Australians at War Film Archive

Walter Appleby (Wal) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 **Let's get a snapshot version of your life starting with where you arrived on this planet.**

Yes, I was born on the 25th of March, 1918, and my natural mother died when I was about one month or six weeks old. My father

01:00 remarried when I was six, I think – five and a half to six, and his wife became my mother, that I knew for the rest of my life. And she was as good as you could expect a natural mother to be, so I was very lucky in lots of respects. They were good people, they brought me up to

01:30 respect others: to do the right thing so to speak. They were very caring; I had an education at a primary school in Brunswick, before going onto Coburg High School, in 1930. I left Coburg High School after Year 10. I in hindsight realised that I should

02:00 have continued on to Year 12 but in those days it was a lot of pressure on children to get out and get a job. The Depression days were on then, and a lot of people were unemployed, and if children could assist with the breadwinner, to provide money, to help the rest of the family, that was the done thing.

02:30 So maybe that influenced my thinking, but in hindsight I think I should have continued on at school to the end of Year 12. But I didn't and I did get a job after about four months in 1934, and I joined a

03:00 firm operating in Brunswick. They were in the building trade, mainly painting and decorating, but they also had a building division, and I started as an apprentice painter. That only lasted about three months because the firm I worked for had a retail establishment as well and when stock taking time came around in June of that year, they asked me to go and help

03:30 with the stock taking, which I did. And they must have been impressed with my attitude or whatever because I never went back to the apprenticeship painting, I then became a salesperson cum clerical person. And my employer said to me, "I think it would be an advantage if you went

04:00 to night school and learnt shorthand and typewriting." They used to have to send post estimates of costs to prospective clients and they had no-one to do any typing or that sort of thing. So I went to the Brunswick Technical School and did 12 months' night school to learn

04:30 shorthand and typewriting, and I think that may be – well I'm sure it did have an influence on my army life, because when the war came along and I was being, after medical examination, interviewed, asked what I did for a living and what employment I was in, they said, "What qualifications do you have?" And I said, "Well I have

05:00 certificates for shorthand and typewriting," and they noted that down, and when I was called up to go into service, I was posted to 58/59th Battalion, which recruited from this area, Brunswick, Coburg, Essendon. I was only at 58/59th Battalion for one day, the next

05:30 day one of the army officers came along and said, "I want you to go up to 15th Brigade Headquarters." No, they didn't tell my why but I did what I was told, and when I got there they said, well the staff captain I think he was, that I spoke to said, "You're able to type?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, just sit down there and just copy that."

06:00 It was touch typing, not just one finger typing. So I did that and they said, "Oh yes we'd like you to remain at 15th Brigade Headquarters." Which I did after, that was January 1942, no 1941, January 1941. I was with 15th Brigade

06:30 Headquarters in Australia at various locations, until January 1943 when I was transferred to 3rd Division Headquarters. At that time, they appointed me as

07:00 the distributor and controller of all the maps that were needed for all the operations around the

upcoming operations in New Guinea. That only lasted for about two months or so. We moved by

07:30 sea to Port Moresby in February 1943 and at that stage at Port Moresby in February, early March ’43, General Savige’s confidential

08:00 clerk was Bill Tipping, who subsequently became a notable person for the Herald Sun, writing a column. And he was back in Australia having a medical, he sort of missed our boat to New Guinea for – I think he was on leave. But anyhow his medical back in Australia

08:30 didn’t allow him to go overseas, he had a condition, a medical condition and, General Savige’s GSO1 [General Staff Officer Grade 1] asked me to have an interview, with a view to replacing Bill Tipping as General Savige’s confidential clerk. As a result of that interview

09:00 with Colonel Wilton, I think his name was, yes, John Wilton, he asked me a few questions and at one stage in his – he was reading off what was going to be a some military order to other units, and he paused for a minute and he said,

09:30 “Oh, I can’t think of the right word to use here,” and I volunteered the word, or well a word and that must have been. I think it was his way of finding out whether I was suitable for what he had in mind, what my future job would be.

What was the word?

I can’t remember, it was, not a hard word, just a word that you might think sometimes

10:00 you’re talking and you get stuck for a word, ‘what’s the word?’ type of thing. I think he was testing me to find out if I was, on the beam enough to do what they had in mind. So, from that point on, I was employed in what was known as the G Office or the Operations Office of the HQ3 [Headquarters] Div [Division]. My immediate

10:30 superiors were lieutenants, captains, a major and Lieutenant Colonel Wilton himself and then the final top man was General Stan Savige, who I had quite a bit of contact with, and I should add, he was one of the finest men I ever met.

11:00 Very popular with all the troops, and most people wouldn’t know, but he was one of the founders of Legacy which is a very worthwhile organisation, still operating. Anyhow, this job entailed quite a lot of typewriting; I wasn’t the only one that was

11:30 doing it, but I sort of had. I wasn’t in charge of everyone, there was another lad that went into camp with me who, I think he was a, he became a warrant officer anyhow and I became a staff sergeant, so he was nominally in charge of me before things went under higher authority. We were

12:00 given drafts of signals to type on a special signal form, the text was set out for us of course by the officers compiling these signals.

How long were you based at Port Moresby?

Only about three weeks.

12:30 Mid March we had to, there was an advance party of 3 Div Headquarters went up to Wau in the New Guinea highlands, preparing to take over from what was known as Kanga Force, which was comprised mainly of the 17th Brigade.

13:00 We were destined – 3 Div was destined to relieve 17th Brigade from the Wau -Bulolo area which was responsible for securing the Wau Airfield, which was a vital area in those days. The Japanese very nearly took that airfield in late January 1943, making a drive from

13:30 Lae and Salamaua to secure this airfield. Had they done so they would have had a forward airbase to facilitate their raids on Port Moresby. As it was they had to come from Lae or Rabaul. Fortunately they were forestalled from securing the Wau Airfield, 17th Brigade troops

14:00 or Kanga Force troops were flown in from Port Moresby to Wau in the end of January ’43 and they went into action immediately after stepping off the plane. It was that close, the Japanese were at the foot of the airfield, and the Australians were, they had troops there trying to repel but the crucial point came when

14:30 these troops landed from Port Moresby, landed by DC-3s I think, Douglas aircraft, and went into action immediately they stepped off the plane, they were out firing their equipment. It was touch and go actually but they finally repelled the Japanese and secured the airfield. Incidentally the airfield at Wau is some two or three hundred feet

15:00 lower at one end than the other end, and the aircraft had the hazardous job of flying into Wau because Wau is about 2000 feet above sea level and surrounded by great high mountains, about 6000 feet high mountains. It was like in a saucer almost you could say and the planes from Port Moresby had to come through what was called the gap in the Kupfer Ranges, not the Owen Stanley Ranges

15:30 but similar to them.

You must have seen some interesting take-offs and landings?

Oh I was just going to tell you about some of the landings. The planes had to sort of get into this saucer like arrangement between these high mountains and if the pilots in their approach, found they were too far up the airfield, being on the slope,

16:00 if they were too far up the airfield they had the danger of running into the hanger at the far end so they had to put on all their power, pull out and go around and make another approach. And, where we were situated, it was at the side of the airfield, and on quite a hill and many times when these, you'd watch these planes coming in and you'd think, "Oh, I don't think he's going to make it," and sure enough they'd pull out and zoom up

16:30 again and just over our heads, we'd invariably duck because we though that we were going to be collected. So that was quite a hazard.

How long were you based at Wau?

About four weeks, I was actually the 3rd Div Headquarters advance party, as it was then. Was actually attached to 17th Brigade Headquarters, or it was called Kanga Force but it was really 17th Brigade.

17:00 3 Div Headquarters took over mid April and their headquarters was based in Bulolo which is about 20 miles further up the Bulolo Valley from Wau. There was a small airfield at Bulolo more or less on a flat surface. We were stationed in

17:30 what was an abandoned sawmill in Bulolo. And the troops were accommodated in what were native, not native huts but huts that were built for the workers at the timber mill I think and surrounded by native gardens with plenty of banana trees and pawpaws so we were

18:00 fortunate in that respect. At one stage when we were at Bulolo, it might have been more than one stage, in fact it was more than one, the supply planes, everything had to be brought into Bulolo or Wau by plane there was no roads, and on a couple of occasion at least, supplies dwindled down to almost nothing. Food and ammunition and all that sort of thing because the planes

18:30 couldn't get through what was known as the gap in these high mountain ranges, because they were closed in with fog or rain or, New Guinea being what it is, is just hazardous flying country. And, a couple of stages we had to resort to what produce we could get from the native's gardens, lettuces, tomatoes, things like that but it was quite a welcome relief from the bully beef or the dehydrated

19:00 meat and that sort of thing.

So after Wau where were you sent?

Actually while I was at Bulolo, the Salamaua campaign was under way. The idea was to lure

19:30 a strong Japanese force, which were based in Lae, which was one of their main bases, was to lure from Lae down through the mountains into Salamaua so as to reduce their strength in Lae, and that was the main purpose of the operation. But it was terribly difficult, because the country is so rough and muddy, just like

20:00 Kokoda Trail really, you might almost say it was a carbon copy of Kokoda, not that I ever saw Kokoda Trail. But just a native trail from just outside Wau which wound its way to Salamaua up and down ridges and through ravines and things like that.

Sounds like one of those great plans in theory the army are very good at coming up with.

Well it was dreadful country, put it that way.

20:30 And the Japanese, you couldn't move great numbers of troops around the country because it was only a native track, , about a couple of metres wide – if that wide – and just mud up to ankles and over. And everything had to be carried by native carriers mainly and they were marvellous what they carried on their shoulders, and on poles from shoulder to shoulder.

21:00 Everything had to be moved that way, unless it was dropped from aircraft and that wasn't always the best of methods because, tins of biscuits or bully beef or something were pushed out of an aircraft, they hit the ground and just disintegrated and a lot of it was lost.

Did they send you to Salamaua, or were you just in regular correspondence with HQ

21:30 **up there?**

No I wasn't in a forward position except late, well before the Salamaua campaign. There was an advance headquarters set up and I can show you some photos later of whereabouts it was, but it was in the fighting area. I suppose three parts of the way to Salamaua from Bulolo

22:00 and Wau and, well the conditions we had to work in were quite primitive – well we had a tent fly, I think, over what was our office where we did our typing, we had to do typing, just the same, send messages

here, there and back to New Guinea Force Headquarters, to the various battalions under command.

22:30 We had hurricane lamps I think at night to – you can imagine what typing under a flickering hurricane lamp was like – until at one stage the kerosene for the hurricane lamps, there was no more supply, so how to type signals and orders, without any light at night and it's dark about

23:00 5.30 in the afternoon. And when I say dark, it's really dark, it's – with the jungle overhanging – it's dark in the daytime in some cases.

So it's like a curtain.

So we improvised. We had little tins like ointment tins of mosquito oil which we rubbed on our face to prevent the mosquitoes biting, and someone, I forget who it was, had the bright idea that, if we punctured a hole in the top of the

23:30 this little ointment tin, and inserted a piece of calico flannel, I think, flannelette I think it was, not calico, which we used for pulling through the rifles clean. If we inserted a piece of that flannelette dipped in to this mosquito paste and lit it with a match, it would light which it did, so.

24:00 **Very clever.**

Improvising

When did they let you get back to Port Moresby?

We did the Salamaua Campaign, so far as the div was concerned, ended about the end of August '43 and just another division, I think it was 11th Div took over from us, and just after that happened,

24:30 the 7th Div and the 9th Div converged on Lae from different directions. The 7th Div were dropped by parachute, into Nadzab, which I suppose was 20 miles from Lae, along the Markham Valley and the 9th Div were landed by barge from the sea on the other side of Lae, so between the two of them, they just pincer movement the Japanese in Lae.

25:00 And Lae was taken. And that was a great relief to everyone of course, because it meant the Japanese were that much further away from Port Moresby which was an overall allied base at the time. We were shipped back to Port Moresby from outside Salamaua, place called

25:30 Tambu Bay, by barge down to Oro Bay, which is near Buna, and from there we were flown back over the Owen Stanleys to Port Moresby.

Did they give you any leave at that point, for good behaviour?

Later, that was September '43.. About the end of November

26:00 I think we were sent on leave in batches, not the whole headquarters at one time, perhaps in batches of 50 or so, I forgot the number. But yes we did have a leave, back home and, the division reassembled on the Atherton Tablelands in early 1944, we were

26:30 there until July '44, when we were sent to Bougainville by ship from Lae. We went, as I said we were stationed on the Atherton Tablelands for retraining, from January to July '44, and went from Lae to Bougainville by

27:00 liberty ship I think it was…

From Lae to Bougainville which is a…

Yes, we went to Bougainville in October '44, and we took over from the Americans, who had been at Torokina. They had a perimeter at Torokina,

27:30 pretty extensive one, but the Japanese occupied the rest of the island, we took over from these United States people in October '44. And we were there in Bougainville – not all the time at Torokina – but moved down the south of the island, to – I forget the name of the place now – but it was a sort of a static campaign in Bougainville.

28:00 When we took over from the Americans it was virtually a holding situation, the Japanese occupied the whole of the island except for this sort of semi circle around Torokina, which was a landing spot. It was quite a fair area but the Americans occupied and the Japanese

28:30 were somewhat reduced in strength though, not in strength in numbers, but in their operations, because they had no supplies coming in to sustain them. They were virtually cut off from the rest of the Japanese command, so it was thought that – well I think it was thought that we'd be able to eventually

29:00 push the Japanese out of Bougainville.

Who was your CO [Commanding Officer] in Bougainville?

The CO at Bougainville was Lieutenant General, no Major General I think he was, Bridgeford who took

over from General Savige. General Savige was promoted to command 1st Australian Corps: he became a lieutenant general, then I think a higher rank, and Bridgeford

29:30 took over from him in the Bougainville campaign. Bridgeford eventually, as a matter of interest, Bridgeford became the chief executive, I think, for the1956 Olympics in Melbourne.

He knew a lot about moving people around.

Yes. Anyhow, Bougainville was a nasty sort of place and

30:00 the terrain was much the same as New Guinea, thick jungle and lots of swamps and high mountain range, especially down the middle of the island. And it was very difficult to dislodge Japanese from their position, because the jungle's so impenetrable you can't see very far, and with the thick jungle it's

30:30 very difficult. And a lot of very tense battles fought, not in great numbers but, perhaps small individual groups of soldiers, each trying to outdo the others from wherever they were stationed. And added to that there were no roads to speak of, just sort of

31:00 tracks I suppose, which developed somewhat into roads but, the weather was so bad, especially around the coastal areas in Bougainville that these tracks used to become more or less just rivers of mud. And in order to be able to move at all, the supply vehicles or the truck vehicles,

31:30 they had to put logs down and make sort of a corduroy track for all the vehicles to move, and even that at times was not too successful, because the mud was so deep and thick that trucks got bogged so it was, in other words, the weather and the terrain were almost as hazardous as the Japanese to combat.

The Bougainville campaign was toward

32:00 **the end of the war.**

Yes, as I said, the Australians took over from the Americans in October '44 and a lot of people were of the opinion, a lot of people back in Australia and troops themselves were sort of a bit critical of that move, because it was more or less a backwater.

32:30 The Japanese could have just been left there because they were cut off from their supplies from Japan and Rabaul, which was a big base. They virtually had no way of getting reinforcements in and their – they still had their air force which was active and their navy which was a nuisance, but as far as their troops were concerned, they could have been sort of

33:00 left to, what was termed then 'wither on the vine' so to speak, because they simply existed off the native gardens that they were able to use. The Australians of course were supplied by ship and air from Australia. At the end of the Bougainville campaign, in August '45, there were

33:30 various estimates of how many Japanese were left on the island and I think the thinking was about 15 to 20,000 Japanese contained there unable to do much. But they were there, they were a nuisance, , they could make raids, but the count at the end of the war when they surrendered was about 35,000 so it was going to be a long hard battle if it was going to continue.

34:00 At one stage during that campaign, we received intelligence from people in the field in Bougainville that the Japanese were preparing to mount an attack to kill the general, this was General Savige, before Bridgeford took over. And, we had to double our security, especially at night with

34:30 night patrols and guards and that around the place. And there were some Americans still around at that time, I forget what their role was, but they weren't active – not in the battle lines, but they were, there were still Americans in Bougainville, I don't think they were under Australian

35:00 command, but these night operations or night guarding duties were a bit hazardous, because a lot of people got trigger happy and there were quite a few, or I don't know how many, but there were a few killed by friendly fire so to speak, perhaps the guards being a bit wary of shadows or movement,

35:30 and firing off in different directions, and there were a few people killed.

Were you on Bougainville for the capitulation of the Japanese?

Yes I was, yes. It was a great surprise to everyone.

Is that right, even in intelligence as you were?

Well, whatever intelligence

36:00 was going around wouldn't have indicated the end of the war was imminent, because that was top secret stuff . The Japanese had, the Americans had the atomic bomb, no one knew about it except the top brass, I suppose, and that would be a very limited number.

How did you hear that the –?

Only by radio from Australia. We wondered whether it was a hoax, because there was no suggestion

that there was any imminent end to the war

36:30 in sight. We were expecting to be there for a few more years at least.

Were you able to get home sooner than later?

Yes, I was actually, because at that time, there was a review of the, not a review but it was sort of an ongoing thing, the people in the armed services could be released for civilian duty back in Australia because

37:00 the pressure was virtually off, Australia wasn't – was no longer threatened with danger. And labour was so short in Australia, that there was what they called a point system, and I forget how it was based, but depending on what the army and I suppose the other services required in terms of manpower to run

37:30 their operations, depending on who was required, troops could be released back to civilian life. But there was a strict system whereby it was controlled, you couldn't say, "you can go back and you can go back." There had to be a request from the employers for a start, and they had to have a case

38:00 whereby they were short of this particular sort of labour, or that or, so forth and by a point system which the government devised, that was the criteria for release, yeah.

So when were you able to be discharged?

Well, I went back to Australia, perhaps a fortnight, a week or fortnight after the surrender,

38:30 and I was discharged from the army in October '45. So it didn't take long once you got back to Australia to get discharged.

Where did you, what did you do immediately post your demobbing [demobilisation]? Did you go back to your old job?

Yes I did. Yeah. Well that's how I got released, really, because my employer, apparently had a good case for

39:00 applying for my discharge and that sort of accelerated by – otherwise I might have been – what did I say it was? Perhaps October '45, it probably might have been January, February '46 before I was able to be discharged.

Okay fantastic.

Tape 2

00:35 **I wanted to ask what that was like for your dad in those first few years, raising you alone, did you have brothers or sisters?**

No. No I didn't. Sometimes I think I'm fortunate, sometimes I think I'm unfortunate. Anyhow, I think he

01:00 was pretty upset, and my mother, the person who became my mother, they were pretty upset I suppose, as were every mother or father whose boys went away to war. , it wouldn't have been a pleasant time for them wondering what was going on, constantly wondering. We'd write continuously of course, about once a week, or every ten

01:30 days, and we'd look forward to getting letters back from home, of course, and most of all we'd look forward to getting a cake or two – , every now and then in a nice airtight tin and –

Did your stepmother have any of her own children?

No, no.

And they didn't have any afterwards either?

No, no.

Gosh, not many people were single children at the time you were growing up; it was unusual to be an only child.

02:00 I suppose so, I've never given it much thought from that aspect of it, but bear in mind that the Depression came along, and I suppose that might have inhibited a lot of child bearing, because you have to feed them – it wasn't easy. Just as a matter of interest, you could go into the Victoria Markets on a Friday evening, as I did with some friends of mine, and you could buy

02:30 28 pounds, what's that – about 14 kilos, 12 kilos, of potatoes for 10 cents, can you believe that? A shilling, 10 cents now, but, 28 pound of potato, and things like that. They were incredibly cheap, but the reason they were cheap was because the farmers couldn't sell their produce. And, they were on the bread line so to speak and I think the unemployment rate was about 30 odd per cent.

03:00 **Did you see soup kitchens and men asking for work…?**

Only in passing, I never needed to take advantage of them but, oh yes, they were grim times for unemployed people, especially if they had children too. I can remember, kids in my class at primary school coming in the winter, sometimes with just a pair of running shoes full

03:30 of holes, and perhaps a pullover full of clothes and no other clothing. In the depth of winter, and one lad I can remember, probably because of lack of good food, he had terrible chilblains on his hands, which would burst and they would, must have been terribly painful.

So you said that your family coped reasonably well.

Yes, well fortunately my father was never unemployed, I don't know what his wage would be, it's only

04:00 about three pound a week or something like that, six dollars in today's currency, but he was fortunate that he was employed by the municipal council, Brunswick Municipal Council, and he wasn't unemployed.

Where was the Brunswick Council headquarters?

In the town hall, Brunswick Town Hall. Actually, a lot of the

04:30 municipal councils in those days bought electricity from the SEC [State Electricity Commission], bought it in bulk and ran their own electricity supply. The council did, and employed people to send out the bills, read the meters, get the money, and it was a good source of money for municipal councils. There are quite a few around Melbourne that did that, there was Coburg, Brunswick,

05:00 Williamstown, Heidelberg, I think. Perhaps a dozen municipal councils, bought their electricity in bulk, how they did it I don't know, but it was an arrangement, the council paid the SEC, and proceeded to bill the householders around their district you see.

What was your dad's job around the council?

He was a meter reader to start with, he went around to houses and

05:30 read the meter once a month, I think from memory. And, he – I don't know whether he left an account – no, I think he just had to read the meter, you used so much electricity in that month, he'd go back to the office and they would compile a bill and send it, or send it via, courier

06:00 or their employees, or mail, but anyhow that was the done thing in those days.

Do you have any recollections of how council played its role in people's lives?

Oh yes, quite a big role in people's lives, they operate, control the –

06:30 oh well, like they do today – rates, building of and maintaining of roads and footpaths. The usual things that they do today. But of course there were much more councils operating around Melbourne, now a lot of them are amalgamated.

Was it something that people relied on, in the way that they relied on their doctor or their police officer?

Yes, I think so, in the way of

07:00 social service, like soup kitchens and perhaps entertainment of some sort. Some councils, I think, even ran local dances of a Saturday night in their town halls. They would, I suppose it's called sub-contracting these days, they'd engage an orchestra and man the ticket booth, and some

07:30 of their own employees perhaps, and I think my father was asked to do that on a Saturday night, go to the ticket booth and take the money for entry to the dance. Oh they were really great sources of community involvement in those days.

Do you recall council elections?

Yes, yes.

08:00 My grandfather stood for the council in early 1920s I think, and he became mayor in 1924 and oh yes, pretty, pretty bitterly fought sometimes too. Especially later in the '20s, when the Depression sort of took hold.

Do you recall if they were fought on party lines, council elections?

08:30 Yes. Yes mostly they were independents, or ALP [Australian Labor Party]. There were a few Communists that stood for council in those days, but, weren't too many successful from my recollection. But there were some pretty wordy battles, especially at the declaration of the poll, they were invariably held on a Thursday in August every year, and

09:00 the declaration of the poll might take place at nine o'clock, 10 o'clock at night after the votes were

counted, and people would roll up to hear the results. And there were some pretty bitter wordy battles between supporters of the candidates, sometimes the candidates themselves, yeah they were, they say today's battles in parliament are pretty ordinary sometimes.

09:30 **Bit tame by comparison?**

I think in those days would qualify just as well for headlines as today. But of course, the local papers were pretty well covered the local scene.

Yes, I'm sure they weren't just covers for real estate guides as they are now, local papers.

Yes, I've got one here somewhere that I'll show you

10:00 presently.

One of the…

A local paper, actually it was, my father must have, Mother and Father must have saved it because it had an account of me when I was awarded the British Empire Medal, that was awarded during the Salamaua campaign. Apparently what happens is

10:30 when a campaign is recognised as a campaign, you're there for a specific object, the Salamaua campaign, the Bougainville campaign, the overseas – I suppose you could say the invasion of Europe – it might have been a series of campaigns. Well, apparently

11:00 in a campaign like that, there can be a certain number of medals awarded for whatever reason, like bravery, like the Victoria Cross, or Distinguished Service Order, things like that. And there are different classes of them, the higher ranking officer's qualify for perhaps the KBE [Knight of the British Empire] or the CBE [Commander of the Order of the British Empire], which is

11:30 a higher Order of the British Empire medal, which I got, which is reserved for other ranks so to speak. And you go up the, I think there's the, KBE, CBE, this is going down, MBE which is a Member of the British Empire, the British Empire Medal, but yes, these awards are given for bravery or

12:00 distinguished service, or even a mention in dispatches. Someone's done a particularly good deed or been reliable or for whatever reason, and they've got to go through from whoever's your superior officer through to the next level higher up and on and on and on, until it gets to the top all being recommended. And then eventually in those days, it went to

12:30 England to the King, who I suppose, he personally wouldn't say, "Oh, that's okay," or, "No," whatever. Through the system it would eventually filter back that you have been, the King had graciously consented to award you, and I can't find the citation I've got, and my daughter will give me curry for not being able to show it to you.

13:00 **She will, she'll chip you.**

But you got a citation which says that you have been awarded this particular award.

Okay, well I look forward to hearing a bit more about that when we have a look at the Salamaua campaign.

Yeah, well it's a sequel, not a sequel but it so happened that I was asked to present myself at Victorian Parliament House to get

13:30 this award the same day as Don Bradman [famous Australian cricketer] got his knighthood.

Did you swap hats?

Well, no, I did get to say hello to him, but that's about all, but my mother and father of course got an invitation to be present at the – and my father he was rapt, he was so keen on Don Bradman, Don Bradman was his idol.

14:00 **I hope it didn't overshadow your victory in the situation.**

Well, I didn't – never asked him – but I wouldn't be surprised if it did. Oh no, it wouldn't. They were seated right behind, Don Bradman was seated there, sort of and they were directly behind him. I don't think he plucked up enough courage to tap him on the shoulder and say, , "I'm a great fan of yours."

14:30 But afterwards, there was sort of a get together in the grounds at the rear of Victorian Parliament House, and I think he took the opportunity to go up and tap him on the shoulder then, and say how pleased he was to meet him sort of thing.

Well it's not a bad dinner party anecdote to say, "Oh, I was just having a chat to Don Bradman the other day."

Yeah, I never went to work with him, but I bet he held the floor saying, "Oh talking to Don

15:00 Bradman." They'd say, "Oh yeah, how did you do that?"

Who was the Governor-General at the presentation?

McKell [Sir William John McKell]. Actually, it was stated that the King would be coming to do these awards, there was a whole lot done the one time.

Had the King heard about you?

Well he…

I'm joking.

15:30 It was never officially stated to me, but the thinking was the GG [Governor-General] that was the common way of expressing something, was that the King would be coming to make, to present these awards. It wasn't just a half a dozen, it was a couple of hundred, or more than that probably, in 19 – when was it? – '49 I think, in the

16:00 meantime he became ill, and he never made it, he couldn't. I think he only lasted another 12 months after that, and then he died, anyhow.

So you could have shaken hands with both the King and God at the same time I suppose.

Yeah, well I forget who else was being given awards at that time, but of course, Don Bradman was the central

16:30 character, he was being knighted, and I think there was one or two other people being knighted too that same day but –

What did you say to Don Bradman?

I think I said, "Congratulations, Sir Don, well, well deserved," something like that. He was a very retiring sort of person, Don Bradman; he wasn't like the present day cricketers,

17:00 throwing their arms around and hugging each other, none of that. But of course, with a large gathering and most of them wanting to shake him by the hand or say hello, it wasn't easy to get his ear.

Well, I'd best ask you seeing as we're talking about this now, for what were you awarded your British Empire Medal specifically?

I had all these papers that were, I think

17:30 my daughter's got them, and she said to me the other day, "Have you got that citation from the, from the," there's a citation given with the medal and it read, 'for exceptional' – I think – 'devotion to duty'

18:00 and some other phrase, which I can't remember – I wish I had it here. During the Salamaua campaign, it's for that specific campaign. And I think the main reason for being awarded, another chap the same rank as me, got one, but he was in a different – he was in what was called the administration and quartermasters section – whilst I was in the operations section of the headquarters. And he got a similar

18:30 award, and I think the reason I got it and I suppose he too, was that the work we did entailed long hours, perhaps from eight o'clock in the morning and sometimes until three or four o'clock the next morning. And I can remember, , perhaps finishing up three or four in the morning after doing all this typing with orders and signals,

19:00 and vehicles would be going and about seven in the morning, six in the morning, everyone would have to get up. And of course I just couldn't raise my head on this particular occasion and anyhow, the duty officer got me on the shoulder, "Hey why aren't you out? Why aren't you…?" , real officious type of person. Some of them were more disagreeable

19:30 than others, but understand I mumbled something about, "Oh didn't get to bed until four o'clock." "Doesn't matter, got to be on parade." No, I didn't, I didn't budge, anyhow, later in the day I went to the person who – one of the staff captain or something was working late hours like me – and had to perhaps feed me things to type, and he knew that I was there till

20:00 four in the morning. So I went to him the next morning and said, "Listen, I've bundled out of bed, or tried to be bundled out of bed this morning at six o'clock or half past six, or whatever, I don't think that's too fair a game, , I'm half asleep now." He said, "Leave it with me," and I never heard any more about it, but if I'd have been, if they'd have an ordinary night, perhaps finished about eight o'clock or nine o'clock at night, I wouldn't

20:30 have had a leg to stand on, but.

I'm going to ask you about your schooling period, if that's all right, and you mentioned before that you should have gone on, but it was very difficult at the time to keep studying.

Yeah, well in hindsight I should have gone on, but like a lot of kids today, when I got to the end of – oh I know what it was – my grandfather who was in the Brunswick council at the time, said to me

21:00 early in my Year 10, he said, “Now if you get your Intermediate Certificate,” which was the end of Year 10, “I’m able to through contacts with…” I forget who he was. Oh, I know, he was the commissioner with the State Savings Bank of Victoria. He said, “If you get your Intermediate Certificate, I’ll be able to get you a position in the State Savings Bank of Victoria.” And a position

21:30 in the bank in those days was something like being secretary to the Prime Minister or something, especially with the Depression going on, , jobs just weren’t available. So anyway, I duly got this certificate, the Intermediate Certificate, at the end of 1933, and I thought, “I’m right now,” , so I had no hesitation in leaving school. Anyhow,

22:00 at the end of January 1934, my grandfather was at a conference up at Pakenham I think he was, involved in one of the friendly societies, and there was a conference up there, and he had a heart attack and died. Well, that was the end of the State Savings Bank, the person we had contact with, he could no longer contact him, he was dead, my grandfather,

22:30 so that just sort of elapsed. And I’d left school and I was out on my own then.

Quite a kick in the guts.

(UNCLEAR) being so, I’d done the right thing, got my Intermediate, everything was lined up, and suddenly it was just, everything had collapsed.

Was your grandfather still in office when he died?

Yes, in the council, yes. 1934, I

23:00 can’t answer that accurately.

You said earlier that he became Mayor in ’26 or ’24, so you would have been about six, so it would have been a long time to have remained there.

If he wasn’t still in the council, he would have only been out of it about 12 months, I can’t remember why if he ran, if he was not in the council, or why he wasn’t. I don’t think he was defeated, I think he actually might have resigned because of ill health or something. Anyhow, the contact

23:30 was no longer there.

Well, you said that it took about four months to get the job with the painting and decorating company, what does a young chap fresh out of school, out of work do at a time like the ’30s in the Depression?

Just relied on their parents, I suppose, to keep them if they could, or else some I think went into the country and, did jackaroo [general duties on a farm] work or things like that.

What did you do with that time off?

24:00 Well, I applied for quite a number of jobs without success.

Was it a time of despair or –?

Yes, I’d say so. Actually, I don’t think I experienced despair, but I experienced frustration, I’m applying for the job, “Oh sorry, no, we haven’t got any.” Another job, “No, no,” and you get very despondent

24:30 about that sort of thing.

So when you did start working at – what was it called – the painting and decorating place, what was it called?

Yes, the firm was Pettigrews, they weren’t a private company, in those days they were just a – well they weren’t a company at all – it was just a place that sort of,

25:00 had been going for quite some time, and they became quite a prestigious firm after the war. They employed, oh, couple of hundred people, painters, carpenters, joiners. A lot of the things in this house were built in their workshop, cupboards and built in wardrobes and that sort of things.

I’m curious about the opportunity to do

25:30 **clerical work at the time. As , it later became the sort of work that women were drawn to do. When you became, when you began to learn to type, what was the sort of considered teaching at the time and were there any women there?**

No, there were later when the war claimed a lot of the likes of myself. A lot of women because sales people or office people,

26:00 that type of thing yes, yes. And even, of course as you probably know, a lot of them became tram drivers, and conductresses and would they call them conductresses these days, or would they be conductor persons.

What sort of equipment did you get to use when you were learning at Brunswick Tech

[Technical College]?

Oh just basic typewriters, Underwood Typewriters. Had a very good teacher, a male teacher who taught

26:30 us both typing and short hand and we had to plug away, wah, wah. Hours at a time sort of thing, I forget – two nights a week or three nights a week – but anyhow, it was a 12 month period, and unfortunately I let my short hand slip. It would have been handy to have kept that going, I used to sparingly

27:00 in the army, but most of the stuff that was hand written by officers because they had to sort of be very careful in what they wrote in sending orders out to, troops, or sending signals out to different units, "You will do this, so and so's coming, The 21st at 9 a.m." Or they had to be,

27:30 in other words, it was not especially in the service I suppose where the officer or male they wouldn't be used to dictating things. They would be able to, but they'd probably need it to sort of pore over what was written to make sure they weren't, , sending anything off open to doubt or whatever, they had to be pretty

28:00 on the ball.

While you were becoming sufficient as a typist and other clerical work, did you form any other ambitions for your future?

No, not really – not after the war, I thought of going into, joining the air force – permanent air force – but other than that no.

Well, did you have any idea, for example,

28:30 **that a war was coming and that you'd end up using these skills for that?**

Not so far as the skills were concerned. We all knew that a war was imminent, not so much with the Japanese, but of course Australia joined the war in the first few days of the German declaration of war. At that stage, we didn't, unless we were going to enlist and go overseas, we weren't

29:00 unduly concerned, and I suppose in my particular case, I can't remember whether my mother and father exerted any influence, for me not volunteering to go to Europe in the army or whatever. I don't ever remember them saying, "We would like you to remain in Australia because you're the only son," or something

29:30 like that, and I presume they had that in the back of their mind.

Well, just looking at the dates, you were of age, 21 when the war broke out I believe.

Yes, I would have been, I was 21 in March and the war broke out in September of that year, yeah, they were pretty grim times, with the lead up to it. Germany had marched into

30:00 Austria, and then they overtook Czechoslovakia, and each time Hitler would say, "No more, no more…" No, they took over part of Czechoslovakia, which was largely occupied by German nationals, and they said, Hitler said, "No more, no more takeovers or invasions."

30:30 And I think by that time, the British had become thoroughly alarmed, and thought, "Oh, next thing he'll be into Poland," so they gave a guarantee that if Germany invaded Poland, Britain would come to their aid. They were grim times.

Very grim, and I'm curious to know what was happening for you between the outset of the war and when you joined up,

31:00 **for example, did you go and do compulsory military training, or…?**

Oh, eventually yes, we were called up for compulsory military training in January '41 I think it was, yeah, before Japan entered the war. Anyhow yes, and we did a three month camp with the indication that we would do a further

31:30 three months camp after the expiration of three months. In other words, went in from January to April, we were back in civilian life from April to July, and then went into what was going to be a further three months camp. During that three months, the powers that be must have had a pretty good indication that Japan was going to enter the war, and

32:00 our three month camp became what they call full time duty. In other words, the three month camp arrangements were abandoned and you were in for the long haul.

Were you keen to get involved?

Not originally, but I think that when the indications were that Japan was going to enter the war, I think the attitudes changed.

32:30 In those early days, we were termed the militia. About six months or so after the Japanese had entered the war, the government invited or asked, invited I suppose the main, the militia

33:00 boys to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Forces]. In those days, the militia troops were not allowed to be employed outside of Australia.

Were you asked whether you wanted to become a member of the AIF?

Hm.

And can you tell me about that particular day, were you all lined up on parade?

I think our officers were instructed from higher authority to talk to the troops and suggest to them

33:30 that it would be a good thing if they joined the AIF, and therefore by doing so qualify to be sent overseas out of Australia. And, I don't know what percentage thought, "Yes we're in it now, we might as well go for the long haul," and I think a big percentage of them did. One of the criteria was that if a certain percentage

34:00 of the militia in a particular unit said, "Yes we will join the AIF," depending on the percentage that accepted that arrangement, the militia unit could offer their name to headquarters, 3rd Australian Division AIF in brackets.

34:30 If a certain percentage of their number didn't say "Yes we will join the AIF," that wasn't permitted to be part of their unit's name.

So what were your views on becoming a member of the AIF?

Oh yes, I thought, yes that's the right – should have done it before sort of thing. Yes, I don't think there was much doubt in the minds, some of them didn't join. In fact if there was

35:00 a – oh I forget what the number, 65, 70 per cent – of the number in each unit said, "we will be happy to join the AIF," then irrespective of whether the other said, "no we won't join," or the unit then became an AIF unit. Now whether that meant that the ones that didn't decide to join,

35:30 were, what's the word, not allowed to be sent overseas, I really don't know.

Well, you said you had this interview where they talked to you about what your hopes were?

Oh, during our days in camp I think we were at Casino in northern New South Wales at the time, and we had – I don't know whether we had to sign a form – I think we did have to sign a form, that yes we would like to join the AIF.

36:00 And we were issued with little metal shoulder things, whatever is the right name – with AIF on it.

But did they enquire as to your previous skills gained with a view as to where they would send you as part of a unit?

No, no. Once you signed, you were at the behest of the commanders, higher command

36:30 Or the –

Well, how did they find out about your typing clerical and shorthand skills?

Oh, when I had a medical at the local drill hall in Brunswick, they said, "What did you do in civil life?" And I said, "I'm a salesperson and part-time clerical work." And I think they said, "Have you got any qualifications that I know about?" and I think then I said, "Well I've, I'm able to type, I've learned typewriting and shorthand." And they probably noted that on their –

37:00 on your history sheet – and when the crunch came, they must have said, "Well we'll have him up in wherever." , "He'll be useful in to do this type of work." Others would have said, "Well, I was a plumber or an electrician," and they would have been probably sent into the engineers, which would do that sort of work.

37:30 **What did it mean to you to be transferred to HQ and suddenly working in this position?**

Well, it didn't mean anything at the time, in so far as the army service is concerned, I thought, oh well, you're in their hands, you got to go where you're told. I suppose in hindsight, it meant that I was not in the front line, firing at the enemy ,

38:00 although we had to carry rifles all the time, and we had to do all the drills for firing and whatever.

Were you shaping up to be a reasonable fighting soldier?

I wouldn't have thought so, my rifle firing wasn't too good. I didn't know why, I've got good eyesight, or did have good eyesight, still have fortunately, but I wouldn't have backed myself to hit a target so many

38:30 yards away.

What about expectations of fighting the enemy?

Well, I don't know whether one could answer that until the occasion arose, you think it could be a bit

grim, but I'll do my best. If I'm going to be bowled over, there isn't much I can do about it.But you would have had to just accepted it and go where you were sent, and some of those fellows had terrible

39:00 privations, especially in New Guinea, where they'd be out in the middle of the jungle, and they might have had a tent fly or some protection from the rain at night, because it rained every night or every afternoon, floundering round in mud. You couldn't see from here past the door for the jungle all around you.

So in some ways it was really quite a lucky stroke for you?

Yes it was, I realise that.

39:30 Yes, yes. Well as the old saying goes, someone's got to do it, we had no choice really, if they said now you got to do this, well you just did it, you mightn't like doing it, but you just did it.

Tape 3

00:32 And as I said before, I can't remember whether my mother and father, or one of them, said to me, or hinted to me that, "We'd rather you didn't go overseas. You're the only one we've got," sort of thing. I can't remember if they – and I'm sure they didn't put any pressure on me. But perhaps in their own

01:00 round about way, they might have sort of got through to me that they would rather I didn't. Unless things became desperate and then they wouldn't have had any choice and neither would I, and I didn't have any choice in the matter because I would…

You would have been drafted…

We were drafted into what was known as the militia in any case, then we got the opportunity to become AIF, which most of us did.

Were you still living at home when you joined up?

01:30 Yes.

So you would have received some form of pre-embarkation leave I would imagine.

No, we were stationed at, when I was with the 15th Brigade and just before I went to 3rd Div, we were stationed at Cooroy, which is near Noosa Heads, in Queensland.

02:00 And then when I went up to 3rd Div Headquarters, we were stationed at Mapleton, which is up in the Blackall Range at the back of Caloundra. And we went straight from there onto the ship at Brisbane, and sailed to Port Moresby – we didn't have any pre embarkation, I don't think.

That's a bit stiff.

Well, I think we had been on leave, might have been, yeah, been on leave

02:30 only about three months before I think, normal two weeks leave, so really, pre embarkation leave I suppose we'd had.

Were you instructed to do anything specific before going to Port Moresby, with regard to the work that you were going to be doing there?

No I think that we all knew that a move was imminent, but we weren't given any dates or –

03:00 **No, what I mean is, see in the infantry they would have just boarded the ship and that was that, but I'm wondering if you were to bring anything specific like typewriters or office equipment?**

No, everything was – all our tents, typewriters, ammunition stores – the whole lot was loaded onto a train, we were transported to Brisbane.

03:30 We left Nambour I think, yeah, in the middle of the night about one o'clock in the morning, so as we wouldn't be conspicuous in Brisbane, like people could say they're off to overseas. We got to Brisbane about six or seven in the morning and down to the wharf and loaded onto the ship,

04:00 the [MV] Duntroon I think it was, yeah it was. aAnd oh, thousands of people on the wharf waving us goodbye. They weren't supposed to know that we were off, that sort of thing. . We weren't allowed to tell anyone or write in our letters, our letters were all censored, of course, by officers in our own unit. And, a lot of us were very disgruntled about that because you can imagine, here's our

04:30 superior officer, he might have been any one of half a dozen of them reading your letters home, goodness knows what they thought, but it wasn't the nicest of things to have.

Were you writing to anyone at that stage?

Yeah, writing to a girlfriend of mine, yeah, and my mother and father of course. And an odd acquaintance like cousin or something like that.

So probably not really the place to tell her what you feel about her when your CO's [Commanding Officer]

05:00 **reading it.**

Well, I think I'm sufficiently motivated to, , express a few endearments to her, I think that was perfectly acceptable. All the officer was empowered to – cut out certain things, if you said, "We're going to such and such a place at such and such a date," that was taboo, that'll get cut out. But endearments and personal things, unless they had some background of movement

05:30 or mention particular units, you couldn't do it.

Without pre-embarkation leave, did you have a chance to see her before you set off?

No, at that stage I wasn't really serious with anyone. I'd gone out with a number of girls, as I mentioned these dances that used to take place. We used to have wonderful times, and perhaps you'd have

06:00 two or three girls, not all at once, that you were keen on and they'd sort of drift by the wayside, or they'd not be interested any longer sort of thing. No I wasn't really serious with anyone when I first went into the army. I had my– what's the word – there were two or three that I liked, but

06:30 they didn't proceed to any finalities sort of thing. Whilst I was away, one of my mates in the army said, "You're going on leave," "Yeah." He said, "Oh, go and see my mother and father and sister. Down in Brunswick they live." So I said, "All right I'll do that," and away I went, and when I got there, I thought to myself, "I'd like to take this sister out," which I did, and got quite friendly with her and was rather keen

07:00 on her. We corresponded backwards and forwards and it was some months later, another lad in the unit, actually it was the chap who also won a BEM, or was awarded the BEM.

The sig [signal] guy, the signaller?

No, he wasn't a signaller, he was in the administration side. There's different sections of headquarters; administration,

07:30 operations, signals, supplies, ASC, or Australian Army Service Corps, they were the supply people, ordnance people who handled all the ammunition, guns, blah, blah, medical. No there's quite a lot of, , departments you might say, he was in the administration and quartermaster side of it,

08:00 which awarded supplies and kept records and movements of troops and that sort of thing. Whereas the lot I was with was the operations, they decided what operations. What they'd try and take that spot or they'd shift troops from there to there, or they'd require reinforcement, were engaged

08:30 with intelligence, we received reports from outside sources, as to where the Japanese, and natives too in some occasions.

But you were telling me about this quartermaster fellow.

Yeah, he went on leave and this other lad whose sister I met up with, he must have told the chap who was on leave, "Go and see my sister, and

09:00 mother and father0," so he more or less took over from where I was, so I was very disgruntled as a result of that. I don't know what letters I wrote, or whether the censors thought, "Oh, something's going on here." But…

I guess the censors would have read your letters to her –

That left me very depressed, I must admit, and this was towards the end of the war, this would have been in July '44, only about six weeks before the war ended.

09:30 No I was very depressed and when I came home, being discharged, I wasn't well at all, in fact I was down to about eight stone in weight, eight stone four, something like that, very skinny. I wasn't well.

As a result of this girl letting you down?

Oh partly, but I think the strain perhaps of long hours and debilitating

10:00 climate, and oh, lots of things, I think I was just – I just wasn't well, both mentally and physically.

So you carried a torch.

Matter of fact, my boss came to see me at my mother's place, Mother and Father's place, not long after I got home, and said, "Oh well, you'll be back next week," sort of thing. I said, "No I won't." I said, "I'm not interested." I wasn't interested in anything.

10:30 I didn't want to go back to work. I was a very keen football follower during the days before the war and during the war, and they said, "Oh you'll be right, once the football starts you'll be right." And, "Go out to a dance." I wasn't interested in anything, just totally unhappy.

Sounds like you were quite depressed.

I was, I was.

11:00 **Did they call it depression, when you were miserable about –?**

Yeah, that wasn't the word they used, anyhow. It was a depressive state, I think they called it. I had medical treatment in the army for it, before I was discharged.

What sort of treatment?

I think they gave me some shock treatment, electrical, I don't know how they administered it, but yeah, I went into hospital in Bougainville and

11:30 that was where I heard the war, the end of the war had finished. That was the first I knew of it, I was in hospital at the time. And of course, when they said, "Well now we've got a signal that you're eligible to go back, to be discharged," I thought that brightened – I recall it brightened me up a bit – but when I got back home I just wasn't. I think a lot of it was to do with the loss of this girlfriend at the time, because I was rather keen on her, and she was a nice girl too.

12:00 **Well you carried a torch for her for a really long time, and just as there is a chance of coming back home, it all – it was all over. What about the other fellow?**

Well, he finished up marrying her. I eventually got over it, because – and I think there must have been some divine intervention – you might smile at this, and mightn't believe it. But I went back to work eventually,

12:30 after much persuasion and, I think I was reasonably happy when I got back to work, but I wasn't totally over my depression. Anyhow, I used to play cricket with a church team in Brunswick, actually up near Moreland Road and Sydney Road and they said, "Oh you're going to come

13:00 back and play cricket." And I said, "I don't think you'll be able to get a team together," because quite a few of them had been in the army and air force and some of them lost their lives. Especially two or three of them in the air force had lost their lives over in Europe. Anyhow, we couldn't get our cricket team together again, and I'd been playing a bit of badminton up at the church, same church, once a week I think.

13:30 And a nice lot of lads, girls there, and matter of fact one of them, I was thinking to myself, it must have been at the same time, that I was depressed, playing this badminton, there was this girl there and I thought, "I like the look of her, she's a nice girl." And, anyhow I went to a dance – no I didn't. I was doing a course of accountancy

14:00 with what was called the Rehabilitation Scheme. Which soldiers or any services person was able to do a course of their choice, providing they were – what's the word – qualified to do such a course, at government expense. And by then I'd got some sense into my head about not finishing

14:30 school at Year 12. And different ones in the army and where I was stationed, they were doing correspondence courses, they were lawyers, accountants, all sorts of things, and it must have got through to my thick head, I should be doing something like this. "I'm only in a dead end job here," so I took up an accountancy course. I'd already done book-keeping up to Year 10 at high school,

15:00 which meant that I didn't have to complete that year, but I actually did in this accounting course. I repeated what I'd done at Year 10 and anyhow, I was coming home one night on a tram to – we had to do night school, we had three nights a week from seven o'clock till nine – and there was a girl on the tram that belonged to the badminton club, and I said to her,

15:30 Estelle Wright was the girl's name, "Is she still playing badminton?" "Oh yes," the girl said, "Yes, yes," I said, "Oh, do you go dancing together?" "Oh yes, occasionally we go to Heidelberg Town Hall or St Kilda Town Hall or Brunswick Town Hall." I thought, "I'll follow this up." She said, "Oh, I think we're going down St Kilda Town Hall next Saturday night." I said, "Oh, that'll be nice." So I made it my business to go down there the same night, of course.

16:00 Estelle Wright was there as this mate of hers or friend of hers had indicated.

She was the right girl?

So that was – it all clicked from there on.

So back in Bougainville, when they gave you electric shock treatment, I'm wondering if you can describe the equipment that they had there?

No I can't, apart from the fact that, I don't know whether the

16:30 series of flashes or – I don't think I was unconscious or anything. I forget how they did it, whether they put a thing around your arm and sort of put on a switch.

Did they put anything in your mouth?

I can't recall, I don't think so, oh, I couldn't be sure about that.

What about…

17:00 But it must have been beneficial I think, although I certainly wasn't cured when I got home, I was still depressed.

Did a doctor have a conversation with you before this?

Yes, I think so, a doctor or psychiatrist, but, by one means or another, they must have got onto the right track, because – and I forget whether I was taking any medication, or whether they just gave me this treatment to sort of just snap me out of whatever it was,

17:30 but –

Do you recall if anyone else was receiving this sort of treatment?

Oh, at the time when I was in hospital, I think there was, but I didn't have any contact of, or if I did I'm not conscious of it now. I think there were a few, yes.

Okay, we might talk a bit more about that later on, I was wondering if we could return to the HQ in Port Moresby when you first arrived, in New Guinea, and if you could describe

18:00 **the set up there that you went into?**

Well, Port Moresby at the time was teeming with troops of course, it was the main advance base for Australian troops, and there was a lot of Americans there too, mainly air force people. I remember the night that we got there, I think it was the 28th of February, we disembarked from the [MV] Duntroon and we were marched out to a camp site

18:30 at oh, few miles out of the main town, and all night long there was this continual din of planes taking off and landing. And we thought, "Oh whatever have we come to here." Anyway, it turned out it was the Battle of the Coral Sea, when a large convoy of ships, Japanese ships and war ships

19:00 was sailing from Rabaul to Lae, to land in New Guinea. And the air force had spotted them during the day and set out to bomb the rest of that day, all night and all the next day I think. And this was just continual flow of planes taking on and off, because we're not very far

19:30 from the airfield at Moresby.

What did war sort of mean to you at that point?

What did?

Well what did the idea of war mean to you?

Well, I don't think it meant anything other than 'it's us or them' sort of things. We're in it, we've got to make the best of a bad job so to speak. We just go to go through with it.

And what were your instructions at the time, what was your daily toil?

20:00 Oh well, we would probably have a drill session, especially before we were engaged in active operations. When we were based in Port Moresby or on the mainland here, it was mainly training, not that there was – or we still had to do training with rifles and route marches, just to keep us fit. There was a lot of – whilst we were not in operational

20:30 mode – there was a lot of sport played between different units and quite a lot of rivalry too. They were fair dinkum some of them, and a lot of them were, that I knew, were quite prominent AFL [Australian Football League], or VFL [Victorian Football League] footballers in those days. Actually the 15th Field Ambulance which was part of the 3rd Division troops, their CO

21:00 was a Doctor Jones, which was the Melbourne Football Club doctor. And naturally, with his influence, he got as many footballers that were drafted into the army to come into the 15th Field Ambulance, and they had a top notch team of course, they had some notable names.

Can you recall any?

Yes, the full-back for Melbourne, Shane McGrath,

21:30 he was one, this is a long while ago.

That's alright, it's a bit to ask, isn't it?

But there were about half a dozen of them that were well known VFL footballers and they were all

Melbourne. I'll tell you one chap who was with the 15th Field Ambulance, but I don't know where he went to, I lost sight of him after we were

22:00 in the first camp at Mount Martha. It was Ron Todd who played for Collingwood in his early days, and then he transferred to play with Williamstown because he was offered a huge sum of money to do so. Well, he was both a great footballer and cricketer of course. That's...

When did you start to work for Savige?

22:30 after we got to Port Moresby in February '43, yeah. As I said, I don't know whether I continued with it, but this Bill Tipping who became a journalist with the Herald Sun, he was Savige's confidential clerk when we were back in Australia.

23:00 When we moved to New Guinea, he was in Melbourne on leave and before he was able to go to New Guinea he had to have a medical. And it turned out that his medical wasn't, well he had a medical problem, which inhibited him from going overseas, so he was no longer

23:30 the confidential clerk. And that was the job I took over when I went to New Guinea.

Is that a job that has a bit of prestige to it?

Well, I suppose so but I never realised it at the time.

What did you think you were up to do at the time then?

Oh, just run of the mill, typing of what they call routine orders. Operational orders where

24:00 the GSO1 [General Staff Officer (Class 1)] and Savige in conjunction. One with the other I suppose, drafted orders for such and such a unit to take such and such a position, or to move to such and such a position, in other words the battle arrangements.

I can imagine and I can see from retrospect what an important role that was to be?

Yeah, well I suppose I did realise it at the time

24:30 you're asking them to do this, that's pretty. Well it wasn't for me to discuss it with anyone, that was why I was appointed to being the confidential clerk, I was privy to a lot of information that only the person who had written the orders had, and I think on one occasion Savige said to me, "This map I'm giving to you here is to go, it's not to go beyond this room," and

25:00 they must have had sufficient faith in me that it wouldn't, well I understood the reason for it. Different ones would perhaps try to, my mate would say, "Oh, where are we going now, or when are we going on leave blah, blah?" And I would say, "Oh, I don't know, your guess is as good as mine," sort of pass it off that way.

Did they believe you when you said you didn't know?

I think so,

25:30 or if they didn't, I think they understood the position I was in, I couldn't.

How tricky at times, you must have known that you were going to be sending mates of yours into some pretty hairy areas.

Yeah, well not in our actual unit, because we were a headquarters unit, but there were people in some of the battalions and actually one lived in this street, and he only died about 12 months ago. Some of them I knew by name, and

26:00 had known in civilian life, and, "I don't like there," or, "That's a pretty grim place they're sending them to." And of course, I had no contact with them they were in a unit over there, and I was back here at headquarters so there was no way I could. I couldn't even write and tell my mother and father who were friendly with people in the next street, whose two boys were in

26:30 one of the units that I, well quite close to me, , it's 15th Field Ambulance I think they were. I couldn't – I could tell my mother in a letter that I met so and so the other day, but, she wouldn't have any idea of where we were, we weren't allowed to say. She knew that we were in New Guinea, but they wouldn't know exactly.

Gee, it must have been frustrating from time to time having this extra

27:00 **knowledge and not really being able to do anything constructive with it.**

It was yes, I understood the reason, as a matter of fact you probably heard about the broadcast from Tokyo, this person called Tokyo Rose [Japanese propaganda broadcaster], who used to broadcast on short wave or whatever and get back to Australia or wherever. And I forget who told us or how it came out, but

27:30 I believe our unit was mentioned on her program at one stage. I thought, “How would she know that? However would she know that we were even in New Guinea?” The unit was mentioned by name or number or identified, so I don’t know how they got this. You could only conclude that it must have slipped through in a letter or someone back in Australia had contact with a Japanese contact, and said

28:00 “Oh, 3 Div are at Bulolo now,” or blah, blah.

Did you come into information yourself about the Japanese that was, what they would now call top secret, highly classified?

Oh, lots of signals which were eventually sent in code to whomever they had to go or, what they called operational orders which were set out in detail; what such and

28:30 such a unit was to do and the time they were to do it and what support they might expect from air force or, well things like that, which were highly. There were different codes of sending messages, there was confidential which was – well confidential was confidential, there was secret, which implied not to broadcast it.

Slightly more top secret.

29:00 There was top secret, which meant ‘for your eyes only’ sort of thing, and there might have been another category, but all that sort of thing. And lots of information came in from the field. Now in New Guinea there was what was called the coast watchers, you’ve heard of the coast watchers? They must have been terribly brave people, especially outside

29:30 of Salamaua. Salamaua is down on the coast on a narrow strip of land which juts out into the water. And back in the mountains overlooking Salamaua perhaps 15 miles, 10 or 15 miles as the crow flies, there were people up in tree tops. Australians with binoculars and they could see the movement, and they would send a signal back by wireless, a radio,

30:00 anyhow, by signal means, Morse code I think. Which would get deciphered and become a signal from such and such an outpost overlooking some 20 barges arrived Salamaua, 10am. “200 troops marched out from Salamaua along the track towards your

30:30 positions at midday.” Things like that, , from the coast watchers, and they had tabs on a lot of the Japanese movement everyday. Unless there was a rainstorm or something, and they couldn’t see through their binoculars. And all that sort of thing had to be, would come into headquarters and be processed and sent to units in the

31:00 field, saying, “Now there’s 200 Japanese marching towards you, we received this signal at 10 o’clock this morning something, be prepared,” sort of thing.

Who would rank the classifications of the information?

Oh the person sending it, usually one of the senior officers. It wasn’t all classified, but any of the operational

31:30 stuff would be classified, and probably a lot of the administrative stuff. Like sending down to Port Moresby we need so many rounds of 20 millimetre shells or so many rounds of .303 ammunition, or that sort of thing would have to be coded I think.

Would you ever have received raw information from any of your signal correspondents?

What do you mean, raw? Like the Japanese captured people, or…

32:00 **No, I guess what I mean is had all the information you dealt with been processed prior to you seeing it? Or was it possible to receive information yourself, and then have to deliver that to someone higher up?**

No, it wouldn’t be processed, it would come from a unit in the field in close contact with the Japanese. There’d be a signal come back by land line. The signallers would lay cable you see, and they’d have microphones

32:30 to talk through and they’d either come, yeah, it would come by signal over the wire, to divisional headquarters signallers. It would probably come in code, and they’d decipher it and sent it up to the GOC [General Officer Commanding] or, one of the senior officers, and they’d make assumptions from that information. Either we’ve got to move some troops

33:00 there or withdraw some here, or take action accordingly, you see.

Yeah, I guess what I’m wondering is if whether you ever were in a position of responsibility with regard to the information you were receiving?

Only so far as – no not actual responsibility – except to keep it under my hat. It might not have had any classification on it at all, or it might have, but

33:30 no I was virtually – not at liberty to talk about operations or…

It's interesting, I mean you, I'm sure you were chosen because of your clerical skills but I bet they knew from their own ability to judge character that you were somebody that was able to keep schtum [quiet]?

Well I suppose so, I don't remember giving any references prior to going into the army, but there was –

34:00 I had some similar work to do at 15th Brigade Headquarters was the next level down from 3rd Div. See, a division is comprised usually of about three brigades, perhaps only two in certain circumstances. And a corps, which is the next higher formation from a division, that's comprised of perhaps three divisions. And then of course goes up to army headquarters which might be perhaps three corps,

34:30 so it's building, building all the time. But when I was at 15th Brigade Headquarters, there was quite a lot of this sort of confidential stuff that I'd be privy to which couldn't be discussed. So maybe, the staff captain, or brigade major at 15th Brigade who I'd contact with, may have passed on to 3rd Division that here is a likely person you can employ in that respect.

35:00 **What was the biggest secret you ever had to keep quiet about?**

Oh, there were a number of them, but some were to do with, one that I can recall was where all Australian troops under our command halfway through the Salamaua campaign, and the powers that be down at Port Moresby

35:30 must. Oh I think General Savige might have indicated to his superiors down in Port Moresby, it might be a good idea to land some troops up off the coast, rather than send them through the jungle. Where our troops were going, send some troops up the coast, land them by barge and they can sort of make, with the Australians inland, these Americans who were supposed to be the ones to land on the coast,

36:00 they can come up the coast, and in a pincer movement would sort of draw more Japanese down from Salamaua, from Lae, which was the eventual object, Lae was to be taken. Now this was all arranged, and I can recall the date, the 30th of June, 1943, I think it was.

36:30 162nd US [United States], I'm not sure about this, better not quote me, US regiment, infantry and some artillery were to come up from around Buna or Gona, which, well seen some pretty hectic fighting earlier in the year. They were to come up by sea, by barge, land at this place called

37:00 Nassau Bay I think it was, at midnight on the 30th of June. And the next day they were to sort of to proceed up the coast and harass the Japanese on the coast while the Australians were to keep probing over the inland route. Well, the landing by these Americans was a bit of a disaster, not because of the Americans themselves, but

37:30 it was a rough sea, and half of their boats they were bringing their supplies in got overturned in the surf and oh, it was just a horrendous situation. That wasn't the worst of it, when daylight came the next morning, all their stores and things that they'd salvaged from the sea, were lined up along the beach. And Savige must have got to know about this from his Australian troops in the area. Well the Australian troops had to be there to sort of, guide

38:00 them in, they had to guide them in with lamps at night, out in the pitch black sea, so Australians were there. And the Americans had all this stuff, their stores and ammunition, whole lot piled along the beach, and they weren't moving, and old Savige, he was ropeable, he sent a signal down to New Guinea Headquarters, New Guinea Force Headquarters, "The Americans are not moving, get some action,

38:30 by one means or another get the American people down there to get their stuff off the beach, otherwise there will be Jap planes over and clean up the whole lot." So that was one particular thing that was very, whether it caused any heartaches amongst New Guinea Force people down at Port Moresby or not, I don't know, but I can remember Savige was very upset about the whole deal. It was a critical time, because that there was the first time where we had

39:00 American troops under command of the Australian 3rd Division, so…

And they weren't any good.

Could upset egos, couldn't it?

They didn't do what they were supposed to do. It's heartbreaking.

Oh, well it was a bit unfortunate in so far as the weather made them so, what they did, but they didn't act quickly the next morning sort of thing, that was the whole thing.

39:30 **How nail biting in a position such as yours, where you don't have any rank, so you can't actively do anything about it, so you have to just live with it.**

Yes. Yes. I think there was, it turned out all right in the finish. The Americans had some artillery with them. Now the artillery in the New Guinea campaign, with odd exceptions, was very – they couldn't haul these huge big guns up the mountain slopes, amongst the mud and that.

40:00 They could act all right down on the flat from down on the coast, and the Americans had artillery with

them and that was probably the whole idea, land them on the coast, they'll be able to use artillery to blast the Japanese out of position.

But for you back at HQ, typing, typing, typing, is your stomach doing somersaults, wondering if they're going to be okay?

Not really, I don't think. We got raided

40:30 by Japanese planes a couple of times, once, once or twice at Wau, and once at Bulolo, nothing serious happened. These planes would go over, and we'd all duck into a slip trench because , we were told to, and in any case we would do it just out of common sense. But they didn't drop any bombs whilst we were there. Only hazardous thing we had was, when we were about to leave,

41:00 to go back to – back south from the Salamaua campaign, we had to embark on barges, at the Nassau Bay I was telling you about, and the Japanese were over the ridge, at the back of it, and we were having a cup of coffee at the Salvation Army I think at the time, and about to embark with all our equipment on these barges to go back south. And all of a sudden over came these shells,

41:30 , are they going to smack right in the middle, or go over our heads or fall short, but, there was no way of telling. But the cups of coffee all got abandoned and thrown away, and we all dived for cover but.

Tape 4

00:30 Eventually, when I got back here, it got worse, I got migraines and the headaches were very severe and especially affected behind the eyes, but what made it worse, I used to get terrible vomiting attacks with the migraine. They wouldn't come on during the day, but I'd wake up with this terrific headache and think,

01:00 "Oh gee, I can't go to work," and I'd struggle off to work, and sometimes I'd be violently ill and I'd have to come home perhaps mid morning or midday or something. And the only relief I could get was to go to bed, close all the blinds and go to sleep, and I'd wake up perhaps two or three hours later and the terrible pain had gone. But I felt like a bit of chewed string or something really

01:30 washed out, I used to get that regularly, and if I didn't get one on the Saturday I'd invariably get it on Sunday, and I think it was something to do with tension at work and sort of the relaxation, sort of must have brought on this. Oh, I don't know – anyhow, the doctor – I had all sorts of treatments.

You were getting these migraines in your time in the war at New Guinea?

I was getting them in the last year or so, yes and I blamed

02:00 the – perhaps the food, perhaps the greasy type of food.

Well, what were your work conditions like, you were talking about working late hours and, under lights.

Hm, there was a lot of pressure on, as far as working conditions were concerned. You had to do things perhaps in a hurry and be accurate about them, about the typing, , not make mistakes, not that you didn't ever make any, you had to just be sure, you tried to

02:30 be sure you didn't. But I think it was a build up of tensions, this migraine, but it certainly got worse after the war when I got home.

When you would get them in New Guinea, were you well staffed enough to take half day off or go back to your?

Oh, you'd go to what was called the RAP, Regimental Aid Post, and they'd invariably give you a couple of Disprin, something like that, , pretty well for any complaint you had. "Take these

03:00 and off you go, ta-ta." That was about it, , if you got seriously sick or malaria or dengue that sort of thing, they probably put you in a hospital bed for a couple of days until you're clear enough, yeah.

With your headaches, how sympathetic were your superiors to the problem?

Oh I think they understood your problem, but I don't know that you could call them sympathetic, they'd say, "Oh well everybody's got to get something," that type of thing and

03:30 dismiss it. But when I got back here, one doctor said to me, "Oh there's no cure to this, migraine," which there still isn't as far as I know, and they said, "When you get older, you'll grow out of it," and I did. I suppose I might have been 55 and they sort of didn't happen any more. I was still working, but

04:00 I wasn't getting the migraines.

When you were at HQ, I mean a migraine or a headache is so internal, you can't show it to anyone can you, I mean it's your own private sort of demon. Would you just sometimes suffer

in silence, or would you generally try to do something about your headaches?

Oh mainly suffer in silence, but sometimes I'd, sort of say, "I can't continue any longer," I'd go and have a lie on the stretcher or something and invariably take some Disprin or

04:30 whatever, Aspirin, whatever is available and that was about it, just oh well, front up the next day sort of thing.

Did you have your eyes checked or anything like that while you were there?

Oh, we had all medical tests before we went into – eye test, everything . In fact, we used to get injections for this, that and the other, and I can remember in the early days down at Mount Martha, you'd have to go

05:00 for three injections, I think. I forget what they were, mainly tetanus, typhoid and some other thing, I think one particular injection was a combination of whatever you were likely to get, and we used to have what they call a sick parade or injection parade, whatever they call it. Anyway, a great long line of fellows as far as you could see,

05:30 perhaps a kilometre long, the whole of the camp would be done on the one day rather than a few done this day, a few the next day. All on the one day and this long line of fellows, it wasn't so bad if you were at the front of the queue, you'd get done and over and off you go, but the ones at the back invariably say, "Oh, this is going to hurt, ." And invariably the ones that complained the most were the great big fellows

06:00 and they'd get up to the doctor, two or three doctors I think and they'd each have an arm with a syringe, and you present yourself with your sleeve rolled up, and you get a jab and off you'd go. But some of the big blokes that were scared of what was going to happen and complaining, oh, keel over, and they'd be flat out on the floor, and they'd get their injection while they were on the floor. It was quite hilarious,

06:30 it never happened to me, but it used happened to quite a few.

How sharp was the needle by the time it got to you?

I don't really remember, but it wasn't a pleasant experience put it that way. And they never affected, the only thing that affected me and it affected everyone really, was the vaccination: it wasn't a needle, they'd scratch your upper arm here with a – I don't know what it was – a needle of some sort, but it wasn't really an injection, it was just a scratch. And a couple of days

07:00 later, you'd get the big sore would come up on your arm, and oh, you'd feel like a bit of chewed string again, just wanted to lie down and die. Made you really sick but some of the poor cows, I can remember their arm would come up like an egg, and then it'd burst and it'd, oh, there was some terrible arms. And, well it was in the arm then, that never happened to me

07:30 I did get a rash there and a sore, but it didn't affect me like it did some.

Which were the worst vaccinations, which affected you the most?

Only the vaccination, the ordinary injections never gave me any distress at all.

Sorry, what where the vaccinations for?

Smallpox.

Was that still a problem?

Well it was a prevention.

08:00 because, I suppose a lot of troops were going through the Middle East and that was a dicey place for, well most diseases I suppose. And, of course, a lot of them went to Singapore and that was a risky place for that sort of disease.

What would you attribute not getting malaria to? Because you had...

Well prevention,

08:30 we had mosquito nets which we put over our stretchers at night, or whatever we were sleeping on, and, we had to take a daily dose of Atebrin, which is a yellow tablet. And a lot of the blokes bucked about that, "No I'm not going to take that, no." But I never, I thought to myself, "Well if it's going to prevent it, I better take it," so it never worried me about taking it, but I tell you what, it did colour your skin. When

09:00 I came home, I was quite yellow. And you could drop one of these Atebrin tablets in a glass of water and the water would be quite yellow, you could almost, paint a door with it, it was a really intense colour. And most people when they returned home had this yellow skin, but it eventually righted itself, so.

What did Atebrin taste like?

Bitter, of course they

09:30 couldn't, they had to get a substitute, because the quinine used for combating malaria had been all commandeered by the Japanese. They took over all the source of it, see, from where it was produced and well, from Asia and those parts, because malaria is very prevalent over there, and once the Japanese occupied these places, we had no access to quinine, so they developed this

10:00 Atebrin. Chemical compound I suppose, it was a preventative, it wasn't a cure but we had to have a parade every day, to make sure, had to be supervised by officers that you were taking your Atebrin. Put it on your tongue and the officer'd say, "You and you." Otherwise, a lot of the blokes would have just thrown it away, or wouldn't have taken them, but it was compulsory to, and there were a lot of compulsory things regarding medical

10:30 preventions. Such as after dusk at night you had to wear long sleeves, long trousers, you could wear shorts during the day, and you needed to in the tropics of course. But a lot of it was on prevention, but it was a huge problem in the early days of the Pacific War, because they weren't prepared for the illnesses that you could contact.

11:00 **How strictly enforced was the clothing rule?**

Oh, very strictly indeed. Oh yeah they would, perhaps have a parade six o'clock at night, all right all on parade, the officers come along, were your sleeves rolled down, yeah, things like that. Well it was necessary to enforce it, because otherwise what was the purpose of having all these preventions if they weren't being taken.

11:30 **How did you find the tropics?**

I coped with them all right, I'm not, I don't mind hot weather. I'm a bit subject to the cold, I don't like the cold. But I think I was very conscious of doing all the right things to prevent me from getting malaria or dengue was a nasty sort of fever, similar to malaria,

12:00 although it wasn't quite as, what's the word, serious as malaria. There was another ailment which was called scrub typhus, which was quite serious. I think it was the bite of an insect of some sort. And a lot of them suffered from that and that meant hospitalisation and quite a few days.

12:30 Oh, you always got a common cold or something like that but malaria was the main worry yeah.

What sort of effect or problems did you have with humidity and paperwork and that sort of environment?

None that I can recollect with paperwork, there was a lot of, we didn't have the mod cons [modern conveniences] that you have these days like photocopiers, and that sort of thing.

13:00 You perhaps have a routine order or operation order to run off or distribution to certain number of units or people which set out exactly what had to be done and who and you'd have. You'd type this up on a wax sheet, which really was wax, and the type would sort of perforate the wax sheet. And then this wax sheet would be

13:30 put on a Gestetner machine, which was a roll off thing which had to be loaded up with thick black ink, I forget what they called it. It was a messy thing, it was effective, but it was a laborious sort of thing. You had to type up this wax sheet and then put on this machine like a cylinder, and roll it around like that, that would imprint onto the paper underneath

14:00 and you'd do, count the sheets, .

Could you run me through that, could you run me through that in detail? How would the sheets be changed underneath, would you have to grab them out each time, or –?

No, you type a full sheet and that would be detached from a backing sheet I think, and then attached to some pins, I think from memory now, in a sort of a roller machine which was

14:30 loaded up with this black, thick black ink, almost like a paste. And, you'd turn a handle and the, inked roller would penetrate the type, the sheet and transfer that print onto the sheet going through. It had to be special type of paper.

15:00 **And the sheet going through is that one continuous roll or…**

Oh no, individual sheets, and they'd come out one by one, one by one, perhaps half a dozen sheets to a order, or whatever. They'd have to be stapled together and sent to whomever, but it was a messy business. People who were operating this, and sometimes it was myself, operating this rolling machine, called a

15:30 printing machine in vague terms, oh, you'd get some of this black ink on your hands, and if you happen to rub your face, or the humidity would do to you, oh you finished up looking like one of the locals, black. Terrible messy stuff, and there was another machine which we got to use later, which you typed onto, not a wax

16:00 sheet, but a, oh, a glossy type of sheet. And I can't, no I don't think there any actual imprint of the typing you could read, I think it was just an impression that the type made on that sheet. And you put

that into a machine which was a roller type machine and it had a little

16:30 trough underneath it, which you filled with methylated spirits and you turned this cylinder again and I forget how this methylated spirits affected the type written sheet but this would have the similar effect to the one I was telling you about, the one with the ink machine. This methylated spirits

17:00 one was a much cleaner operation than the flat ink one. But, no, it had it's problems too, from time to time and, sometimes the print wouldn't come out very clearly. And I forget what would happen again, we'd have to do it all again, or there was a button you could press or a lever that sort of, put the more pressure on, if the thing came out a bit light, "Oh, gee that's a bit hard to read." You could

17:30 press a button which might put a bit more pressure on the rollers or something, that'd make a better copy.

With that second machine, was there ink involved?

No, there was a carbon I think, a carbon paper. There was a red, green or purple colour it would produce, you had to select which one you'd use.

18:00 **Did they have different significances for your work?**

No, it was only, it was a less cumbersome machine, and it didn't involve all this messy ink. No I think the – I forget what the paper was, no it was just a glossy white paper I think, but. You must have,

18:30 it'd have to be someway you could insert this glossy white paper into the typewriter, and type up what you had, and there must have been a backing to it which was, a colour, green, red or purple. And it must have been impregnated, so that when you turned the, you'd set it up on this

19:00 roller, turn the handle, the methylated spirit must have sort of activated whatever chemical was typed on the, was on the backing paper. That's what I recollected, but it was not such a messy operation as the black ink.

Would you use the different colours for different types of work or different receivers?

Well, it depended, if you wanted to sort of highlight a map with different positions,

19:30 how could you get three colours on the one paper, without, I can't answer that, but it was mainly just taking the place of the black ink. You could type it up, mainly in a purple sort of lettering. Red was sometimes a bit hard to read, I don't know about the green, but it was a less messy operation, put it that way, than the black ink one.

20:00 **How big were these machines?**

Oh, pretty cumbersome. What could I compare it with?

A couple, three feet high or –?

Oh, no, no they were, you could.

Would they fit on a desk top?

They were pretty heavy and a bit bulky but you didn't need any special equipment to move them from place to place. You put them on a table,

20:30 and when you wanted to use them, you just uncover, they had a cover of course, to keep the dust out and now they just load a sheet to which ever way, whatever one you were using, turn the handle and churn out these copies.

Well I was wondering if you could describe your office, or what would you call it, where you were working, the HQ?

Oh, I suppose it was an office mainly in

21:00 either tent or a makeshift building. The ones that we used in Bulolo were sort of, they were already huts, already built, perhaps for the timber workers. I don't know, they were all gone by the time I got there, you see, they were all evacuated you see. And we either had a structure like that which was already in position when we got there. Or else we'd operate

21:30 out of a tent, or perhaps in the case of advance headquarters, just a fly strung between two trees, just to keep the rain off you see.

Well, was that a problem for keeping paper dry and that sort of thing?

It was rather, we had to be, careful how and where we stored paper. It wasn't so bad ordinarily, but if we went to an advance headquarters, where there was no

22:00 prior means of storing things, yes it was a bit of a problem then, yeah.

So when you're working, how many people are in the room?

Oh it depended sometimes; it depended on the urgency of things. Sometimes I might be, well they weren't rooms insofar as you could call them rooms. One hut at Bulolo where

22:30 we worked, it'd be mainly officers down at one end, who were drafting the different things that we had to produce and we would be up the other end. There might have been four or five officers on duty at the one time. And about the same number of other ranks, like myself and people who could type and people who could run off these copies, or a couple of people who were just called runners who were

23:00 just soldiers who were perhaps given a signal and said, "Now take this down to the signals office," and they will transmit to where it had to go.

Would you have to do that occasionally?

No I didn't, no there were people, just, , appointed for that type of job, they'd get sort of rostered on; there might be three of four of them.

23:30 Might be a couple here, through the G Office so called, that was the operations staff, they might have a couple of runners, and they'd be, "Now here you are, take that down to signals office, immediately if not sooner," sort of thing. And the administration and quartermasters office, they might have a couple of runners to do the same thing, but with different instructions like to do with supplies, or bringing up ammunition

24:00 or leave problems or medical problems, things like that.

So, with roughly about 10 people working at a time, it must have been a pretty busy environment really.

Yeah it was, really, especially if there was big things happening, . Yeah. The signals were of course, the signal boys were quite an important part of the scene. They had to receive signals from wherever,

24:30 lower formations like battalions, and higher authority like New Guinea Force, who were the supreme force in New Guinea. They in turn had to answer to Brisbane or GHQ [General Headquarters] in Melbourne, so it's sort of a chain of command all the way through. I remember one occasion, there was a botch up between, it

25:00 must have been the signals, although they disclaimed responsibility. General Savige at one stage had to go down to Bulolo, to New Guinea Force in Moresby to attend a conference. Off he went and the next morning he was still down in Port Moresby, the next morning we were having breakfast under just a tin shed or something, and all of a sudden there's an aeroplane flying low,

25:30 came over where we were having breakfast and one fellow went from under the roof to have a look at this plane, he said, "Oh, it's got red circles on it," this is Japanese just observing I suppose what was going on. That was a bit of a scare, anyhow it just passed by and the air gunners

26:00 on the airfield who were stationed there to shoot down any intruders, like Japanese planes and that, they must have all been having breakfast too, or still asleep or something, they never fired a shot at it. That wasn't the worst of it, the upshot of it was, the next morning, after that, the following morning, General Savige was due back from Port Moresby to Bulolo. And a signal was sent from our

26:30 headquarters, to all interested parties, mainly the gunners with the ack-ack gun, the anti-aircraft guns, and to other people, urgent or, confidential or something like that, General Savige returning by plane tomorrow,

27:00 Or gave the date, 23rd of the ninth, '44 , or '43 , ETA [estimated time of arrival], which was expected time of arrival, 700 or something like that or 800. All was in readiness for his return, and duly the plane is flying in and whether the anti aircraft didn't get the message or if they did get it, they didn't act on it, they thought, "Oh we won't be caught this time."

27:30 Another plane coming and they had shots at , the General Savige's plane coming in, put a couple of holes through the wings too, oh there was a row about that of course, because they'd missed shooting down the Jap plane, and were having shots at our own. What a mix up that was and I don't recall who found out, or who did the wrong thing, either the signals didn't get the message or if they did, they didn't act on it.

28:00 And so when they saw this, a similar type of plane to the Jap plane coming in the next morning, they thought, "Oh, we won't be caught a second time with our pants down sort of thing." Fired at it.

Could have changed the course of history there couldn't it?

Yeah, yes caused a bit of an uproar.

What was the fall out from that?

I don't recall, I suppose people got rapped over the knuckles, but whether anyone got any serious punishment I don't know,

28:30 I never heard.

Were you ever in ear shot when Savige had a few words, or what did he say about it?

I never heard what his reaction was, but oh, . Well he wouldn't let it pass without some critical comment I'm sure, because he was a pretty mild mannered person and very sympathetic to the ordinary soldier – a very much liked person. but you can't let things

29:00 like that slip, that's that, undisciplined, put it that way.

What was he like with discipline in HQ?

Oh, I think he wouldn't, he didn't like irresponsibility, I think he was easy going enough to see people's point of view but he was very critical of

29:30 people that didn't act responsibly. I think he, to put it crudely, he wouldn't suffer fools gladly, put it that way. Actually, he was a bit different from a lot of the top brass because he was in the First World War, and I think he was at Gallipoli, yes he was, and he became

30:00 what is known as a citizen soldier, in other words he didn't do, go through Duntroon Military College, and staff college, and sort of , do the real educational part of it. He grew up as a, well as a citizen soldier, a part time soldier, did weekend parades or camps and perhaps a weekly parade at night, so

30:30 I think some of the graduates from the military college, like at Duntroon. I don't know if Duntroon existed in those days, but people who were professional soldiers, trained as soldiers, I think they were a bit, sort of looked down their noses a bit at these citizens soldiers, because they were not trained as they were.

What evidence of that did you see in your interactions in HQ?

Nothing that I could put my finger on

31:00 but I know that in, must have been '42 when the Kokoda Trail business was on, there was a lot of animosity between [General Sir Thomas] Blamey. I don't think he was a – I don't know whether he was a staff trained regular soldier, or whether he was a citizen soldier.

31:30 But there was a bit of a difference between the citizen soldiers and the staff trained soldiers and I think a couple of high ranking officers during that Kokoda operations were demoted because they were considered not aggressive enough, that type of thing. And, yet, they could hardly be blamed

32:00 because the troops on the Kokoda Trail were pretty raw, they were not trained, they were trained but hadn't got enough experience of – in other words they were thrust into the battle without too much actual preparation

32:30 or conditioning of jungle conditions. And even the seasoned troops who came back from Africa, North Africa and Syria and those places, they were floundering when they got into jungle warfare, it just wasn't – they just weren't prepared for it.

From your perspective, was there a noticeable shift after Kokoda, because they acquitted themselves so well, did you notice a

33:00 **change in attitudes towards militia and citizens soldiers?**

Oh I think so, yes. I think during, when we were at training in Australia, the AIF used to refer to the militia as Chocos, chocolate soldiers. And there was some quite pitched battles, especially in early days, when we were down at Mount Martha in our first training camp. The AIF were stationed nearby too

33:30 and they used to have some pitched battles in Mornington when they were on leave at night time and things like that. And even troop trains coming backwards and forwards from down south there up to Queensland, perhaps the trains that pass at a station, they might get out to have a meal or something, it was a bit dicey at times. There wasn't any love lost but, once the militia were able

34:00 to say, "Yes, we'll join the AIF," and sort of it was, especially when the Japanese became a threat to Australia, it was one in all in. I think things got back to a sensible level, then we're all in this together, we've got to just live with each other sort of thing, I don't think there was a problem then. But there were many problems with the Americans. Especially in Brisbane…

Did you have much to do with the Americans?

34:30 Not a great no, very little really, there was one particular item which is of interest I would think. When we were in Bulolo and directing operations against the Japanese in the Salamaua campaign, we had attached to us an American, American born Japanese,

35:00 he was, quite obviously of Japanese descent. But he was an American soldier, there were a lot of them on the west coast of America, you might have read from time to time, that were interned when Japan came into the war. These American, I suppose they were American born, a lot of them would be American born Japanese, but the fact that they were Japanese or looked like Japanese, into detention.

And this chap came to us as an

35:30 interpreter, in other words they could speak Japanese, and he was attached to us, he was an American soldier, but he was attached to Australian Headquarters to interrogate any Japanese who might be captured in the operations. And everywhere he went within our headquarters, or anywhere he went, he had to have two Australian soldiers with him all times

36:00 because, , people perhaps who weren't familiar with him from an outside unit who had no knowledge of him, think, "Oh cripes, a Japanese, he's got an American uniform on." They'd have a shot at him you see, so he had to have an escort with him everywhere he went.

What were your impressions of this man?

Oh, I think he was a very knowledgeable, very likeable person, very quietly spoken, but was there for a specific purpose,

36:30 to interrogate any Japanese prisoners. And there were very few of them, they didn't volunteer as prisoners, so to speak. They committed hara-kiri [suicide] or were shot anyhow, but I only saw a few of them and it was his job to interrogate them, find out what he could about their unit, what their purpose was, where they came from. And, but he was only with us for a short time while I, this Salamaua campaign, yeah.

37:00 Only for a matter of perhaps six to eight weeks, yeah.

Did you have a chance to talk to him?

Not in detail, only just pass the time of day, "Oh have you got any Japanese to interrogate today," and he'd either say yes or no, it was no really contact as such, no fraternisation, put it that way. We – not unfriendly to him – he used to eat with us at

37:30 mess times and perhaps have a joke or something like that.

What were the other men's attitude to that, to having?

Oh, once they knew what his duties were, they , accepted him and, once it was just a case of he couldn't move outside our immediate headquarters. I think even within the headquarters, I think he had to have an Australian soldier or perhaps two with him at all times, because

38:00 if someone came from an outside unit to a conference at headquarters, and saw this fellow walking around, they think, "Oh he shouldn't be here, he's Japanese." Y they wouldn't stop to ask questions, they'd shoot first and that type of thing, it was just a precaution that he was under escort all the time. And of course when he went out into the field to perhaps a forward unit, they'd got a couple of prisoners,

38:30 then of course he'd have his, the unit that had the prisoners, they'd look after him there but he'd just talk to these Japanese and if he could get anything out of them, he'd report back to whoever needed the information.

Were you ever privy to those reports?

No. Oh, those direct reports, but there was within our headquarters, what they called intelligence section, whose job it was to gather intelligence

39:00 by one means or another. And they'd sort of present what they'd found to higher officers and they would think, "Oh yes we'll act on that," or, "No, that's of no value," or that sort of thing. There was a section with what was called an intelligence officer, whose job it was to gather any information it could by one means or another and transmit to, perhaps

39:30 the general or his next down the line, and they would either act upon it, or say, "No we know about that," or "This is of no value."

Tape 5

00:33 **I was wondering, there was a brief period before you joined General Savige, where you were involved in maps or something, can you tell us about that? What were your duties there?**

Yes, yeah. Oh, only keeping track of them, we had a big quantity of maps of what areas we were operating in, and we would have to farm those out to areas that needed them for operations in that area.

01:00 And we had to keep a track of who we'd issued maps to and retrieve them when they were no longer necessary for that particular operation. And I've got some here – I'll show you afterwards – of around Bulolo area. They were put together by what they called field survey units. They were people qualified in topography, I suppose, and a lot of it would have been done from air photos. But they had maps of the

terrain,

01:30 in other words they had the contour maps, which showed like a weather map where the lines were very close together – that's very steep country – and lines further apart, which was not so steep. And different colours of perhaps green and, which indicated a lot of kunai grass, which was a very, well a native grass to New Guinea. It used to grow about six feet high and it was terrible stuff to wade through,

02:00 especially in that climate, very humid climate. And perhaps you're walking through this kunai grass, and just about overpowering with the humidity and no movement of air, and all of your clothing… Oh, just about pass out with it.

I believe it was quite a danger for scrub typhus too.

Yes, yes. Quite a few fellows suffered from scrub typhus, and it was very serious I think it might have been fatal in some respects, some cases, yes.

Had you had much in the way of training for map

02:30 **reading?**

No, not really no, that wasn't part of my – people in the field needed a lot of training about that – to read maps. And of course map reading was important insofar as they might be in a certain position and perhaps being harassed by the Japanese or for one reason or another, they'd call up some air support,

03:00 like from Port Moresby mainly in those days. And say we want such and such a map reference, they'd have a grid you see, and that had been numbered and lettered like a Melways [street directory]. We want that reference bombed, at 8 a.m. in the morning, or we want it bombed tomorrow between the hours of so and so and so and so to get rid of

03:30 strong points, machine gun posts or something like that. And this information would come from a unit in the field, we'd get it at headquarters, and the officers would compose a signal to send down to the New Guinea Force, who had access to the air force command. And they'd ask that command

04:00 to send whatever planes were necessary to bomb position A, B, nine, one at such and such a time whatever date.

When you were working with the maps and sort of lending them out or sending them out. How well equipped were you with maps?

I think we had all that was necessary, we only needed

04:30 them for the immediate operational area. We wouldn't have the whole of New Guinea. Just for a certain area, perhaps sometimes there wouldn't be maps available, because it just hadn't been surveyed at the , when the operations took place. And of course until the army moved in, I don't suppose there are any, hardly any maps of the area at all. There might have been some

05:00 general type of maps, but there were no roads for maps to be of any use much, there were only just native tracks and everything. As I said before had to be flown in by air from Port Moresby or Australia wherever.

The map distribution, it sounds a bit like a library really, lending out the maps, did you have trouble getting them back?

I don't recall. I don't

05:30 know, I wouldn't know really. You handed out maps for this particular area of operations to such and such a unit, and you kept a note of who got them. It's quite likely that when that particular area of operations had finished and everyone had moved on to the next area, those maps were probably of no further use, they might have even been destroyed by the

06:00 people who had them. I don't think there was any serious dereliction of duty if they didn't return them as expected. Of course, if they were going to be there for a long period of time, they'd have the map for that length of time I suppose. But I can't recall whatever, actually I was not responsible, when I went to 3rd Division Headquarters, that was my job, to distribute maps to whoever asked for them,

06:30 and to make sure that I had a record of who had them. And presumably to get them back but I wasn't in that particular situation for very long, as I said, they, asked me to be the GOC's [General Officer Commanding]confidential clerk and, do most of the typing and that sort of thing, so the maps passed to someone else then.

Were you sorry to see that job go?

Oh,

07:00 not really, I suppose most of the things in the army, you did them when you were told to, perhaps with a good grace or a bad grace, whatever your mood was at the time.

Now, I was wondering what your observations were on the working relationship between Savige and Wilton, did you see much of that?

Oh not close up. I would see them together from time to time or perhaps individually.

07:30 Not so much Savige himself because he mainly dealt with his senior officers, and told them what his thoughts were and what he wanted done and they would then possibly contact me. Wilton was an army officer trained at Duntroon, I think. In other words

08:00 he was a permanent officer, he was a likeable chap but he was a – I can't compare here really. Savige was a man sort of brought up with the troops, he related to the common person. Wilton was a permanent army man and as such was,

08:30 he was a nice enough bloke, I never had any trouble, but he had a bit sort of attitude to a person who grew up as one of us sort of thing, which Savige was.

Which method did the men respond to better do you think?

Well, you're talking about the men and I think the men in the field were the ones that, they never

09:00 or very seldom came in contact with Savige or Wilton or headquarters. 3 Div officers, they had their own officers, like the battalion commanders and the company commanders, and the platoon commanders. In other words, like schoolmates, like great big school, he's the head master, he's our form master, he's a junior

09:30 teacher and that sort of thing. They were close, but the average soldier in the field had very little if any contact with the officers that I did.

I suppose in a more general sense, from any of the levels, which of those methods do you think produced better results?

Oh it's hard to say. I think it would

10:00 be a pretty close call, I think Savige got good results, because he had a good attitude to the common soldier and he seemed to be able to get the best out of his officers under his command. Now General Bridgeford became the next GOC of 3 Div, he was involved

10:30 in Bougainville. He was a staff trained soldier to my best recollection, and I don't recall him being vastly different from Savige I don't think, I didn't seem to have as much contact with him as I did with Savige. But I did have contact

11:00 with his next under command, like the, what was called the GSO1. There was a General Staff Officer One who was next under the GOC, and then there was the GSO2 [General Staff Officer (class 2)] who was next down and then the GSO3 [General Staff Officer (class 3)] who was perhaps responsible for intelligence reports. And then there were liaison officers who sort of, went out into the field

11:30 and sort of liaised with the field commanders and brought back some information to the general staff or the quartermaster staff, whatever thoughts were going on out there. , "So and so is a bit critical of this, how can we remedy that?" All that sort of thing. Like making things easier from one lot of troops to higher command sort of thing, perhaps smoothing the

12:00 way, I really don't know, but that did take place. I'll tell you one person who was a liaison officer whilst we were in New Guinea, Jock Sturrock, who became one of the famous yachtsmen after the war, yeah. I think he won some pretty famous yacht races in his time, yeah. He was a happy go lucky fellow.

In your experiences the difference

12:30 **between Savige and Wilton would, I mean in mess hut would you gripe about Wilton and sort of praise Savige or..?**

No, I think they got on well together. I think Savige was a very respected person, whether or not staff trained officers under him had their own thoughts about how he conducted

13:00 campaigns I don't know, but I never knew of any falling out between them. I think the GSO1, he would be a lieutenant colonel in rank. He would be there to give advice perhaps and thoughts to the GOC, perhaps to colour the GOC's thinking, or perhaps point out something that the GOC

13:30 may not be aware of. It's like a board meeting I suppose, the chairman who receives all the input and he makes the decision accordingly.

That's a good comparison. On a sort of a social level, who would you spend your free time with?

Well, there was virtually no, well when I say free time, there was very little free time when you're in a

14:00 an operational situation. There was time to write letters and perhaps, well that's about all, but if you were back in a base area like Port Moresby, there would be canteens you could visit, perhaps not in your

own unit, but in Port Moresby itself.

14:30 Or things like that. The YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] had a presence, they had a tent which you could go and get writing paper to write letters and envelopes. They probably had books you could read, and magazines. And the Salvation Army was similar, they had a tent and facilities you could use, perhaps mainly books or you could write letters there.

15:00 You could seek counselling perhaps from a Salvation Army officer and the Salvation Army were wonderful in so far as providing tea and coffee and biscuits. Any time of the day, come and have, and I recall one occasion when we were going up what was called Mount Tambu, and that was an

15:30 episode I wouldn't like to repeat again ever. We had to go up this steep mountain and the Americans I think had cut a lot of steps into the slope, it went up like that, and, I don't think you'd ever be able to scale up it without having steps to step up. Because it was just muddy and slippery and up at the top,

16:00 oh, I suppose we spent an hour a couple of hours climbing up, they called it Golden Stairs. And with a full pack and a rifle and all your equipment, you used to get out of breath, if you took two or three steps, you'd have to stop and get your wind again and do another two or three and stop again. And up at the top, the Japanese had just departed a few hours before, here were the Salvation Army with the fly over a tree branch,

16:30 dispensing tea and biscuits.

It's almost absurd, isn't it; they just seem to get everywhere.

Well, I think it helped the Salvation Army's – what's the word – the Salvation Army's standing

17:00 in the community. After the war, because there were so many soldiers who experienced their care and, goodwill all through the war, , nothing was too much trouble for them to give you this, give you that, "How can we help you, what's on your mind?" Anything like that,

17:30 and the ordinary soldier, I suppose the air force the same, I don't know the navy, perhaps they had a person on board from the Salvation Army, but, it gave them tremendous goodwill from the service people, their contribution during the war. And also the YMCA, they did a good job, they weren't as prominent as the Salvation Army,

18:00 but they were there and provided a back up.

How well was it understood that the Salvation Army provided what we now call counselling that –?

I don't know that it was so prominent during the operations in the field, but the people who provided counselling in that situation were the chaplains.

18:30 There was a Protestant chaplain and a Roman Catholic chaplain attached to each brigade, and I think there was a perhaps a senior chaplain attached to division headquarters, and they were wonderful people. There was one chap, and I'm not a Roman Catholic,

19:00 but he was most respected by everyone, Roman Catholics, Protestants, you name it, anyone, because of his attitude and his kindliness. And he always had a smile and a kind word and he eventually became the Archbishop of Canberra. And he's still alive, I believe he's 94,

19:30 and I did speak to one of your people in Orange a couple of weeks ago, and gave his name as perhaps a likely source to do what you're doing with me. Whether they followed it up, or whether he's available because of health I don't know. But he used to come to our reunions fairly regularly just to mix with the boys he knew, and he became a very

20:00 likeable chap after the war. And of course during the war of course because of what he was and what he did. He wasn't a person who said, "Oh you must come to church, do this, do that." No, he'd be like you and I just one to one and, "Have you got any problems? How's mum at home?" blah, blah.

How did those chaplains help you?

I don't know that I needed to be involved with them very much.

20:30 I tell you thing that it did, in my opinion it did do. Before the war, there was a lot of animosity between Protestants and Roman Catholics, even in Brunswick where I lived, , and especially in school days. The Protestant kids used to heckle the Roman Catholics on the way home or to school or vice versa. And they got pretty bitter and so did, oh a lot of the parents. I think it was

21:00 just, well it was just what went on in those days. And after the war and I put it down to the fact that, during the war, the Protestants and the Roman Catholics were all in the one camp together, all in the same boat, all running the same risks and we all understood each other, and we made friends with each other. And, after the war, that animosity

21:30 seemed to disappear in the civilian population, we all became civilians again of course, and there wasn't

that, I suppose you call it bitterness, pre war, between Roman Catholics and Protestants. You no longer see that, not like it used to be, there might be an undercurrent somewhere with some diehards who can't abide the others, but. They even visit each others' churches now, which in those days was

22:00 just not on.

In that period, where you were particularly depressed towards the end, did you find someone to talk to?

No, not really, because it was right near the end of the war and I spent some time in hospital in the last couple of weeks before the war was over and the only people I had contact with were the medical people who were

22:30 not, not confidants, what's the other word, they were there to do a medical job, put it that way. And they did what they had to do. And I just, I suppose was being observed and checked out, and, then I was

23:00 about to be discharged. And so I had no further contact with them and I had no contact back here with any people to give advice. No, just got my discharge, went back to work and admittedly not happy at the time, I suppose I think it was an over carry from, it was a depressed state, put it that way.

23:30 **What was the attitude to going to say the Salvos [Salvation Army], or the chaplain, expressly for talking about personal problems?**

I think, it didn't happen to me, but I think some people had problems at home, perhaps their wife was being unfaithful or the wife had met up with someone else, and wasn't writing to him. Or she was writing, she was telling him that what she was interested in,

24:00 or perhaps the kids were not performing or being, she was finding it hard to manage them, perhaps the mother and father had parted, all sorts of domestic things like that. Perhaps they'd lost a comrade in the war just that they knew, perhaps. Well quite a few of our fellows who were friendly

24:30 with one or two chaps in battalions who lost their lives and that affected them. They were very morose about hearing of the death of so and so, who they'd known from early days in the army or perhaps in civilian life. Whether or not they used the Salvation Army or a chaplain to counsel them, I don't know, I didn't have that experience fortunately.

Well, in your observations how would

25:00 **they deal with those feelings, being morose, would they talk to one another?**

What the troops that were affected or the?

More the men you knew, who had bad news about the troops?

I don't know that I knew of any close by who might have, I might have sought to befriend or try and help them in their grief, or misfortune, whatever it was.

25:30 No, I think most of the fellows that I knew had pretty positive thoughts, like some of them got married just before we went overseas and, perhaps they'd come home, come back to camp and say well , "We were married, it all went well, we talked to each

26:00 other, we didn't want to postpone our marriage until after the war, despite thoughts of what might happen, we might get killed, they might be left alone, might be children that we're expecting." I didn't go into any detail with them but I understood their concerns. I think most of them that I knew

26:30 at any rate, coped reasonably well, because none of them that I was directly involved with suffered any serious, or didn't suffer any gun shot wounds, or that sort of thing. A lot of them suffered malaria, or dengue, medical problems, but they all sort of overcome those.

What did you miss most of all about home?

27:00 Oh I suppose I missed the parents, and I missed my work of course and work mates, whom I got on well with. I missed my, what's the word, my social life. I was a very keen dancer in my young days

27:30 and did all the things that our age group did. I was a very keen follower of football, most passionate about it. My father took me to a football match, I think I was only seven or eight, and it was over here at Essendon, and he and my mother, my eventual mother was there and I was there.

28:00 And in those days there was a lot of flying out of what became Essendon airport, Essendon Aerodrome now, where the aero club was based. And it was a very primitive, just a grass airstrip, nothing like today's arrangement, and, the upshot of that was, my father said, "I'm not going to take you to the football any more, all you do is look at the planes going over." which I did, I can quite recall it.

28:30 Anyway, something must have rubbed off on my because he took me to a match a couple of years, might be three years later, to the MCG [Melbourne Cricket Ground] and Essendon was playing Melbourne and Melbourne were premiers the year before. And everyone was there with expectation that Essendon

would be severely dealt with but the reverse happened, Essendon beat the reigning premiers and my father was over the moon.

29:00 oh, he was really passionate about it, and I must have inherited his genes I think from that, in that respect.

Were you able to keep contact or get information about the footy when you were away?

Only by well they used to, they produced a newspaper called Guinea Gold. It was a little newspaper about the size of your pad there, maybe a little bit bigger.

A4.

And printed

29:30 perhaps back in Port Moresby, but it was distributed free to all the troops and that would have information of that nature in it and a few paras [paragraphs] about how the war was going in Russia and how it was going in the UK [United Kingdom] and that sort of thing. And the sporting results which everyone turned to first, that sort of thing. A few of the towns, perhaps in Australia where we were based nearby, boys used to wonder off to the pub

30:00 or wherever a radio was going and perhaps on, listen to the footy results, sometimes a description of the football if they were off duty that particular day.

When you got the Guinea Gold, or when you were in New Guinea, how much did you maintain those old rivalries, the club rivalries or code rivalries?

Oh it never ceased. There used to be some terrible arguments about, and, yes, oh yes if you supported Essendon and

30:30 they were playing Collingwood, and, discussion went on the week before, “Oh we’ll do you over.” , “We’ve got so and so and he’s at the top of his…” just as though you were home. But, yeah, well it didn’t really change, you had your team, you supported them through thick and thin, and yes it was, some of the boys had their favourite players,

31:00 and others would say, “He’s no good , you want to change your support for him.” That sort of thing, a lot of friendly rivalry put it that way.

Did you have many fellow Essendon supporters in New Guinea?

Yes quite a few.

Is that a basis for an extra friendship I suppose?

Did they what?

Is that a basis for a friendship beyond what you might have had before?

No, it didn’t make any difference to me, I think I was committed at that stage. So when I came back

31:30 I was a bit crooked on the fact that the first year that Essendon played in a final series, I saw the first semi final, and Essendon won it, I think they played Richmond, that’s right. And by the time the grand final came around, I was up in New South Wales somewhere, I think, and of course I couldn’t see it, but I, heard the result and oh no.

32:00 Here I am and I’ve followed them for what, 11, 12 years, saw them down the bottom of the list, now they’ve won the premiership, I didn’t get to see it , feeling rather sorry for myself. But after that in later years, I’ve got my money’s worth, put it that way. But I did have a time during the late ’30s where I thought to myself, oh,

32:30 they were down in the bottom three or four, I thought, “No, I’m going to give them away, I’ll go for some other team,” and I said to my father, “No, I’m not going to go for them any more.” He said, “No, don’t give up,” he said, “they’ll come good.” And he was right, they did, but.

Was there much footy played in New Guinea?

Yes. Oh yes there were a lot of, well not in New Guinea so much because of the – not in the operational

33:00 areas of course, it just wasn’t possible, and in any case there was just no flat ground to play it on. But on the Atherton Tablelands and in Queensland, and any parts of Australia where Australian troops were stationed, yes, there was very keen competition played. Yeah some of the Queenslanders and New South Wales boys, they sort of looked a bit of disdain upon Australian Rules,

33:30 aerial ping pong they called it. Because they were brought up with rugby, you see, not so much soccer but rugby, and us Australia Rules devotees, we couldn’t understand their rules, there aren’t any rules. They just do as they want to do and in any case it’s just one long scrum on the ground and it just didn’t make sense to us, so there were a few arguments went on about that, but all friendly.

34:00 **I was wondering how much the staff or HQ staff mixed with the rest of the troops?**

In operational areas like the Salamaua campaign, very little, because, well we each had our job to do and, there was no time to

34:30 sort of fraternise, to put it perhaps crudely. Oh, they got on all right with each other. There were one or two officers who wouldn't be ideally suited to the troops or the other ranks, put it that way, because of their perhaps, superior attitude, or

35:00 domineering sort of attitude, this was, pretty rare. But, no, by and large, I don't think there was any upheaval between the other ranks and the officers, no.

I was just wondering how much you had to do with non HQ people, yeah, did you?

Non H

Oh not very much, not in New Guinea at any rate, back on, in

35:30 **Australia, perhaps a bit from time to time, but by and large, not very much, no.**

Now your leave when you came back, how long did you get back in Melbourne itself?

We had one leave from when we were stationed outside Albury, oh we had, every second weekend when we were stationed

36:00 at Seymour, or out of Seymour, or down at Mount Martha. We had leave every second weekend in, the half the camp would go one weekend, the other half would go the next weekend, by train. We would leave on a Friday, late Friday afternoon, come back Sunday night, get back about 11 o'clock at night. The same at Seymour or just out of Seymour, where there was a huge number of troops. There was AIF,

36:30 over in Puckapunyal, and there was the militia over there near Seymour, that was once every fortnight. When we got up further, I think it was once every month when we were stationed up near Albury, we'd get weekend leave once a month then when we got up to Casino, I think we had,

37:00 I forget, not long leave. When we went to – when we got up into Queensland, there might have been a week or two weeks leave. I think this, we didn't call it pre-embarkation leave, because we weren't told we were going overseas. But we might have got a week's leave or a fortnight leave then. I remember one –

37:30 oh no this was after we'd been through New Guinea, and come back through the Atherton Tablelands, we were sent on leave after that Salamaua campaign. Sent on two weeks leave, I think to home, we were back at Port Moresby then, sent from Port Moresby home, and we, had

38:00 two weeks' leave, and the leave expired on Christmas and we all said to each other, "Oh they won't send us back on Christmas Eve, that would be shocking." But they did. We went, we spent Christmas Day as I recall in the Brisbane Showgrounds. And the Brisbane Showgrounds were under water because of the rain for days, the deluge. And instead of having, sleeping in

38:30 tents on the showgrounds we had to sleep up on one of the grandstands, on, the narrow seats. Oh, they were terribly uncomfortable, but that's what had to be done.

That's a bit rough for Christmas Day isn't it?

Oh well, we all assumed that being Christmas they wouldn't be so unkind as to send us away from home on Christmas Day. But Christmas Eve we had to report to the train and off we went.

Did you have a full complement?

There were a few AWOL [AWL – Absent Without Leave],

39:00 I don't know what happened to them, they would have had some sort of punishment, I can't recall what it would have been. But it didn't happen to me, I did the right thing and perhaps it's one of the reasons I got the job that I did. Anyhow it was all a marvellous experience at the time, hm.

Tape 6

00:32 **I wanted to know if you could talk to me about the difference in command between Herring and Savige, for you personally by the way?**

Between Herring and Savige? Well I never had anything really to do with Herring, except he was the GOC of New Guinea Force which is superior to Savige's command, but as far as I know, they had a pretty good relationship. Herring

01:00 became Governor of Victoria in later years, as you probably know, and was a very well respected man.

From your point of view can you ascertain a difference in their style of leadership?

Not really, because the only, well I didn't have anything to do with Herring, but only. See some of the orders which came up from New Guinea Force, which didn't indicate his temperament

01:30 or just bare order, "You will proceed to do this, that or the other," by a certain date or, orders really not anything personal or interpersonal between the two.

Okay, what about a sort of general feeling among your small enclave towards Savige then?

02:00 Oh, one of respect and I'd say admiration. He was, a soldier from the First World War not that that was terribly prominent, but he had, immediately coming back to Australia and taken over command of 3 Div, he was a brigade commander in Syria I think during the early days of the European War.

In your personal dealings with him,

02:30 **did you find him an easy person to approach?**

Oh yes, yes, like a relative I suppose.

Like an uncle.

You gave him respect, like all service personnel were supposed to do, but you didn't feel in awe of him or uncomfortable in his presence, no.

Well, I believe rank amongst the Australians was a reasonably relaxed arrangement in New Guinea, was that reflected in HQ for you?

03:00 Yes I'd say so. By and large I think everyone respected the other person's viewpoint, or there was discipline of course, you had to do what you were told to do, or expected to do. There was the occasional officer who would not be respected, mainly because of his attitude.

03:30 I can remember, this is not in 3 Div, but in 15th Brigade, in earlier days, us fellows being militia people in camp and we'd every now and again get a new officer. And quite often they were straight out of university, and in some cases, younger in age

04:00 than what perhaps many of the troops were. And in the 15th Brigade, there were some pretty rough diamonds and these, new officers out, straight out of university, were given a pretty rough time, they weren't – they were sort of, not one of us. They used to do some terrible things to them, not openly, that would bring a

04:30 court martial or something like that, but.

How did Australians sort out their officers unofficially?

How did they?

Australians have a way of sorting people basically regardless of their rank or position?

I think unless it was a formal parade, if you met them during the course of the day or

05:00 just in passing, respect would be shown, you had to salute, that was mandatory. But a lot of them had contact with the officers in sporting events and as such there was, virtually no difference between the classes so to speak.

So a bit of an elbow here…

Oh, yeah, one that was well merited perhaps, yeah.

05:30 **I read that General Savige sometimes played checkers with his men.**

I don't recall that. I wouldn't have thought he'd be playing with the other ranks, but maybe amongst his junior officers and staff, he could have, yeah.

And in the position you were in, were you ever, given any, what we'd call perks [privileges] nowadays?

No.

Never invited in for a drink or…?

No, there was strict demarcation there, the officers had their

06:00 mess, or their dining facilities, the sergeants and warrant officers had a separate mess and the other ranks had, they also ran, so to speak. One thing I do remember about messing arrangements, when we had our meal, sometimes it was a hot meal, dehydrated meat, which was – reminds me of minced steak, only

06:30 less palatable. We used to have to wash our dixies, our mess tins, you've seen the thing, in a trough of hot water. Well that was fair enough, but if you happened to be in the end of the line, going through for your meal and you were the last to finish and then had to go and wash the dishes, it was like washing

them in soup and the water was just about cold, and, when the mess tin

07:00 would dry ready for the next meal, you could run your finger through it and leave a like a line in the sand so to speak. Yuck, but there was no alternative, if you wanted to eat that's how you did it.

I also wanted to ask you about plane flights, you said you had that first DC plane into New Guinea I think you said.

Yes, the DC-3s I think the Douglas planes I think.

Oh that was

07:30 **up to Wau and you had an escort, I think you said, a plane escort.**

Yes, we had to because the Japanese base at Lae wasn't terribly far away and it would have been easy pickings for Jap fighters to pick off our transport planes. What happened was, the transport planes flew as low as they possibly could in the ravine , and you could look out the window and the trees would

08:00 be level with your eyes , and you'd think, "Oh they're a bit low here," but they had to do that to make it hard for the fighters. If they were swooping down too high up to sort of manoeuvre to get into these deep ravines, added to that, the Australian Air Force or it might have been the Americans supplied a fighter cover, and they used to fly way above us and any Japanese planes were approaching or to be seen they would

08:30 be there to protect the transport planes. We didn't experience any action in that respect.

Be a bit nerve-racking though, I imagine.

Oh yeah, a bit nerve-racking, especially see you flying down so low and , trees passing at eye level. If you looked out the window and looking out the window there wasn't seats like there are in aircraft now,

09:00 it was just a metal, doubled as a seat I suppose, along each side of the plane. Flying in New Guinea wasn't so bad there, when we went up to Wau because the plane kept basically below the tops of the mountains. But on one occasion, I came back from Bougainville to, eventually to Brisbane by air, and flying

09:30 over New Guinea from the north side over to the south side, it's like going up and down in a lift, the air currents are so violent, the plane you feel the wind get under the wings the plane would go … and then… let down like a lift going down with no control and then up, up, up again, and then the same thing. And I looked through where the pilots were sitting at one stage, and they weren't concerned at all, in fact I think they were playing cards.

10:00 Or they weren't sort of manipulating the controls like you manipulate a car in a gale or something.

Do you recall hearing about an incident in Port Moresby when a Liberty crashed?

I don't know whether it's the same thing I'm thinking of. Is this where a lot of Australian troops lost their lives? Yes, that wasn't long after we, excuse me, had arrived

10:30 in Port Moresby, and I forget which might have been, no, I can't properly name it. Anyhow it was a, quite a large number of troops drawn up beside the airfield, I think they were quartered in covered vehicles

11:00 during the night, and they were there for an early take off next morning, I forget where they were going, possibly up to, no I don't know, but they were there to be transported by air out of Port Moresby. And I think one of the aircraft, I don't know if it was one of the troop laden aircraft but, one of the aircraft

11:30 taking off malfunctioned, I don't know whether it was a mechanical problem or an engine problem, just what it was. Anyhow, it slewed off the runway and ran into some of these parked trucks and there was a terrible death toll amongst these troops ready to be transported to wherever they were going. It was a disaster at the time. We heard the loud explosion. It was still dark, it wasn't daylight. And that was what happened. It was just

12:00 an accident, couldn't be avoided.

In a situation like that when everything's gone terribly pear shaped [into chaos], does…

Oh dreadful despondency amongst troops , "Oh that could have happened to us, we could have been in those trucks."

What about in a more technical level, would that affect the work that you were doing, would the signals change, or your information alter?

No, no that would become an administrative matter and a court of enquiry

12:30 as to how it happened, why it happened, no it didn't concern us at all. No.

Did you get a sense of working in HQ of the bigger picture of the war in New Guinea, or were you still very much a kind of a small ant in a big hill?

Oh both really, we were all concerned with our operations of course, but we were aware of the big picture.

13:00 Not so much by our inter communication with headquarters higher than us, or any official signals, or documents that came into our possession. We mainly got the bigger news of the war and how it was progressing through this publication Guinea Gold which was like a newspaper for the troops, that was how we kept abreast of things and

But the Guinea Gold would only give a

13:30 **very broad version of events?**

Oh yes, it was like reading a newspaper really.

Were there incidences where you would read something in the Guinea Gold something that was ultra to what you were hearing through HQ?

Only in like you would read a newspaper, for instance if –

14:00 supposing you were in Melbourne when the test match had been played and you read the newspaper as to how it was progressing, and the journalist said this that and the other, you would take that in as, pretty well the scene. But in the Guinea Gold, which was an official publication of the army, it mainly was a repeat

14:30 of what I suppose was in the newspaper of the day, although some of it could have come from army sources, like intelligence reports, but it would only be published if it was released by a censor.

Well, I wonder whether journalists every approached your HQ to see if they could solicit some information?

Well, we did have Damien Parer [war correspondent and cameraman] up there at one stage in that Salamaua campaign,

15:00 and he went out with the forward troops, and I believe he even filmed some of the fighting there and he was a very respected journalist, cameraman. And I don't recall any other journalists, there could have been some without me knowing, but I remember him being there.

Was it, were there any female officers or…?

15:30 No, the only females in the army were in the what, the AWAS, Australian Women's Army Service, and they were never in forward areas. I don't think, there might have been some in New Guinea, but I never, ever, they certainly weren't in forward areas. There might have been a few in Port Moresby, but there, lots of them based in Australia of course.

Yes, but none in your particular vicinity.

16:00 No. There were probably nurses in the hospitals in New Guinea.

Well I wanted to talk a little bit more about the Salamaua campaign and, and specifically from your experience of it. For example, what would be the first you'd hear with regards to the movement of troops?

Well either we'd get a direction

16:30 from New Guinea Force or at least General Savige would via secret signals like a telegram sort of thing but only in code, which the signal people would decode. Either that or else, written documents perhaps flown up by aeroplane from

17:00 Port Moresby to Bulolo. That would be the only way they could communicate, I don't think they could do it by, well they had to, to get communications from Port Moresby to Bulolo you would have to do it by either radio, or can't imagine them doing it by telegraph anyhow, because there

17:30 was no land lines to – .

Were you savvy enough to pick up when something was brewing?

Not without reading what might be happening. As I told you, there was probably emanated from New Guinea Force Headquarters I would think. To deploy these Americans

18:00 landing on the coast south of Salamaua, and sort of moving up the coast whereas our own troops were moving inland over these mountain ranges. That was virtually the only way, by official channels that anything was impending and then it wasn't common knowledge, it was

18:30 only amongst the people who are reading the signals. Or in my case was told that General Savige wasn't satisfied with the way that the Americans left their stores on the beach, and was complaining back to

New Guinea Force to get them moving off the beach sort of thing. None of the troops themselves would have been privy to that sort of thing. And in it wasn't,

19:00 general knowledge anyhow. Put it this way, we were really only concerned with our own immediate field of operations. What others did, or what they were commanded to do was, , from the higher formation down to the lower group, for them to act as instructed. But for the troops that surrounded me and our immediate headquarters, they just went about their

19:30 day to day duties, without, they were aware of what was going on, but not in any detail.

I appreciate that you wouldn't have breathed a word of the information that you were receiving to anyone outside of your immediate vicinity.

No.

But was there a bit of scuttlebutt among yourselves, did you sort of have a little bit of a musing?

Oh well, those,

20:00 the person who was perhaps typing the orders for transmission to the brigade headquarters and for brigade headquarters to pass on that information to their battalions. To that extent, some of the people who were typing would know what was coming up, they would be instructed to, ,

20:30 keep this to themselves. Not to refer to it in any letters back home, that sort of thing.

But was there no – – "Hey, have a look at this," or, "This is going to be difficult," or, "Gosh, can you believe this is going to happen?"

No, not to my recollection no, no. Most of the concern of the ordinary person in the camp was, "When are we going on leave?" "Where are we

21:00 going to next?" That sort of thing. Doing sort of generalisations, but curiosity perhaps, but no, expectation of any classified memos or things like that that might get back to the enemy.

After a period of time, typing up all this information, you would have a fairly good understanding

21:30 **of the way war operated I guess. Was there a point when you could begin to discern what was going to be a good campaign and what was a doomed campaign. From the orders?**

No I wouldn't say, I wouldn't think so, no I don't know. As I said, we were concerned with our own little battle area if you could call it little, and we were very concerned with what was going on outside,

22:00 even to the extent of how the Russians were faring. We'd only get that information through this publication, Guinea Gold or I don't think there was any radio contact like we have today, transistors or that type of thing, no. So, we rely on, perhaps people might write to us from home and say, "Oh, they bombed Berlin last night or last week or whatever." and

22:30 maybe that was a morale booster, but as to any involvement in our part with other than the next door neighbours, or the units under our command, you wouldn't have any concerns as to the – well we'd have more concern, but we wouldn't know the details or the implications of it.

And you were in New Guinea for

23:00 **perhaps the roughest period of allied fighting over there. Were there times when you would have liked to put the typewriter down and picked up a rifle?**

No I can't say there is, because apart from the time we were advanced headquarters, which was very fairly to the Japanese and we could have been raided at

23:30 any time, apart from that occasion which lasted about three weeks, four weeks maybe, we weren't close enough to the enemy to be threatened by them. Oh, there was a time as I mentioned in Bougainville, when we were alerted to the fact that the Japanese were mounting raiding parties to specifically assassinate General Savige,

24:00 that came through loud and clear. And measures were taken according to combat and that sort of thing but there was not always that risk and there was always the threat of a few bombs being dropped on me. Not so much in New Guinea, unless you were in Port Moresby or one of the strategic areas, perhaps where

24:30 the fighting was pretty close confined, perhaps in open areas like the beach areas where planes coming over could more or less identify where their troops were and where the enemy were in the jungle. You can imagine it's pretty hard to pinpoint anyone, see anything from up above I mean. In the Kokoda campaign the only way they could get

25:00 supplies to the forward group was by air dropping, and they had native carriers, but a lot of supplies

both food and ammunition that sort of thing, would drop from the aircraft. Flying over a certain area, and one particular part of the Kokoda campaign there was a dry lake bed, which was about the only open area in from one coast to the other coast, with a few

25:30 exceptions, where they were able to drop supplies there. And that was easy enough too, for the fliers to pinpoint. It wasn't easy enough for the things to drop out of aircraft and come in one piece, when they got to the ground, they'd often burst open and things would go everywhere.

In fact, I believe they fell on men's heads, is that unlucky?

Yes that did happen,

26:00 I can't recall any particular cases. I can recall one case in, this is not an air dropping, but when we were stationed in – just before we went to New Guinea, we were between Caloundra and on the coast and the Blackall Ranges at the back there was a few severe thunderstorms, and one or two people were killed in their tents by falling limbs off trees just that were struck by lightning.

26:30 **Did you ever receive information that you had to type that was, other than military sort of troop movements and so on?**

Not during the actual campaign, perhaps when we were back at Port Moresby or on the Atherton Tablelands, it'd be, certain things to do with sporting events or, on one occasion when we were at Bougainville,

27:00 we were alerted to the fact that the new Governor-General, was the Duke of Gloucester I think, was coming up to have an inspection of troops and there was a mad panic to have things looking spick and span. You can imagine can't you, "Oh, look who's coming. We'll have to…" And troops were despatched to pick up the leaves around the campsite.

27:30 As fast as they pick them up, another dose would come down. That caused a lot of, well , troops whinge at small things and that was one in particular. But another thing that happened on that occasion, one of our number was told to stand by the roadside, and when the Governor-General's jeep came to pass it was going to stop, and this

28:00 soldier would hand the intercom to the Governor-General, a map of the area or a map of the operations, So he dutifully stood out there, at the appointed place, about half an hour before the Governor-General is due to pass, waiting to hand out his copy and when the jeep arrived it just whizzed straight past, without getting anything and he was terribly irate, I think he threw the thing

28:30 down on the ground and jumped on it, so that was a bit hilarious.

Well I'm sure if I was a soldier in a situation like that and I'd been risking life and limb and suddenly told to paint a rock white or pick up some leaves, you'd find that a little bit hard to take, wouldn't you.

Oh yeah, it was one of those hilarious things, .

Some crusty old royal…

So regimented sort of thing, "Oh, we must clean up the Governor-General's coming."

God forbid he should see what a war looks like.

Lot of

29:00 jungle leaves that kept falling down, especially if the wind was blowing and then to have this mishap with the map that never got delivered, it was just too much.

From your point of view, was it possible for the information you were dealing with to be infiltrated? Was security tight enough to prevent, , activity such as

29:30 **espionage and so on?**

What, from out troops back to home…

Yes I know a bit Mata Hari [Margaretha Geertruida Zelle, a Dutch exotic dancer and courtesan who was executed by firing squad for alleged espionage during World War I] sort of et cetera, but I'm just wondering how was it arranged that the enemy didn't actually get their hands on information you were dealing with?

Oh only by censoring, our letters going out. Or, by instructing troops not to discuss military

30:00 matters at all, not to, especially what. In forward areas, it wasn't so vital because it was only us and the enemy, no, no fifth columnist [sympathisers with the enemy] in between, like there would be in the cities, or even perhaps Port Moresby or –

Is that possible, Port Moresby had members of –

No I wouldn't think so, It'd be very unusual for any

30:30 subversive activities to go, well you never know I suppose. Even amongst your own troops, there might be a person who had a grudge against your own army, or would rather, I can't imagine any Australians wishing the Japanese would win, can you? But, oh well, especially back in Australia if you went on leave for instance, "Oh we've just been up in New Guinea and this went on and that went on,

31:00 we were outside Salamaua and blah, blah, blah," and this could filter back by various means and get to the enemy, yeah. And perhaps, and I wouldn't think anyone would know in advance where we were going next, so it was a minimal sort of a risk as far as the troops were concerned. Unless they just happened to go back to Australia on leave just prior to us going moving somewhere else,

31:30 and if by some means they got to know that we were bound for another destination, they let the drop wherever, back home, the club or the pub, that sort of thing, that was frowned upon most definitely.

I wonder if we could talk briefly about the leave that you had back in Australia, and how you spent that?

32:00 Actually, I suppose in the broader picture, our leave back to Australia was much better than what, well of course it's understandable because we were closer to home, but troops, once they went to Europe, they were there till the end sort of thing unless they were hospitalised. But we got a leave from, once from New Guinea, to, once or twice.

32:30 Once whilst we were back in Port Moresby, we got a leave back to Australia for two weeks I think. Then in the last three months of the war, we got a leave from Bougainville back to Australia, I think that was pretty generous. We had to fly from Bougainville, we had to fly from New Guinea too,

33:00 down to Townsville and then by train down to Melbourne, via to Brisbane. And from Bougainville, we had to fly to Finschhafen, which is on the New Guinea coast and from Finschhafen down to Townsville.

So how did you spend that first leave?

Oh, just doing the normal things, just socialisation with our families, and going to dances I suppose. Pictures, films

33:30 in the theatres.

Did you catch up with this lass you'd been writing to?

No, we'll the first time, I was down on leave when I met her, yes we had a couple of weeks together, , every night or every second night or whatever. And then the bombshell came through that she'd matched up with someone else, so that was the end of any socialising on leave.

34:00 When I came back in, not the first leave I had, I wasn't friendly with any girl at the time, I used to go to dances with some of my mates, but there was no particular girlfriend. The second time I matched up with this lass I was keen on and then I went back off leave and

34:30 this other chap from our unit, he went back on the second leg. Y the leave was staggered, so many that fortnight, so many went that fortnight and so many went the next. And he went on the next one after me, and he sort of took over my – what was blossoming as a romance, see. So I only found out about that after I'd gone back to Bougainville off this leave, so, in

35:00 the greater scheme of things, it didn't matter very much because about six weeks after that happened the war ended, so.

Well I had a specific question about leave, which was, with regard to the amount of information that you were privy to, I wonder if there were things that people said back in Australia about the war that you knew was just, a load of old hogwash?

Not

35:30 that I was asked by any outsiders, but immediate my mother and father I suppose, and I can't recollect what they specifically asked. I would have told them, I suppose I would have been in the Salamaua campaign. Well the Salamaua campaign, everyone would have known by that stage about that, even the Japanese knew that 3 Div were operating there and such and such a unit, and someone else and someone else so there was no point in trying to

36:00 hide that. But you couldn't, not that we knew what any forthcoming campaigns were going to be or where we were going to go next, no one, that we didn't know that that was only known to the top brass. So, oh we could generalise, I suppose about our experiences, but, some lads were very reticent

36:30 about talking about that.

In your opinion, did you get the feeling that the Australians were very well involved about their role in the international war?

What, the Australian public? Oh, as far as censorship would allow I think they were. The news might have been slanted, like it is today sometimes. , "We're doing KN [?], such and such a place,"

37:00 whereas, perhaps we weren't doing as well as they projected we were. That sort of thing but I think the public are as well informed as they could be without prejudicing any operations. Perhaps all may not have been told about some disasters that might have happened, I can't recall a particular one, but –

37:30 **That's all right.**

That might not have come out, well not right away, it might have been published a few months later, when people were concerned about no communications from their loved ones in the armed forces and things might have been disclosed then, which were not at the time and yeah.

And also I wondered what it was like to be back in Australia so briefly, when

38:00 **you knew you had to go off?**

Well, I think most of the troops marvelled at the normalness of life, . I still go to the races, the footy's still on, the place is lit up like Luna Park [amusement park], and some places were, whereas in other places it was total blackout. I remember coming down here on leave

38:30 when the blackout was on and, it was pretty well observed, I'm thinking this is a pretty dismal place, of course you compare what you're used to before you went away, but in other cases you'd think, "Oh gee it's pretty dull and dark here at night." Whereas up in Port Moresby the lights were all blazing on, they had to be, because they were unloading ships you see so they had to have flood lights and things on and if they got any

39:00 alert about an air raid, well then that would only get switched off until that was passed.

So the normality of it back in Melbourne was unusual.

Well, life to me, when I came home on leave, seemed to be much the same before I went away. Things seemed to be going much the same, I suppose they weren't in so far as trams were manned by women and not men but people still

39:30 went to the races, and there was a lot of criticism about the easy life as compared with army life or service life.

Passing people in the street, would they give you a warm reception or an indifferent…?

Oh yes we were well received, yeah.

Tape 7

00:37 **I wanted to ask about this three month period back in Lae which seems most roundabout to have sent you there before Bougainville, what was that about?**

Was really only a stop over I suppose. We were astounded that we went back to Lae, not that we'd

01:00 spent any time in Lae, we were close to Lae in the Salamaua campaign, then we went back to Australia and we were training on the Atherton Tablelands. And when we embarked again, we knew we were going to New Guinea, but the last place we thought we'd go to was Lae, we'd just left there, well near there six month before and Lae was no longer a Japanese stronghold, it was occupied by the Australians.

What did it look like when you got there?

Oh, pretty devastated with the

01:30 bombing, it had been partly – not rebuilt but it was operational, put it that way. They would use the airfield, the Australians and the Americans. And, oh it was largely populated by natives of course, the New Guinea people themselves. I think there was a big hospital there, an Australian hospital.

02:00 Which possibly serviced a lot of cases in New Guinea, not just around Lae, but perhaps further up the coast that did, in other words, it was a base hospital as opposed to what they call a field hospital, where doctors were operating, but they were pretty make shift equipment they had. In serious cases they would send back to Lae or even to Australia I suppose.

So when you got there, what sort

02:30 **of physical work would you have to do to set up HQ for that period of time?**

We would have to pitch tents, set up an office working area with tents, mainly big tents. Aside from that, I don't think there was – we had to maintain the area around tents, otherwise we would have got flooded out with the tropical rain, .

03:00 We had to dig ditches around each side of the run off of the tents, otherwise you get flooded out, that

sort of thing, keep the place tidy. You'd have an inspection of your bed each morning, to see it was properly made, not just tossed over like that and things scattered wherever, there was, it was the discipline I suppose.

Do you... sorry?

I was just going to say the discipline was a big thing in the army.

03:30 If things got lax, unless you had discipline and enforced it, sort of Rafferty's Rules [anarchy] prevailed – you could get away with things that, wasn't the right way to go about. In the army you got to be focused sort of thing, and you can't

04:00 buck the rules, so they had to have the discipline.

Were you still expected to be armed at all times in a situation like Lae?

If you're outside the immediate headquarters area you were, and the forward troops, of course would have to be armed.

No I'm talking about you, and mostly in this interview we're just talking about your views and your experiences.

04:30 No, we had to carry our rifles with us wherever we went, and have ammunition but only in case of an emergency. Yes.

Were there ever situations in New Guinea or Bougainville where you had any personal danger apart from the bombing and strafing?

I can't recall any. We had to be on alert when we were at advance headquarters of course, because we were in fairly close proximity to the enemy

05:00 and they were past masters at moving through the jungle without making any noise. But there was one, and he wasn't connected with our unit, but I recall this as an anecdote, it's true, it's not a falsehood. There was a person in one of the

05:30 independent companies, I think, who sort of – commandos you might say – and this fellow was an expert with explosives, and he and a mate used to set out in the dead of night, in the pitch black jungle. How they ever found their way, where they were going I don't know, and they'd go armed with explosives, and they'd put booby traps around the Japanese camps. They'd sneak up in the middle of the night when everyone was asleep, and they had little tins,

06:00 I think, or jam tins or something like that filled with explosive and a wire set to a fuse back in the jungle somewhere. And they'd go back there in the dead of night and the first light of the morning. And of course the Japanese would wake up and rush outside to do ablutions or whatever, and of course these booby, they'd set off these booby traps and they were, oh they were terrible menace to the Japanese, what they got away with is

06:30 nobody's business.

How were you made aware of what the independents were up to?

Oh, by their daily reports, they'd have to send in a report to our headquarters, each independent company and each battalion or each fighting unit and they would be collated by staff at 3 Div Headquarters, and sent back to New Guinea Force, for them to consolidate. And from our headquarters

07:00 and from any other formations that were engaged with the enemy at the time, they'd all go back to New Guinea Force and from there they would be transmitted to Australia for further.

Would that be some of the material you'd type up each day?

Yes, could have been, yes. In the form of signals to New Guinea Force fighting, at

07:30 whatever location today, extensive patrolling to ascertain the strength of the Japanese in that area. Oh reports about casualties, one killed, three wounded, that type of thing yeah.

Would you have to use any sort of code in the work that you were doing?

No that would be up to the signals people.

08:00 They'd get the long hand or the English version and they would transfer that, transmit that into cipher I think it was called, or code and for transmission by radio.

The three months in Lae, was that eventful in any way shape or form?

08:30 Well, it was really only a training drill. As I said, we were even staggered that we even went back to Lae, it may have been, and I'm not quoting from official sources here, it may have been that they weren't ready to receive us in Bougainville. The Americans were in occupation of this perimeter from around a place called Torokina, where there was a big airbase,

09:00 well, comparatively big, and a cleared perimeter for, oh, pretty extensive area, but beyond that in the rest of Bougainville, the Japanese were in occupation. They weren't right on the doorstep, but they were there and we had this perimeter. So whether we were destined to go there earlier than what we were able to because the Americans were still there, I don't know. But we sort of,

09:30 I suppose we were cooling our heels for a couple of months, yeah, before we went to Bougainville for no apparent reason.

So would you have reasonable advanced warning of where you were going to go, say unlike most of the soldiers?

Only these senior officers would have that or even they may not have had it until maybe perhaps a week before when they would get a signal from higher in headquarters.

10:00 You are on two days, 24 hours, 72 hours, alert for movement, they perhaps wouldn't say where to, but just, and that would mean that they would have to set in motion for us to get our things packed and be all ready to move, at the certain number of hours notice, that's about all it would say. So we knew then that we were going to move somewhere, but we didn't know where.

10:30 **What did you think when you then arrived in Bougainville? Was it the last…?**

I think we knew when we were embarking on a ship, I can't be sure, but I think we knew then that we were going to Bougainville and again, we wondered why. There were certainly Japanese there and, but there was really no point in trying to evict

11:00 them from Bougainville, they had no air force there, their troops were virtually cut off from their main source of supply.

Was that something you could actually approach General Savige and ask?

I suppose you could but I don't think anyone did. I mean, we were told to go there and that was it. That came from probably MacArthur's [General Douglas MacArthur] headquarters, or the

11:30 highest command, your formation would go to such and such a place. And, that I think was mainly MacArthur's overruling that he wanted the Americans to return to the Philippines, no, he certainly took advantage of the Australian Navy and what air force, Australian

12:00 Air Force, was available. But as far as occupying troops like the army, I think he wanted it to be a total American show, so we were never –

Well what personally did you discover when you got to Torokina, there were Yanks still departing the area and equipment everywhere?

Well the Americans were still in occupation, but they were moving out in, from day to day sort of thing and we inherited all their, not all their equipment – but

12:30 what we did inherit was an open air theatre, which we'd never had before and a lot of, huts and, well supply dumps and things like that, and an airfield which incidentally was used by the New Zealand Air Force in Bougainville, but.

Physically, how different did it look to New Guinea?

13:00 Not greatly, not greatly, Bougainville's a very mountainous country, like New Guinea: it also has an active volcano which is sending forth smoke all the time. And on one particular occasion, I remember I must have been off duty during the day time and I was having a sleep on the stretcher under the tent,

13:30 and all of a sudden the stretcher's going like this and I thought, "Oh that's funny, some bloke pushing the stretcher trying to annoy me see," but it was an earth tremor and I don't think it's been active, but it occasionally gives off these tremors. But Bougainville is virtually jungle covered like New Guinea is. I don't think it is quite as precipitous as New Guinea, there are high mountains.

14:00 And there are no roads interior, to the interior, there are what they call a makeshift road around the coastal area, but it degenerates in many cases to just swamp, such a high rainfall there.

Given that you inherited so much equipment from the Americans, was your HQ a better set up in Bougainville than you'd experienced?

14:30 Yeah, probably. From an amenities point of view, we had better canteen facilities. We had as I say this open air theatre which had the latest films.

Such as?

Picture of Dorian Gray was one that I can recall.

It's a pretty dull film.

Sorry.

I said that's a pretty dull film for a bunch of soldiers.

Yeah, that was, it was pretty dramatic

15:00 but it was, I suppose at the time it might have been one of the top rated films. Occasionally we'd get some of the female stars, who were they, Jean Harlow, was that one. I can't remember whether Marilyn Monroe was on the scene in those days, maybe, maybe not.

A bit before her time.

Oh yeah probably, but they were up to date films,

15:30 they weren't, from way back, of course, the Americans being what they are, they probably demanded, up-to-date things, not castoffs.

Well what other goodies did you manage, did they leave any of their ice cream makers behind?

No, not really but we had access to their canteens back in Port Moresby and again in Bougainville whilst they were still there and whilst we were stationed at Moresby.

16:00 After the Salamaua campaign, we were sort of in limbo going back to Australia, we had access to their canteens, and a lot of the Americans invited some of our troops to their mess sessions and they came back saying, "Oh gee, they've got everything, got ice cream, got fruit, you name it, they've got it." So we sort of, "We better go and join them," sort of thing.

Did you make any friends among the Americans?

16:30 No I didn't, no one or two of our chaps did. But, no I didn't, I seemed to be pretty well occupied nearly all the time. A couple of occasions we went into Port Moresby at night, we had a lecture by a chap who was the St Paul's Cathedral organist, a fellow by the name of Winston Lea.

17:00 And he gave us a talk one night on, pretty dry subject I suppose for the troops, on how organ music was played and composed and that sort of thing. But I think a lot of them went along just for the sake of getting into, out of the camp. We had concert parties came along every now and again. I forget, I don't think we ever saw any of the American, like concert people, Bob Hope [American comedian]

17:30 or forget who else was involved, but there were quite some famous names went around the American camps.

And who did you get?

I can't recall, I don't think we got any American entertainers, I can't think, there were Australian concert parties, and troops if they had any expertise could apply to join the concert party. They'd have to have, , musical ability or acting ability or something like that,

18:00 but.

Didn't fancy it yourself?

No, I wasn't in any, didn't have the talent for that sort of thing.

Who were your friends?

But they were entertaining; it was relief for the troops from the humdrum life , so it was valuable really.

I haven't asked who your friends were throughout all of this and whether you stayed together for the most of your experience, there?

Yes well in 15th Brigade Headquarters,

18:30 I was there for a couple of years and one chap, I went into camp with him on the first day, and we sort of sat down together to eat a bit of lunch together, and he said, asked me from where I was from and I said, "Where are you from," and he said, "I'm from North Melbourne," and I told him, "I'm from Brunswick," and we palled up there, and then we kept that friendship up all the way through. He was in the same category I was, he could type. And he went up with me to 15th Brigade Headquarters from the battalion on the first day we were in camp

19:00 and I was with him right through, until about a month before I went to headquarters, 3 Div. He'd gone there before me, I forget for what reason, but about a month later I followed him there and the friendship sort of continued all the time. And I still have contact with him. He only lives down the bottom of the hill here. And yeah, we've been good friends over the years. And as I was

19:30 saying earlier on, he was the Roman Catholic and I wasn't, and before the war there was a bit of animosity between Roman Catholics and Protestants and we became firm friends and I looked upon him as a good mate. And there was no, "Oh you're a Protestant, can't mix with you," none of that sort of thing. We were on friendly terms and that

20:00 was pretty by and large throughout the whole of the army as I recall it.

I wanted to ask if your position entitled you to a better pay cheque?

It depended on your rank.

But for you, yes.

If you were a private. Yes, a private I think, when we started got six shillings a day. If you had a trade qualification, in other words if you were a, could send Morse code

20:30 or proficient at typing like I was, you got a trade qualification and you were probably made a lance corporal mainly to give you a trade rate of pay which was marginally more. It might have been instead of being six shillings a day; it might have been seven and six. And things like that. And then a sergeant or a corporal, a full corporal, say, would get a slightly higher rate,

21:00 a sergeant would be a bit higher again and so it went on, and on till it got up to general.

You got a couple of promotions in your time, did you not?

I got a promotion to a lance corporal when they found that I had a trade qualification, like being able to type and do shorthand. And I suppose if you, for what reason, but you'd have to be, perhaps be proficient at your

21:30 trade, and you might have been advanced to corporal and got higher pay and…

But did you get promoted toward the end of your service?

Only as far as what they called a staff sergeant, which was not an officer category. It started off with the lance corporal, then a corporal, then a sergeant, then a staff sergeant and a progression from that was a warrant officer class two, then a warrant officer class one, then you became a commissioned officer.

22:00 **But you retired, your service career, what was the rank you attained by the end?**

Only a staff sergeant. Yes I didn't go into an officer class.

Still that's a reasonable position to reach, is it not?

Yes I suppose, by and large most were privates or lance corporal, corporal, something like that. I did do a trade at school back in Toowoomba after the Salamaua campaign, I did that

22:30 in May 1944. It was called an orderly room sergeant's course, which fitted you to be in charge of documents and returns that had to be sent in daily to higher authority. It fitted me out to become an orderly room sergeant,

23:00 but I never, never went into that field at all because I wanted the position that I already was.

What was the difference in the information that you were typing up and receiving from the New Guinea campaigns over to Bougainville? Could you sense there was a different modus operandi, at work?

23:30 No, I don't think so, it was really mainly routine stuff, day to day. What was happening there, what was going to happen there, what was going to happen with perhaps the next move to where you're going, or, there was mainly to do with our own little field

24:00 of responsibility. The bigger picture outside was mainly given to us through this Guinea Gold, a New Guinea publication, but that was for everyone's information, like reading a newspaper.

Well then a routine day for you at Torokina base, soon after you got there were you sending out troop movements for the patrols that were going on up north?

24:30 Yes, yes. There were two scenarios in Bougainville. A bit different to New Guinea, insofar as one group were directed to go inland over the mountains to try to get to the other coast. Another group was sent down the coastal area, pretty well flat country, round the southern end of the island,

25:00 and eventually meet up with the people who went over the ranges to the far coast. It never did get to that stage, because of, mainly because of the country, the terrain, just couldn't move through it. Nothing like mechanised warfare, with exception of a few Bren gun carriers which were tracked vehicles.

25:30 There was no way vehicles could move successfully, they certainly couldn't move over the mountains because there was no roads and it was difficult to move around the coast, because there were rivers every five or six miles maybe which were continually in flood because of the huge rainfall. Y the roads either got washed out or else they were rivers of mud anyhow.

26:00 And the vehicles couldn't traverse them.

One of the big revelations after the war with Bougainville, after the war finished and studies were done and something you mentioned before was the anomaly between the number of Japanese that were actually there.

That was a rude shock, I think, to those who were on Bougainville. There's only about 15,000 of them here anyhow they can't do any harm, just –

26:30 **So were you in a position, did you receive that information officially from the Americans from where you were in HQ?**

No, I don't think they knew. They only either guessed or I don't know how they would calculate, how they – many Japanese were on the island but it was our knowledge, how we got it I don't know that there were about 30 to 35 000 Japanese still on Bougainville

27:00 When the war finished.

I'm just wondering…

No, I got it wrong way around, there were only about 15,000 but when they surrendered and things were able to be organised it was found there were more like 30 –35,000.

From your work, was it apparent to you that the reports you were receiving back from patrols indicted this that there were way more Japanese?

No there wasn't any confirmation that there were greater numbers

27:30 than what we thought were there, no that wasn't apparent. The patrols really, there wasn't any fighting like would be like say in the Western Front, or in huge numbers and tanks rolling in and artillery firing continually. It was just sort of perhaps a dozen people would go out on patrol and sort of feel their way and be careful that there were no Japanese hiding behind that

28:00 lump of jungle or have a weapons pit in front of you, the first time they would know of it was when there would be a burst of gunfire. So –

Is there any chance you can give me a kind of a verbal precis of a report that you would have typed up as an example?

I don't think my, I've got pretty good memory, but I don't think my thinking

28:30 could extend back to, anything sort of verbatim about that sort of thing. It would mainly be to, ask for reports of Japanese activity in our immediate area.

29:00 Or perhaps request information regarding the number of Japanese in your area, or, "Has there been any increase in numbers in the last 24 hours or 48 hours?" Things like that and perhaps information we'd received from another source, "There's a big concentration of Japanese

29:30 at such and such a point," more or less alerting the people to whom the signal was sent to, be aware of that and take the requisite precautions. Often, as I said before, are we onto Bougainville now, rather than New Guinea? There were coast watchers in Bougainville, and they did valuable work.

30:00 And more especially in relation to operations further down in the Solomons, like Guadalcanal, there'd be people perched up in trees in Bougainville. And Bougainville was more or less the northernmost island of the Solomons and there was a series of islands all down, until it got to Guadalcanal and there was this sort of channel, it was open sea, but it was like a channel they called it the slot, because it was like a slot

30:30 and ships could come down this between these islands and have a go at Bougainville. And Bougainville was touch and go whether it was lost or won. Had it been lost, the Japanese would have been able to sever communications between American and Australia from sea, it would have been very serious and they had a terrible time, the Americans in Guadalcanal. But these coast watchers

31:00 in Bougainville, perched up in a tree, and could see the air movement and sea movement, mainly from Rabaul, which was further north from them, and they would count the number of Japanese planes going over towards Guadalcanal, and the number of ships and what type of ships were going down this slot so called. The signal would read, "45 JW,

31:30 whatever's headed your direction at such and such a time, o nine hundred hours." Back in Bougainville they'd get that signal, they'd be prepared, so they'd have their fighters up 20 – 25,000 feet, waiting for the Japanese planes to appear. And as soon as they saw they'd just swoop down on them and finish them off. And the same with the naval craft coming down. they'd say, "One battleship, three cruisers,

32:00 four destroyers," something like that, "proceeding such and such a direction, south east at o nine hundred headed your direction," something like that. Not that the air force had to take care of them, because there was very little naval activity, allied, there was some there but not enough to turn back these Japanese ships. But the air force go the message, see, so they were

32:30 reading from the time and the, that it'd been sent and knowing the Japanese flying time from the report came from to where they were, they'd dispatch their planes up ready to bomb them when they appeared, see. So it was terribly important information that these coast watchers sent in, yes, very important. And a lot of them were, I don't know about a lot of them,

33:00 but some of them were planters from pre-colonial days that went to New Guinea, or Bougainville, to set up coconut plantations or fruit plantations and they, when the war broke out they – I think they mainly offered their services to – being familiar with the country, they could send back valuable information which they did.

In the reports that you were receiving, sending on

33:30 **typing, were you able to discern what some men were up to out there on patrol in Bougainville, given that the patrols were small etc?**

Not specifically. We would perhaps ask them to, or the general or his senior officers would ask them to ascertain how many

34:00 Japanese were estimated to be in a certain area and to report back, within so many hours, or immediately if not sooner sort of thing. That and perhaps to report the difficulties being encountered with road movement such as, perhaps they'd had a terrific

34:30 downpour of rain, perhaps 20 kilometres from say where we were, and are the roads passable, and if not, sort of dig in and await further instructions, things like that.

What about issues of discipline, is that information that would receive at various times?

No, I don't think there was much discipline, like troops in Australia

35:00 if they went AWOL, that wasn't possible in Australia, where would you go?

True, but I'm sure there were issues at times that lieutenants would have to write…

Oh infractions, sort of, not following orders or something like that, is that what you mean?

Yes would they be duly noted in reports?

More to do with lower formations, I don't think there was that problem in the headquarters. There might

35:30 have been an odd, perhaps argument between another rank and an officer which perhaps needed to be, given up to higher authority to rule on. There might have been certain minor discipline charges laid but nothing ever of a serious nature.

What about men who were mentioned in dispatches, is that something you would receive and type up?

36:00 Yes, but it wouldn't come through the part that I was, I was concerned with operations, the battle. And that sort of thing that you're mentioning would go through what was called the AQ section, which was the administrative and quartermaster's field. They, had authority over health matters,

36:30 supplies.

That's quite interesting, really, that you would only concentrate on movement of men.

Well you can imagine that if the army was just one pool of officers and men and someone wanted a big supply of ammunition because they were running short and they were rushing around in circles to organise this supply, and someone said, "Oh the Japanese are only 20 miles away.

37:00 We better get troops up there." And other people say, "No, the ammunition more important." You got to have a section that deals solely with that sort of thing. And the medical people, they didn't want to be involved in petty arguments about who was going to get what amount of food, that was left to the quartermasters, the AMQ [?] as they called it. And although the medical

37:30 people were sort of subject to the administration part, the operations group was entirely separate from the rest of the – they were under the same roof sort of thing. And general was the commanding officer, and he could fall out with the AMQ [?] people just as easily as he could fall out with the general staff people, yeah.

And you said that you got your BEM, you think because

38:00 **of the intense number of hours you put in. What would determine when you would work around the clock as opposed to when you'd get a (UNCLEAR)?**

Oh your superior officer, if there was a operation which was under way and sort of all hands were needed on deck and, "You can't go home yet, it's five o'clock and we've got some urgent signals to send out and we're expecting some urgent information

38:30 coming in." You had to be there and it did mean that if perhaps a certain operation had to happen the next day, and a signal had to be sent to the people who were going to be involved, the night before, maybe at midnight, something like that before it could be sent. You had to be there to type the necessary things, and, if there was something that was not quite, or

39:00 circumstances altered what was intended, and perhaps that was all scrubbed, because the situation was altered, you had to be on hand to do the updated version. That meant working long hours and I think the citation I got, I thought I had it here, but I think I gave it to my daughter for safe keeping a few months ago. I think the citation read,

39:30 the award was for, outstanding devotion to duty, I think they were the words which virtually meant, I had to be there virtually 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It didn't actually come to that, but there were times that I'd perhaps started eight in the morning or nine in the morning sometimes and I'd still be there four o'clock the next morning. Not terribly often, but especially during

40:00 a campaign like – it didn't happen when we were in base areas, although we had to do night duty as well as a roster basis. There were occasions when, or the officers too they had to be, that were preparing the reports or instructions, they had to be there to give us the bare information to type up in signal form so as it

40:30 could go to the people who needed to know.

Tape 8

00:34 **I was wondering in sort of a general sense, for you, how different your experience was after leave in Lae and Bougainville as compared to before?**

What do you mean, coming home at the end of the war, compared to earlier leave?

I meant more if there was a difference perhaps in Bougainville to New Guinea?

01:00 Generally speaking, no, the country was very rough and rugged and no good for vehicle movement.

In terms of the work you were doing, what were the differences?

No, much the same, much the same, yeah.

And in terms of the progress of the war, was there a sense that things had changed? A difference in the…?

Oh, I think there was

01:30 more confidence that, , the Allies were winning and, I think the main thought at that time was, well, "How soon are we going to get home." And even when the war ended, it was a huge but pleasant surprise to everyone that it had ended we were all thinking in terms of, "Oh, we'll be here another 12 months or 18 months or something," and, all of a sudden the atomic bomb was dropped and,

02:00 or two of them were dropped, and that ended the whole thing. There was a great sense of relief, I might say. We were keen to get home much sooner than we ever thought we would.

Was there any point when you thought we might not win?

Not from about mid 1943 onwards, I wouldn't think. Up until then, there was great apprehension that the Japanese would

02:30 get to invade Australia, yeah, but I think there was no doubt, if you're fair minded about the whole thing, there is no doubt that they would have invaded had not the Americans had their equipment and their manpower that they had. Because Australia didn't have the resources to repel them, but some people favoured the Japanese never intended to invade Australia. They were just content to have all the

03:00 places to the north of Australia in their own hands, and perhaps the islands to the east thereby cutting off any American aid to Australia by sea. Or because air transport wasn't like it was today, you can only fly so many miles and touch down, so many more and touch down, anyhow they wouldn't be able to carry the equipment or the amount of cargo that

03:30 you could by sea.

During the war, what did you think about that, that potential Japanese plan, what were your thoughts about the Japanese invasion of Australia?

Oh, I think everyone thought they would get in, yes I think that was the, yeah, I think that was pretty universal. Very pessimistic about the chances of repelling them.

04:00 Of course the Americans were in it from the start as far as the Japanese were concerned, coming to Australia. But I think the feeling was that no, we haven't got the swiftness which the Japanese got down to New Guinea and occupied the northern coast of New Guinea, I think was sufficient for the Australian people to think, "Well,

04:30 look how far they've got in such a short time, we can't repel them." And of course the Americans being

involved in the outset and having the capacity to build planes and ships quickly, that sort of was the – made the tide able to turn, so to speak.

You mentioned the Americans really held the power in that region, is that something you've come to realise after the war, or during

05:00 **the war did you sense that Australia needed Americans?**

Oh, I think during the war we thought, "Well we can't hope to keep the Japanese out unless the Americans can both with manpower and equipment, maybe able to repel them." I think that was pretty well acknowledged, yeah. And I think the Australian parliament knew that too, they

05:30 were entirely dependent on the Americans' capacity to, , repel the Japanese. If the Americans had sort of concentrated on, well they had no alternative but to meet them head on so to speak. But if they'd have chosen just to defend America, I don't think anything could have stopped the Japanese from getting in here, no.

06:00 They certainly would have had a job getting to the south of Australia, but that wouldn't have been a problem for them, because they just come down the coastal roads in the great numbers. And the outback and the bare, the deserted part of central Australia wouldn't have, they'd have just bypassed that, yeah.

Well that dependence on the Americans, what does that do for pride among Australians?

06:30 For what, pride?

Yeah.

I think the Australians are intensely proud of what they are able to achieve with the resources they've got, and they're inclined to deride the Americans because of their brashness and what they've got, oh, , "We can't match that, they've got this, they've got

07:00 that they've got the other." And there's a certain amount of criticism of the Americans for the way they go about things, but I think deep down they realise that they can't do without them, even in this day and age. The Americans might go about things in a way that perhaps we don't think is very ethical in this day and age, but I think you've got to face up to the fact that, without them, we

07:30 just can't defend Australia ourselves, we haven't got the resources. Haven't got the manpower and haven't got the equipment, so although there's a lot of cynicism about the licking the boots of Americans as some people say, just contemplate the alternative.

Well speaking of the Americans, when did you hear about the atomic bomb?

08:00 Oh, when it was dropped virtually, or a few hours thereafter, by I suppose radio contact. We wouldn't hear it on a radio, but the New Guinea Force Headquarters and the higher formations would get to know about it by radio from the mainland, and that would be passed on immediately in a case like

08:30 that, where it was vital that the troops know that they had nothing to fear. The only trouble would be, with letting that information out, and they couldn't hide it of course, but letting it out might have caused a bit of heart burning amongst the troops, "Oh, it's over now, when are we getting home?" Y, that sort of thing ,and that one person might say, "Oh I'm going, I've been

09:00 allowed to go for discharge next week," or something and another one say, "Er, how did you manage that?" , a bit of what's the word? Disappointment at not being in the, perhaps first boat load to go, that type of thing.

How was the news of you coming home reported? I mean what were they telling you about those bombs?

I think they just reported the fact that they were, that Americans

09:30 has perfected this atomic bomb and they'd dropped on one, which was the first one? Hiroshima, Hiroshima wasn't it, and what devastation it and caused. And the Americans had given the Japanese an ultimatum that unless they surrendered within 72 hours or 42 hours or whatever, they would drop another one, knowing full well the devastation that the first one had caused. And

10:00 no reply came from the Japanese in the time limit imposed, and so they dropped the second one and that sort of convinced them that it was all over. The Japanese just had no alternative but to surrender.

What were your thoughts about the new weapon?

Relief that we would no longer be needed to , be away from home. Relief, I think that was it, there was no thought given

10:30 to the terrible devastation that it caused. And after a bit of reflection, that must have been a terrible thing, fancy doing a thing like that. But what was the alternative, we fight for another how long, two years. The only way we could defeat the Japanese would be by direct invasion of Japan. What casualties would that cause on both sides?

11:00 So, I think from the Allies point of view, it was a god send, so to speak, that they'd been able to do this, otherwise it would have dragged on, for who knows, another couple of years at the very least. So, that was the reaction I think. Oh, it was a great relief that it was over, how it came to be over was a secondary consideration.

11:30 **When you heard about the atomic bombs being dropped, did it really hit home that that would be the last step before the end of the war?**

Well, we didn't know for sure, but it just sort of, I don't think when the first one was dropped that it sunk in that this would be the deciding point,

12:00 and of course when the next one was dropped, and publicity was given to how much devastation it had caused, and of course hard on the heels of that was the Japanese surrender. It was just all so quick in terms of how long the war had gone on, that. "Oh well now we can go home." And what a sense of relief to everyone,

12:30 , that was just what they were longing for, to get home, But how would this ever happen, until the bombs were dropped and, paved the way so to speak.

Well at the end of the war, were you involved or were you privy to the information about how to deal with the Japanese in Bougainville?

No, not really because I think I was on my way home within

13:00 about a week of the surrender. And I was in hospital at the time, so I wasn't privy to what was going on in the normal course of events that I would have known that. I think it was just a general sense of relief and how soon can we get home. That was the [feeling] amongst the troops and I suppose all ranks for that matter. They were just so relieved

13:30 that, the prospect of another couple of years in such devastating type of country was no longer going to be, just an overwhelming sense of relief, I think.

What sort of celebration was there?

I wasn't involved in any celebrations really; I believe they were pretty, pretty

14:00 big magnitude in the capital cities. Some of the films I've seen of the celebration, dancing in the streets and hugging and kissing each other and, well you can understand it can't you. We didn't engage in that sort of behaviour, because there were no girls there to embrace or kiss, but it was very low key as far as I was concerned, because as I said, I'd been in hospital and I knew

14:30 I was about to be discharged, so. I can't really recall my thoughts except relief and knowing that I'd be going home and you can't imagine what a sense of relief that was after being so long in a war situation where, mainly the, not so much

15:00 the exact fighting of which I was not involved to the degree that most forward troops were, but everyone longed to be home, put it that way. There's no place like home which is an old saying and a very true saying, there is no place like home.

Did you get an extra beer ration at least, at the end of the war?

Beg your pardon?

Did you get an extra beer ration?

I can't recall, mainly because I'm not

15:30 a drinker. I, everyone, or not everyone, we'd get a ration of beer. I can't, don't know how regular it was, but from time to time. And I had a lot of mates, because my ration was more or less asked for by Joe Blow and someone else and someone else. I think they gave me cigarettes instead. I used to smoke in those days. And they'd give me a

16:00 packet of cigarettes, or cigarettes were plentiful, especially American cigarettes, oh any number could be obtained.

Were they good?

Hm?

Were they good cigarettes?

Oh yes, they, I don't think I liked them as well as the Australian ones, but they were much sought after and what some of the troops did, and I think I did it myself on one or two occasions, was to send a carton of them home to my father. It wasn't illegal

16:30 to do it, they were yours. I forget whether we had to pay for them or whether they were given without charge, I can't remember now, I think we had to pay, oh a very nominal sum. But I don't think there was

any restriction on sending them back home as long as they were parcelled up properly. I think though in many cases they never reached home, with through the different systems, they were sort of found their way into illegal hands, that type of thing. But

17:00 it didn't happen to mine, not that I sent that many back, perhaps a couple of cartons over a couple of years, but. And I think they were much prized by the people back in Australia, because I don't know whether cigarettes were rationed or what the situation was. But if you had a carton of American cigarettes and came on home, on leave with them, you were instant friends with everyone.

How did being a non drinker affect your social life overseas?

17:30 Didn't affect it, no. There was virtually no social life in New Guinea of course, back in Australia there was a bit of social life in nearby towns where we may have been stationed. But it never affected me, I still enjoyed my dances or picture shows, if there were any nearby, when we were camped near to an Australian city or town, yes.

Would you get much,

18:00 **I suppose you'd say, pressure or friendly encouragement from the other guys to have a few drinks?**

Oh yeah and I did have, I thought to myself, well, , this must be pretty good, everyone seems to be onto it, so, I got my ration one day and I thought, "I'll find out whether I like this or not." So I opened a bottle and I had a drink of it, that was enough, it turned me off for life. And I can't understand how people can,

18:30 , down glasses and glasses and glasses without, I just don't know how they can do it. I couldn't drink the amount of soft drink or cordial or water that's put away by the beer drinkers, oh well. If that's their pleasure in life, I suppose, who am I to criticise them. But it never took on with me and do what? And I tell this to my grandsons, not that I know that I'll

19:00 influence them in anyway, but one's, oh one's 20 now and the other one's 16. And I told them, I said, "Do you know what? I reckon I saved enough money by not drinking during the war years and after to finance three, it might have been four overseas trips, myself and my wife, because of the money

19:30 I'd saved by not being interested in purchasing beer." Which is , it's pretty expensive now, isn't it, to buy? I really wouldn't know. And the same with, I'm not – I enjoy a glass of wine, once in a blue moon, but I'd never have a cupboard stocked with it. And that together with the non beer drinking I reckon has saved me,

20:00 over my lifetime, say from 16 onwards, in today's currency, 30–40 thousand dollars. See, that's going back a period of 70 years in which I could have perhaps been expected to spend money on liquor.

Well during your army service were you allotting money back to your family?

20:30 Yes. You were expected, well I think it was mandatory to send a certain amount of your pay, it was called an allotment, and the pay corps, on pay day, which was twice a month would give you your entitlement and what your allotment was to your parents or wife or whomever back home went directly to them. And,

21:00 that was one of the things that my mother and father did, they never pocketed any of that money, they put it into a bank account which I had. And that arrangement together with, the money I'd saved from when I was working. And I never got much pay when I first started work, matter of fact I got

21:30 14 and 6, which is a dollar 45 in today's terms, a week, can you believe that? One dollar 45 and it wasn't, it was 44 hours and when I went into the retail part of the business, it was 50, 56 hours a week I think. Eight o'clock in the morning till five I think, till six in the afternoon, on Saturdays it was eight in the morning, until one pm. Yeah, it was about and

22:00 Friday's it was eight am in the mornings till nine at night, being in retail sales. The second year of my working life was – I had 21 shillings a week, or what's that? Two dollars ten, you can't believe it can you? I can't believe it myself now.

It's hard to imagine.

But I was a person who was encouraged by my parents to save as much money as

22:30 I could. And in the finish, it paid off, because when I came back from the war, you got deferred pay which was now sounds like a miserly amount but in those days it might have been, 250 pounds, 500 dollars say, that was in a lump sum. It was pay which you'd earned during your army life, but wasn't paid to you; it was deferred until you were discharged.

23:00 And that, together with the money I'd saved pre war, and after the war when I was working, until the time we were married, enabled me to build this house, using contacts of sub contracts which I had through my working life. Enabled

23:30 me to build this house without any mortgage, didn't have to borrow any money. I bought the block of

land, which is not a big block, admittedly, for 248 pounds, 550 dollars say, no 590 dollars, no 248 twice that, yeah, say 500 pounds in round figures,

24:00 500 dollars I should say. People were astonished that a person could do that without borrowing any money, solely because I was able to save it and what I'd saved during the war. And we didn't get paid big amounts as I've just told you, so you can do it if you set your mind to it.

That saving must have also been a comfort when you came back

24:30 **and you didn't have to immediately go into the workforce as well.**

Well, I was only about six weeks before, or not that, about a month I suppose, a month or six weeks before I went back to full employment. I think my mother and father never pocketed any of that money that I sent back as what was called an allotment.

25:00 I suppose people who were married and had a wife, their wife would have to use that money to support herself and any children. But I was lucky in that respect, that that didn't happen and I was lucky that they saw fit to bank it for me, so it was there when I came home. And that together with what I earned after the war, in what, '46, '47, and half of '48 when we were married, was sufficient to buy the things

25:30 to build this house. And in those days, before you could – you had to order all the supplies in advance, for instance, the tiles on the roof, had to be ordered and paid for 12 months before you could expect delivery and the same with the plaster, fibrous plaster ceilings and walls. I knew the manager of the place who made this sort of thing,

26:00 he was a personal friend of mine and I said to him, "Would you, can I order the fibrous plaster from your place?" and he said, "Oh yes," he said, "but you'll have to pay six months or nine months or whatever it was before." And he was a personal friend, like a brother to me, but that was the only way you could be certain of getting things. That fire front there is all one piece, it's terribly heavy and we selected that,

26:30 my wife and I, and that had to be paid for and stored in our mother's or my wife's mother's or in my mother's house for up to two years before we needed it. The same with the bath and basin fittings. All that was not there to be, on site to be gone and bought there and then, you had to order it and wait, and the same with the bricks. What happened was,

27:00 if you wanted bricks, you ordered them at two or three places simultaneously and then you'd wait until one of them rang up and said, "Oh your bricks are ready." And it was normally about nine to 12 months before you could expect to get your order of bricks. Anyway, one day my boss said to me, oh someone he knew in Coles stores, one of the top brass, "Oh so and so's got his bricks today, from whatever source. Would you like to

27:30 take over his order from such and such a place?" I said, "Oh yeah, I'll do that." It meant that instead of waiting about 12 months for the bricks, I got them in about six months I think, that sort of thing, and all that type of building material.

And when you got married, where were you living?

In Brunswick, West Brunswick.

With your parents?

Yes.

How was that?

And my wife and her parents just lived a couple of streets around the corner, so it was pretty

28:00 handy, so to speak. Yes, my parents lived in Brunswick all their life, and I did until we were married and we were able to build here.

Just like to go back a little bit, I was wondering if you could describe how you felt when you heard you were heading back to Australia.

Overjoyed, I suppose would be the main thing, that and relief.

28:30 I suppose everyone was relieved, relief more than overjoyed perhaps, I know they were all looking forward to meeting wives and girlfriends again and parents.

Did you have specific plans for your life back here in Australia?

Did I have any plans?

Yeah.

Not at that time, I wasn't. When I returned to Australia I was a free spirit so to speak, didn't have any girlfriend connections.

29:00 Had, oh I was friendly with a few girls, I used to go dancing, take a different one out, or different one to

the pictures, this that or the other, but never got terribly serious until this one that I was talking to you about, who was in the badminton club that I was in, and that was, I think there was some divine intervention there too somehow. I really mean it because,

29:30 yes she was a top person. Oh yes, she died two years ago, she had a diabetes problem, and a heart problem, well it wasn't terribly apparent until later life that in her earlier life she had a couple of bouts of rheumatic

30:00 fever. You never hear about it these days, but apparently it was a very serious complaint in the '30s, '20s and '30s and she had two bouts of it, and it affected her heart beat. She had an irregular heart beat and when she was going to the dentist any time to have dental work done, even just a filling she'd have to have certain medication beforehand, before the dentist could ,

30:30 do his work, because of this irregular heart beat.

Did you have any difficulties arranging the wedding, you said it was 1948, were there any problems in terms of rations or supplies then?

Yes, there was clothing rations, yes. I remember my wife used to be a bit worried about how she would be able to buy enough blankets and sheets and that sort of thing. But I forget how it was resolved, but we were never short of

31:00 bed clothing, or even. I remember when we returned from the war, we got a free issue of a suit, a new lounge suit to go to work in. I don't know what tradesmen got, whether they got a couple of sets of overalls or things like that, but yeah there was a hand out of clothing.

Where did that suit come from?

Just one of the, it was a ready made suit not a tailored, not a measured suit but one you buy off the rack,

31:30 oh, one of the firms in the city. Foy and Gibsons [department store in Melbourne], or Myers, one of those department stores yeah.

You were probably lucky to be coming home early; you get one of the first picks I suppose.

Yeah, I suppose so but you still had to, you didn't get – you got a free suit as far as money was concerned. But you had to surrender so many coupons for it, it just wasn't for free, for all sorts of things, you had,

32:00 you got so many clothing coupons, to set you up, but once they were used, you got no more until rationing disappeared, of course.

When would you get them, was that on discharged or during the army?

Yes, when you were discharged I think. You got a discharge certificate, an old pay book which I've got in the system somewhere, and certain number of ration coupons and food coupons. Like

32:30 we had coupons for butter, I think, and certain foodstuffs, yeah. I think they looked after us pretty well in that regard, yes.

Was being discharged much of an event?

No, not really just an event, everyone looked forward to it, of course, and I suppose had long and loud celebrations about it,

33:00 but all that happened to me, I went down to, what was known as Camp Pell, it's in Royal Park. You know where the West Coburg tram goes through Royal Park, just as you cross that at Elliott Avenue? That goes from Flemington Road up to Sydney Road, just in the corner, it's called the south west corner, I suppose. There was this great big, it was all covered with campsites, and it was called Camp Pell and it was occupied by

33:30 the Americans when they were here in great numbers. And when they left to go further afield, it was taken over by the Australian Army as a reception and discharge centre, and that's where people from Victoria mainly, went to get their discharge, yeah.

It's a pretty straightforward affair isn't it?

Sorry?

It's a pretty straightforward process.

Oh yes there was no drama about it, you simply took back what had to

34:00 be handed back, like a, I think we kept our army clothes, like a, coat and trousers and great coat and hat, but we had to hand back rifles and things like that which were not our personal property, yeah.

From your perspective, how had Melbourne changed in your time away?

Not much, not

34:30 like it's changed in, since we came home and what it is now. No, I wouldn't say, see there were building restrictions, you couldn't just build anything without a permit. And even if you got a permit you then had to get the materials, which were virtually non existent. So, no, there wasn't much change from the early war years to the end of the war, no.

35:00 **What sort of effect do you think the war had on Australia as a country?**

I think it brought them closer together, I don't think there were the, oh, I wouldn't say there were the haves or the have nots in Australia, and I still don't think there, I think everyone, if they're fair dinkum are reasonably well off, compared with the Depression years put it that way. There was a lot of hardship in the 19– late 1920's and '30s,

35:30 terrible lot of hardship. And I don't think that, there's no doubt there's poverty around today, but I think a lot of it is people's own making. Like, won't budget their money to, oh, not save for a rainy day, but they're more liberal with their money, how they spend it, they don't think of tomorrow sort of thing. And I think that's made easier by the

36:00 use of credit cards, which the government and commercial people seem to think it's got out of hand and I think so myself. I got a card here, oh we'll go and get that, and, oh yeah we like that too and, people from, not immediately after the war, but say from the 1960s onwards if they want something they want it now, not tomorrow, in out. When

36:30 we were kitting out our home here, we didn't get anything until we could pay cash for it. There wasn't any credit in those days, unless you had a friend who had a business and you'd say to him, "Oh I'd like to get a refrigerator, but I can't pay till next month or in six months." That might have worked but you just couldn't go along with a card and say, "Yes, I'll have that refrigerator and I'll have a suite of furniture, and

37:00 oh, we better have some standard lamps and all of that sort of thing." You just couldn't do that.

Do you remember much of the post war of immigration into Brunswick?

No not terribly, it's certainly a very multicultural place now, which it wasn't pre war. There were quite a few Italian greengrocer shops and fruit shops and some

37:30 Greek cafes and things like that, but an odd one here and there. But in today you'd be hard put wouldn't you? To go from Brunswick Road up to Bell Street, Coburg and find 20 Australian-run shops. I'd like to have a few bob on a bet on that occasion, how many, . I'd do a bit of research first, but once upon a time there'd be perhaps,

38:00 between Brunswick Road and Bell Street, Coburg there might have been 10 or 12 Greek restaurants, or eating houses, and perhaps the same number of Italian fruit shops.

Well when did that begin to change?

Post war. When migration was encouraged, well it was virtually subsidised. They used to bring boat loads of migrants out.

38:30 In the first instance it was mainly from England and Scotland and Ireland but then it became pretty widespread and they needed a big workforce mainly for the Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme. And that really kicked things off then and then people came from everywhere then, from Germany, from Yugoslavia, you name it they came, well not from America or Canada perhaps but mostly from Europe.

Tape 9

00:32 **So do you remember when the Brunswick Baths were being built?**

Yes, 1920, mid 1920s that's as near as I can guess, and there's a foundation stone out the front of it with the names of all the councillors of the day and my grandfather's name is on that.

I'll have to look for it, what was his name?

Appleby, W. L. Appleby,

01:00 his name was.

That would have been quite an event those baths being built, especially for a young kid.

Yes, they were world, well not world famous, but they were built to Olympic proportions, I think the main pool. I think there was an indoor pool built at the same time, I know when I went to school we used to have swimming sports and swimming carnivals down at the Brunswick Baths, and people used

01:30 to come from all over to swim at the Brunswick Baths, they were the most modern ones in Melbourne I think at the time, for a number of years, yeah.

I was just wondering what your family had to do with the First World War as well?

Nothing really, I think my father would have been eligible to go, but whether he was in a reserved occupation at that time, I don't know. He was working in Dunlop

02:00 Brothers factory, I think in his early days. Now whether that was a reserved occupation, he wasn't, he was required to remain at that, I don't know. Or whether my grandfather and grandmother persuaded him, being an only son, not to enlist, I really don't know, it was never discussed within my hearing. So I really don't know why he didn't go, he would have been in the age group eligible to go, yeah.

02:30 **And your mother's family?**

My real mother died when I was only about six weeks old. The person my father subsequently married about five or six years later, she was born in Ballarat, and she moved to Melbourne to get employment I think. And she had quite a large family, I think there were about nine

03:00 in the family. I think there were the two brothers and besides herself, six other sisters, and yeah she had a large family and –

Any of those brothers serve in the First World War?

No, I don't think they would have been old enough.

I suppose I'm trying to gauge what influence the First World War had on your early life.

Nothing that touched me greatly,

03:30 I know we used to have school commemorations just prior to Anzac Day or perhaps Armistice Day. Those occasions, when we perhaps assembled in the Town Hall and there were patriotic songs sang and perhaps poems read by Rudyard Kipling or those people. In other words, people were keen to observe the occasion.

04:00 Anzac Day was always a patriotic occasion and people attended those parades in large numbers. And I can remember going to some of those, and like they do today, waving a flag as a kid and being, having pointed out to me various notable soldiers or sailors or airmen who were marching by. And

04:30 Anzac Day has come to mean much more to young people in recent years, than what it did in my early years before the Second World War, that is. I suppose because of the publicity the forces had in the Second World War, and because so many people were involved,

05:00 like I was, that were not involved in the First World War, like the same age group. Well there wasn't the threat on Australia for one thing, like there was from Japan in the Second World War, so it's sort of become a much more all embracing national day hasn't it, Anzac Day, to what it was perhaps after the First World War.

05:30 **How do you think your father felt on Anzac Day, not having participated?**

I really don't know. No.

Did you have any sense of social pressure or the fact that so many young men had been in the First World War?

There was a lot of ill feeling during it I believe, I was too young to be involved in any of it. But

06:00 there was a great lot of condemnation of people who were eligible to go, but didn't go for one reason or another. Maybe because they were not able to because of employment restrictions, or whatever I don't know, but there was a lot of resentment, so shall we say, by the returned men

06:30 against the ones that didn't go. Or a lot of them couldn't go because they were in what was known as a reserved occupation, in other words they weren't eligible to go, weren't allowed to go and of course there were others who were physically incapable of going. They might have looked all right, but they may have had disabilities which were enough to bar them from active service.

07:00 **How would that resentment manifest itself?**

Sorry?

Well you mentioned that the ex-servicemen would have some resentment towards men who hadn't served. How did that resentment show itself; did you remember any cases of that?

No, not specific ones, it was a sort of an undercurrent as far as I was concerned. No I can't remember any direct

07:30 confrontations between people who were in the forces as opposed to those who were not. There was a lot of that sort of resentment went on in the Second World War, when people who were not drafted so to

speak but were

08:00 employed in perhaps a reserved occupation. Like perhaps a turner or fitter, or a moulder or someone who was engaged in the armaments industry, or perhaps teachers, I don't know about teachers, they were free I think to enlist, I'm talking about teachers now if they wanted to, but I don't think they were drafted into the army.

Were you on the

08:30 **receiving end of any of that sort of attitude, because, in the early years?**

No, I wasn't, no. I think in the early days of the war, when there were militia, like conscripts so to speak and voluntary enlistment, people who were the AIF in those days, there was a lot of ill feeling between the two groups. In fact there were pitched battles between

09:00 some of them, the first time I was in camp in Mount Martha, a lot of the troops at night would go into Mornington for recreation, . And some pretty serious incidents took place, hospitalisation in many cases, just, , Australian troops fighting the, "We're the AIF you're the choccos," sort of thing and, battles used to take place.

Now you were called up in 1941 I think?

09:30 '41.

Yeah, was it January of '41?

Yes, 23rd of January, I can remember, I know dates quite well. And I can name the day we sailed from Brisbane, bound for Port Moresby, that was the 23rd of February '43. Isn't it marvellous, I was telling you earlier in the piece, how you retain some things in your memory. You wouldn't think

10:00 little dates like that would be important, but they must imprint themselves on your psyche at just a particular time.

They're pretty significant events though aren't they?

Oh yes. They, yes they must have been, yes.

I was wondering about that early period, before you were called up, what you remember about recruitment

10:30 **drives, or publicity about the war or just Australia gearing for war?**

Oh, there were recruitment drives, yes, and advertisements in the paper saying, oh I forget how they were worded but, a lot of suggestions that you should join up and, what effect it had on people's

11:00 motivation I don't know, but.

What sort of tone did they take?

What sort of?

What sort of tone were those recruitment drives or advertisements, were they?

Oh pretty low key I think, there was no, "Y you must do this or you'll be looked upon with disdain", or something, nothing like that. It was just, the right thing to do, your mates are overseas, go and join them sort of thing. Or

11:30 pictures of Germans, sort of marching with their jackboots on, "Would you like this to happen to you?" Or that sort of thing. And then the Japanese were depicted as horrible little people and, "Are you going to let them take over your land?" They weren't the exact words but that was the implication.

What did about the Japanese before

12:00 **they entered the war?**

That they manufactured cheap little goods and the aeroplanes, that they were building up an air force, would just disintegrate because of the reputation of the goods they. You could buy cheap Japanese things in all the, what do they call them, variety stores like Coles and Woolworths and those places and they'd inevitably last a short time, and

12:30 then you'd have to throw them away and people projected that image onto their aircraft, . "They won't mean much," but of course exactly the opposite was how it turned out: they had superior aircraft and they were clever at their – as they are still with their electronics and their battleships and warships, they were, they

13:00 weren't made of balsa wood or anything like that, they were really well put together.

Now I'll just get you to clear up something for me, I was a little big confused about your

movements. So in '41 you were called up for militia training?

Hm.

And how long did that last?

Well the first, there were three months camp and then you were, you weren't discharged, you were said you will be called up again in another three months for a further

13:30 three months camp. We went from January to April and then we had three months back in our civilian occupation. And then we were called up again in July to do a further three months camp with the expectation that we would be back in civilian employment in October. In that interim period between July and

14:00 October, it was apparent that Japan was going to do something about going to war and the government thinking must have altered to the extent that we can no longer avoid raising a full time army. And instead of having the second three months camp, about half way through it we were all notified, you are now on

14:30 what they call full time duty. Which means we weren't going back to civil employment, we were in the army for however long it took, that's how it evolved, yeah. And then we had the option of joining the AIF which as I said, a greater percentage did join.

So from, let's see, from July '41 until February '43 when you sailed, what were you doing during that period?

15:00 Oh mainly training, especially the field trips, well the artillery, we had to practice how to fire their big calibre guns. The infantry had to do target shooting, had to practice bayonet charges, fix a bayonet to their rifle and charge at bag full of straw or something 50 yards

15:30 down the track and bayonet that bag of straw and withdraw and then go back to their position. Do it again, two or three times, that type of thing.

How did you find the physical side of things?

Oh I coped with it; I can't say I was a robust sort of person. Yeah, I coped with it, I must admit I wasn't a good rifle shot, I was, I don't know whether it was, it couldn't have been my eyesight, it was my, it must have been

16:00 the approach. Or I suppose I wasn't military minded in those days to really be a good shot, so I don't think I would have caused the Japanese too much trouble.

That sounds like about 18 months of training then, is that about right?

It would have been yes, yes. Oh well, training and getting to know the system, in my particular case it was being familiar with

16:30 the terms of what the military use, how to cope with the odd hours of duty, occasionally one would get to do a guard duty. Mostly at night, well always at night of course, on a roster system. And if you're in a, what's the word?

17:00 Area where it was prone perhaps to, not enemy so much, but people who were poking their nose in to see what was going on in the camp, you were expected to challenge anyone that looked like as though they mightn't have had proper motive for being where they were. And if you're in an area reasonably close to the enemy,

17:30 there used to be passwords issued each day, a new password which you had to be familiar with to get past a guard, . And, they used to go to great lengths to devise words which the Japanese had difficulty in pronouncing. I forget what, I think L, the letter L was a one that they had difficulty with, and, what was the other?

What sort of words then, something heavy in L's?

18:00 Oh perhaps a word like palm, lazy, little, with two Ls in it, likely, things like that, there were other letters that they claimed the Japanese had difficulty in getting their tongue around sort of thing. I can't remember what the others were, there were about half a dozen of them. L was one that I can recall.

18:30 **During that training period, what were your thoughts about being sent overseas?**

Oh, bit of apprehension, I suppose, but sort of a sense of inevitability about it . We've got to, if the Japanese hadn't been the enemy, I don't think we would have been too happy about it, but we realised that unless someone made a stand the Japanese were very likely to occupy

19:00 Australia and that wasn't a very pleasant prospect. Not only from our point of view but from our family's point of view, so I think we were motivated to, , not be too critical of it, just do what we had to.

And it sounds like you were moved around quite a lot, where were the different places?

The what?

You were moved around quite a lot in training.

Well yes, we had to do training exercises like perhaps out in the bush for a day or two

19:30 and they'd have what they call, well I suppose a war game or a, they didn't call it that. I know what it was called, a T E W T, they called it Tewt. Training without… What was the E for? Training without enemy troops something like that, it meant that there were two sides, picked from our resources and, various orders

20:00 are issued to the goodies and the baddies and we're out in the bush. Out in northern Victoria mainly at the time, around Tatura, up that way. And there are orders issued to each side, "You are the enemy, you will do this." "You are the defenders, you will try to eliminate the enemy."

20:30 And I don't think they used live ammunition, but by tactical means they had to, there were umpires appointed from the officers whose job it was to decide who won. And they were out in the field observing what the enemy did and observing what the home side did and they would decide at the end of it who won.

21:00 **And who won?**

Oh I can't recall who won, but there mightn't even have been a decision, it was mainly to train them to try and anticipate what the other side was doing and act accordingly you see. There were quite a number of these things went on, they'd last perhaps two or three days and they'd have to take field kitchens out into the bush to feed the troops and a skeleton staff would be left back in the main camp.

21:30 And the rest of the troops, with a headquarters and signals and engineers, all that sort of thing. The whole bit was sent out to sort of do a realistic proposal of what it'd be like in a battle, without the live ammunition of course.

And what role did you have?

Oh out there with the troops,

22:00 sending or typing up messages that the officers were sending from one group to another, telling this was going on or what to do tomorrow or, generally what they would expect to happen in a battle. And we were there to do what we would be expected to do when a battle was on anyhow. We , had a what they called a three ton I think it was called an office van.

22:30 It was a big, like a three ton truck with a big canopy and it was all set up inside with metal, not desk but metal, well it's a type of desk down the side of the, which you could sit and type and cupboards underneath for your stationary and that sort of thing. So, , it was supposed to be, this is what you can expect when you go into battle.

23:00 And you act accordingly.

So how did training compare with the real thing?

How'd it compare?

Yeah, well, when you actually did the job, when you were in HQ doing the work itself, how prepared had you been training?

Oh yes, I think we were well prepared for what might eventuate, the only thing that perhaps they couldn't replicate was the type of country.

23:30 You know what we were doing up in northern Victoria or New South Wales, wherever it was going on, and in Western Australia, they were doing the same thing, it was really flat open country. What was entirely different, was New Guinea, the jungle, and the same would have been in Malaya, where , the 8th Division was taken prisoner in Singapore and that country would have been much similar to New Guinea, except for high mountains it was a reasonably flat country.

24:00 But the exercise or the training that we did, as I've just explained, would be the thing that we had to do anywhere, but it'd be much more difficult to do it in country like New Guinea, or jungle country where there weren't the – there were no – well there were towns, but they weren't easily accessible, there were no roads.

24:30 Vehicle traffic was virtually non existent, except along the coastal fringe. Amenities were non existent like they would have been back in Australia, when you were, even when you were out on exercises. I suppose you certainly were restricted, you weren't going into towns or having any social life or films shown at night, or couldn't go to the

25:00 Salvation Army and get a cup of coffee or, read a book or whatever. From that point of view, it was somewhat similar to what you could expect to encounter in the field, without being what we finally did encounter in New Guinea.

Was your unit involved in some jungle training in Queensland as well?

Yes.

Just before Lae, wasn't it?

Oh well, yes,

25:30 first of all when we moved from just north or Albury, it was the other side of the Murray River, we were there for about two months perhaps. We moved from there to Casino in Northern New South Wales, the whole, well 15, two brigades moved up to around Casino and that area, we were there for about, nearly three months I think. And from there we moved to Caboolture in Queensland,

26:00 it was about 20 miles north of Brisbane, and we were there for a month or six weeks, maybe a little longer. And from there we went to, what's the name of the place? Cooroy, which is fairly close to Noosa in Queensland, you've heard of Noosa, famous tourist resort now. Then the last couple of weeks, which

26:30 I was up at 3rd Division Headquarters, that was up in the mountain range, beyond Caloundra, very lovely country up there, but we were only there for, oh, I was only there for about two weeks before we embarked to go to New Guinea.

Well, as part of the HQ staff, what sort of physical training do you have, what sort of jungle training do you have up there?

27:00 None really, not like the infantry training or the artillery would have had, we just had to adapt to the conditions as we found them. I don't think anyone would have adapted too well to the climate changes we experienced,\ in New Guinea or even in the coastal areas of Queensland, it's pretty climate in the summertime, from about November to the end of March,

27:30 it's sultry and humid and all that.

So for the HQ staff, it's more acclimatisation really?

We did physical training every day I think, every morning we had a physical exercise parade, yeah. Nothing like they're doing these days, at the – in whatever they – places they call they do them, it's a commercial enterprise now isn't it. It's not called physical training, what's it called?

28:00 Aerobics that type of thing. No, we just did hand flings and bending and stretching, and, perhaps a bit of rifle drill with up the rifle, and onto your shoulder and down again, things like that. I suppose we were kept reasonably fit, we were encouraged to play sport whenever we could. When we were in both New Guinea and Bougainville, we played a lot of volleyball

28:30 amongst ourselves and often we would play late afternoon perhaps and we, did get a pretty good representation of kid, or mates keen to play, just as a sort of relief from the boredom perhaps. But, inevitably, you'd start the game and you're going for about quarter of an hour and down would come the rain, it would teem,

29:00 you could hardly see the other end of the court, and it wasn't a court, it was just a patch of ground, for the thickness of the rain. But it didn't deter us, we just, it was a relief to stand out and get wet and cool, , from the overpowering heat. But gee it could rain up there, especially in, well both in New Guinea and Bougainville. I never ever saw rain like it before or since. Could do with some of it down here now, couldn't we?

What sort of sense did

29:30 **you get of the differences between HQ life and other life in the army?**

What as far as the army was concerned, or between the army and civilian life was concerned?

Well as far as the army was concerned, so your role and your place did you get a sense of the difference between your experience and the non HQ experience?

No, not really because, I never had any

30:00 experience, with really what you would call in the field like, we were in the field certainly but we weren't in combat mode, put it that way. We were trained to use rifles and perhaps be aware of how to use camouflage, and that type

30:30 of thing, but other than that, no. I suppose you could say, had we been called upon to repel some Japanese coming across the street there, relative to where we were, we would have just had to drop everything and grab our rifles and do whatever we could to repel them.

31:00 **Was that ever a contingency? What did you have in the way of plans for that?**

We were expected to be able to be a front line soldier if the occasion arose. There wasn't, I forget whether it was part of the original scheme, or whether it came down during the war as a direction from higher authority.

31:30 But I remember in New Guinea, there was formed, what they call the defence and employment platoon. w=Which was of about 30 people I suppose who came, were drafted from field units to come to divisional headquarters to be what

32:00 was in actual fact a defence platoon. It was their job to sort of man a perimeter day and night to be the first people to engage the Japanese if they got near enough to us. We were expected to, be firing at them if they got near enough, but this defence platoon, defence and employment

32:30 platoon, when they weren't sort of defending, in an emergency, they were employed, I think perhaps digging trenches to use if the Japanese got near, or well, whatever they were asked to do. But…

So you had your own private guard in a way?

Sorry?

Like a guard, a guard line between you and the enemy?

Yes that was the

33:00 essence of the thing, yes. The higher authority must have thought well, we can't expect these blokes to do their duty during the day and perhaps well into the night like we had to do, and then turn around and fight the enemy as they approached. We had to do it in a last resort, of course, but this defence and employment platoon, it was their job to be

33:30 the first line of defence against any enemy attacks I suppose, yes.

Okay, I was wondering in your time away from Australia, what you had to do with the native population?

Not very much, we were briefed not to, we were asked to be friendly but not to impose upon them in any way or treat them as

34:00 inferiors. And when we got to Bulolo, we were warned not to go up that particular track up there, because if you venture too far along there, you met up with the Cuckoo Cuckoos, an apt name because they were cannibals, so you might have finished up in a stew pot if you didn't take heed of the warning not to

34:30 go too far along that track. So there were cannibals still about in New Guinea even in those days. I don't think they disposed of any of our troops, because I think they took the warning seriously and didn't go along that track.

Just wondering if you yourself had any contact with the native population?

Oh, only in a minor sort of way, when we were in Bulolo.

35:00 We were sort of in occupying some of their native gardens which had been abandoned, because the enemy were not far away and the natives sort of fled. And there was also a saw mill which had also been abandoned, and as I said there were great heaps of sawdust and, native gardens growing paw paws and bananas, and vegetables of different, tomatoes and that type of thing. But the natives

35:30 had sort of disappeared. They were about in small numbers, but nothing we could fraternise with really. They did a marvellous job, they were recruited I suppose, or shanghaied [enslaved] into the job of transporting things that the army needed, like evacuating wounded soldiers. You've seen pictures of them, haven't you? With two in the front and two in the back with a stretcher and a pole on each shoulder

36:00 and they did a lot of carrying. When we went up to an advance headquarters, they carried all our typewriters and the things that I was telling you about earlier.

Those printing machines?

Yeah, printing machines. Supplies in general food that we had to exist on, we carried our own rifles of course, but they carried ammunition,

36:30 things that we needed to run the thing as we'd been doing back at base. And, oh they did a marvellous job, the Fuzzy Wuzzies as they were called. And they, a bit hard to understand, they spoke their native dialect which we couldn't understand, but a lot of them used what they called Pidgin English which was a corruption of English really, they adapted it to their own use. And

37:00 for instance I, one of those cross cut saws they used to cut the big logs with was a, pusha me go, pulla me come, the action was the way of their speak.

We're just coming towards the end of this tape, I was just wondering basically what effect the war had on your life?

It taught me to be tolerant of other people,

37:30 although I can't say it's carried off into the later life, but it certainly made a great thing of mateship, ,

being able to be powerless with your mate, with people you perhaps otherwise would not have. Not for any particular reason, but, it sort of

38:00 put people together in a close-knit mode, which you had to get on with the people around you, otherwise what was it to do in life? You couldn't go around with a snarl on your face and say, "Oh I don't like you very much." Like perhaps you would do at school, have a bit of a box on with someone just a trivial reason, you

38:30 all sort of realise that you're in this together, and perhaps he might save your life sometime in the future, or you like the way he was friendly with you, it sort of brought the troops altogether and I think it was a valuable thing to take into civilian life at the end of the war. Think that was

39:00 one thing, one good thing that came out of the war, which wasn't so apparent. Oh, in school days you were made mates with your school chums and that sort of thing. But this was a sort of larger life during the war and yeah, you met up with people. Farmers from the country that you had no contact with before and you came to realise that they had a pretty hard life to make a living in the country,

39:30 and it made you appreciate the other person's point of view I think which otherwise you would not have had the opportunity to do.

Thanks for that Walt. (Interview Ends)