything in refer to, reference to the railway and the atrocities on the railway, that would've all been cut right out of the letters. The worst, the worst incidence of atrocity was on Sandakan in Borneo.

But you only knew that after the war, didn't you?

Oh yes. We didn't know at the

08:30 time.

It's actually quite a few years after the war, isn't it?

6,000 set out from, where was it? On the, a forced route march and anyone that dropped out they shot them, so if you couldn't keep up with the march that was your, that was your death sentence. They'd shoot you straight away, and out of 6,000 I think there's five got there, the end of the march.

So what did you

09:00 **have a gloomy sort of perspective about Australians who were captured by the Japs? Did you feel that**

No, not really.

you'd be treated ruthlessly or anything?

We didn't realise how bad things were, not when the war was on. It wasn't till the war had finished and we started to find out what they'd suffered.

But when you felt that the Japanese were, as you had suggested to me beforehand, had killed a priest and killed the nuns and raped them I understand you said,

Yeah.

09:30 **well with this sort of information spreading around Australian troops**

Oh, it went like wild fire,

Yeah. So

news like that.

So you would think that POWs who were captured by the Japanese may also be treated badly as well? Did you think that?

No, we didn't give that much thought at all.

No, OK. So what did you, what was going through the average Australian soldier's mind in New Guinea? Were they thinking that they like, anything at all about being a POW, what would happen if, what would I do

10:00 **if that was the case or**

No. We didn't think about it, didn't worry about it.

No?

No, no.

What were you told about the Japanese soldiers? I understand that other veterans have suggested they were told by the officers or intelligence, army intelligence officers,

Yeah.

that they would, the Japanese guns were inferior and they'd take about

10:30 **four to five bullets to pull you down, they couldn't see properly. Were you told anything like that in New Guinea?**

The first of that was up in Darwin. The used to tell us about the, about their air force. They all wore thick-lensed glasses, they were all half blind, they couldn't, they couldn't dive bomb, they, we found that out in the first raid in Darwin. We found out how, how poorly they could fly, it really opened our eyes.

11:00 They'd come down in a vertical dive. Our blokes would be coming down at 45 degrees. There was a little bit of a rock of Nightcliffs they used to use as a bombing aiming point and they'd be dropping only small bombs.

So you think the Japanese pilots weren't very good?

They were excellent, excellent. Of course the, where they came undone wasn't the pilots' fault, was

11:30 our aircraft, American, the Kittyhawks, they had armour plate behind their backs. The Japs didn't have any at all, but of course, they were ever so much lighter in the air and they'd turn on a threepenny bit and the only way our blokes, they're flying American fighter aircraft, was to, in a screaming power dive if you could get into them

12:00 and you'd get a decent burst in them, they'd just disintegrate the Zero. But of course the same thing with us, they'd be hitting armour plate at the back of the pilot's seat, they wouldn't disintegrate, the, the Kittyhawks.

So you must've had a feeling that when you went to New Guinea that you were fighting against professional soldiers, that the Japanese Armed Forces were not to be taken

12:30 **lightly of course, especially after the raid on Darwin?**

Well, at that time when we got to New Guinea they were on the run. They were in defeat and we were chasing them. We chased them right up the coast almost up to, well the 6th Division was up at Aitape, but we went well 400 kilometres up the, or 400 miles, up the coast, the north coast

13:00 of New Guinea. One of our troops was up that far chasing with infantry and leap-frogging, mostly by barge because the terrain was that bad that we couldn't use, couldn't travel by land. We had to leap-frog around by landing barge, and

So you felt that even

13:30 **though they were retreating they were still fighting very hard, the Japanese?**

No, they were half starved at this stage. They were really in a bad way. I might point out here that the Milne Bay was on at the same time as the campaign in the Owen Stanleys but they landed at Milne Bay, landed in force and they were repelled and this went what, Milne Bay

14:00 went on for about six, five, six, seven days but they were defeated and that was the first defeat the Japanese had ever suffered in the whole war was Milne Bay at the hands of mostly Australian soldiers, no Americans there except air force or American Air Force.

How many Japanese soldiers died at Milne Bay?

How many died?

Yeah. Do you have any idea like what?

That's the

14:30 64 dollar question. Thousands of them.

Thousands?

Thousands. I don't know, I don't know but

'Cause I was told that

If I went away and got, and read my history books there, I'd be able to give you the answer but off the top of my head

From what I've read it indicates that there was something like 3,500 Japanese troops in Milne Bay in the entire invasion.

Yeah.

15:00 **I understand that one of, some of the other veterans I've met beforehand have spoken about Malaya in the lead up to the fall of Singapore,**

Yeah.

and they were saying that there was an ambush by the 8th Division,

Yeah, on a bridge over,

on a bridge.

at Muar I think the place was called, somewhere around about there.

They say they killed 700 Japanese troops in that ambush.

Oh yes, easily. Yeah, they let, they're pedalling bicycles

15:30 you see, and yabbering away like monkeys and they let, they let several hundred get over the bridge before they decided to blow her and of course a plunger, you've seen them on the movies, and went the whole bridge. They'd prepared it all with explosives long, 24 hours before the Japs arrived and up they

went and opened up with the

16:00 machine guns and the rifles, and what didn't get blown up on the bridge well they just mowed them down, but that would be right, those figures would be pretty good.

You reckon 700?

Oh yeah.

That sounds like a lot of troops to kill in an ambush, doesn't it?

Yeah, but once, once you've let so many get over the bridge and you're on both sides of the road concealed in depth right along both sides of the road and here they are peddling bicycles and yabbering away to one another,

16:30 and as soon as the bridge went that's the signal to open up, and of course you just mowed them down like ninepins, skittles in the bowling alley, over they went.

So then that would be classed as the first land defeat for the Japanese then?

No, that wasn't, no.

Didn't they lose that battle, the Japanese?

No, they didn't lose a battle. They finished up that was only one little incident in

17:00 the Malayan campaign.

That seems to be more than Milne Bay actually in terms of casualties.

Oh the casualties. You're saying casualties. That's because they were, I don't know how many landed, how many Japs landed Milne Bay. 3,500 Yeah, that'd be

Marines I heard.

Yeah, well that'd be I'd say off the top of my head, that'd be somewhere about right.

Still a fairly large landing of course, yeah, brigade strength.

And they

17:30 got a foothold too.

Yeah, makes it hard, yes.

But of course they got right in, they were, they got one airstrip and what I've read at Milne, I wasn't there of course

I think the 61st Militia Battalion was there.

Yeah, but there was AIF there.

Yes, that's right.

7th Division. There was a whole brigade of, brigade of, infantry brigade with artillery support. I dunno, there was about

18:00 5, 6,000 soldiers all told and militia units as well.

Yeah, that's right, they fought in that.

Yeah, yeah.

I mean they fought in quite a few of the New Guinea battles as well as Guadalcanal.

What, militia?

Yeah. Is that true?

Well the 39th Battalion took the brunt of the Kokoda Track.

Yeah, but I'm talking after that as well. They were still involved in operations in Rabaul and

They were involved in operations until the end of the war.

That's right.

Militia units?

Yes, yes, that's right.

Oh yes.

18:30 **So tell me, was there a new found respect for the militia amongst the AIF soldiers?**

Yes.

Did they feel that militia had done hard under the circumstances?

After the Kokoda Track, yes, there was a change of heart. We used to call them chocolate soldiers, you see, before that but after they came back from overseas and there was a change of attitude towards the militia soldier

19:00 after Kokoda, the Owen Stanley Campaign. So they took really, really took punishment that 39 Battalion.

Do you know what their losses were off the top of your head?

Who?

The losses of the 39th in the Kokoda Campaign.

No.

They must have really got some fame out of that amongst a lot of Aussie troops?

Well they're looked up to,

19:30 they're really looked up to as far as, as I said there was a change of attitude towards militia soldiers after that. Of course the whole problem with the war, the Second World War that Australia had two, two separate armies and of course there's a certain amount of jealousy for one army to the other and between them and

20:00 we used to call them chocos, that was a derogative term to, to say that he's a sort of inferior quality soldier I suppose and, but that attitude changed after the Owen Stanley Campaign.

So when you landed in Finschhafen you just

20:30 **moved up the coastline? When was your next engagement?**

We didn't really do anything serious in New Guinea because they were on the run and we couldn't catch up with them and they weren't really going up the coast, they were inland and they're starving. They had no supplies, they're dying of disease and there was nothing serious, not until we got over to New Britain, then it

21:00 started to get a bit serious over there.

OK. So when you were marching up the coastline did you also go inland as well? Were your

Yeah, we sent, had patrols going inland.

Did your unit have to go inland at all?

No, we were artillery. We supported their patrols. We'd have observation officers travelling with them and sometimes they'd be laying cable behind them. Other times they would only have radio contact, back to the

21:30 guns I mean.

Yeah, wireless.

Yeah, yeah.

So how did you conduct artillery, co-ordinate and conduct artillery strikes, barrages on, in jungle? I mean that must be quite difficult. Could you tell us about that?

I've read an article not so long ago about the Vietnam, in Vietnam yeah, that the Australian

22:00 Artillery over there was having difficulty recording the fall of shot and this particular commanding officer remembers, very dimly remembers reading something that the 2/14th Field Regiment did in New Guinea and New Britain, and he dug out the history of what was going, what happened there, this is years before,

22:30 and we had devised a system whereby we took bearings, magnetic bearings on the sound of the, where the shot was falling from three separate observation posts and by intersecting the lines on a map they were plotting where the rounds were actually falling. They

23:00 could get a pretty accurate estimate of where the rounds were actually falling because you couldn't see them.

So when you say observation posts, how, they'd have to be on a high ground area or something to see these things, see the actual accuracy of the

Yeah, yeah, but that doesn't happen. That happens here in this type of country but when you get up there you can't see over the tops of trees 'cause you're down on the ground.

So what happens? They go on,

23:30 **they have to create special posts or something like that?**

No, no. We, our observation officers, NCOs, are travelling with

With the troops.

an infantry company and as soon as an infantry company comes up against opposition, they'll call for artillery support and that's our blokes and they've got the fire orders. In many cases the shells are going right over their heads

24:00 and landing on top of the opposition, the Japs.

Right, I see. So did it have much of an impact in the jungle, firing shells into the jungle? How would that impact in the jungle environment, landing a shell there?

Well after the war had finished we fired that many rounds into them at, where was it? Waitavalo was, was the

24:30 place where it all took place. They, the Japs thought they had two artillery regiments firing on them. In actual fact there was only us, 2nd, one artillery regiment, but they thought there was two. That's how much fire we put down. And we had, we had infantry, artillery officers up there with the infantry

25:00 companies and of course they're bringing mortars to bear on the infantry. They're suffering casualties and of course the first thing they want is artillery support and we're well back with the guns. Could be 5, 10 kilometres back and we'd, he'd call for support and he's

25:30 not happy. He said, "Bring it closer, bring it closer", and our bloke, the OP [Observation Post] officer, whatever rank he was, lieutenant or captain, would say, "It's getting dangerous because we're going to hit some overhead trees", and eventually the worst did happen.

It hit a tree?

It hit, it exploded in a tree up above and there was above three or four blokes down the bottom of the tree killed. Killed, that's what you call friendly

26:00 fire, or what the yanks call. There's nothing friendly about it, it's just as deadly as enemy fire.

So your, I've been told also that when you fire into trees it can cause splinters from the tree to fly around.

Oh, yeah well.

Does that happen in a jungle environment as well?

Yeah, but you'd be awfully unfortunate to get hit with a wood splinter. You're more liable to be hit with a steel splinter from the bursting shell.

26:30 Yeah, that could happen, you could hit, be hit with a lump of wood.

How would you move artillery pieces through the jungle? I mean, you're, now you're talking about 25 pounders you had at that stage.

Yeah.

Now obviously there'd be very limited manoeuvre, wouldn't it? I mean you wouldn't be able to pull it through most of the jungle.

If there's a track there and you've got something to haul it with, a tractor or a wheel, we didn't have any wheel tractors, not that

27:00 I recall.

How big would a track have to be to move a 25 pounder through the jungle? How wide?

Oh, they're no wider than what a normal truck is, 30 hundredweight truck or,

OK.

providing the track's there and if there's trees close in well you've got to chop the trees down to give you a little bit more room.

It must be difficult under those conditions when the jungle's a fairly moist place, constantly wet.

There's gotta be a track

27:30 there to start with.

Right. When you say a track, what, are you talking about sort of like a road?

A vehicle track.

Yeah.

Well not a road, but a two wheel track.

Right, otherwise

And if there's not, you've got to travel by barge.

Alright. So that's the only way?

Yeah.

OK.

Yeah.

They're fairly large guns.

We weren't lifting field pieces by aircraft, by helicopters in those days. That all happened after the war, as

28:00 happens now. No, we didn't have any, well we had, well I can't remember helicopters. No, I don't think we had any helicopters. They'd been invented but they certainly weren't in our

What about mortars? Did any, was it under that sort of, was it under the purview of the artillery units?

No, mortar's an infantry weapon.

That's a close infantry support

28:30 **weapon?**

Yes.

Now, were they effective in jungle combat?

Oh yes, yes, yes.

Were they used more frequently than the artillery barrages?

Oh, as soon as mortars opened up we'd open up with artillery and silence them. Of course the only way to silence them is kill the crew and damage the mortar itself I suppose, but that was very successful because where they're,

29:00 where the infantry is and the fighting's going on, they're not very far apart, but of course through, when you talk about jungle it's not all completely covered over your head. There's trees, separate trees but of course they're growing a bit more closely than what it is in our bush in Australia say.

OK, so it's not necessarily all the time very thick jungle?

29:30 No, not all, not all places, no, no. It can be, it can be. You mightn't see the sky for the overhead canopy. You mightn't be able to look up and see the sky above you but that's extremely thick, to be in jungle like that.

So what was it like to be, I mean I know the infantry, we all know the infantry had a very hard time in the jungle of course.

Yeah.

What was it like for an artillery person to be in the jungle?

Well we lived with them

30:00 in many cases.

So were the conditions a little bit different? Did you have any privileges the infantry didn't?

No, we didn't have anything they didn't have. No, you lived exactly the same as they did.

How did you, and how would you sleep? Like what was the general routine with sleep? What did you sleep on, where?

There was only, we used to cut everything in half, slice everything in half, chop your blanket in half, because everything had to be

30:30 carried on your back and there's only one thing we couldn't chop in half and that was our mosquito net. You can't chop a mosquito in half and still look for protection. You've got to be completely covered with

a mosquito net. That was the only thing that we couldn't reduce our load. Everything else, even the towel used to bath with, that got cut in half, only carried half a towel. Anything to reduce bulk and weight because

31:00 everything had to go on your back, carried on your back. But when we were with, when we were, mostly NCOs and commissioned officers, whoever the, and what they used to call officers' assistants, they all lived with the infantry in, sometimes a company, company of infantry, what's,

31:30 a company can be about 200 soldiers but sometimes a platoon's only about 40 soldiers, in a platoon roughly, but when you were travelling with them as you are moving forward or out on patrol or whatever they're doing, but you're travelling with them and, not the guns. I'm only talking about the,

32:00 the OP party, Observation Post party.

So yeah, we were talking about life in the jungle.

Yeah.

Tell us what sort of wildlife you came across as well in the environment you were in. What did you

Wildlife?

Yeah, animals.

No, no, no, no, no. The funniest thing happened with wildlife was up in Darwin. We were camped right along the

32:30 2/21st Battalion where we were at Winnellie and one of the blokes over there in the tent, he had a rock python. Now rock python grows to, I don't know, 20 feet long when fully grown, but he had one in a box under his bed. When I say bed, they're only two poles with a potato

33:00 bag in between the two poles and one night one of our blokes are going down the toilet which is away from the camp and there's a great snake going across the pathway, and he said, "That's, that must be that bloke who owns the pet python", so he grabbed it and it bit him. So anyway

33:30 he carted the snake back to the 2/21st bloke and he said, he said, "Here's your snake", he said, "I've caught it". So the bloke lifted up the box under his bed and the snake's still in his box, so it was a wild one, no wonder it bit him. I suppose well, the tame one would've bitten him as well. So that was a fit of a funny incident happened up there.

34:00 **Did he let the snake go?**

I don't know what happened to the snake, I suppose he did. He might've bitten it back, I dunno. So

What about monkeys?

No, no. I don't remember, I don't remember seeing any monkeys, no, not one. No.

What did you think about the jungle? You know, when you were brought up you must've heard things about the jungle. Generally most people thought

34:30 **the jungle as being a pretty dark place. You know, a bit dangerous. When you were actually there what was your impression of the jungle?**

I think by what I can, since the war's over I think in Malaya they had more of a jungle than what we did in New Guinea. It was, it was thick in places and as I said, it's, you

35:00 could see the sky in other places, but night time there all sorts of strange noises and you're on sentry duty and you're listening and every little sound is magnified and you don't know what to make of it. Is it a human being or isn't it, and of course animals, nocturnal animals they only run around in the dark and all sorts of strange

35:30 noises that you're not used to.

Did you like the jungle? Is there anything about it you liked or you found it just to be…?

Yes, I liked it when I waved it goodbye. No, you took it in your stride I suppose. If it's there it's there, you can't do anything about it, but as

36:00 as far as soldiers are concerned you can, there can be an enemy soldier where that tripod is and you walk right past him and not see him. He can see you because he's looking at you, but

Did that ever happen to the artillery? After the infantry went, the artillery followed behind them and you came across any Japanese?

No, not really, no.

But you'd see the after effects of what you've done sometimes, wouldn't you?

Oh yes, yes, what, the

36:30 effect of a shell fire?

Well yes, the casualties, dead bodies?

Sometimes, sometimes. As I said the gunners never, very rarely did they see what they were shooting at. They never saw, ‘cause it was always well in the jungle, it was, it was over treetops. In our type of country it’s over, over the other side of the hill and your eyes and ears is the bloke on top of the hill directing

37:00 the fire or he could be in an aircraft.

So what would happen when the artillery soldiers are walking past dead Japanese soldiers on the ground?

Yeah.

How would they….

Did they weep or did they cheer?

You can tell me that.

They cheered. That’s one less of the Imperial Japanese Army that we’ve got to contend with.

Yeah, did, you said

37:30 **that soldiers often used to go past and bayonet to make sure. I mean I understand that would’ve been more infantry.**

That’s, that’s, yeah, not us, not us, infantry.

Did you ever see the artillery soldiers do that as well?

No, no, never. We didn’t, we didn’t more or less, we very, the gunners very seldom saw what the effect of our gunfire was,

38:00 very seldom. There’s, I can’t recall any occasion when the gunners would’ve seen what they, what they were firing at.

So your war was essentially a little bit different, actually not a little bit, quite a bit different to that of the infantry, your experiences were very different.

Oh, yes.

Even though you fought in the same areas,

Yeah.

the type

38:30 **of roles you had made sure**

As I said before, only the signallers and the Observation Post Officer and his assistant were with the infantry. The main part of the gunners and the guns were well out of it. We were well, and we were all the time in New Guinea and New Britain, we never ever came under shell fire.

Oh right, never?

Never, not once did we ever have

39:00 shells thrown back at us.

No artillery at all?

No, no. No, not once did it ever happen. Well not with the unit, not with the battery I was with anyway, and I don’t think it happened anywhere else?

Did, what did you think of the Japanese artillery in New Guinea and New Britain?

They had, they had a mountain gun there which was, I can’t recall what the calibre was but it was certainly much

39:30 smaller than what our, ours were about three inch calibre, 25 pounders, around about three, three inch, a little bit over.

This is in Lae, wasn’t it, those mountain guns?

Hey?

Was it in Lae by any chance?

Lae?

Yeah.

They would've had them in Lae, they had them wherever the Jap army was, mountain guns.

These big guns.

No no, they're not big guns. Smaller, much smaller than a 25 pounder, but they're

Right, OK. I met a chap from the

40:00 **2/23rd Battalion.**

Yeah.

He told me that he was in Lae and they came across two big Japanese naval guns that had been brought up to Lae.

They're not mountain guns. They're naval guns.

Right, sorry.

They'd be six inch or, I'd say about a six, eight inch if they're naval guns, they're big guns.

Pretty nasty explosion they must've had.

Well double, double, double what a 25 pounder explosion would be.

40:30 That's why I said up in Darwin we only had pop guns to battle with naval guns. They would've gone, walked all over us.

We're going to have to stop now, take a break.

Tape 7

00:30 We're rolling.

OK. Now we were talking about just before about your experience in New Guinea and you were telling me about artillery bombardment and the jungle, life in the jungle in general.

Yeah, yeah.

Right. After Finschhafen you moved up the coastline in pursuit of the Japanese.

Yeah.

Which was the next major engagement you had after that?

Well I was, I was, I didn't get beyond Alexishafen as far as

01:00 I went, and that was where we, how did we get into the place before Alexishafen? I'm trying to think of the name of the joint. It's not very far anyway. That's where we went to sleep and laid out our, our

01:30 mosquito net and crawled in dog tired. Must've been a long day that day, I can't remember. Anyway, woke up in the morning and I got about two inches of water flowing through my bed. That didn't wake me up. It was daylight when I woke up, so just break of dawn, dawn breaking, but when it started raining I don't know. Never had any tent, just the mosquito net

02:00 so I remember

What do you remember about the natives you

Madang, that was the name of the place, Madang.

Madang, that's in New Guinea isn't it?

Yeah.

Yep, OK.

So is Alex, Alexishafen. Alexishafen's the place where the day before the infantry were going up the road and the Japs had planted, they planted mines in the track itself

02:30 and they, a couple of blokes had been blown up with these landmines and they, his mosquito net was up, all blown up and hanging in the branches of a tree. I remember that. So we came along, might've been

two days

03:00 after that. The mosquito net was still up in the tree and our, our engineers were prodding for these mines with bayonets on the end of rifles, they were just prodding as, about two or three abreast as they're going along, just a small arc in front of them, prod, prod, prod, prod, till you strike something metal. Well you wouldn't know it was metal, you'd be content a bit of

03:30 rock, but you'd still treat it with caution. Funny thing, I'm caravanning up through centre of Australia at a place called Barrow Creek and I'm talking to, I can't remember his name now, he was considered, he was the president of the racing club. They had one race meeting a year I think. He's the president of the racing

04:00 club. They called him the mayor of Barrow Creek. He had his own pozzie at the bar. No one was allowed to sit in that corner, that's the mayor's corner, and he lived in the old Telegraph Station which is just, just a few, 50 yards north of where the pub is, and I'm talking about this one day. He said, "I was one of those engineers",

04:30 and this is, this is 40 years after the war's over and we'd passed one another of this particular section of track between Madang and Alexishafen. He said, "I was in, I was one of those engineers in that party, we were, we were prodding with bayonets for mines." I says, "I dips my lid to you. I always thought you were very brave soldiers to be prodding,

05:00 searching for mines with bayonets on the end of rifles." Of course that's all the equipment they had then.

So, you went through a few places, you must've come in contact with the local population of New Guinea.

No, no. No population there.

Natives?

All, natives they'd all cleared out, everyone.

Everyone cleared out?

Yeah.

05:30 **Didn't you have any people that were carrying supplies?**

No.

No?

We didn't, no.

None?

You're thinking about the

Kokoda (UNCLEAR), yeah.

It's called Kokoda Track.

Yeah.

Yeah, they had, they had native carriers there carrying supplies and munitions into them and carrying wounded out. Well it was really

06:00 serious, it took about eight of them to carry a stretcher in relays.

Did they get paid for that? Do you know if they got paid?

I dunno what, I've got no idea what they were paid but they would've been paid something. They'd be on the payroll, but probably some pittance they'd give them. We had native soldiers up there. We had the

The Papua Infantry Battalion?

PIB

06:30 and the NGIB, New Guinea Infantry Battalion and the Papuan Infantry Battalion. They were white officers and senior NCOs but the rest of the troops were all natives.

Were they good soldiers?

Oh yes, yeah, very good.

Quite respected amongst the AIF?

Yeah, yeah. They'd slit a Jap's throat, like, something like the Indians,

07:00 **Yeah. The Sikhs?**

They'd put, the Sikhs, was it the Sikhs?

And the Ghurkhas.

The Ghurkhas, that's what I'm thinking of.

With their kris.

Yeah, they pull, what do they call it, a kris?

Yeah.

Yeah, they gotta draw blood every time that comes out of its scabbard. The Jap would have his throat cut and wouldn't realise it, well something similar with these native soldiers, all bare-footed and they'd sneak around especially

07:30 in the dark. Got eyes like cats. So I think the Japs feared them more than they feared us because we couldn't move silently like they could through the bush.

Did the Japs use any tricks in the New Guinea Campaign? Did Japanese soldiers

What, for natives?

No, against your, the Australian soldiers. Did they say, did they use any deceptive sort of guises

08:00 **at all? Like you know, I've heard they dressed in uniforms and calling out words and stuff.**

Yeah, yeah.

What can you tell us about that?

Not so much there but in Malaya they did.

OK, Malaya.

Yeah.

But did you, did you

They used, they used firecrackers, they'd get around behind you and they'd light these fire crackers and you thought all hell was going on with rifle fire. It wasn't rifle fire at all, then they'd be yelling out,

08:30 "Over here Aussie, over here, over here", and of course you'd be straining and looking through there and then someone else would yell out over, in English, "They're calling out in English to you."

But you knew straight away they were Japanese?

Oh yes, yeah, yeah.

The accent would've

And all our passwords were, had a lot of L's like Woolloomooloo, Woolloomooloo is a suburb of Sydney. The Japs can't

09:00 pronounce L's. He'd say "Wooroo, Wooroomooroo, Wooroomooroo." He's pronounce an L as an R, and that's how you, that's how we used to, we used to pick all these passwords with a lot of Ls in them. Woolloomooloo is the best one I can think of.

Even in New Guinea you did that?

Yeah, well you had to have a password because if you're outside your perimeter and you're challenged for a password. Anyway you shouldn't be outside the perimeter to

09:30 start with. We had one bloke killed outside our perimeter. He was challenged and didn't give the password so they shot him. He was one of our own blokes.

He was an infantryman?

No, artilleryman.

OK.

What he was doing outside the perimeter nobody knows. He probably didn't know. He'd gone troppo I suppose. But you don't fool about, if you don't get the password, bang. We had, we had one of

10:00 our lieutenants shot. A situation arose, where was this? This was in, I don't know whether it was New Guinea or New Britain. We had telephone communication that the Jap patrols were in the area and we

had an infantry battalion just not far away, only 100, 100 yards away,

10:30 maybe 200 and the OC [Officer Commanding] of the battery wanted, got a lieutenant and a warrant officer to go over and warn the infantry that there were Jap patrols, suspected Jap patrols in the area. Anyway away they went and next thing we hear is a burst of machine gun fire

11:00 and we're yelling and screaming and the warrant officer said, were yelling out, "Don't shoot, don't shoot, we're Australian." Anyway they hit the lieutenant, hit him right in the groin with a bullet. He died, severed his femoral artery. He was dead in about three minutes, bled to death. So if you haven't got the pass, they

11:30 weren't challenged. This young bloke, he went bush too, after he realised what he'd done.

What do you mean he went bush?

He disappeared. They couldn't find him.

Right, OK.

Yeah. They caught up with him later. I think they put a charge on him, but I don't think there was any challenge. They weren't challenged for the password. So he just opened up, he thought, they thought it was a Jap.

So just going back to sort of like

12:00 That's what you call friendly fire. Nothing,

Not very friendly about it.

Nothing friendly about it.

With, going back to sort of like battles and the POWs, would you say as far as taking POWs and as far as brutality was concerned, that the Japs and the Aussies treated each other similarly in New Guinea?

We were just as

12:30 brutal as what they were. Just as brutal, we wouldn't take Japanese that decided to surrender. We'd kill them just the same even though they were waving a white flag, and as I said before they were actually ordered to bring back a prisoner. They didn't bring back a prisoner, well don't come back yourself. It didn't get to that but that's what they meant. They couldn't

13:00 get any information. So they talk about the Jap being vicious, we were just as bad, we were just as bad.

What would they do if they did capture a Japanese soldier? Would he be, if there was so much sort of, I mean it's war time here we're talking about, so both sides are engaged in acts of brutality.

13:30 Yeah.

Did Australian soldiers when they captured a Japanese soldier as a POW, if they didn't kill him, how would he be treated immediately after they captured him like within the first hours?

Oh, after this incident when they were ordered to bring back prisoners they was treated with kid gloves, not by the infantry of course.

But they would've roughed him up, do you think, before he came

No, not, no, not really. Well you don't handle him with

14:00 kid gloves, give him a kick in the backside and get going, but he'd finish up in Cowra in the big prisoner of war camp when they broke out during the war. They went berserk. In fact, how many were killed? There was about three killed, three Australians soldiers killed there [actually it was one Australian Officer along with three other ranks]. Overran them and beat them to death with knives and

14:30 batons and that. That was a pretty serious business that, which we didn't know much about it during the war.

So do you think that it was the appropriate thing to do as far as not taking prisoners at the stage before the orders were given?

They brought it on themselves, didn't they? Didn't they bring it on themselves? So,

15:00 a crime committed by one section and the whole mob pays for it, but you didn't bother about the niceties of the rules of war. We just decided no more prisoners. Well that, we didn't, that was the infantry attitude, 'cause we, we weren't up there with the infantry in touch

15:30 with the enemy.

Did you ever want to go into the infantry?

That's why they called us nine-mile snipers. That was the name of the artillery. Infantry used to call us nine-mile snipers but when the going got tough they would've kissed us to death because we were pretty quick, quickly silenced those mortars that were causing havoc to them.

Did you ever want to join the infantry when you were in New Guinea?

No, no no. I was, I belonged to the gentlemen of the artillery. We didn't

16:00 march, we rode everywhere on wheels until they decided that they're gonna strip us of all our wheels and everybody had to walk the same as the infantry.

Yeah. Did you feel that you were upholding a certain tradition when you were in the AIF, the second AIF in World War II? Did you

16:30 **feel sort of, how can I say it, like an Anzac in a way?**

Oh yes. Yeah.

Can you tell us more about that?

I was following my dear old dad's footsteps. He went in the First AIF and I went into the Second AIF. Oh yes, there was a certain amount of pride in being an AIF soldier, a volunteer. We weren't conscripted to go to war. We volunteered to go to war.

17:00 There were no conscripts in the AIF. They were all volunteers. In the First World War the boat of the soldiers over in France and Belgium carried the day. They said, "No, we don't want any conscription." Australia, they'd run out of recruitment, they couldn't get anyone to, we were there scraping the bottom of the barrel. So they decided,

17:30 they government of the day, federal government said we'll introduce conscription, we'll get them, and of course the soldiers in the first AIF they all had a vote the same as everyone at home, and it was the soldiers vote that defeated that proposition. They said no conscription for the AIF.

Do you think that was a good thing that they didn't have conscription in the First World War?

Not for the country it wasn't a good thing, but for the AIF it was good

18:00 because it meant that the AIF were all volunteers and that's a big thing. You're not saying to an 18 year old "You'll go and fight and fight a war." He goes with a certain amount of resentment doesn't he, as happened up in Darwin when these young blokes said, "If the Japs land here we're off." They're there to protect the guns.

What units were they again? You were saying militia.

18:30 You asked me that question before and I said I still won't tell you in case I'm, if I name the unit it's a sort of a derogatory statement against that infantry unit. No, I'd rather not say.

That's OK. What about Billy Hughes? Did

Billy Hughes?

Yeah.

In the First World War?

19:00 **Well I mean he stuck around as a politician.**

The last man to the last shilling.

Were, did you like Billy Hughes?

I wasn't born then.

No no no, but Billy Hughes was actually still in Australian politics

Yes, yeah.

in the Second World War period as well.

Yeah, when I was, when I was a child, yeah, Billy Hughes was still a politician. He was the Prime Minister during the First World War and he said, "Australia will see this war out and we'll fight to the last man and the last

19:30 shilling." That was a famous statement by Billy Hughes. He, I think Billy Hughes is a Welshman. I don't think he's an Australian, he's Welsh by birth. I'm pretty sure he was. Yes, he's famous, well to my age he is. I was born, what, two years after the war, the First World War finished.

20:00 I'm a war baby from the First World War.

Just get back to your campaigning now. You said you were, you had moved up to, what were those towns again?

Alexishafen, Alexishafen.

Alexishafen.

That's as far north that I went in New Guinea, other

Were there any battles there that you faced in Alexishafen?

No, that, as I told you about the bloke's mosquito net up in the tree that had been killed,

20:30 **That's right, yeah.**

that, they were advancing following the Japanese there. There weren't many there to follow but there was enough of them there to plant mines under the track and these poor unfortunate jokers had to, there were two or three of them killed, had to step on these mines and of course they detonated and killed them.

So what did you do after Alexishafen? You got

From Alexishafen we had

21:00 a Yankee, Yankee fleet was anchored there and we used to, we had native canoes that we'd gathered up that had been abandoned. They got an outrigger on them and you'd paddle and paddle. We used to go out on to these, these American ships and they used to have picture shows on two or three times a week on the ship and we'd go out

21:30 and climb up the ladder and

You stayed there for a while, did you?

In Alexishafen?

Mmm.

Oh, we were there for, oh I'd say best part of six months at a rough guess we were.

Six months?

Yeah.

That's a fair stay then.

Just sitting there in that position.

Why was that? Why were you staying there for so long?

Well we, I was in battery headquarters. We didn't have guns, we didn't have any 25 pounders. The troops, they moved up the coast. We were

22:00 administrative headquarters of that particular battery. So the batteries moved, the troops of the battery, there's two troops in a battery, four guns in each troop, they moved up the coast and we had communications with them. That was my job to, had wire, radio communication with then and we had our sched [schedule] at certain times of the day when we switched

22:30 the set on and they'd switch the set on at that time of day and we'd pass messages backward and forwards, administrative messages, and

What was life like there? Was it more comfortable?

Pretty, yeah. We were more, we were in tents, yeah, we had tents, we were sleeping in tents, full size tents, yeah.

There would've been quite a few Yank soldiers there as well I understand.

No.

No?

23:00 No, no Yank soldiers at all, except the Sea Bees. The Sea Bees, they're engineers, sort of engineers in the navy and they build airstrips. That's one of their jobs, building airstrips, and that was the Sea Bees that were camped, well not camped, they were moored just in the harbour at Alexishafen and that's where we used to paddle,

23:30 paddle the native canoes out to go to the pictures of an evening. Oh about twice, three times a week I think they had a picture show on. Of course they're all into it too, all the crew on the ship. It's a navy ship but it's more like, it's not, it's not a fighting vessel. Hasn't got big guns on it, it's just a transport ship, that's all it is.

So while you were in

24:00 **Alexishafen did you throughout the previous months contract malaria by any chance?**

Ah.

'Cause I understand a lot of Australian troops were

I didn't get malaria until I got home after the war. The war had finished and I'd stopped taking Atebrin once I got back to Australia and next thing I've been home, no, I hadn't been discharged out of the army. I was still in the army because I,

24:30 I was out, I finished up Heidelberg Military Hospital, but of course as I explained, I had both toecaps out of my boots to let the air get at my toes because I was, had a dermatitis all over my toes. By the time I'd got down to Melbourne it had taken some weeks and the further south I came the quicker it was healing, get out of the tropics, and

25:00 I'm in the process of, no, I was out at Watsonia, that's right. I'm in the process of going through discharge when I went down with malaria and of course they shoot me out to, from, I'm at home at Middle Park where I was living with my wife and parents and a military ambulance calls up at the front door and out I go on a stretcher and into the back of

25:30 an ambulance, out to Heidelberg for about, what I was out there? About a fortnight till I recovered from this malaria attack. When I get discharged back to transit depot at Watsonia to go through, took about three days to get a discharge out of the army. Anyway they called the role this first day I report back there, right Sergeant Burton, you report to the

26:00 orderly room. Hello, what's going on here. So I go to the orderly room and they're charging me with being AWL [Absent Without Leave] for fourteen days. So I had to do a bit of tough talking about I've been in hospital, "What are you talking about?" Heidelberg hadn't advised them where I was, that I was a patient in the hospital, hadn't done anything and of course as far as they were concerned at Watsonia I'd been AWL.

So you managed to get of it?

26:30 I got out of it alright. They rang up Heidelberg and verified what I'd just told them, so.

OK. Skipping back to the Alexishafen, then you said you went to New Britain?

Yeah.

Tell us what happened there?

On another liberty ship.

OK.

Don't ask me the name, Stephen Garard I think it might've been called. They all had names

27:00 even though they were only old cargo vessels. Well they weren't, they were new cargo vessels. Liberty ships, that's what they were called because they'd been welded instead of riveted. We went across to New Britain to Jacquinot Bay, it's called. It's on the south east side of the island and we were camped there in a sort of a static camp. The, one of our

27:30 batteries had moved up the island with the infantry. We were sitting in Jacquinot Bay for I dunno, be a month, a couple of months maybe. Used to see the mail, the mail plane was a Sunderland Flying Boat. I don't know whether you've ever seen them, a big four engine, I think they're got four engines, maybe they've only got two, can't remember. That was the mail plane.

28:00 He's coming in about twice a week, the mail plane comes in bringing our mail, letters from home. Of course that was a red letter day. As soon as you see the old Sunderland coming in to land, they're flying boats, they land on the water. Other than that nothing exciting. We did, we just carried on signal training there as usual.

28:30 And then eventually we moved up to, up to Wide Bay, Open Bay, I'm not sure. Anyway there's a neck of the island. We had a bit of a stoush there with the Japs. We fired a good few rounds there, some thousands of rounds we fired there.

Tell us about that one, that specific engagement?

29:00 Well we had them bottled up in Rabaul and they estimate it would've taken about three infantry divisions to get them out, three to four divisions to get them out of Rabaul. I don't know how many Jap troops were in Rabaul, somewhere about 2 to 300,000 in Rabaul itself, and the policy was to contain them. MacArthur, he'd

29:30 gone on, he'd said, "Let them wither on the vine." Now you'll get me on my soap box in a minute, but that wasn't good enough for Blamey. Blamey, Blamey was the, was the allied commander of the

Australian forces and he was, Blamey wasn't happy with this. He didn't want to be left behind because the war was over as far as MacArthur was concerned. He was heading for Japan.

30:00 Blamey had wanted to mop up all the troops that MacArthur had bi-passed. Consequently there's was a lot around Wewak and a lot in Rabaul. 200,000 at a rough guess off the top of my head. That's a lot of soldiers, soldiers, sailors and airmen.

You're talking about Rabaul?

Rabaul.

Yeah. I remember reading something

30:30 **was more like 90,000 troops.**

90,000? I'm exaggerating. Anyway a hell of a lot when you consider there's 20,000 in one Australian division. Well wouldn't, not then, no, we were tropical division, we were much less than that 20,000. We were more like 12,000.

So you were quite under strength?

Oh, they'd cut, they'd cut, they'd

31:00 paired it to the bone. All our transport was gone and artillery regiment's got a hell of a lot of transport.

Why did they take it away?

Because you're fighting under jungle conditions and you, the roads, never had the roads to travel on to start with and with a motor vehicle we used to lay cable out the back of a one ton truck and we'd be, at

31:30 one stage we had a mechanical cable layer which was a petrol engine spewing cable out and we're laying cable at 45 mile an hour. It's really hopping along. Of course it's very wasteful on cable, spews it out. Drum of cable, they come in mile drums. It's no time before you spend one mile of cable.

32:00 **So you were talking about that**

None of that in New Guinea. That's all gone, finished.

OK. You were talking about you had a fairly big battle against the Japanese near Rabaul.

Yeah, where we had them penned up on the, on the, between the two bays, Wide Bay, Open Bay, and they were resisting and as I said we fired a fair amount of rounds, some

32:30 thousands, thousands of rounds of shells we fired in that episode and we killed a lot of Japs but not nearly enough to be able to march into Rabaul and say, here we are, you surrender.

So the Australian infantry were attacking the Japanese positions while this was happening?

Oh yes, we had the pressure on them. Yeah, we really had the pressure on them and

33:00 we suffered a few casualties there too.

The infantry did?

Oh yes, yeah. Well that incident I just told you about, we killed three or four of them ourselves with friendly fire, but it wasn't meant to be friendly fire. It was the infantry commander's fault because our bloke had warned him that it was getting dangerous, we're gonna hit the trees above the

That was in New Britain?

Yeah, at

33:30 this campaign where we've got them bottled up towards Rabaul.

So what's it like to be a signaller under those conditions of combat? Is it frantic?

Bit scary, yeah.

Can you tell us more about that? What do you mean specifically?

Oh well, I'll tell, these three of our blokes, they were all in my battery too, they got the Military Medal, they were under

34:00 heavy mortar fire and they were bombing the track was leading up towards the OP, which was the, they're in the infantry company's perimeter and these blokes went out and they were repairing the lines. Of course they're dropping mortar bombs all along the track and they're cutting the telephone line which is

34:30 laying on the ground and chopping it with this mortar fire. Anyway they're going out their repairing our cable back to the guns and also the infantry cable back to the, back to their battalion headquarters from

the company. So they're also repairing their line as well 'cause they were both cut, not, more than one place repeatedly. Anyway they finished up

35:00 they gave them, three of them got Military Medals.

So you were saying that they won the Military Medals for that?

Yeah, for bravery 'cause there was a certain amount of bravery involved. There's only got, get hit with a bomb splinter and you're curtains, could kill you.

Did the Japanese try

Severely wounded or

35:30 be killed.

Did the Japanese try to have an artillery duel with you in New Britain?

No, never, never. They had plenty of mortars but of course we're out of range of the mortars. The mortars can't go as far as what an artillery shell can travel.

Did they ever try to attack you position, the Japanese around

No, no. I can't, no, I don't recall any

36:00 incident, well in my battery anyway, but I don't, I would've heard about other incidents in the regiment with the other batteries where they tried to attack. I don't, can't recall any, no.

What do you think the difference between the Japanese troops in New Guinea and New Britain were? In terms of their

Distance, what apart?

No, no, no. That's not what I meant. What I mean is that in actual

36:30 **will to fight and their effectiveness, what was the difference between Japanese troops stationed in New Guinea Rabaul area and Japanese troops stationed in, sorry, New Britain Rabaul area and New Guinea?**

No different to anywhere else. They still fight to the death.

Right. So they were still very, very

It's an honour to die for the emperor in battle. That's their attitude.

So you didn't encounter any differences in your view?

No, no, no, no.

37:00 With an attitude, that's the attitude right through. It's imbued in them to die; it's an honour to die for the emperor.

We'll change tapes, yeah.

Tape 8

00:36 **OK, you said, you were talking about, we were just talking before, the Japanese troops. There's a, that's right, you were saying that they'd, their will to die for the emperor is very strong?**

Oh yeah, that's bred into them, bred into them.

Do you feel that Australian troops were very similar in that way? That they were

What, die for king?

01:00 **Well king and country,**

King.

or the queen for that matter.

Well that's the attitude that you enlist under but when it comes to actual dying, no. You're not, well every man speaks for himself but certainly not my attitude.

Not even for empire?

Well, empire, empire disintegrated, didn't it, yeah. King and country.

01:30 No, you don't, that's not, that's, we don't grow up with that instilled into us, die for your king. No, that's a lot of rubbish. That's contrary to the first instinct of man, is self-preservation, isn't it? Hey? Who wants to die? Nobody wants to die, but the Jap has got a different outlook on life altogether.

02:00 I don't know what it is now, whether they're starting to wake up to themselves now. I tell you a funny thing, now the younger generation of Japanese, the young generation don't know anything about the Second World War. They don't know a single thing about it, and if you don't believe me you go up to, up to the Gold Coast and you'll meet thousands of them

02:30 up there and you ask them, and they don't know because they weren't taught anything about it. Whether they consider it as a nation it was a disgrace to be defeated, to lose the war, but whether that's got anything to do with it, so they just didn't teach them anything about it in the schools, but that's a fact.

03:00 They don't know what, they don't know anything about the war. I don't know whether Australian kids no much more either, but at least we teach them something in the schools about the Second World War.

I'd like to get back to that a little bit later, but what I'd like to focus on is more your service in New Britain.

Yes.

Now that was obviously in '45, there was a,

Yeah.

you know, towards the end of

03:30 **the war.**

We didn't know that then.

No, you didn't know then,

No.

but you knew the war was ending, you knew it was moving in the right direction.

Well, well, well MacArthur was, he was in the,

Philippines, that's right.

he was further than the Philippines, he was into Okinawa which is an island what, how far south of Japan? About 2, 300, 400 kilometres

Yeah, yeah.

south of Japan, but they're still fighting ferociously.

04:00 They reckon the atom bomb saved hundreds of thousands American lives. If they had've gone into, onto the mainland of Japan itself and the islands of Japan they would've fought just as hard, even though, even though you could see the writing on the wall. They'd still fight, they're fanatics, and

Do you think, so you think that was necessary?

04:30 **To drop the atomic**

What was?

To drop the atomic bombs, definitely necessary.

Well it chopped about 18 months, two years off the duration of the war, that's my opinion. If it hadn't have been for that atom bomb, well two atom bombs. We dropped the first one and they still wouldn't surrender. That proves what I'm saying. They had to drop a second one to convince them that we were really fair dinkum. Of course it wasn't Australia's decision, it

05:00 was the US President had to make the decision. Who was it, what was his name? Can't think of his name now.

Roosevelt or Truman, one of them.

Truman.

That's right.

That's right, was Truman. It was his decision, he had to make up the mind, up his mind as to whether to use it or not use it. Thank, thank goodness he did use it

05:30 because as I said, it would've, he saved hundreds of thousands of American lives, soldiers and airmen

and sailors by the, by that decision.

So you were still in New Britain when the war ended?

Oh yeah, yeah.

Can you tell us more about that? What happened when the war ended, what were you doing?

We couldn't believe it, it was so sudden. Of course nobody knew anything about the atom bomb.

06:00 That was all hush hush, they didn't advertise the fact they had the atomic bomb. The first the world knew about it was Hiroshima and of course a terrible weapon. I don't know how many people were killed in Hiroshima with one bomb, thousands wasn't it?

Tens of thousands.

Tens of thousands,

06:30 and how much later, it was four days, four days [actually 3 days later, 9 August] after they dropped the second one on Nagasaki and it took two bombs to really convince the Japs that we had the upper hand.

Sue, can you stop the tape for a second please. Sorry, just a second. Thanks, so you couldn't believe it. You must've been very relieved. I suppose the war

Yeah, but even

07:00 then it didn't sink in. It didn't really sink in. Oh, the war's over, we're going home, but it was hard to realise because nothing around us had changed, wasn't any change.

So the Japanese at Rabaul were still resisting?

Oh yes, yeah.

They didn't surrender until the actual official surrender.

We didn't go into Rabaul until at least six weeks after that. I can't remember the exact date but it would've been six weeks after the 15th, 15th

07:30 of August which is considered the Japanese surrender. V, Victory Pacific is the 15th of August. It would've been, would've been I would say the end of September or end of October before we, before we actually sailed into Rabaul Harbour on, what ship were we on? It was an Australian

08:00 troop transport. I can't remember the name of the ship, [HMAS] Kanimbla or the [HMAS] Manunda, I think was one. Can't exactly recall which ship it was.

So what was going through your mind when you were going through the harbour and you, you know, you realised that you were in Rabaul, you'd been

Oh, when we got there they were all bowing and scraping and you can imagine what our

08:30 blokes were saying to them. Of course they didn't understand what we were saying; we couldn't understand what they were saying.

What were they saying, the Australian troops?

"Oh, get out you bloody mongrel", and all this sort of stuff, and derogatory statements towards them. Of course there was no, there was no fisticuffs or violence or anything like that. In fact, they were cutting grass,

09:00 we had, there were no transport, we had to march about four miles I think to where our camp site was had been allotted to us and we had them, we used to get a big mob of them every day, prisoners, Japanese prisoners. They were cutting grass and they're doing our washing and their polishing our boots and they were cleaning our

09:30 rifles even.

Cleaning your rifles?

Cleaning the rifles.

Why would you trust them with your rifles?

That's how pussycat they were; they turned out to be in the finish. Well they'd realised the war was over themselves.

I mean of course you're not going to leave them with ammunition.

Oh no, no. Of course not, no.

OK, so they were humble in defeat?

Yes, by what I saw of them, yes, they were.

Were there any renegade elements in the garrison there that

10:00 **decided not to surrender?**

Not, not in Rabaul, no. Not where we were but I've read articles and magazines and so forth where they went on for years, they wouldn't surrender. Well they didn't realise the war was over and they were still, well they weren't actually fighting but they were still holed up.

10:30 And well it's only what you read. Is it true or not? You don't know whether to believe it or not, but we didn't find any such, any of that.

That would've been probably the first time you'd seen Japanese up close perhaps, would it?

No, no. I'd seen, there was an incident in, where was it? It was in New Guinea, that's right, where

11:00 they were sitting, of course they were starving and on the run and they were suffering with disease. They had no medical supplies, no food, and they've got a fire burning, this infantry platoon, and they're sitting around the fire. Of course you didn't need a fire because it's pretty hot up there but they just had the fire going. Think they're sitting around a campfire at home I suppose, and all

11:30 of a sudden into the firelight is a Jap, bedraggled looking individual, half naked and all he'd say, he's only got one word, "Fire, fire". Starving, half starved and he had a billy, he's carrying a billy on a handle on a billy can, so one of the blokes jumped up and said, "I'll give you fire", and he up with a rifle and just shot him dead.

12:00 I wasn't there when it happened but I went up and the body's still laying there two days later.

Sorry, where was this again?

In New Guinea.

New Guinea, whereabouts in New Guinea?

That's a good question. Somewhere between, somewhere between Finschhafen and Alexishafen. How's that for an answer?

I'll look it up on the map.

It's a pretty fair stretch.

Yeah.

But I can't recall exactly where it was now, and I didn't keep a diary

12:30 through the war. I could've pinned all these places down for you, told you exactly where it was.

You wish you did, did you?

No, not really. She's a great one for a diary. She writes everything down day by day. So

So what were the other duties that the Japanese POWs in New Guinea…?

After the, after they were prisoners?

Yeah.

Oh, we used to keep them busy.

13:00 We'd always plenty of grass to cut, make our beds, shine, clean our boots, do our washing.

Did they do a good job?

Oh yeah, yeah. Clean our rifle. What else could you find them to do?

I don't know.

Anything else you can find for them to do. We were living the life of Riley, we didn't do any work whatsoever.

13:30 So

Were any of them treated badly at any time?

Treated badly? No,

What I mean by treated badly is sort of like did any Australian troops who were really angry about what the Japanese had done,

Not to my knowledge.

ever assaulted them or anything for

No, not to my knowledge, no. There might've been isolated cases.

What would happen if an Australian soldier in front of one of his officers decided to hit a Japanese soldier for whatever

14:00 **reason it was, if it was**

Well you wouldn't do it in front of an officer to start with. You'd wait until the officer had disappeared off the scene, if you were that way inclined, if you wanted to have a go at them, but I can't recall any incident that ever took place while I was there.

What would happen if an officer saw that?

Oh well, he'd have him on a charge I suppose. What the charge would be, I don't know. Conduct

14:30 of the Order, Conduct to the, Contrary to the Good Order of Military Discipline, that's a good charge. That sticks to anything, that one. I've been in a few myself through my time. The upshot was the last, the war's over and everyone's looking forward to getting home,

15:00 and of course you've got hundreds of thousands of troops to get home out of the war zones, back home to Australia and it's gonna take some time. How much shipping have you got to transfer, transport them back to, back home? So they decide the whole unit, Divisional Headquarters decides

15:30 that everyone's got to have a medical in Rabaul before we get any movements, orders to go home. So I'm still paddling around with my toecaps cut off my boots and I front up this day, up to a medical, the Regimental Medical Officer. He said, "How long have you had this?" I said, "I don't know, six, six or eight weeks." He said, "You can, you're into

16:00 hospital, go and pack your gear and you're going into hospital." So I went into hospital. I handed my gear in, what I had to hand in to the quarter master and went into hospital in Rabaul and I would only bee in there two days and next thing I know I'm on a flight, on an aircraft evacuation flight out of

16:30 Rabaul. Two days later, so that's, I said, well I didn't see the unit any more after that. It was Rabaul to Lae and I remember we got up at dawn, we were awake at dawn. It was still dark and we're out on the aerodrome, airstrip at Rabaul and there's old Biscuit Bomber and

17:00 RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] gonna fly us out, and the DC-3 they were, we used to call them Biscuit Bombers 'cause they were the main supply for the Owen Stanley Campaign, they used to airdrop ammunition and food to the troops. That's how they got the name Biscuit Bomber. He said, "The pilot was walking around, they're testing the elevators and the rudders and

17:30 all", he said, he said, "If this one won't fly none of them will fly", and only a week before one of them had flown straight into a mountain with a plane load of Indian POWs flying them out of Rabaul on their way home, back home to India. They'd flown straight into a mountain, it must've been in cloud. So that's the first time I'd ever been in a,

18:00 in an aircraft in my life. You can imagine, you can imagine how I felt. First time into an aircraft, and it's not the aircraft you get in today with a nice lounge and lay back seats. These, they had aluminium seats, I don't think they even had any padding on the seats, just the bare aluminium that you sat on down each side of the aircraft down the, down

18:30 the wall, the fuselage of the aircraft. They must've had seatbelts I think, even in those days you must've had something to tie you down. Can't recall. Anyway away we go. We flew to Lae, Rabaul to Lae, straight into, off the aircraft and straight into a,

19:00 I don't know what, it would've been an AGH [Australian General Hospital] I reckon at Lae, a proper field hospital, army hospital, base hospital.

That would've been fairly developed by this stage, wouldn't it, Lae?

Oh yeah. Oh yes, yeah, yeah. So I don't, I was there about three days I think. The bloke in the bed next to me said, "How long since you've, how long since you've had leave?" I said, "Oh, it's going on two years." "Oh", he said,

19:30 "You're a homer, you realise that?" And I said, "Well, I didn't really." He said, "As soon as the doc comes around in the morning on his round", the doctor used to come around doing rounds through the wards at 8.00 o'clock or 8.30, 9.00 o'clock in the morning. He said, "Mention it to him." "So", I said, "There's nothing to be lost", so I piped up and, "Sir,

20:00 of course they're all commissioned officers all the doctors. Captain is a minimum rank for a doctor." I said, "Any chance of getting home to Australia?" He said, "How long you been, how long you been in New Guinea?" I said, "Two years." Wasn't, it was just under two years. He said, "Have you got your

20:30 paybook, your AB83?" That was a record of service every soldier had to carry. So I produced it and he, next thing I know I'm on the, next morning I'm on an aircraft to Townsville and I'm a walking, walking wounded you see. I've still got the dermatitis on the toes. So we get into Townsville and I don't know what time we landed

21:00 there. Sometime in the afternoon and only stopped there overnight and out on the aerodrome. Garbutt I think was the name of the aerodrome there, and from Townsville next morning, I think it was next morning, we were on another aircraft to Brisbane. So before you know it I'm out of Rabaul and I'm in Brisbane.

You must've been happy to be back home?

As a hospital

21:30 patient, yeah. I'll tell you a funny story, I've been to Townsville three times during the war and never seen the town once. The first time was coming home from Darwin. We went the outskirts of Townsville on a bit of loop line about 2.00 o'clock in the morning. The second time we're on the old liberty ship or the new liberty ship. We sat in Townsville Harbour

22:00 for five days waiting to form up a convoy. Wouldn't let us ashore, no, we were penned up on that ship for five days in the harbour, and the third time I'm a medical patient being evacuated out of New Guinea, New Britain and overnight out the aerodrome and up first thing in the morning to catch an aircraft to Brisbane. There's the three occasions.

22:30 I hadn't, I hadn't seen Townsville until 20, 30, 40 years later when I'm up there caravanning. What else? Brisbane, Greenslopes Hospital. Well the further south I'm getting, the better my feet are getting you see. So they give us leave everyday, we got leave to go into Brisbane. I suppose they're glad to get

23:00 rid of us, only make a nuisance of ourselves otherwise. Got leave everyday, that's where we used to drink the Starboard Lights. No beer, the beer was, in the pubs the beer was, what did I say? 12.00 Till 1.00 and 5.00 till 6.00. Two hours a day you'd get to drink.

Was there still rationing then?

Oh yes.

For how long after the war were they rationing beer?

I don't know. I got out of, I was in,

23:30 I was in Brisbane at that hospital about a week I suppose. They used to dress us up, the only reason you'd know we was a soldier we still had our slouch hat, our khaki hats, but we had white shirts and navy blue trouser, and military boots of course. For some strange reason that was the rig of the hospital patient.

OK.

Yeah.

So how was, I

24:00 **suppose, what did you get into after you finished, you were decommissioned from the army, demobilised?**

Oh, I told you that they had me on a charge at Watsonia for being AWL.

Yeah.

When I had malaria.

No, no, but after getting out.

After getting out.

Employment wise, what did you get into and how long did it take?

Well I was in the railways

That's right, yeah.

when I enlisted. Well when I was still in the CMF [Citizen Military Force] in the Militia

24:30 I'd gone into camp for three months continuous training at Seymour and it was half way through that camp I enlisted in the AIF. That was about June, July 1940 when I enlisted, and of course I was in a junior job in the Railways when I enlisted and when I go back five and a half years later it's, I'm no longer eligible to

25:00 take on that junior job. I'm an adult. So I went into head office, he said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "Well I'd like to have some leave to start with." "Righto, where would you like to go?" My sister was living over in Adelaide and she was married to an ex-air force pilot. "So alright, here's a leave pass

to Adelaide for a month", so we, away we go to

25:30 Adelaide and spent best part of my leave, must've been over there two or three weeks in Adelaide living with my sister and her husband, and I remember coming home. Of course the trains in those days were still all steam and we, it must've been, well it would've been, I got out of the army just before, two days before Christmas I think when

26:00 I'm over in Adelaide it must, it's January and we got terrific temperatures over in Adelaide. They get it pretty hot over there, hotter than what it is here I reckon sometimes. The night we're coming home we're in a non-air conditioned carriage right up next to the locomotive I think and there's two steam locomotives hauling the Overland and you had to

26:30 leave the window open to get some air it was that hot. This is night time, and my wife is wearing the costume she got married in, and the dirt and soot and filth coming in that open window while we're travelling, I think when we got home the rig out she was wearing was beyond redemption. She never wore it any more, it was

27:00 ruined with dirt and soot and stuff. Now, I went back to the Railways, he said, "What, I was working the signal box as a boy, not a signalman", I was too old to go back to that, and I said, "How far off signalman would I be?" "Oh", he said, "About 18 months before your number comes up." I said, "No, that's no good."

27:30 He said, "We'll put you back on the platform." I said, "That's no good, as a porter." I'd done my share as a lad porter, I'd had enough of that. "So", he said, "Just a minute." So he come back, he said, "How would you like to go shunting?" So I said, "Right, I'll have a go at shunting." He said, "Where do you live?" I said, "I'm living at Middle Park at the moment." So he come back, he said, he went to his file

28:00 and had a look in the job vacancies. He said, "How would a job at Port Melbourne do you?" I said, "That would do me right down to the ground." So away I went to Port Melbourne as a, learning to shunt. I forget how long, we had about 10 days or a fortnight learning and then we, they reckon you're right, you're ready to take over.

What did that involve? The tasks?

What it did,

28:30 what, shunting involve?

Yeah.

You break up trains and you make up trains. Mostly, well a lot of, that's, Port Melbourne's a port and we had a lot of export traffic to be, coming in by rail to be loaded into ships and you had to break up the trains coming out of Melbourne yard down to Port Melbourne. They had to be

29:00 broke, the trains had to be broken up and the stuff, export stuff to go down the pier and local stuff to go into, into the local siding, public siding at Port Melbourne and stuff to go around to, down to Prince's Pier which is another pier further around adjacent to Station Pier, and stuff to go up into Bridge Street which was another siding, a local public siding and,

29:30 well that's what you had to do, sort it all out and go and place it all, and the reverse at the end of the day's work. You'd go up at Bridge Street and had to pull it all out, some, some's not unloaded, a lot of empties, you gotta kick them out, and the other stuff's all gotta go back.

Tell me, I'd like to also ask you what sort of an impact did the war have on your relationships with

30:00 **women? Now you had your honeymoon in Lakes Entrance, you were telling us about.**

That was a second honeymoon.

Yeah, that's right, second one.

Second honeymoon.

What happened?

I think, I think the main thing was sort of a unsettled feeling, unsettled. You'd been in the army for five and a half years, more than five and a half years.

30:30 All I wanted to do was after work we'd go to the pub and go home nearly every night three sheets to the wind and couldn't settle down I suppose, a feeling of wanted to be with the boys. Of course the boys now are blokes I work with.

So you said, you're saying you felt

31:00 **somewhat restless?**

In a way, in a way. You'd been living, you'd been living without women for so many years and all of a

sudden you're thrown back into civvy street and you've got to settle down. Well it's a bit hard, bit hard.

How did your wife handle

31:30 **those changes in you? I mean obviously you were absent most of the time during the war.**

Oh yeah, I

How did that affect her?

After we left Puckapunyal well it didn't affect her too good, but husband coming home drunk, half drunk every night from work. One occasion I came home and found all my

32:00 clothes out in the street, and I said, "What's going on here?" She said, she said, "I pitched them out in the street, you can follow them." So I think I gave her backhander across the mouth and drew blood. I didn't hit her all that hard I don't think, and she's in tears and I'm picking up my clothes out the street and I go down Grandma's,

32:30 down mother-in-law's down the, down the back of the house in the kitchen cooking the tea and she said, "What's going on?" I said, "Well she's just thrown my clothes over the front fence out in the street." "Oh", she said, "And I hit her." Oh, she said, she had no, she took my part. I got the shock of my life. She said, "She had no right to

33:00 do that." So when she took my part I was amazed.

So you were a little bit drunk when that happened?

Oh.

Coming after the pub?

Coming home from the pub, being in the pub too long I suppose.

Did you feel that you had problems communicating with your wife

No.

as a result of your experience in the war?

No, no, no. Only problem was me drinking too much, that was the only

33:30 problem.

So you're doing this every day, going to the pub to meet up with your

Yeah.

old army mates?

No, no, no. They'd, we'd all gone to the four points of the compass. I never saw any of them. The only time I see them is we have a reunion once a year in the march on Anzac Day. It's the only time I ever see them. No, this is my work mates,

OK.

the blokes I'm working with.

Did you feel that you could relate to them, the people

34:00 Who?

at work?

Relate to who?

The people at work.

That I work with?

Yeah.

Yeah.

In the sense that because you had, you know, been in war, been overseas. Did you feel like when you came back you could sort of like have a sort of certain connection with them?

Well they hadn't, oh well one bloke there had been in the navy. He'd just started shunting too with me and the others hadn't been away to the war,

34:30 the, well there was only how many? There was only four of us. Two of us were returned servicemen and the other two weren't. They were leading shunters, they'd been, I don't know why they didn't go the war. Not for me to query them.

Did you used to communicate with your wife with letters?

Oh yes, yeah. In fact I,

35:00 I used to, we had to man the telephone switchboard right, 24 hours a day, right through the night and I, well I was the one that had to allot them their duties you see, so the blokes, I said, "Well I'll do the, I'll do the late shift, 10.00 o'clock till midnight." Quite often I'm still sitting there

35:30 at 4.00 o'clock in the morning still writing letters to my wife, and of course they're all snoring their heads off, the blokes. I should've gone and woken up to come and relieve me. They didn't object either. That's one shift they got out of, or more than one shift. I think it was about a two hour stretch, might've been three hours, can't remember. So they reckon it was pretty good when I'd go on the

36:00 switchboard. I'd sit there all night writing letters.

Must've had a lot to say.

Well I'd been away for a long, long time, been away from her.

Did you feel sort of like a bit awkward in a sense because you hadn't seen her for so long?

No, no.

Did you feel a sense of awkwardness about it?

No.

Never?

No. No, I didn't feel awkward.

Or estranged at all?

She wrote to me regularly,

36:30 I wrote to her regularly. That's what I said, we're always happy to see that air flying boat coming into Jacquinot Bay landing on the water because that was the mail, our mail coming.

What sort of things would she give you? Would she give you any parcels?

Yes, occasionally I did get a parcel from home, usually a cake

37:00 in it or something. Wasn't any, wasn't any, we didn't have to put up with the extremely cold temperatures that they did over in the Middle East, so they didn't bother about any woollen knitted products. That'd be the last thing you'd want up in the tropics, something to eat usually.

Now

37:30 **in your old age now, do you feel that, what's your view of war now after being involved in the Second World War when you look at the wars in Vietnam, in Korea, Iraq? What do you think? Do you think that**

I can see now, I can see the politics behind what's going on. The Vietnam War I look to

38:00 the politicians and I think of Harold Holt who was the Prime Minister of Australia, going all the way with LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson]. "Oh yes, we'll give you troops, send troops to Vietnam." Look what happened in Vietnam. The mighty US, US army,

38:30 navy, air force couldn't subdue the peasants of Vietnam. That was a defeat, Vietnam, nothing more than a defeat.

So you were against the war in Vietnam?

No, I wasn't against it, but it was a war to prevent communism coming south, that's all it was.

Do you think

We'd been listening to this from

39:00 pre-war, from Menzies,

Pre-war?

about, yeah, the communists hordes coming down from the north are going to take Australia.

Before the Second World War you're saying?

Yes, yes.

OK. So you were worried about communism?

I wasn't worried, but they were, the politicians were, but you know why. I can see why. They were instilling fear of communism into the voter so somebody said,

39:30 somebody, I don't know whether it was a politician, something to do with the banks, "Put your money under the bed. You can't get it under the bed, we're got a red under there. Communists under the bed."

Who came up with that slogan, reds under the bed?

I don't know, I can't recall, but it was in Menzies day.

Yeah.

Yeah, old Ming.

You must remember the anti-communist, they tried actually, what was it, ban them from politics or something like,

40:00 **something of that**

Yeah, yeah. The communist party was banned in Australia, yeah.

No, I mean they tried to ban them during Menzies' time when he came back on his second

I think Menzies did ban the communist party, or might've tried to.

I thought they lost. He tried to but the referendum was lost.

Yeah, yeah, they, I think it got tossed out in the High Court.

Yeah. We've only got one minute left on our tape. Now for the record is anything you'd like to say about anything,

40:30 **or about your war time experience altogether? Anything for the record?**

I don't know what to say, but war is a terrible thing. There's a lot of lives lost although it's amazing what's happened in Iraq now.

INTERVIEW ENDS