

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Ronald Dunque (Ron) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1987>

### Tape 1

- 00:32 **I'm going to ask you a series of questions beginning with the date and where you were born.**
- 01:00 Well, incidentally my past history in respect to my birth date and all the rest of it, is somewhat obscure. So much so that I have to say perhaps you
- 01:30 might not like to include it because it's rather - it's obscuring to me. That as far as I know I - well my birth certificate which I obtained only about ten years ago, was
- 02:00 made in a different name, and how do I say this, I never knew my birth mother or I understood I was the only one of the - of my type if you want, but
- 02:30 it turns out I got six brothers and sisters which I never knew about until about five or six years ago.
- Well, I might come back and talk to you about that. But for the moment, I'm not looking for any detail so I'll just keep going with the series of questions that I'm going to ask you,**
- 03:00 **first of all, where did you enlist?**
- In Melbourne.
- And do you remember the date of that?**
- Yeah, it was 25th of March, May, I believe, 1949.
- Where did you do your training?**
- 03:30 **Your rookie training?**
- In Puckapunyal, Victoria.
- And that basic training, how long was that at Pucka [Puckapunyal] ?**
- Three months or something I believe.
- And after the basic training, that first three months, where did you**
- 04:00 **go, or which battalion were you posted to?**
- 67th Battalion, which immediately almost became, 3 Battalion but I had to go to Japan for that.
- So before I go on and ask you about Japan, where did you join the 67th Battalion?**
- At Japan.
- 04:30 **Was that at Pucka or..**
- No, in Japan.
- So you went to Japan in '49, was that immediately after your basic training?**
- Yep, well, give or take week or two.
- And then**
- 05:00 **67th, became 3RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] ?**
- Mmm.
- When were you posted to - before I ask you that, where were you mainly based in '49, before you went to Korea, where were you based?**

In Hiro, Japan. H-I-R-O.

05:30 **And did you go to Haramura for the battle training?**

Yes I did.

**So - and that battle training that would have been about three weeks or so?**

Well, it used to be three months, the curriculum,

06:00 if you like of the unit, itself, was three months in Haramura, three months in Hiro, and three months in Tokyo, doing night duties. And then the last quarter of the year, was - they were all, this

06:30 was done by companies of the last quarter of the year, they all came back to Hiro and had Christmas together.

**We'll come back and talk a lot more about that, when were you posted to Korea?**

Well, this was a unit business.

07:00 I don't know when I was posted but I can tell you when we went. Which was in September I believe, 28th September, 1950. This was the initial date of the battalion's

07:30 any Australian movement into Korea.

**So you were first in.**

Mmm, Yep.

**And that was with K-Force [Korea Force] ?**

Oh no, no. This was in 3 Battalion.

**3RAR?**

K-Force was

08:00 recruited from people who had previous Second World War experience and they - they were needed as reinforcements to 3 Battalion who was badly under strength.

**So you were then sent to, was it Pusan?**

Mmm.

08:30 **September 1950 with 3RAR?**

Yep. Yep.

**And where were you based, mainly in Korea in that first tour? Or did you move around?**

We moved around with the battalion but I was

09:00 attached to Dog Company [D Company] .

**Was that "Don," or "Dog?"**

Oh, Don or Dog. You know.

**And did you have a platoon or...?**

Oh no, I was in company headquarters.

09:30 **And then you were involved in the Battle of Kapyong? That was 23rd, 24th of April, '51?**

Yep.

**And that was,**

10:00 **you were still in Don Company then, or Dog Company? And was it at the Battle of Kapyong that you were wounded?**

Yeah.

**You were wounded and then taken to where? Osaka?**

10:30 Yes, I went to Pusan, with an American train load of people and then airlifted to Osaka Hospital yes, in Japan.

**And how long, roughly was your recovery?**

11:00 Only a month or two I believe.

**And where did you rejoin the battalion?**

Well, I - first of all

11:30 went to the reinforcement unit in Kure, Japan, and then I was airlifted back to the battalion at the Imjin River.

**And then you went on more operations?**

Mmm.

12:00 **So the end of that tour, did you have return to Australia leave ..?**

Yes. Yes, I just followed the usual route of back to the holding unit in Japan and then back

12:30 to Australia.

**So is that now early '52, or late '51.**

That was late '51.

**So you didn't do your second tour until 1953, is that correct? So in between returning from that first tour and going back again, where were you based?**

13:00 Well, I did an - I did a number of

13:30 courses and I had some instructional posts at this time, they'd - the National Service was on the go and went to the School of Infantry, and I did

14:00 the course there and ..

**Was that back at Pucka?**

Well that was in that Puckapunyal environment, yes. I did a parachuting course.

14:30 Then I went to as an instructional post at Glenfield in New South Wales.

**And were you instructing national servicemen?**

No, this was regular army I was instructing. Yeah.

15:00 **And did you do any further jungle training or anything like that yourself?**

No, no.

**So that was most of '52. And then you went back to Korea for a second tour?**

Yeah.

**Was that early '53 or?**

I don't recall.

15:30 No, I couldn't tell you.

**Could have been late '52.**

I couldn't tell you, no.

**And how many months roughly do you think that second tour was?**

It was - it was about twelve months.

**Then it must have been '52. And where were you when armistice**

16:00 **was declared, July '53? Do you know where you were?**

No idea.

**I'm just wondering if you were still in Korea?**

Well, I'd have to be in Korea, yeah.

**And then you came back to Australia?**

Yes.

**And**

16:30 **is that when you got married?**

Dare I say, I don't remember. But somewhere round about there, yeah.

**And then I understand you did a short posting in Malaya.**

Oh no, I had a - I joined a second battalion then.

17:00 And -

**2RAR?**

Yeah, and then we were notified of our, we were going to Malaya, so all the battalion took off for there, and so I had twelve months or so in Malaya.

17:30 **And after Malaya?**

No, I took a discharge then.

**Do you know when that discharge was?**

1956.

**So you had originally signed on for six years?**

Mmm.

18:00 **And after your discharge, what did you do?**

Well, I s'pose the biggest thing I

18:30 joined the fire brigade in Melbourne and I was there for some years. But about seven years I think. Yeah.

**And after the fire brigade?**

Well, many and varied were my jobs.

19:00 But nothing of consequence there. But then I had a - I got a job with - up in the bush, in a milk factory, and I had a semi

19:30 it was with Tongala milk supplies and so but unfortunately at this stage after a year or two they were taken over by Nestle and

20:00 so Nestles and I parted company but been out of there for about ten or twelve years.

20:30 And by this time, the living was easy it was in Echuca and the - my circumstances weren't

21:00 weren't getting any better but the children were increasing, don't know where they come from. Better speak to Vera about that one, but yeah and I was there for another thirteen years.

**Living in Echuca?**

And

21:30 I then got the post of about - forget what they used to call me, yeah, it was a Melbourne health farm market, from which you've got all these (UNCLEAR casuals) being killed today. But

22:00 then I was there for - and so I retired.

**Was that the big Victorian markets?**

That's the wholesale market. Yeah

**And what was your - what were you doing there?**

I was - I can't remember me

22:30 my post but I used to run the market in its operations of a night. As you know they close during the day. And so yes, I used to run the market operations themselves.

23:00 And not anything to do with administration or maintenance or anything of that type. I was purely operations.

**So would you coordinate the stalls and...?**

Everything, yeah.

**That's quite a big job.**

Hm. Certainly was.

**And how many kids did you have...?**

23:30 I don't know, I sort of lost count somewhere along the line. Was seven I believe.

**And do you have any grandchildren?**

Oh yeah about 99. But there's a heck of a lot of them. And great

24:00 grandchildren. Too by the way.

**How many great grandchildren?**

One.

**How did you come to be living in South Australia?**

Well, I retired early, I thought, "I've had enough of this working." So, I - and I noticed that the

24:30 financial aspect was - houses were much cheaper and I wanted to get back to the bush so we then settled in Murray Bridge. That was a outside the Murray Bridge, by the way, near Mannum. And

25:00 it was good living, beautiful place, and we were there until only there about two or three weeks, when a bloke cleaned me up in a truck.

25:30 And so there I was with this bloke's truck sticking out of me ear. Van. And that took care of me and also took care of me beautiful

26:00 Ford. I had an LXD Ford, LTD Ford, it was a beautiful machine. And so then Vera had to go to, all the way to Murray Bridge and back again every day more or less. And so we were

26:30 and we got this old broken down place and we built it into really something. And I planted trees and did the place up, it was remarkable. Beautiful place, but it - we did the same in Echuca, I

27:00 the - when I went with Tongala Milk they - I bought this old, big place, huge place and I did it all up. So much so that we paid

27:30 11,000 for that house and sold it for 87. So. And we did a similar type deal with the Murray Bridge place, it was a beautiful house.

28:00 **And where do all of your kids live these days?**

Well, one lives in Brisbane, three I think live in South Australia, two of the boys live in Echuca,

28:30 **So there's none in Melbourne?**

No, no. They - and one is in Sydney, he's in the - he's a would be actor.

29:00 But - I think that's all of them.

**Well, thanks for that Ron. And now I'm going to go right back to the beginning, and you mentioned that you had a bit of difficulty knowing about your birth mother**

29:30 **and everything. Can you tell us about your childhood?**

Well, childhood's a - they don't differ much from one to another but

**Tell me how you came to - I understand you got a foster**

30:00 **mother, which orphanage were you in?**

What state would you like to hear about?

**From the beginning.**

Well, I never really mention this because no one would believe me. Well, put it this way, I was 65 before I

30:30 met my elder brother. And he claims that he can remember this woman - a woman in a white car, came and took me away. Now, I can only remember -

31:00 I can only presume that this was my foster mother. And I can never understand why she took me away. But and why she

31:30 had to keep on the move all the time, and I remember this was in the northern rivers of New South Wales. In Lismore, and she, herself was a South Australian and I can remember her telling the tale of

- 32:00 her brother, the police sergeant in Adelaide and that's the first time I'd heard of the - I was in an orphanage in Adelaide. And he came and pulled me out 'cos he said I was starving, "The kid was starving," he said, "He wasn't getting anything to eat." And it appeared they used to
- 32:30 throw the tucker [food] on the table and the big boys would get it all and the rest would get nothing. And but and then believe it or not, I've got some photos of this, too. I was at the time, I went to Tassie [Tasmania],
- 33:00 now why a woman, would come back - she lived in the northern rivers, all the way across Australia, over to Tassie, and then back to Melbourne. Why? And she often used to say, she was a remarkable woman, and she'd say, she had a daughter was eleven years old and why she lobbed with two kids in Tassie,
- 33:30 I never know. But she said, they lobbed there with two ha'pennies [half pennies], and - in the old currency is half a penny, two halfpennies, between them. Now, so they used to foster me out. And I was fostered by some
- 34:00 people in a rural area, 'cos I can remember being attacked by magpies, that's the only thing I've got of that era and then I remember the - my first plane trip back to Melbourne which I was violently ill and I was repatriated. As a matter of fact I've got this newspaper cutting, that says, I was
- 34:30 five I think, five and a half, the youngest child to fly unaccompanied in the world at this time. This would be 1936. So and then I lobbed back and do you know Melbourne at all?
- 35:00 You'll know the Hoddle Street, the corner of Hoddle Street and what's the main drag up there with the - where the trams go, up past the big church, the big cathedral on the corner of the street and Hoddle Street, anyway
- 35:30 I was fostered out by this - these people in these - one of these terrace houses just round the corner, of Hoddle Street and - blimey! I can't remember it. But,
- 36:00 and for my first schooling, I went to the big cathedral on the corner, where they had a school, a kindergarten sort of thing. And - but oh, I didn't like this, I can remember this day in school, first day in school. And
- 36:30 I'd had an altercation with this son of this bloke, whoever he was and
- 37:00 so it appears I beat him up rather badly. I had a propensity as a kid -for scraps, and so these and I remember these two drinking and they told - they held me while this kid beat the bejesus out of me. See?
- 37:30 So, next time back at this school, and I remember a little dog, little black dog come in and the nun said, "Who owns the dog?" I said, "I do." Never had a dog in me life. "I do." So, she said, "Can you take him home?" "Oh yes." Said me. So I took him home alright, I took him down to Richmond, and
- 38:00 there I stopped. And until the police took me up some ten or twelve days later. I was living out of the - me and the dog were living out of the cans and the all the lot of eateries along that street, and that'd be what's the name of that street?

**How old were you when**

38:30 **this happened?**

I was only about - I wouldn't be six then.

**So you're living on the street when you're six years old?**

Mmm. Don't forget me dog. And so at this stage, I believe that the people that

- 39:00 cos I was in a bit of trouble, the police got onto them. So they were under this thing all the time because there was due to the (UNCLEAR taps) The Depression the big depression, there were a lot of kids like me that were in these circumstances and the government paid out the money, you see, five bob a week it was. I can remember that, and
- 39:30 they keep them. When I - when they found me, you know, living on the fat of the land in Richmond, actually I know where it was, it was at the corner of Richmond, Bridge Road and Church Street. Was the area. I know 'cos I went back there many years later, driving the fire truck. So
- 40:00 the police got these people and they took them off their register of minding kids. But I then went to live with an old girl in Blackburn.
- 40:30 End of tape

## Tape 2

00:32 **Ron, you were just telling us about, who would be paid five bob a week?**

The carers, my carers you see. I was under foster care. And the government because of the polio epidemic at the time, no one would take kids in, you see. And

01:00 so the government would give anyone who'd foster these kids or rent them out if you like, would give them five bob a week. For care, you know. Tucker and board and this sort of thing.

**And before we changed the tape you were just about to tell us that you went to live in Blackburn,**

01:30 **who was that with?**

I'd have to give that a bit of thought. But, was an old lady that - let me try, and my first

02:00 schooling with, I went to the first - they disregarded the school that I'd started and then went a runner away with the dog, but is the first time I must have been, nearly close to seven. I went to the

02:30 Blackburn school on the - on Whitehorse Road. But I didn't last long there. Needless to say. But after this, I don't know whether the old girl

03:00 I don't think I was too much trouble but there was another kid or two living at the house. So I guess there was trouble, but in any case, I then had the Melbourne orphanage and there I stopped a couple of years a few years there. But - and I was just telling

03:30 about the name, "Dunque," was the name originally was, "Dunchue," which, there's a lot of them in South Australia. But my foster mother, old Ivy, she changed the name to, Dunque, and I never know why but

04:00 I know there's something funny about the whole deal. See, she came from the northern rivers, down to Tassie, down to South Australia, over to Tassie, back to Melbourne, but why was she going along? With all this - middle of the depths of the Depression and no one's got any money, how can she afford to go everywhere? And so

04:30 that's why she changed the name to Dunque. And so, and it something to do with the husband, I don't know, but she was divorced from him in 1940, I believe. So, the next thing is, I'm

05:00 off to the Melbourne orphanage, and from which I made three escapes.

**How did you escape?**

Well it was easy, but actually I'd just run away, you know.

05:30 Because we were part of the community as such, these huge, big buildings, that was in Dendy Street, Brighton, but I - we used to

06:00 go to church every Sunday, you know, and a few of us - it was a bright and sunny day at - he'd say, "Righto, all the Protestants come over here, and all the Catholics over there and.." And so if it was a rainy day, you'd always be a Catholic because oooh!

**Why did you want to be a Catholic on a rainy day?**

06:30 Well, who wants to walk around in the rain? Oh good Lord, no. I mean, Catholics are for rainy days. If you're a Protestant it was a sunny day. See, you get to walk in the sunshine. And but and if you felt pretty good about things, you know, you

07:00 wanted a real good walk, you'd become a - I believe it was a Methodist. Yeah. That was a mile or two away. So you could walk there and it was - but -

**So this orphanage**

07:30 **that you're at in Brighton, you ran away three times?**

Oh well, you know, actually I lived in the kiosk of the Brighton Baths. Cos having seen it when we were taken there for one time, I thought, "This'll do me. It's got all these chocolates on the wall,

08:00 oh yes." So I - anyway I busted in there and I lived there for a week or two, in the winter, by the way. And but -

**And what did you think of that particular orphanage? Did you-?**

Oh, it was a great, it was a good place.

08:30 I think I was the trouble but as I generally was, but it was a good place. It was a huge place, very big.

**And what - you've said that the attraction of the kiosk at**

09:00 **the baths, was the chocolates, was there another reason that you just didn't want to go back to the orphanage?**

No, I was something of an adventurer, I suppose, but oh no, I - as long as you - orphanage wasn't easy, with all these kids

09:30 they couldn't afford to be easy. But on the other hand it - I lived with various people and went to orphanages and etcetera I was never - you hear these things about kids being abused, I was never abused or except for the one time when I was beaten up. But that was always on the go. But

10:00 no, I can tell you that in retrospect, it wasn't a bad place. And then old Ivy, she got married again. And

10:30 then took me to live with her. But it wasn't till I was well in the army, that she told me that I wasn't her mother, I wasn't her, you know, her

11:00 birth mother.

**Did you think that she was your mother? Your birth mother?**

Well, yes, I guess I did. Yeah. I might have to give it away for a bit.

11:30 My legs are giving me a bit of trouble.

**Do you want to stop for a minute?**

**You didn't like school very much, by the sounds of it, but I'm interested to know when you started learning music and how that came about. Was that through school?**

Yes.

12:00 Yeah. That's the first school I attended to at Fairfield, they had a band. And that was the first school I went to outside of the orphanage. And

12:30 every year, the - in Chapel Street, Prahran, they held the band titles. And

13:00 I was a runner-up one year, Australian Champion runner-up, whatever that is, come second, one of them. Anyway..

**That was for music? What instrument were you playing?**

I think

13:30 I was playing a flugelhorn at the time. No, it was a bass, an E flat bass. Yeah, what you - one of you ladies called a tuba. And E flat bass.

14:00 **And where did you get your instrument from?**

Well, the bands provide them, the school provided an instrument and subsequently the army provided me with it when I was in there.

14:30 **And what sort of music, in the school band, what sort of music were you playing?**

Oh, just general ensemble work that anything, nothing real particular but

15:00 made of course, for brass bands and or military bands there's a difference, but oh it was just

15:30 a general band atmosphere I suppose, it's - I've got a mate lives up the road up here, who spent what, 20, 30 years,

16:00 in the army. Different armies. And never did anything but play instruments and he's a master musician, this bloke. But cos, it's all he did.

**How old were you when you left school?**

16:30 Oh, about thirteen I think. Thirteen, thereabouts.

**And were you still living with your foster mother at this stage?**

Yes.

**So what did you do at the age of thirteen and not going to school any more?**

17:00 Well, I got a job looking after show cattle. And I sort of had to go to outside Sale, a place called, Rosedale.

17:30 And then when I wasn't showing the cattle, I was crutching the sheep, so then I course, went to milking cows, but still, it's a bit of an experience. Whatever you do.

**Do you remember how you came to get that job?**

Well,

18:00 I don't know they're around these days but there used to be, I know in Melbourne, there was some places where they used to advertise the farmers

18:30 for whoever they wanted and for whatever they wanted, in these little places who and they were like a - thinking of the term, a - can't remember, but

19:00 they were - can't recall. But they were - you know, you'd look for a job, a place where you can get a job, and they used to advertise

19:30 a big sign in the window, for cattle, thingo, people with experience. I'd never had any experience but no one knew any difference otherwise they wouldn't have advertised so - in the end I knew all about them. But I used to get some good travel out of it too.

**And did you like being on the dairy**

20:00 **farm?**

I didn't much care for dairy farms, cos I think it was - actually it would be the area I was in, was very cold and wet. And that didn't suit me too well. But the other areas with the cattle, and that it was dry and

20:30 sheep and that was alright. But of course, it means that when you're allowed out on your own, you've got times when you don't get anything to put in your belly. You see, so you're better off in these places, at least you get something to eat. And

21:00 so - I was just thinking that

21:30 yes, it was I was thinking of yeah, I - there was one instance when I just can't think of the name of this place,

22:00 must have been fourteen, I think. When I got to Sydney and it's a cold place, Sydney's a cold place, and I was sleeping out on the Shrine, [War Memorial] would you believe, the Shrine was the best place in town, when

22:30 you were sleeping out, so and the police picked me up one night and sent me back to Victoria. But that was just an episode I was on me way through

23:00 to Queensland.

**What was the attraction going to Sydney?**

I was on me way through to Queensland. You gotta go through there to get to Queensland. Unless you're walking.

**And what was in Queensland?**

Well, I'd heard at the time that

23:30 there was a lot of money to be made by shooting crocodiles. So I thought, "This'll do me." So, of course, when the police wasn't too pleased when I turned up in Sydney with a big powered, high powered rifle. So when - and there was

24:00 two of us, and of course, we run out of money about the second day we were there. And so if ever you want to know how to get some tucker and survive, so Central Station, seemed to be the go. They were always round this place

24:30 and one of these and one of these and so we figure, what you do, you pinch one of these and you take off. And your mate would be round the corner, first corner round and as you went past, you tossed him the parcel, say, "Me? Well, I've got nothing." You know. Never caught us, I lived there for a week on this.

25:00 **And I understand you, at some point, you started a mechanic apprenticeship?**

Oh yeah, I

25:30 well, my I suppose, stepfather at the time, he was a great old bloke, too. He was a foreman for E.A Watts, who was a big

26:00 builder, and I was attending the school, doing the right thing, but of course, when you're not in a commercial type atmosphere with several and lots of

- 26:30 business and you've only got your own trucks to look after. You have a downside in your business and which you've got nothing to do. So anyway, this bloke
- 27:00 who was in charge of the garage, said to the old Charlie, who was my stepfather, said, he made some disparaging remarks about I don't know what it was but anyway. So one morning, it must have been, he was always doing this and I didn't know
- 27:30 this anyway, so one day old Charlie come in and said, and he was an operating foreman for E.A Watts, you see. And he said, and he's complaining and belly aching about me not doing this and not working and doing this and I said, "Look, it's hard work if you haven't got it."
- 28:00 He said, "Well, you can sweep the floors." I said, "No, I'm not employed for that." Anyway, so one thing led to another and he walloped me so me - and he was a big man but I flattened him
- 28:30 with a piece of four by two. And with that, I went on the road again, more or less. And - oh I can't you know, can't remember all these with the bits
- 29:00 and pieces the, I think I was about fourteen then, yeah.

**Well, about that time, you being fourteen, it would have been 1945, which was the end of World War II. What do you recall if anything about the end of World War II?**

I can remember the

- 29:30 big crowds that were in Melbourne celebrating but apart from that I don't think of anything that really - that I
- 30:00 my sister, if that's what you can call her. She was knocking round with a bloke from the 9th Divvy [Division] . Who turned out to be a real good bloke but and of course, I was always fully aware of the
- 30:30 instances in New Guinea etcetera and because this bloke was up there all the time. But certainly not much in the
- 31:00 war's ending, it wasn't much, how do you say this, it's - it just came and went that's all there was to it. There wasn't any noticeable difference in my lifestyle, or
- 31:30 but answering your question, that's I didn't - all I can remember is the big crowds in Melbourne, that's - nup.

**Well, you got out and about on the street quite a bit, so I imagine you would have seen a lot of those parades**

32:00 **and...?**

Oh mainly the crowds in Melbourne, just the crowds in the street, you know but.

**Moving forward, the year that you started thinking about enlisting in the services, do you recall what prompted you to start**

32:30 **thinking like that?**

Well, I'd have to say that this chap who was - my sister took up with, probably he was most

- 33:00 involved in getting me to look at things this way, but I did try for the navy first. But of course, that was - the navy was seventeen and a half, you see. The recruiting age for the army was eighteen. So I tried the navy because it was
- 33:30 earlier but so I covered me bets and tried for the army as well. But the army got there first and that was it, and I'd have made a terrible sailor but.

**So that sister that you've mentioned, that was your stepsister?**

Mmm.

**And she was knocking round with a 9th Divvy army bloke?**

34:00 Mmm.

**Well in 1949, that's not long after World War II, a few years after World War II, what did you think the army could offer you at that stage?**

Well, I guess,

- 34:30 the only thing I ever thought of was they'd get me fed three meals a day. And a bed. That's the main thing.

**So, you had enlisted in the navy but they were - took too long so you went and enlisted in the**

**army. Where did you go to enlist? Do you remember?**

No.

35:00 No, I don't recall, but that's when I had the first inkling mind you, you must remember that when you're speaking in front or in the vicinity of kids, they can always pick something up and I always knew that there was something there other than my immediate family.

35:30 And because I often, you know, having a squeak and a peer around corners, that I had another family somewhere, but I never knew for sure, but

36:00 I could never get a birth certificate. And no one ever, couldn't send one, but mother didn't know about one. So, when I was discharged from the army, up turned my birth certificate from the army. And it said,

36:30 my name and date and written in freehand across was the name, Dunchue. And I knew that this was what old Ivy used to tell me. That she had to go and made it known to the army authorities that

37:00 the name as given me, was really Dunchue, and how she talked them into it, I don't know. But that's what it was.

**So when you went to enlist they asked you for your birth certificate?**

No, no you must have your birth certificate if you're under 21. But I never had one, and Ivy went down and said, "I'll go and see them."

37:30 So she went and saw them and they sent me to come in and join up but I never knew how she did it but till this came with Dunche written freehand so she must have told them that what the circumstances were.

**So she clearly, supported your decision to go into the army?**

Anything to get rid of me I think.

**38:00 So after, did you have to do a medical?**

Oh yeah. Yep, the - and

38:30 the first day that we took a medical and then they instantly, more or less, inducted in - inducted me into the army. But Stan Connolly who I mentioned before, fella in Victoria who no doubt you people have been involved

39:00 with, he was a very tall man and he was just a kid as well, you see. And I remember he was six-foot-three and as thin as a rake and this doctor said, "God, son!" He said, "There's not much of you is there?"

39:30 And looked him up and down and Stan said, "And you ain't no Miss Australia yourself." So I thought, gee that's, won't get in on this, but yeah, "You ain't no Miss Australia yourself." So I remember that. But yeah we stuck right through and Stan and I, he was the man from Fitzroy

40:00 and we went to Japan together and there were three of us actually but Stan and I went together, joined up together. We went to Japan together in an old Lancaster bomber, it may seem, but

40:30 and our careers, well we went in the same unit of course, we went to Korea together then we were wounded on the same day but with different companies. And we went back to Japan the same day, and we went back again the same

41:00 day, and we finally came out the same day. We were with different companies and but -

41:30 End of tape

## Tape 3

**00:31 So you said earlier that you rookie training was at Puckapunyal, and what was the camp like?**

Oh, very basic. It had been a large staging place for troops in the Second World War but

01:00 of course things had run down, and then they had to open it up for us recruits but it was very basic and but - I'd lived in worse so it didn't worry me at all.

**Who was - how many men were there in your barracks?**

01:30 I couldn't tell you. But there was only be a minimum I think of - because they'd just closed off Ingleburn I think or somewhere up there and so they were putting all the recruits

02:00 at this stage down to Puckapunyal. And we were the first or second intake there. But no, there couldn't have been very many.

**And you said Stan was your mate, did he have a nickname?**

Lofty. Such a tall man, Lofty.

**And did you have a nickname?**

Yeah.

**What was yours?**

Nugget.

02:30 **Why's that?**

Well, because I was probably thick set.

**And your instructors, were they - who were they?**

Oh, just general army people, no one of particular

03:00 consequence.

**And what were they like?**

Oh, very good, as far as they were concerned, up to the level we were, but we found that most of them then of course ended up in Korea but most of them had

03:30 well they'd - not reached any sort of a level other than they were at - they were in at Puckapunyal and so it means that they were instructing but only in basic infantry things and certainly not - no minor tactics,

04:00 the - some of them were good. They turned out to be good cos there was a certain level at which only you can attain by constant practise. But they were at a recruit level

04:30 and so they only- never had to go any higher than that. Some of them when getting any higher were found to be wanting but I don't say this is all of them but I do know there was two or three circumstances when they were found wanting.

**What do you mean by, 'wanting'?**

Well,

05:00 you've heard of the blokes who are promoted till they meet their own level of incompetence, well this is what they were like. They had gone to the level of their competence, they couldn't go any - no one had known that they were incompetent,

05:30 with that, what it was, their level was, but because never reached it and they'd never been there. But they were at the very basic level of the job they had to do, so it's I don't think it's right for me to say that some of them were no good, no they weren't, no that wasn't the right way,

06:00 some well like everything else, there were some good in them and some were better than others but. And I don't think really that one should

06:30 agree that - or answer your questions, that they were no good, or some of them were, some of them weren't, that's a rambling sort of statement to say that they're - no some of them - most of them were good, they were good for what we wanted. But

07:00 when we met them later on, when we become, we advanced further than they were, so we - when you say, "Were they any good or...?" No, some of them weren't, some of them weren't. No.

**And how did you respond to the discipline of the army?**

Oh, no trouble.

07:30 When you're out and about and had to earn your own living, you're very soon learn that part of your job, whatever your job was, is discipline. And that's the reason that kids today can't keep a job. It's their discipline. And however minor

08:00 it may be, they have to conform. But yeah, I guess that's - discipline's the name of the game.

**What was the physical training that you were doing?**

Very little, very little. We didn't have enough of it.

08:30 Very little, just bit of marching and a bit of running. You know that's about all.

**What about the drills, what drills were there?**

Oh, normal physical

09:00 army drills. There's drills of course of competence in handling of weapons and this sort of thing which are there to facilitate the use of the weapon itself and

09:30 what must be called, stoppages as such. What to do when a weapons stops or it breaks down that in itself is a drill. What to do to make it then fire,

10:00 or but and there's the drill of marching and close quarter marching and all of this sort of thing. That's more physical but still it's - it's

10:30 yeah the drill -the word drill, or the term, drill doesn't really seem that they're drilling over there, alright the men might be drilling, but how are they drilling? They march up and down that's a drill to get the way they're doing it and

11:00 a man might be fixing up and changing a barrel on a machine gun or something, that's a drill. And until you can do it properly and you do it with your eyes shut and all those circumstances that are involved then that's why they have to keep going about this and

11:30 getting it right until they can. I mean a drill is something that you go through, when you have to fix something up or have to do it in the best possible way.

12:00 Until you can get to that stage where you can do it automatically, for example, there's I only whip this in for what it's worth. But there was a drill in Korea that when a Bren gun [machine gun] which is a

12:30 LMG, a light machine gun, and then now, might - the cold weather, it might, refuse to fire. Now the cold means you couldn't pull your cocking handle and get a round

13:00 up into the barrel to fire. Now, the cold would make this not happen, so one of the things to do, and the only time you can make this

13:30 fire is when you urinate on it. So you urinate on your weapon on the barrel on anything there until it warms up. Now, that can be called a drill, although it's never in any books. But just to show you what is termed a drill, how

14:00 to make something operate. Which is - there's nothing to show where it can't operate but that's just a -

**Well, that's an interesting aspect of drilling in Korea and I think we'll ask more about that later. But still at Puckapunyal, how were you with infantry training and the gun drills?**

14:30 Well, what can you say, something new, something - I never had any difficulty with them. I mean, there's a very, but once again, it's the very basic stuff. So

15:00 everyone had to be able to do this basic routines before they can go any further.

**And were there any men who weren't really coping with the basics?**

Not that I remember, no it's - not that I recall, no.

**15:30 And was it at Puckapunyal that you started to join the band?**

No, no. Was only when I was - when I got to Japan that when you get there, they

16:00 look at all your - what do you call them? All your - run out of words, but and we were all at this, the group of us that arrived there at the same time, were all

16:30 going to go to Baker Company [B Company] because that's where they needed the troops most. But then you see, someone flipped through all the records and see what you've done, "Ah ha! Band. That's what we need." So they sent me straight off to the band.

**Before we talk about that do you mind if we cover**

**17:00 how you got to Japan and that whole process? When were you sent to the 67th Battalion. At what stage was that?**

Well, we were infantry

17:30 and there was only on infantry battalion in Japan. So that was going to be 67.

**Ron, you were just saying that a battalion was required for Japan and that was to become 67th Battalion.**

No, no, I said that the 67th Battalion was in Japan and

18:00 there was only one battalion there and we were infantry we were going to 67. There was no question about it. If there'd been more, you'd have had a choice, you see, but no, there was only one battalion.

**So when did you get told about your posting to Japan?**

18:30 Well, when you finished your infantry training, they ask everyone at what corps they would like to join.

19:00 Which doesn't mean that you would automatically become, if you wanted to join, say you asked for artillery, you wanted that but may not automatically get an artillery, but which something had

19:30 I don't suppose I should say this, but I remember there was a - they were trying and had to bring up the raise the infantry to a higher level. That is mentally speaking. Infantry was not always

20:00 the brightest star in the sky but they were - and I remember that we'd

20:30 been told and who it was told me, I don't know, but Connolly and Hec Roberts, meself and a couple more, would have the highest degree of IQ [Intelligence Quotient] that they'd seen in any intake. Now

21:00 that was something. Anyway, that was said to me, so I can only repeat it. But I've forgotten what the original question was anyway.

**I was asking you about your posting to Japan and how it came about.**

Oh yeah, well, because of this

21:30 we were told that this IQ test that we were going to infantry as we wanted and the 67th Battalion was the one to - that needed it most. And so we went straight off to Sydney and for a holding there and waiting for a

22:00 draft to go and then when the aeroplane - it was an old Lancaster bomber and away we went.

**And can I go back a step and ask, did your infantry training come after your basic training?**

Oh yeah. Yeah. Basic training, everyone gets the same, irrespective of whether you're going to be in a

22:30 headquarters bunch or artillery or infantry, it's always the same, basic. And that's why they call it, basic training.

**And it was after basic training that you went - you nominated for infantry?**

Yeah.

**Why did you choose infantry?**

Mmm. I don't know. But

23:00 I really don't know.

**What preparation were you given for the posting in Japan?**

Well, as I said, the basic training

23:30 was all that we were given. This is the - the basic training, inducts you more or less into the army. And they give you this basic training, so as you can then go wherever you choose or wherever you're appointed but - and then of course you've got your corps training which we would

24:00 would do infantry, which is mainly marching. And learn the, everything to do with the structure and the aims of infantry. And of course you went to the artillery you'd then learn the big gun things, but

24:30 no, I think I've answered the question.

**Did you have any embarkation leave?**

I don't remember. I don't think so, but I don't remember.

**And do you recall taking any personal items with you or...?**

Sorry, the what?

**Any personal items**

25:00 **anything that was yours other than what the army gave you?**

No. No.

**So you flew out on a Lancaster bomber? How did the flight go, where did you stop through the flight?**

Well,

- 25:30 we stopped at Darwin, but I think we transferred to the Lancaster at Darwin. We then flew to Manila, which was an interesting stop because Manila was in the middle of
- 26:00 a civil war. And everyone had guns and pointing guns at everyone else and besides the old Lancaster which was converted is - was always breaking down. And so you could, you know and you'd just- under you could reach out and touch the sea where it - oh I thought,
- 26:30 "We're not going to make this place, not going to get." - so Manila was pleased to be on hard, solid ground and besides we were stopping at General MacArthur's hotel would you believe? And using all their facilities, and which you had to sign for, they had telly [TV] and Joe [E.] Brown [comedian] and
- 27:00 {Australian Prime Minister} Bob Menzies of course [given as false names] , and so they patched up our old aircraft for the final leg to Japan.

**Can I just ask why did you change your names when you were signing in at Manila in the hotel?**

- 27:30 Well, we didn't actually sign in Manila, sign in the hotel because we were put up there by the army, you see. But if you want to get any of these other things, like using their pool for swimming,
- 28:00 getting any beer, which you had to pay for yourself, and if you haven't got the currency of the country then you don't get it anywhere. So mainly what you do if you've - you had to sign, so for all the facilities that and to use things and to eat, you had to sign. So the currency
- 28:30 well the thing is to sign someone's name, certainly not your own. Because it would come back on you at a later stage. Where the army would get their bills, "Oh, Fred Johnson, he's got \$20 worth here." And they'd see, who Fred Johnson was, that would be you, so you had to be pretty smart. And besides, I suppose that
- 29:00 they must have - these people must have wondered that this Bob Menzies, he must have a - he must get through here a lot, with all these signing from him. But no, so that was the reason so you didn't get billed for something that obviously was overcharged anyway.

**And this is your first time out of the country.**

- 29:30 **What did you think?**

Well, I do know I was a little like...

- 30:00 **If you like, you can answer this question in Japan when-**

Well, hard to

- 30:30 hard to say.

- 31:00 Just, I don't think I thought anything extraordinary. You just accept things as they come, I guess and but - no, I just didn't think of anything, you know I didn't think

- 31:30 there was anything extraordinary or - although I should have I guess.

**Well you - where did you land in Japan?**

A place called Iwakuni. Which was the air force base on

- 32:00 the inland sea. And it's the main railway line is the end of the railway line by the way, but the main railway line which

- 32:30 bisects the Hokkaido Island, and it's about 40 mile from Hiroshima. And then it's a further 20 mile down to Kure

- 33:00 which used to be the big imperial navy base, and then it was about 10 mile further on to Hiro, which was where we were camped. Well, we ended up camping.

**So you went through Hiroshima on the way to Hiro?**

No - yeah. Yes, yes. Hiroshima was about 20 miles from Hiro.

- 33:30 **What were your impressions of Hiroshima?**

Well, it - there had been a lot of building there, but I thought it was a

- 34:00 ghastly joint really. But no doubt I felt something more about it when I was there, but originally I can't - I mean I can't say much more than that.

**Well, then you finally made your way down**

34:30 **to Hiro, what was the camp like at Hiro?**

Oh, splendid camp. I can't think of whether I've got some photos of it

35:00 up there somewhere. But it was a really a good camp, a really well set up, well appointed and scrupulously clean of course.

**How long were you there before you moved on to Haramura for battle training?**

Well,

35:30 of course, not everyone did the same thing so some people who went to the companies that were involved in their period of training at Haramura, would have got there

36:00 immediately. Others like myself, who was in the band, who - it would have been months before we got there. But this would depend on what company you were with.

**And is this where you joined Dog Company?**

No. No.

36:30 I joined Dog Company when we hit Korea.

**And so at Hiro, what company were you with?**

I was in the band.

**Okay, in the band.**

Which was headquarters company, not - battalion headquarters.

**And how far was Haramura from Hiro**

37:00 **for your battle training?**

Well, the - on the main road, from where

37:30 the camp was, it was 23 miles. And then around the other direction there was a camp, one way (UNCLEAR forties) and round there 23 miles and around this one, was 28 miles and so

38:00 was up in the mountain region too.

**What did battle training consist of, what were you doing with battle training?**

Well this would be depending on what your job was, in the unit that of course in

38:30 the company exercises, would mean you'd be going up these huge mountains and practising your

39:00 practising all your tactics, minor tactics, and

39:30 section and platoon. And ultimately company tactics and by scaling these mountains and wherever something was, that's what you had to get there without - within the minimum of tactics and - the minimum of -

40:00 but I'll get that in a minute, but there's a small group in every

40:30 company and ultimately platoon, and section which - and you have to practise your mortars, mortar sections and would be attack a position in one way and then the get the LMG [light machinegun] , this was another way. And then the how to

41:00 a small section would be - for example I'm just assuming you're know all this, but with a platoon, there are three sections and you have to go - you have and the phraseology is I'm afraid I've forgotten that but and you have to set up in each and every individual part of your platoon too.

## **Tape 4**

00:31 **Ron, just noted off camera that you actually had a few months of being with the band before you went away for battle training, is that right?**

Oh yes, yes.

**And I'm just curious, where did your instrument come from this time?**

Well, instruments that are not being used are always stored in  
01:00 battalion headquarters but they would have spare instruments for an increase in personnel perhaps or  
you see, the battalion would supply every  
01:30 instrument and would obtain them if required - more required.

**And what instrument were you playing in the band?**

Well, I played an E flat bass, most of the time.

02:00 And then I had to play a B flat bass at times, but an E flat bass was my instrument choice.

**What songs were you rehearsing?**

Mostly military marches and various  
02:30 tunes which are - I couldn't tell you the name but most of them were to do with shall we say, we used to  
play at garden parties and things like that you see,  
03:00 and you had Gilbert and Sullivan or things of this nature, but gee, it's a long time ago.

**Who were the garden parties for?**

03:30 Oh, sometimes you'd - the general commanding would put them on for people and if we were in Tokyo,  
we'd play at the embassy and all this type of thing, you see.

04:00 **And how often would you rehearse?**

Every day. More or less. When we were in our camp, in our home camp, which was Hiro, we would  
practise every day. Generally in the theatre and or if someone considered we weren't marching good  
enough or the drill  
04:30 wasn't good enough then we would go out and march and play - the marches of the type, of the day and  
but generally we'd practise whatever, you know whatever's required.

05:00 And we'd so that's - I think I - I've said it that we practised whatever's required.

**And when you were practising the tunes  
05:30 for marching, were the other men marching or were you just rehearsing the tunes, the  
marching?**

Oh no, you'd see, your marches are a built on a  
06:00 time frame a beat and so many beats to the minute and that's when somebody marches, they march at  
120 paces, to the minute. Now,  
06:30 the pace of an infantryman is 30 inches. And he marches at a rate of 120 to a minute, which gives you  
120 paces at 30 inches, gives you 100 yards, exactly. And so  
07:00 you can always tell how far you've gone. By that. So that is - that's non negotiable, that's the way  
infantry marches. So,  
07:30 just trying to think whether I've left anything out, the - no, 120 paces to the minute, yep. And they used  
to do a thing called the  
08:00 Gloucester Cup. Was written, it was done by the three infantry battalions of the time, 1965, 66, and 67  
who used to march off for this Gloucester Cup and the thing was  
08:30 they used to time you, and then give you a minute or two minutes, whatever it may have been, that how  
far you can go and if you've - then they had to pace it out, and you could - had to be right on the  
knocker to see then which band was the best  
09:00 and which marchers were the best. So you've got this time and melody and beat all in the one thing so  
as you can beat that you can slap on and anyone that was below it or above it would fail. That's - then  
you get the  
09:30 march past, all the reasons of the march past for review order and that's all interplay of band and  
marches which is no orders are given, and there, and they - then they grade each one by the  
10:00 efficiency of their march. But it sounds so - for someone who doesn't know it, it sounds so you know,  
nothing there, but it's not, it's quite a thing to see.

**And who else was competing in the Gloucester Cup?**

- Oh, the three battalions as I said. That's the 65, the 66 and
- 10:30 67.
- So, no other bands from perhaps other Commonwealth countries?**
- No, no, no. No, it's only infantry bands. And - there's bands of all types, but you see, you've got your bands of the command and the band of can't
- 11:00 think of it now, but none of these were - none of these other bands were involved in the Gloucester Cup, and they hold this annually, and with 3 Battalion, they won it for three times and then they kept it forever
- 11:30 that's the reason we used to wear a green lanyard, on the shoulder. And the green lanyard showed that we were the senior or the best, if you like, battalion and band. And that's the reason they wear the green lanyard.
- So where was the competition**
- 12:00 **held when you were in Japan?**
- Oh well, out on the parade ground.
- And you were in the winning band three years in a row?**
- No, they'd already done it once, before I got there, but the next two years, yes.
- 12:30 **Can I just go back to the battle training at Haramura. Do you recall how the platoons were organised through battle training?**
- Well, I think
- 13:00 initially the platoons were organised, for battle training but - and you got your drill and then they have to drill themselves, drilled till they become of peak efficiency of the
- 13:30 sub- unit which was the platoon. But whereas the band didn't have to go through this. See, we weren't in that platoon earlier, we were made up of two members of the band, to each company. And we become the medical
- 14:00 men in that company. But yeah, and that - and we had to - and of course that comes with the new drill, as such your basic - not your basic drill, your battle drill for in our case, it's getting the wounded out, and attending
- 14:30 to the wounded, and so on from there. All that sort of thing.
- Were there many training accidents?**
- Oh no. No. I can't recall any, but that - I don't recall. I don't, no, I don't remember.
- As a stretcher bearer, what training did you have, what first aid training?**
- 15:00 Very minimal. We learned to slap a bandage on you. And we could give you morphine, and stop the bleeding and then get you out of there. But
- 15:30 of course, stretcher bearers differentiated in different companies. Some companies wouldn't allow them to go anywhere where they can be shot, that is, whereas Dog Company, we never had
- 16:00 more than one, or two. And we used to go up with the first in a platoons, go up on the first attack and therefore when a bloke was hit, or wounded we could tend to him immediately, fix him up, leave him there for someone else to get. And that was the idea, and we stuck with that all along the line.
- 16:30 **We'll talk about more of that work when you're in Korea which - when it really came into play. But after Haramura, did you go back to Hiro?**
- Oh yeah, we weren't - as I said, we weren't involved in Haramura as much, as such. We went out there for a quick
- 17:00 go here and now and then and never any length of time.
- And so back at Hiro, what was - from what you could sense, what was the local's opinion of the army's presence there?**
- Well,
- 17:30 they used to reckon they were great. So much so that one time, somebody I suggested, might be one of the battalion, one of the boys in the battalion but someone had printed

- 18:00 some leaflets, which they strew all over Kure and Hiro saying, "Now, as you know the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, in brackets -- Hiro's
- 18:30 Own -- are going to Korea. Anyone who wishes to join them turn up at the white house." Now the white house was the general officer's castle more or less and they came from hundreds of them. Nips [Japanese], Hiro's own, here they come up there. And they were - they
- 19:00 the boys had a pretty good arrangement with the people and they all had the same likes, for example, the same dislikes, they disliked the provos [Provosts, Military Police], and
- 19:30 if some of the boys had been misbehaving they'd look - pull them up and you know, smarten them up. And dress them up and send them back to the camp and they had real good, was a real good show.
- 20:00 **What about fraternising with the local women?**
- Oh, that wasn't allowed. Not allowed, not allowed. But I have no doubt it went on. Yeah.
- Were there any locals helping in the barracks?**
- Oh yeah, many. Yeah, mainly in the kitchens and
- 20:30 the messes and of course, the laundry, and in the grounds of course, always being neat and tidy and swept and yeah. A lot of them there.
- And what did you think of Japanese food?**
- 21:00 Oh, well after a while I never ate anything else but Japanese food. Eggs and all that sort of jazz, was always the go.
- And what about communication with the Japanese?**
- 21:30 **How did you go with that?**
- Well, just become normal.
- 22:00 **How did you spend your leave in Hiro?**
- 22:30 Well, just trying to remember.
- Where did you drink in Hiro?**
- 23:00 Well, in the prior to Korea, we just used to drink wherever we could. There was no fraternising,
- 23:30 the beer halls were out of bounds, and so they just go to private homes and
- 24:00 **Why weren't you allowed to go to the beer halls?**
- Oh well, they were all out of bounds. I don't know why but I suppose they were out of bounds because it would lead to fraternising. I guess.
- Fraternising wasn't allowed, but what about**
- 24:30 **visiting the red light district?**
- Oh dear, you wouldn't go there. Not if you were not allowed to fraternise. I never heard of a red light district but I guess there has to be one, but
- 25:00 **Well, how long were you at Hiro before going over to Korea?**
- About twelve months.
- What was your daily routine at Hiro?**
- 25:30 Well some days, the routine never changed. But mainly it would be
- 26:00 well it was - I'd have to say that it had been daily routine would be whatever was required. And so I guess, if you weren't practising you'd do whatever's
- 26:30 required.
- Were you involved in any garrison work?**
- Well, first of all you've got to define what is garrison work. And garrison
- 27:00 is what we all did in Hiro, we garrisoned the town. And the district. That's what we all did and so only...
- But does your presence qualify as garrison?**

Yeah, we're the garrison- as such was at Hiro, that's what we did.

27:30 Garrisoned the town.

**When you said, whatever was required, was a part of your daily routine, what would be an example of something that was required?**

Well, let's assume that one of the companies was on a route march,

28:00 and they came from Haramura down the main road and then they'd turn off into Hiro, now that would be a mile from the turn off to the barrack gates. And we'd say,

28:30 that'd be - say midday, when the band would have to meet them there to march them back to camp. And so they always had to meet, had to be - when going into the camp gates, your rifles would be sloped, and you all marched properly. Now, that would say - so we'd have

29:00 a two hour business escorting one of these companies back to camp. Now, perhaps we've got some practise after that,

29:30 we might have an inspection before that or - you know, something similar there, that just routine duties, but anyway.

**With the inspections, what kind of inspections would you have?**

30:00 Barrack room inspections. About your gear, the clothing,

30:30 **And would the band have any inspections?**

Oh yes, yes, of course. Yeah, same thing, all of them about your gear and your clothing and your

31:00 webbing, boots and everything had to be spot on. And every little bit, every little bit - every little

31:30 piece of your equipment all had to be up to scratch and that was inspected at least once a week but.

**And the instruments, when they were - how were they inspected?**

32:00 Well, mainly by looking at it. Everything had to be a high polish and so.

32:30 **Did you have to play them at all to make sure that they were tuned or...?**

No, no, no. No, they're all self tuning. Or you tune it themselves but.

33:00 **The twelve months at Hiro, you mentioned earlier about the rotating companies, did you - aside from Haramura for battle training, did you - were you**

33:30 **posted outside of Hiro at all?**

Several times a year, we'd go to Tokyo and we'd have to play - we played outside the Emperor's Palace and various odd

34:00 sorts of places and usually dates of some consequence, like V- Day and VJ Day [Victory over Japan] and all this sort of thing. And

34:30 of course the -

**What about the concerts, did you play concerts in Japan?**

35:00 I'm just trying to think if we did. No, I don't really think we did. If we - no we played

35:30 a couple of the concerts only in the unit, but this wouldn't be as a band. This would be as an ensemble or two. A jazz band or something like that, you see. No, that's the only time I can recall that.

36:00 **And they're more for the unit, for the men, rather than outside?**

Yeah.

**When you played at the Emperor's Palace, was that the closest you got to playing for the emperor?**

Oh yeah, well of course, I've got some photos around somewhere about these but.

36:30 **Who was the conductor?**

Oh he was generally depending on shall we say,

37:00 certainly he'd have to be someone with the expertise but mainly he'd be depending on - I think a

- warrant officer was a general, but sergeant, but we
- 37:30 did have number of very extraordinary musicians in the band, and probably one of them would step up but it calls for a being a unit band, it calls
- 38:00 for a warrant officer, but if he wasn't available, well.
- How many members were in the band?**
- Well,
- 38:30 I couldn't tell you the official complement of one - 'cos I don't remember but I do know about 20, I guess.
- 39:00 Oh no, be about 30 given the drums, drum corps was -
- And what were the different sections in the band?**
- Oh, there
- 39:30 be the bass section, the lead section, the trumpets as you call it, and the
- 40:00 I don't know what they call them these days. But there's only about four sections. But then of course the drums were entirely different but was only about
- 40:30 four sections but.
- 41:00 End of tape

## Tape 5

- 00:32 **Okay Ron, I'd just like to pick up in Japan before we go on and talk about Korea. As I just mentioned you did go to Japan just at the tail end of BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupational Forces] , I've heard and it's quite well documented that there were a**
- 01:00 **few problems with Australian soldiers in Japan and I guess one of them was the big VD [Venereal Disease] problem. Did you come across that or hear stories about it at all when you got there?**
- No, it - I think the incidence of VD would have been well overdone. Been too much. It used to be early but when I got there
- 01:30 it was all gone, just about.
- So the problem had been sorted, or do you think the fraternisation had stopped?**
- No, the problem had been sorted. I knew of three incidences all the time I was there. There was one bloke, twice. But no, it was all gone.
- And**
- 02:00 **in terms of that problem being sorted, was the army giving soldiers condoms and lessons of how to look after yourself?**
- No. No. Oh, we used to - but this is when Korea came up, that we used to get these things you know, films, but they were pretty graphic but.
- 02:30 **So you saw some films before you went to Korea?**
- Mmm.
- On the problems with local populations?**
- VD, yeah.
- Do you think watching those films worked or were they helpful?**
- Well it did for me. It worked for me and it worked for most blokes
- 03:00 yeah.
- One of the other things that I've heard about is there was a bit of a black market in Japan, did you know of the black market that was going on?**

- Oh yeah, everyone did. We used to be allowed every fortnight in our pay to spend so much in our local canteen. And as soon as you were paid they used to open the canteen and you were allowed, I think I got six bob a day. I was allowed to spend three days
- 03:30
- 04:00 pay, excuse me, in there and everybody that - don't remember, let me see.
- 04:30 So we could spend 2000 yen, and in - and by retailing this, I'd get back 1000 yen. I'd get 50% profit.
- 05:00 Which wasn't bad. But of course, if you had a lot more and those with more money could get that sort of increase and as far as I can recall but.

**What sort of things were on sale on the black market?**

Soap.

- 05:30 Soap came readily to mind, but - some chocolates,
- 06:00 milk, the canned variety of course, those sort of things, were always good to go with. But as I say, you could every 2000 yen you could get 3000 back. And
- 06:30 of course if someone wanted something in particular, then they had to pay for that. So, there was a good earner to be made and particularly if you were only getting six bob a day, so and of course. You did
- 07:00 most of the beer halls they were all in it and you'd spend the money there anyway so they got it all back. They did mine anyway.

**And what about sake, did you ever try any sake?**

Terrible drink.

- 07:30 Everyone's got their own drink. And there's the - and (UNCLEAR oh a loov) looks like sake, sake looks like that water you know, it's just the same. And the Greek's, ouzo and the Middle East, Yaki, and the sake and all the same, they don't taste the same but they - they're all distilled the same,
- 08:00 I think. But, no I didn't like sake. Only beer.

**So the grog wasn't on the black market?**

Oh no, no.

- 08:30 **I understand there was one night that you went AWOL [Absent Without Leave] in while you were in - before you went to Korea, was there any nights that you went AWOL ...?**

No.

- 09:00 I did go to Hiroshima one day though, when I weren't supposed to, but I did.

**And why did you go there?**

Well, we used to have a system where in the company office, all the leave passes were written out and you used to go and pick your own up. Now,

- 09:30 I don't know what I - some misdemeanour or other, I - my leave was cancelled for the weekend. But when I went over to the company office, I see there was a leave pass written out for me.
- 10:00 To go to Hiroshima. And so I took off. So I come back and the CO [Commanding Officer] - I had to front the CO and he said, "Well, what's your excuse?" I said, "Oh, I haven't got any." He said, "Well, I'll give you two minutes to make one up."
- 10:30 So I thought, oh that's a - you don't get that very often. So I said, "Well, when I saw the chief - the leave pass written out, I thought that it was alright for me to go." He said, "Bullshit!" He said, "Two days for being AWL [Absent Without Leave] and two days for telling me lies." So how about that. Yeah. Two days for telling me lies.

**So that was two days CB [Confined to Barracks] ?**

- 11:00 Mmm.

**How easy was it to kind of get into trouble and get punishment like CB?**

Oh, very easy. Unless you were smart and dodged it. But very easy.

**Did that happen to you very often, or...?**

No, not very often, no.

- 11:30 **You stayed out of trouble?**

Well, more or less.

**Okay well, we were looking at some photographs of you just a little while ago of**

12:00 **you getting ready to go to Korea. Can you tell me how you got to Korea and why did that photograph of you with your tuba...?**

That was taken on the Kure wharf. And it was just before we embarked

12:30 but as you can see, it had been raining and - but not much to tell about that but.

**Well, did you take your instrument to Korea?**

Mmm.

**And I guess, I'm curious about why?**

Well,

13:00 it's to do with traditional when a troop ship or any ship goes out they play them off. But as we had no other bands there, we had to play the wharf off and that's the reason we took them. But we left them on the ship.

**So just tell us again**

13:30 **the band played on the wharf as the troops were getting onto the ship?**

No, we played on the ship as the ship left the wharf.

**And then you left your instrument, you didn't take your instrument...?**

Yes, we took them over with us.

**But you left them on the ship, you didn't have to take them off the ship.**

Mmm.

14:00 **And what was your destination?**

Well, I hope it was in Korea because that's where we landed, Pusan.

**And could you smell Pusan before you saw it?**

Mmm. Very much so. Yes, it was a filthy

14:30 hovel. And crowded with ships, scores, dozens, hundreds of them, all you could see, for miles. And of course, they were then manning what was then known as the Pusan perimeter and

15:00 of course, with the smell of humanity and everything else there, it was quite a thing to live in your memory.

**Can you describe what it was like, why did it stay so strongly in your memory?**

Well, because of the stench of the place. And the

15:30 so many hundreds and hundreds of ships there and they're discharging of effluents and the same being said for the shore, that's the reason that stopped in my memory.

16:00 **And did you have to cover your mouth or...?**

Oh no, no it's just, the smell was that bad that it quite lived in your memory.

**And what time of year was it?**

September the 28th, 1950, which was

16:30 Autumn. And beginning to get very cold.

**That's a very good point, what sort of clothing did you have with you?**

All we had was the

17:00 service dress of the day which was cold weather gear for us but no, certainly wasn't cold enough for there, warm enough for there. But it was called, Australian service dress.

**And was that a jumper and a great coat or...?**

Oh, well you should have had

17:30 a jumper and then we'd have the tunic and then we'd have a greatcoat.

**And did you have gloves ?**

No. No, I don't think so.

**A beanie?**

No. Only slouch hat.

18:00 **And how quickly did you move into the frontline or were you taken to the frontline?**

Well, I think after a couple of days we were

18:30 fighting some infiltrators but, it'd be a week or two before we got up to the big stuff, yeah.

**And what time of night was it when you moved right up to the big stuff? Or the frontline?**

Well, we were

19:00 moved up there by railroad and then by a series of airlifts and that was daytime. Mid morning if I remember.

**What happened when you got to the frontline?**

19:30 Well, like most frontlines, it had gone further away and so we didn't have much to do there at all. But we then

20:00 we then marched for a period and until we caught up with some and then she was on. But I'm not sure whether that's the action or not but

20:30 that's where the - we pulled the Rakkasans [187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team] out of trouble they - I think - they were - it was called the Apple Orchard [Battle] thing. Yeah.

**Was the apple orchard, your first contact?**

Well, I think it was the

21:00 battalion's first contact really. Yeah.

**And as stretcher bearer, where would you be positioned?**

Well, as I explained

21:30 previously that each company had their how they had their own discretion with stretcher bearers who some liked them to be on the front, some liked them to pick up and do their things afterwards. But we in Dog Company found that

22:00 you were in with the front troops, you minimised the problem of bleeding, you and you got to them very quickly. And so we could bind the bloke up, stick some morphine into him,

22:30 and then let him lay there and then someone coming afterwards would have picked him up.

**And who would give you the signal to move forward? To attend the wounded?**

23:00 Well, you'd find out in the briefing what you were going to do, where this situation, is and

23:30 I've lost me train of thought but and if there was one, one of us would go with the forward section. If there was two of us, well, one of us would stop back and coordinate the blokes

24:00 coming after. So they picked them up and removed them. Because it's too late, if they've been mortally wounded and you've had to pull out, or retreat then it means that you've lost your man. So, if the man has been hit badly, we can do what we can for him, stop his blood flow, and his pain,

24:30 maybe bind him up or whatever. And then someone else can grab him but it's too late then to - if you've got to go out then you have to leave him, you can't carry him.

**And what sort of**

25:00 **stretcher did you have?**

Oh, just a army stretcher, I don't know what they were called.

**Just like a canvas between two poles?**

Yeah, canvas, two poles. Yeah.

**And was that reasonably light to carry?**

Oh yeah.

**And did you have a medical kit?**

Mmm.

**And what sort of things**

25:30 **were in your medical kit?**

Bandages, morphine capsules,

26:00 some tape. Just general things like that. Nothing big. We were only there to bind or whatever - if a man was immobilised then we'd put him on his feet and put him out.

**And when you say, you were carrying morphine, was that in injections**

26:30 **or...?**

Mmm.

**So you would administer injections?**

A little ampoule of - stick it in and push it in and away she went.

**And how would you know when to administer the injection or not?**

Well the amount of a bloke's pain tells you when he's and so

27:00 you inject him and then you've got to be careful that it's not done again. But this would be done by word of mouth, that I'd tell him, "You've got morphine, you've had morphine, tell whoever you go to that you've had it." Because they're going to give you another one and then you're addicted, as quick as that.

27:30 **Did you - you might not have had time, but I'm just wondering if you wrote anything down on a card or...?**

No, no. Theoretically, you're supposed to but you don't even bother with that, no we never bothered with that. You're supposed to identify him and whatever, but I never did.

28:00 **Was that because you didn't have time?**

Mainly.

**And the medical kit that you were carrying, was that in a box, or was it just in a bag slung around your shoulder?**

Just a bag. A very small one.

28:30 **And did you carry water?**

No, only my own water bottle that's all. Not for - not to administer to anyone. Although we frequently did. But I don't recall we ever had a large water bottle or anything of that nature, extra but, no only to, only for our own

29:00 purposes.

**And did you also carry your own personal weapon?**

Mmm.

**What were you carrying?**

Well, I carried an Owen gun [machine gun] .

29:30 And sometimes a rifle, but and frequently you lost them because you'd put them down to tend to someone then move along and but hence I made it my business to get a brace of pistols, which

30:00 I wore for a while, 'cos then I'd never lose them. But because when you're - when you've got to pick someone up, you haven't got time to get your weapon or and there's no way it's been moved or - then but the pistols always come in handy.

**So the submachine gun got in the way a bit?**

Anything does.

30:30 Particularly when you're - when you're in close contact then you're nothing, everything gets in the road, cos then you've got to try and pick the man up sometimes and carry him. And that's the trouble.

**Do you mean over your shoulder or...?**

Which ever way you can.

31:00 **So when you say you got a brace of pistols, does that mean you had two in holsters or? What did you have, can you...?**

Two, .45s [pistols] . And they were American army issue. And so I get one on each hip, a brace

31:30 of pistols.

**And what sort of - can you just tell us about I guess, if you can remember your first contact and**

32:00 **take us through what happened in your first contact?**

No.

**Can't remember? Just a typical kind of situation, then, if you had a contact and it was fairly fierce, what would be the routine for going and tending the wounded?**

Well, depending on your circumstances, you'd - when a man goes down you have to

32:30 assess what he's got, fix him up accordingly, and that means you - you're not a medical man but you're - you can see he's got a hole in the head. Well, then you have to make sure he's dead and leave him.

33:00 **But if somebody was dead, would you take the dog tags [ID tags] off?**

No, no, no that's for the section commander to do but I could possibly give them to him but I don't remember ever doing so. But I do know there's a man in

33:30 Perth, Alex Crowell, who I certified dead, and he's one of the top artists over there now, has been for years. But yeah. Anyway.

34:00 **When did you find out that he wasn't dead?**

Immediately, I saw he's dead, he's got two holes through his head. Immediately. So...

**What, he woke up?**

No, no, no, no. I found out he was dead immediately because of these two holes through the puggaree [band] of his hat, that went right through but they were a burp gun [submachine gun] , and

34:30 not very high calibre. But someone else must have come along and they picked him up and the next thing I saw that he was in the paper about his painting ability. So, one for Alex. And nil for Ron. I haven't seen him since.

35:00 **And would you be moving through by yourself, or would you be moving through with another medic at the same time?**

All depends on our complement at the time. Mostly if I'm moving through I'd be on my own or

35:30 certainly be sometimes two of us but yeah, a very good, I teamed up with old Slim Towler. He was in the band with me and until

36:00 he, at Kapyong, he was wounded just prior to that but we had a good rapport, Slim and I. And it was a broken bridge at Pakchon, where we were called

36:30 out from our company to come and give Baker Company a hand with their wounded. And Slim and I walked slap dab into them. And they - and so we had to paddle the river and

37:00 we had this bloke in this old boat, it was on a - and the enemy was all around and so we went to this village, and we got this, it was - old tin boat, and we slapped this bloke in and then we went paddling around. Well, the river was slow and fast and it was as deep as blazes

37:30 and I'm at the front, trying to paddle and Slim hopped out the back because we were sinking, and anyway he pushed it and I pulled it and we - and remember this was sub zero temperature, and he was a man of - shit, I was what, nineteen, twenty. Something like that. Anyway Slim was eleven years older

38:00 than me. And he was an ex 6 Divvy man from New Guinea. And it - he had, had a wound from the Second World War and it give him something or other but they had to send him out, he wasn't any good after that but.

38:30 **So that was action at Broken Bridge at Pakchon? That would have been October, 1950, so it would have been-**

Pretty early.

**It was still pretty early but it was starting to get quite cold, I imagine. And you were paddling**

**without - you - were you paddling with your hands or...?**

Both hands.

**In a very cold river.**

39:00 **And did you get the wounded man to safety?**

Yep.

**Well that's quite extraordinary that you - how come you had to go up the river,...?**

Well there was a broken bridge there, the Yanks [Americans] had bombed it

39:30 and it was all sunken in, you know rocks and so, Slim and I crawled up the rocks and we got - and the Baker Company had gone further on. We went into this village and it was all burning and looking for some sort of old boat or something we could use as a boat,

40:00 cos you couldn't carry him over the rocks. 'Cos they were too jagged and depending on the man's condition, it probably would have killed him anyway. So and that's when we got this boat and loaded him in and away we went. But the

40:30 river was flowing too fast and it was too cold but - we started to sink and so Slim hopped off the back and swum around there and pushed it and I - so we got over and - we got him out, he's alive, but no one can tell me his name. I've asked the Baker Company blokes.

41:00 But I don't know.

41:30 End of tape

## Tape 6

00:31 ... nice big bronze doors, so they hurled up at that time we had a seventeen pounder [gun], which is for blowing up tanks. And someone said, "Hey! Hey! Let's pull up the seventeen pounder." They shoved it - the door was off - so I don't know what happened, but no one ever got anything out of it. But not that it was any good to us.

**So how did you come across the bank,**

01:00 **was it just calling - just going through Korea on...?**

Oh, we were just going through a village, through a town and here's the bank and the bank doors, we'd have to give them a try but.

**So did you break the doors down the first time?**

Oh yeah, we blew them off, yeah. But they - there was lots of money in there too. In the end we,

01:30 a bloke got back to Japan and they were all brand spanking new, too. And he said, "They're not worth a bumper." So that night as we lit our fire to have our tea, I was throwing them all on the fire. And millions of won, not worth a cent.

**And how did they burn?**

Well, sufficient to get our tea cooked anyway.

**And what happened the second time?**

02:00 I don't know, I didn't get to see the end of it but I do know the seventeen pounder shot the doors off and I was told there was no money in there but.

**What else were souvenirs that were collected along the way?**

02:30 Well, I think the country's too poor to have souvenirs. I don't remember anyone desecrating any temples or so there

03:00 was none of that and it's too poor to - there was nothing - no food, no nothing there. So souvenirs as such was not in the name of the game.

03:30 **What were your first impressions of the people of Korea, the Koreans?**

Not very good. We came off the ship, we marched a night or two and got on some very antiquated railway,

- 04:00 and we were there for a couple of hours. And we all watched was the Koreans shooting kids with a small calibre rifle. No, a .22 [firearm] that were trying to pinch stuff from the - and some of the blokes got a bit annoyed about this. And they had to
- 04:30 tell them in no uncertain manner, to get out of there, leave the kids alone or else they'd use a big - heavier calibre on them. But - and I saw them bring some prisoners. And one with legs cut off, between the - and leave him the two streaks of his - he's on his, you know, pulling himself with his hands but
- 05:00 the two streaks of the blood from his legs. But that showed us that they were very brutal, and didn't care a cuss for anybody. They were always brutal, and but of course they paid for it in the long run.
- 05:30 They were monsters, cruel.

**Is this the South Koreans that you're talking about or are you talking about the North Koreans?**

The South Koreans. They're just as bad as the north. There's no difference, they

- 06:00 yes, it's just the same, just the same.

**You were over there with the United Nation forces, what other forces were positioned with you on the frontline?**

Well, of course,

- 06:30 we went there and became - the only Australian battalion and we were put into a British brigade which is three battalions and which is not an independent brigade as such, it's just three brigades,
- 07:00 battalions. And we became the Commonwealth - British Commonwealth 27th Brigade. Now, a short while later, the 28th Brigade turned up they were an independent brigade. Which means they could act independently, we couldn't we had nothing, we had no, we did have machines of
- 07:30 our own but no mortars, machine guns, artillery, tanks, they - we never had any of that but the 28th did. And so wherever they needed a gap in the line that needed to be filled up they put us in there and they became and we became part of the line which could be
- 08:00 any name. 1st Division, 27th, the 2nd Division, we'd be plugged in there and whereas the 28th couldn't, they were too cumbersome, they had too much, they were independently - could (UNCLEAR bob) independently but - and so we became the
- 08:30 now then we came the 28th again, with the Canadians- Australians, Canadians and the British. But we'd been alongside the French and the Turks, who got a hell of a hammering.
- 09:00 And I can tell you a strange story about that. A very good friend of mine, who - this was after Kapyong, he - I was getting out, I was the last man off the position, now they'd all gone off Kapyong and I was the last one
- 09:30 there. With a bloke named Bill Nimmer. And Bill was helping me get along, see. And I said to Bill, "Those Chinese are gone." He said, "For Christ's sake, they're gone alright, let's you and I just..." And humping along and anyway I'd look around the position, there's no one there. And I find out that one of the
- 10:00 blokes from 11 Platoon, of which I wasn't a member of that, we were all Australian and he was taken prisoner. Anyway, I saw him about ten years later. In Melbourne. I said, "Listen, where were you?" I said, "I was the last man off that position, and I never saw you around there." And he said, "No, but I saw you."
- 10:30 And he said, "I saw you and Nimmo, getting along." He said. And I said, "Why didn't you call out?" He said, "Because I noticed you started in a half run." We were doing a three legged race, see. He said, "I saw you do this and I looked over there and here was millions of these buggers." He said, "I thought
- 11:00 Jesus, if I call out to him, he'll only come over and get me and then we'll all be done. She'll all get done." I said, "Yeah." So, what had happened, is a shell had caved his hole in and he'd you know, come unconscious, anyway.
- 11:30 So when he looked over and he saw me, and he saw these thousands of Chinese, I can remember at the time, I said to Bill, "For Christ's sake, look at that." And there they were, lining up the top of the hills. Ten deep, now mind you, we had the - that day
- 12:00 up until that time, we had held a position where they couldn't get through. And but as we left our position, and withdrew they came up and they were millions. And he said, "Yeah, well that's what it was." He said, "I couldn't yell out to you cos you'd have come over and they'd have got you too." So I said,
- 12:30 "Oh well." So when the Chinese got him, they'd already, they'd already gunned the Turks, the Turks were in a very bad position, they shouldn't have been there, but nonetheless. And when they'd taken

- them to this camp, there's an English and all the English and
- 13:00 this bloke said, only, "Yabber-yabber- yabber." Didn't know what, and the Chinese didn't know what to say. So he said to one of the Turks, he got a couple of Turks talk English and he said, "Hey, tell them I'm one of you, will you?" He said, "If they get one out." He said, "I'm gone." So he spent the rest of his time, in the POW [Prisoner of War] camp,
- 13:30 where he couldn't talk except English and of course the Chinese could understand English but couldn't understand the Turks and the captured Turks are saying, "No, no, no, he come from up north you know, he no..." Something in English. So they looked after him and
- 14:00 yeah, very strange story that, but he was a great bloke too. But so nonetheless we -
- I was asking about the other Commonwealth troops you were with, I was just going to ask what the Canadians were like to fight with or**
- 14:30 **to fight alongside of, I should say?**
- Well, we didn't really - I've got to tell you, they're dirty buggers. 'Cos, we were always taught, that you had to clean up after you. And that was always also when you
- 15:00 when you live for some time, in a trench or a hole or something, then naturally you've got to nature takes its course and you fill up your hole, more or less. But that's one thing we noticed, whenever we took over the Canadians and particularly the French
- 15:30 Canadians, that they were always filthy and dirty. And that - and a couple of times, our boss had to go and say, "Righto, come on you mugs, go and clean your holes out." We got to come over and take yours over, you see." So yeah, and but I suppose they were
- 16:00 we never had much to do with them other than that. On leave we were always fighting with them. But course the Yanks weren't much better but remember we had a - I'd say a - we had an esprit de corps
- 16:30 which was recognised right throughout and the - but this is because we had done so much training in every unit, we knew we were good. And we proved it all along the line. When you remember, Kapyong was a
- 17:00 have you see our citation? Our battalion citation? We're the only battalion that wears a citation on the - was on the breast, now it's on the arms but you know, I'll get it for you, I've got it.
- 17:30 **If we can - can we have a look at it when we change the tapes then? Keep saying what you were saying about the citation, we can look at it later.**
- Well, we - you've got to think of the
- 18:00 history of the Chinese were going to take the world over. So it said. And there's some thought in some analysts' eyes that if it hadn't had been for Kapyong, there wouldn't have been
- 18:30 a Vietnam. There wouldn't have been anything in Vietnam because when they were stopped at Kapyong and remember this was the brilliance of them, Callaghan in his book says that there's 300,000 on our front. Well, that's - there are about 700 of us. And that included all our echelons, that's your
- 19:00 infantry transport and your artillery and everything else and - but nonetheless he claims - and of course they wouldn't have, they'd have kept going through Korea and then onto Vietnam and that's and then I got the end of them in Malaya. Oh yeah, they were going to go all through there, and
- 19:30 take the world over, more or less. But now, I forget what I was saying. But - what was I saying?
- Can I ask you when K-Force joined the battalion?**
- Oh yeah,
- 20:00 they joined a couple of months before we went to Korea.
- So they joined you in Japan?**
- Mmm.
- Can I just take a step back and ask you about when K-Force joined 3RAR, how well prepared were they for Korea or for combat?**
- Well, they weren't very well prepared at all. They had
- 20:30 individuals that had the skills but they had to be integrated into a unit. And they certainly brought our unit up to scratch, because of their individual skills. But remember that as distinct from the
- 21:00 K-Force, the regular army lads that were in Japan, were the highest, highly trained of anyone that ever

left Australia. Because that's all they did. And three months scaling the hills, and then three months around about the barracks. And so they were fit and so much so the buggers were always fighting, they were

21:30 and but when the K-Force got there, with this experience, added to them. They compliment them rather well. There was a good mix. Yeah.

**And when you finally got to Korea, what was the terrain like?**

Well, I can best answer that by the Koreans

22:00 have a saying, that "When the Lord created the world, he had some stuff left over so he shunted it and called it, Korea." And that was it. You could sit on one hill and look at the big, the peaks, and the peaks and the peaks as far as the eye could see. Although North Korea was the bread basket of Europe at that time.

22:30 And it had some magnificent flat areas which the south had nil. And it was a very hilly place, yeah.

**Well, let's talk about Kapyong and how that began, how..**

23:00 Well, it began we were in - what do you call it? I'll get that in a minute, but the South Koreans were and the Yanks were

23:30 collapsed in there and the Koreans come barrelling down the main road. But and on one side of this main road, was the Canadians, on the other side was us. And we held

24:00 a brigade front, which was three battalion front. But just prior to they got there, the other units of the brigade had to go back to England and so we were holding the lot. But so much so that so much, the Diggers [Australian soldiers] were so well thought of that

24:30 the Middlesex who was part of our, and the other was the Argyles [British regiment] , they - the Argyles were getting on the ship, and the word came down that the Diggers were in trouble. So

25:00 they all about-turned and marched back. And so much so that when I think - I don't know what it was, but somewhere

25:30 in the last couple of years in England, the head - had a thing for the King, before the Queen, and the Argyles were first in line, that'd be first in the queue

26:00 they waved all the Diggers through. But yeah, so they said to us, "You got to make this hole in the..." - so we took up our positions, with

26:30 A Company on the floor - on the road and Baker Company and Charlie Company in reserve and Dog Company's right on the peak of the hill.

**Which hill was this?**

Oh I don't know. It's Kapyong somewhere. Anyway,

27:00 they come through and A Company stopped them in their tracks and then of course, going up from the road, the hillside, going a bit deeper, bit deeper and then Baker and Baker Company had a an effort

27:30 where they - when this mob came from the - from where A Company had been, and surrounded them. They lost track of their ammunition but and they were giving Baker a bit of a time so they chased them off the hill with their bayonets and...

**This is the Chinese?**

No,

28:00 no this was the - Baker Company chased the Chinese off. And anyway when I - when they got them off, they turn around they go up and here they are in their holes, this other mob had come up round the back of them. And so they had their - to go up all the way up this hill with their bayonets on and they shot them out. A great show that. Anyway,

28:30 after the others had all gone, Dog Company was about to be last, and we were the only ones fighting at the time because you see, there's a thing called, enfiladed fire and defiladed fire. And it's where one man can hold off a herd, and this is what had happened. We had a defile where only a few could get through at a time

29:00 and we kept them there for a full day. And anyway they - Charlie Company and A Company went up the road and pulled out and Baker Company came up through us. And so

29:30 that's how it was, we were kept there and of course the Yanks napalmed us. They didn't realise who we were, they thought that the Chinese had got this far, we were the Chinese. But yeah, it was a - and yet we'd have the- of course

30:00 you know they put a silk - what do you call them, colours and for aircraft recognition and they bombed us straight on the colours so - but and that's when it started to come apart for us. And so but it was

30:30 it was quite a show.

**What action did Don Company - Dog Company see in that? You say that B Company had moved through you, and you were positioned on the hill, but where were the Chinese positioned in relation to where you were at that time?**

They were right below us, right around us only one access south,

31:00 but they couldn't get up that last few feet, if you like because - without getting gun that they were - but Baker Company of course had surrendered their part of the hill. And it was no

31:30 use, we couldn't come up the other side but say, looking at towards you, on that obverse side, where they - "it's alright it's only me" - me war wound.

**Do you want a break for a moment?**

No, I'm okay. It's - so

32:00 and they couldn't get up, could get up before the defile but Baker Company could come round us but they couldn't come up on this side either and there was no, that side, they weren't going through there cos there was no one there. And so the only way out was towards me. This side and Baker Company come and around and so we

32:30 were left on the position as - anyway, they after a while they, there was only one if you pass that citation I'll show you the -

33:00 **How long were you dug in at the top of the hill in Kapyong?**

Well, some were dug in, some couldn't dig in because of the very nature of the hill but I suppose we were about twelve hours.

33:30 **And Dog Company was seeing action throughout this, prior to the napalm being dropped, how heavy were the casualties?**

Oh, not very heavy. Not very heavy but

34:00 in the instance of Baker Company and A Company they could have been very great because they're both pushed out of their positions. So actually A Company carried a good deal of the casualties

34:30 we were up keeping these people off the hill. Which is very good if you were in that position. But no, I don't remember how the - but to give you an idea, read what it says about -

**Well, it says here that there were six casualties in the section and that you made six separate trips attending and evacuating casualties under heavy enemy fire. What memory do**

35:00 **you have of that?**

What can you say. That was about it I guess.

**Six trips?**

Mmm.

**How many men would you take out?**

Oh one at a time. I could only carry one.

**What about the walking wounded?**

35:30 Well, that included them but only left one. That was a bloke named Harry Ritchie. But he was a very big man and I'd been hit in the head and in the leg and I wasn't and he was dead, anyway. So Harry he had to pay the price to be left there.

36:00 **When you were going in, were the men calling out for medic and...?**

No, no, no. No, they were too close to the enemy. Here they were, remember we were only a thing like a tennis court and that's, we were holding this tennis court.

36:30 And keeping all these buggers at bay, but no. And of course you had to, if one went down or he was bugged, you got to get him out for when you have to eventually all get out.

**So were you watching these men get hit and then going in?**

No, I was in there.

**I'm trying to ascertain**

37:00 **how you knew that someone had been hit and...?**

No, I'm in there. I'm in amongst them and I can see one go down and I got to get him out before they get him.

**And how were you getting to them, was Slim with you?**

No, no, no.

**Who was the other stretcher bearer with you?**

There wasn't any stretcher bearer with me.

**You were on your own?**

Yeah.

**Carrying them out?**

Yeah.

37:30 **How did you carry them out?**

On my shoulder mainly. But I think perhaps I'm telling you rather badly, here. Because you seem to,

38:00 I seem to have told you something wrong.

**No, I understand it perfectly now, it is clearer for me...how you got from each man to another.**

Well, I could have touched everyone. I say, it was no more than a tennis court wide.

38:30 And these people had to get up the hill. And of course, every now and again because of their fire power, someone would be hit. And it was my job to make sure that they are hit and not only wounded are collected and something done about their wounds, but they're not left - see that's part of my

39:00 business but. And that's why I very rarely bothered with a weapon, because it was not my thing to - unless I had to, to go shooting the enemy, my thing was to look after my troops and get them out.

**And do you remember treating any of**

39:30 **these six men?**

Oh, I suppose I did but.

**And how far did you take them back?**

Oh, be a couple of hundred yards I suppose.

40:00 **And where was the medic?**

I was the medic.

**So you took them a couple of hundred yards back and just based them all together?**

I give them over to the company commander. If you've got a query, there something's not gelling very well.

**No that's fine.**

40:30 **End of tape**

## Tape 7

00:31 **Just one question I had before we keep going and talking about Kapyong, before Kapyong, in the months leading up to that battle, I was just wondering whether news about a United Nations resolution to end the Korean War had filtered through to you, did you hear about that at all?**

01:00 I don't remember. I don't think it made much difference anyway. No.

**Don't think it would have affected...?**

No.

**anything?**

No.

**Well, you were talking to Louise [interviewer] about being surrounded on the hill, at Kapyong. And**

01:30 **you making those six trips or six collections of wounded, I guess, that was a very intense two days of action, was there any time to rest, at all during that time, that battle?**

Oh yes, there's always time to rest.

02:00 You always paired off and you have a fifty percent stand-to all the time. So one of you sleeps, and the other one keeps your eye out.

**And did you rest in a hole or not?**

02:30 Oh, would have been, yes.

**Did you have any food with you?**

Well, I don't believe - the only food would be there would be that which is carried by somebody. But

03:00 I don't think there was any food delivered to us. Not that I can recall anyway. Although they would have tried but nothing I can remember.

**And what sort of rations did you have?**

Well,

03:30 I don't know. They quite probably would have been American 24 hour rations but I don't remember.

**Well tell us, you got wounded twice**

04:00 **during this battle, the first time was just in the temple, how did that wound come about?**

I think I just stuck my head in the wrong way. Certainly in the way that I shouldn't have. How can anyone come about

04:30 you just put your head in the wrong direction I guess.

**Was it noisy, what was going on, was there just a lot of fire and grenades going off...?**

Oh, very noisy.

05:00 **So when you got that wound were you standing to or were you attending someone who was wounded or, do you remember?**

I was

05:30 just going about me business. Yeah. Just going about me business.

**And what was the wound from, was it a grenade or...?**

No, quite possibly would have been a round. [bullet] Because it went straight and there

06:00 straight across in there.

**So that bullet was - just whizzed past?**

Yeah, well it come in my direction anyway.

**Did you feel it at the time?**

Oh yeah.

06:30 **So you're the medic attending to wounded, so what happens when the medic is wounded?**

You slap a thing around your skull and tie it off and that's it.

**So you tended your own wound?**

Mmm.

**And did it bleed very much?**

No, not much. Head wounds don't

07:00 bleed. Not much anyway.

**And was that on the first day or the second day?**

Oh, be on the second day. Things never warmed up on the first day, they did on the second.

**So most of the action happened on the second day?**

Mmm.

07:30 **And did you have a sense of being surrounded?**

Well, I think if you look at your notes I didn't say they were surrounded. I said that people couldn't get to us from various areas but yeah, we

08:00 had a sense of - we knew that A Company had gone. And we knew that Baker Company were going, so that meant they had to come around to us. But they could only get to us on our immediate front. Because of the

08:30 those things that prevented them from doing so, the mountain in itself and so.

**Well, perhaps I'll ask another question. Did you have a sense of being outnumbered?**

Oh no, no. I think that

09:00 whenever you're fighting someone like the Chinese, who swamp whatever they're going to do by numbers, that you'll have to look towards the end result which is being run over by lots of people. But

09:30 no, we didn't - but we knew because of the front, the very front we had to consider, now, every digger in the place knew that because he was covering this front. It was going to be a wide one, by numbers, and we haven't got the numbers, so they have to have them. And that's

10:00 it in very simplified form.

**And during this action was there a time at all, that you were scared?**

No. No. No, you really haven't got time to give it

10:30 any thought. No.

**Too busy.**

Yep, no time to give that sort of thing a thought, because there are others that are depending on you, you see. And you can't afford to be killed, oh no, heavens no, if someone's left in the grease

11:00 if you are.

**What sort of injuries were you seeing or tending to?**

Oh I couldn't tell you. But whatever injuries are possible in the body that's what you're there

11:30 for. Yep.

**I'm wondering if any of them were really shocking to you or made you feel a bit queasy?**

Oh no. Hell you're - when you're in it every day of your life, no nothing surprises you.

12:00 **Well, there were a lot of casualties on the Chinese side, can you tell us how your**

12:30 **second injury came about?**

Well, during the course of things they called for some air cover. And the navy the American Navy sent some

13:00 Corsairs [aircraft] over. And they bombed us fair and square in the middle of us with napalm [flammable, gasoline based weapon] . And of course that set it all off. So after we managed to - after several times, get these navy pilots to tell them that they've got the wrong blokes,

13:30 they buzzed off. Then there were all sorts of fires, small ones that kept, that played the hill, people of their holes, of course they always line them with their grenades and things you see. And

14:00 with the prevailing winds sweeping up into 10 Platoon's position that's where all the fire went. Now, I don't know if you've ever seen a napalm bombing, heavy but.

**Just a picture of it.**

Well, they're just as bad as they seem and we had

14:30 taken many a position with napalm but never thought we'd be on the end of it. But the - I went over to 10 Platoon to see how they were going, cos - if there was any wounded

15:00 and I'd just come across a bloke in a foxhole. And I grabbed him out and just as I pulled him out the

grenade went off and got some slopes in my leg but.

**And did**

15:30 **you utter any words of frustration or...?**

Oh, I did indeed. Yes, I certainly did.

**So they're not printable words?**

I don't imagine they were but.

**Did it hurt?**

16:00 Not initially, no. But I don't think it hurt me ever. No, they - I don't recall much but I don't think they hurt me at all but.

16:30 **Did you have to wrap another dressing around it...?**

Oh, I did yeah. I wrapped a field dressing around it and went on me way.

**And how much longer after that was it before you left the hill?**

17:00 Oh, it'd have to be a couple of hours I guess. But I had an episode with a very good friend of mine who was in 10 Platoon,

17:30 and he was caught right in the middle of the napalm. And he - his fingers were all burnt off, his feet were burnt off. The flesh was hanging off his face. He was something to see. And I was sitting on the company headquarters, sitting down, and

18:00 this apparition came and sat next to me. And I didn't know what to say or anything cos I couldn't recognise him, you couldn't - they were all burnt off and they're hanging off his - the flesh was hanging off his arms. And I turned to speak to him, and he said,

18:30 "Jesus Christ, Nugget!" He said, "You're having a rough day."

19:00 But I recognise him by his voice then. But anyway, he lived.

19:30 **And at the time was there anything that as a medic you could do to help him in that?**

Not a thing. And then shortly after that we had to pull out

20:00 and - by the way I'd - broke me neck too, oh yeah, when they - when I pulled in - the grenades went off as I pulled him out it blew me down the hill. But on the side where the enemy was, you see, so on this side. And so when I took a bit of getting up the hill.

20:30 And this fella, mate called Ray Cullen, he - Ray left his position and helped me pull the wounded or what was left on the - and get carried out. But

21:00 of course every move he made, you can imagine he was in agony. And so Ray said, "We better look at these characters and get him to carry him down." And

21:30 of course they're - they give it a bit of a jolt, you know deliberately, and he once, and so we - I was in charge of the evacuations, but he - I said to Ray, "Watch these buggers. So try and tip him off, you know what to do."

22:00 And sure enough, Ray keep his eye on these and every time one dropped, 'bang', he'd get clobbered but.

22:30 **Well, by this stage you were walking wounded, yourself, so how did you get to a field hospital?**

I walked all the way. According to the citation, six miles or something.

23:00 I don't know. But I went to a Indian Field Ambulance and then by train down to Pusan and then to Osaka Hospital by plane but.

**What was the feeling like coming down out of that position,**

23:30 **did you have a sense of victory, or were you too concerned about your own wound?**

Oh no, more of relief I think. And but when we, Billy Nimmo and I

24:00 started walking down and we saw these characters all up on our hill and we thought that, we're going to cop it now. And I said to Bill, "Come on let's move then." So we had a three legged race and we were going along and just as they [the Chinese] were coming started to stream down the hill the New Zealand artillery got the lot of them. 'Bang, bang, bang'. I saw the whole front row of these people

disappear.

24:30 Scores of them, just disappear and so.

**So you had a sense of relief and you were down and then you walked**

25:00 **to the field hospital?**

Mmm. Oh I walked down to a river, which was a pick-up point and then they transported me by jeep and to the hospital.

**And then you had to say, "See you later," to your battalion to go off to Osaka?**

Oh no, I never saw them. That was the last

25:30 I saw them in the action but I went to an American hospital in Pusan. And the only thing I can remember there was mountains of chickens everywhere. Jesus it was a - and so we pinched ourselves a few to keep away the pains of hunger and then this American hospital I was - that was a real

26:00 eye opener.

**Why was that?**

It was such a huge modern place. It was unbelievable, I'd never seen anything like it. But it was, something incredible but and then after a few days there, they woke up. I was, I don't think I knew where I was,

26:30 but I do know that I was given a Purple Heart [American combat medal] which I'm afraid I didn't have any - didn't show any whatsername,

27:00 but I threw it back at them and said, "No, we - we don't have those sort of things." So, "What are you?" "What am I?" So was then I had to disclose, I'm Australian. So they outfitted me in their uniform and there was a couple of Poms [English], in with me, who

27:30 Gloucester people, you know the Gloucester story. Well, would you like to hear the true one? But the Gloucesters they were overrun the night before and of course like Poms always, they never got any money. But I had pockets full of it. From - don't know where I got it from but I had it.

28:00 And so we got - we were on the main railway line between Tokyo and Kure and - which Osaka's point, but I said, "Look," said to these Poms, "I'm headed for Kure Hospital." And I got all me papers and - so I

28:30 we got to Kure and I said, "Look, I've got some money, do you want to come and have a bit of a move around and..." So, "Ooh, yeah, yeah. Righto mate." They'd be in that. Being Poms and so after a couple of days I thought, oh I better call in and

29:00 so no one questioned me and I said, "Well, here I am." Got me papers and they said, "Yeah, we're sending you over to Miyajima." Which was a beautiful place. Opposite Hiroshima, but it's - the holy island of Miyajima and

29:30 they had magnificent recuperation place there. And for which - I was sent out in disgrace but I was - when I went - when I got there, a fella named Jack Green who came from A Company, he was there.

30:00 And him and I decided we'd go out on the booze one night. And the next day, the OC said, "Got you - and you Green and you Dunque, get rid of you two and..." And I thought, what's he doing? He's pointing to Jack and calling him Dunque? And do you know I never could recall why.

30:30 Anyway, I was in Canberra and coming back and this, bloke couldn't speak and I got on the plane seat with this fella and his missus [wife], and she said something about - called him, Green and I said, "Hey, hang on,

31:00 you're not Jack Green are you? From Tassie?" And he says, "Yeah." He says, "Yeah, Nugget didn't you know me." I said, "Jesus Christ, how things, can you know." 50 years later. I said, "One thing, Jack's always puzzled me. What was that bloke bawling me out for and telling me that you're a no good and..." I said, "What was he on about?"

31:30 And Jack said, "That's because you pissed in his fish pond." "Oh." I said. But just goes to show you.

**That was after you'd had a few beers?**

Oh yeah.

**Did the beers help you unwind from that**

32:00 **intense action that you'd seen on the frontline in Korea?**

I don't know whether it did or not. All I know, I liked the beer. But who knows?

**Well, I was just wondering how your nerves were by the time you - after you'd recovered?**

32:30 Alright.

**Did you have any second thoughts about going back to rejoin your battalion?**

Well, I did. but it was a long time later but

33:00 **Well, you mentioned earlier that you spent about a month recovering from your wounds and in Osaka.**

Oh yeah well, then rejoined the battalion and finished out my time there and...

**I was just wondering if going back, after you'd recovered was a problem?**

No. No.

33:30 **Where did you rejoin your battalion?**

Where? No idea. In the Imjin somewhere.

**The Imjin River?**

Mmm.

34:00 **So you went back to the frontline?**

Mmm. Mmm.

**And did you see any more action?**

Oh yeah. I saw the normal bits and pieces that we used to do on an almost daily basis. But I was also in the Operation Commando.

34:30 That was the biggest operation of the war, there as far as we were concerned.

**What did that involve?**

Well, it involved usual thing. Fighting, you know but,

35:00 and you might have heard the or seen the Yank Heartbreak Ridge, well that was on the same line. And the Yanks tried for weeks and weeks to take it and in fact our - the Yankee general in charge said

35:30 "We'll get the Australians to do it." And our OC said, "No." Our OC said, "No, they've seen too much already." Otherwise I mightn't have been here. And that would have been a terrible tragedy if I'd have been killed, you know. I had so much more living to do.

36:00 **What was the general mood of the battalion by this stage?**

They reckoned they were invincible.

**So,**

36:30 **what did your battalion do then?**

Well, I left after Operation Commando, and I was on the line one night and next morning the runner come up and said, "You're due to go home today." I said, "Good, let's be off." And so there we go and away I went, that was it.

37:00 **And how battle fatigued do you think you were?**

Oh, I don't know about this battle fatigue nonsense.

**But you were ready to go home, to leave the frontline.**

Oh yeah, but that doesn't mean anything. Everyone who goes there is ready right in the beginning. But

37:30 I never - I don't know about this battle fatigue business.

**So there was not too much contact or during Operation Commando or there was?**

Oh, yes as I told you, this was the biggest thing since we were there. Oh yeah.

38:00 **And how successful was it?**

Totally successful. We they - Dog Company

38:30 on right from the beginning, busted up a Chinese brigade. And after that it all went downhill for the Chinese, yes, it's - it was a - it's been the one action which

- 39:00 it's always been considered by all the people that were there to be the supreme soldiering action of the whole lot. And yet it - it never got the kudos that Kapyong did.
- 39:30 **Why do you think that was?**
- Well, we were on the attack, we weren't on the defence, I think that's the reason that when people compare the two
- 40:00 that in the old British tradition of supreme sacrifices and it's always the defenders that get the kudos but no that was a great show that one.
- 40:30 **And how busy was it for you?**
- Very busy, yeah. It wasn't as sharp as Kapyong but it was certainly more steady.
- 41:00 **And were your own wounds fully healed?**
- Oh yeah, yeah.

## Tape 8

- 00:31 **Ron, before we come to the end of your first tour, I just wanted to ask you, what was it about Operation Commando that really stood out in your mind?**
- The immensity of it. The comprehensive play by the battalion
- 01:00 the whole battalion - generally in an action you've got one or two companies involved and the others not so much but everybody committed themselves or all the companies were committed in such a way that they all one couldn't be singled out from another. And it was the hugeness of it,
- 01:30 we never stopped. And I think that was - that was it. That, all involved and the - how often they were involved and the immensity of the whole action.
- And how long after Operation Commando before you finished your tour?**
- One day.
- 02:00 They said, "We've got one more and this is it. We've got them now, they're done." The following morning a bloke said to me, "What're you doing here Nugget, you're supposed to be at home." I said, "What? What do you mean?" And he says, "Well." He says, "You're going out today." I said, "You're telling me I am." And away I hopped out of me hole and away I went. Yep, one day.
- And you came back to Australia and did some**
- 02:30 **courses as you mentioned earlier today, but one of the other things you did was instructing national servicemen, what were you instructing them on?**
- Oh, basic instruction for recruits, that's all.
- And how did you find the national servicemen adapting to army life?**
- Well, to be frank with you, I wasn't there long enough I took meself
- 03:00 some leave. But no, I - it wasn't for me.
- Well, you were saying before we started rolling about the other instructors with national service.**
- Well, these were fellas that they'd got out of the regular army and put into the national service to instruct
- 03:30 in the basics there. Now, a lot of blokes who's done some - a good deal of time in Korea, and they hadn't been promoted and they went to the national service and they found that these fellas outranked them. Although they didn't have the experience and that caused a lot of bother.
- 04:00 A lot of bother.
- Having gone to Korea and now going into instruct with these other men, how did you feel about having had the experience and what they were teaching the national servicemen?**
- Well, it didn't really worry me. No, I just
- 04:30 didn't worry me. I didn't have anything to gain or so, I just disregarded it all.
- And from there you did more training at Puckapunyal?**

Oh, no not really, I was only there a week or two.

05:00 **And then to Lindfield in New South Wales with the regular army? When the second tour of Korea came up did you volunteer for that?**

Mmm.

**Why did you want to go back?**

Well, I don't suppose

05:30 I really wanted to, well there was an episode which at Lindfield where I,

06:00 they were then starting the Special Air Service [SAS] up and the bloke that was doing the recruiting, was Special Air Service, was at Kapyong with me and he's quite a bloke. And he said, he came up and he said, "Nugget,

06:30 we're doing this Special Service recruit," he said, "and immediately I thought of you. Are you interested?" I said, "Yeah, sure." He said, "Alright, you're a number one in the book." But there'd been an altercation

07:00 the night before with some fellas and meself, and so they had to wait for the court martial for - and he said, "You've got to leave right away." I said, "Nope, court martial's on, they won't let me." So, a fella named Archie Dennis,

07:30 and they just said, "Look Nugget, you're going to - what are you going to do about this?" He said, "Do you want to go back to Korea, there's an opportunity?" I said, "Yeah. Give me a week's leave and I'm off." He said, "Alright." I thought that was the best opportunity and the easiest way out of it. So I never got to Clem Keely's this bloke's name. And every time I see Clem, he

08:00 took the Special Air Service over to Vietnam, and he was a big runner at Kapyong with Baker Company. And he's a great bloke but and that's the reason I never got there, that's the reason I went back to Korea.

08:30 So, I did want to go, I was just cos I'd been there and so that was it.

**So you did go back for a second tour is that right? And it was during the stagnant phase of the Korean War?**

Oh yeah, yeah.

**Well, what were your operations in your second tour?**

Well,

09:00 I became section commander of 12 Platoon, the same platoon that's in there. I pulled some strings to get back into Dog Company cos I had a lot of mates and anyone who had a - let's say any rank, non

09:30 commissioned rank in the army they owed me, (UNCLEAR mayor and other) and I just pulled them in, pulled in some of the things owed me, the so...For example, I was due to go to Charlie Company, 2 Battalion and then 3 Battalion, I said, "No." And the bloke was RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] there, he's a mate of mine.

10:00 I said, "Look, Dog Company. Alright?" So they changed it, everyone got shifted sideways and I got Dog Company. Yeah. No use having it if you can't pull the rank.

**And you were section commander?**

Yeah, the second time round.

**How did that change your feeling within Dog Company?**

10:30 Well, there was no one there that I knew, I mean, I knew a lot but I hadn't served with anyone, some others came later on, but we all tend to be rather a clique there. And so there was nothing doing so we worked ourselves into the best

11:00 positions and something like - I was trying to think of that bloke's name and he was a sergeant in the army, in the American Army, Sergeant Bilko. And so we weren't doing anything there and so we worked ourselves into the best positions and that's where we stopped.

11:30 Oh, must tell you about the - I had the each company had a canteen. Anyway, I was running the Dog Company canteen.

12:00 And there was many opportunities there if I wanted to take them. But, one night, I was in the tent lines and used to - after the canteen was closed. I used to go and sleep in the tent with the section. One night I woke up and a bloke's ranting and raving, shots going on and off. I thought, "Oh shit." So he said,

- 12:30 and he served with me at Kapyong and he was in this section I was with at Kapyong. And he shouted out, and he's gone off his nut, you see, and he said, "Bring up one of your soldiers, bring out Nugget Dunque." And I said, "Oh, shivers!" So,
- 13:00 and then word went up, "Someone's been shot." I thought, "I'd better go and see to this." So, in his daze, shooting off and everything, he'd shot a bloke in the back. And so he was up, we were on the floor in of this re-entrant and he was up this hill,
- 13:30 with all this gauze covering it. So I thought I'd better go up, frontal assault, he can't see me because I'm down in the shadows with the moon, wasn't coming down so I thought. And then this voice starts up, "Officer Dunque, come back here, I'm ordering you." And I give him a mouthful of abuse. I said, "Shut your mouth you rabbit faced, so and so."
- 14:00 And of course, I knew very well I was - I knew who it was, that if he had a complaint, how's he going to tell I knew, can't do it see. So I thought, oh well. So I give him some more abuse and continued on me way. And eventually got to him, and I brought him down, took his rifle off him and
- 14:30 it was the CO down there and I said, "What're you doing here, sir?" "Was it you yelling out before?" Never said a word, cos you knew very well that you can't - if I'd have already got him a court martial, because if a man's doing a job and he's been given up, you've given his side away. You've given his endeavour
- 15:00 away. And liable to get him killed. And I said to him, "That's no way for you to act. You can't act that way, you're a - you've destroyed everything that's been taught to us." Didn't like that. So, this bloke, in spite of shooting everybody up and wounding one bloke badly, he
- 15:30 was a second timer like me. And he had a bit of pull. And he went to a court martial and I refused to give evidence. I said, "No, I don't believe, I don't even know if he did the job." I said, "All I got was the rifle off him." And so
- 16:00 he said the judge advocate said, "Oh well, I guess if you don't want to, you can't be made." And so he got off. This bloke got off, mind, three months he got, for shooting a bloke in the back, and disturbing and fighting him and shooting rifles off and anyway,
- 16:30 they - so I distinguished meself by getting a bloke off, and -
- 17:00 and that was the end of the - of that episode but - well. And the CO showed himself to be what he was that cos a few months later, the battalion came home. I'd already got home of course, but
- 17:30 and they tell me that the troops on the troop ship were going to throw him overboard and I'd never seen someone treated as he was, named Buckler and it happened in Korea at that time too. That I watched the - a concert party and he said,
- 18:00 he can't tell - he said, "Go and tell the concert party, thankyou." And they all booed him off the stage. I'd never seen it before and - but well, that was Buckler. He was horrific.

**Why was he so disrespected?**

I don't know.

- 18:30 I don't know. But although I have got some inklings of the past, from him on - from these blokes that knew him, I hadn't known him, I'd only been connected with him for a matter of weeks at one time. But they
- 19:00 used to call him, 'Spin', because anyone wondering, he said, "That'll be a spin." Five dollars. Five quid. But no one I knew had a good word for him but certainly I didn't. But I did know one time he said,
- 19:30 "And what're you two doing? What's your job?" And bloke with me said, "Oh, I run the sports store." And he said, "And what do you do?" I said, "I'm his assistant." We never had a sports store and he's just taken over the battalion. And he never forgave me for that.
- 20:00 I know that, but still.....

**Can I just go back to the episode with your mate on the hill, what had cracked for him? Why had...?**

Oh, who knows? Who knows? Who knows?

- 20:30 **Did you see that often amongst men?**

No, no I didn't. This was - there were four awards given for Kapyong, right through the battalion, of which I'm one and this bloke, he had another. His name was Smith, Ron Smith.

- 21:00 And he - and he was in Dog Company too, but I don't know, but he wasn't very let's say he's - he was a

21:30 bomb but he was good one. But I never knew what set him round the bend. But I do know what woke him up when he mentioned my name. And I decided to do something about him.

**Why do you think he called out your name?**

Well, it goes back in the history that at this time,

22:00 the army was - couldn't get recruits and they couldn't get people for the infantry, so they had what they call, "corps conversions." And the corps conversions were coming out because they had long service and most of the lads in the infantry and

22:30 I think Smith was one who'd been reduced. And couldn't get his rank back, and he was saying, "All you corps conversions and all you blokes, this and that, why don't you get a good soldier like Nugget Dunque." And that's when I woke up. To my name, what's he saying? Oh well, and I think that's what sent him round the bend. Was

23:00 following this theme that anyway.

**How did you talk him down?**

I didn't remember, this was thick gauze. You couldn't push it aside with the hand. And

23:30 I can - I knew from where I was following this path you see, and I knew he was in there somewhere within a range of two or three yards, and I called his name. Said, "Hey Smithy!" He said, "That you Nugget?" And I got him. I said, "Yeah." And then I looked straight in and grabbed him. Right through the - only a matter of feet away.

24:00 Cos I couldn't take the chance with him.

**That was an act of bravery in itself?**

And this Buckler, there was an aftermath with this. I'd only just been reduced

24:30 to the ranks, and there was another bloke involved in this. But he was unbeknown to me he was coming behind me. But and strangely enough, he was a Second World War MM [Military Medal]. And so was Smith, so was I and I said...

25:00 And so we had to front the CO the following morning. You know and, I'll get me rank back here. He said, "And you corporal." He said, "I'm promoting you to sergeant." And he said, "You Dunque, I wouldn't promote you if you were the last bloke in the unit." I said, "He'll do me." And out I went. But

25:30 he hated my guts, mind you it was mutual but dare I say, I was promoted and demoted eight times by the way. Which was something of an army record.

**I'm sure there were different instances for every case, but generally,**

26:00 **why were you demoted?**

Oh, being AWL, out of bounds, some similar things like that, you know.

**Small rebellion.**

Something like that.

**So after**

26:30 **your second tour, you came back to Australia and it - how long were you back in Australia, before Malaya?**

Only a few months.

**And in that time, did you get married?**

27:00 Somewhere in there, yeah. Somewhere in there.

**And you joined 2RAR for your posting in Malaya, did you have any training or preparation at Canungra?**

Well, I didn't, no. But most of the battalion did. But

27:30 I did my training in Casula, I joined the assault pioneers then, the battalion. And so I - that was in Casula I did my training.

**And how were you prepared for your service in Malaya?**

28:00 Well, I don't suppose I did any training for the preparation for Malaya but I certainly did a lot with -as a pioneer. And but we got good training at

28:30 pioneers, assault pioneers but and of course most of the blokes in assault pioneers had been in Korea in

my second term.

**And what was the role of the assault pioneers?**

29:00 Well, damned if I know. We used to build bridges and minor ones of course.

29:30 **What service did you do in Malaya?**

Used to patrol all areas, because we'd get word back from the Malaysians themselves, about the

30:00 Chinese infiltrators there. A Chinese gentleman by the name of Chin Peng. And we used to go out and they'd say, "You're out in an area in there you're patrolling until you can find them." But I had a secondary role there, I used to go round,

30:30 with a jeep and driver and explode all the aerial bombs that the air force had dropped and of course that was part of pioneers duties you see. So, I was the most

31:00 experienced bloke in the APs [Australian Pioneers] and I used to go round and explode these bombs. But I don't know - if ever and I used to run the - gee what was it, the ammunition and all that sort of jazz but oh it was a good posting, Malaya.

31:30 If you got the right job.

**What was it about Malaya that you enjoyed or made it a good job for you?**

The beautiful hotels they had. Oh, great hotels. Which I don't suppose in reality we were allowed in. But some

32:00 that's neither here nor there. But yeah, we had some good times there, some good times.

**And was it those good times that led you to an altercation with a British MPs [Military Police] ?**

Oh, well I guess so, yeah. But yeah. Me and a fella

32:30 named, Neville Prott, and so we were in an out of bounds place which most were, and so they started coming up the stairs and

33:00 so we threw the furniture down on them, and then they had a muster parade in which we had to muster and they'd pick you out in the line-up and but.

**Why were you throwing furniture at the**

33:30 **MPs?**

Cos they were going to arrest us, that's why.

**What had you done?**

We were in an out of bounds house. Weren't supposed to be in there.

**What's an out of bounds house?**

Where a sign is put on the wall, "Out of bounds to all troops."

**And what would class that house as out of bounds?**

I don't know, whatever the police say is out of bounds. Whatever they say, I don't know.

34:00 However they think, I don't know but it was - they were still going to come in there when they learned some diggers were in there so .

**Well, why were you in there?**

Boozin' [drinking] .

34:30 **And so in the muster, what happened?**

Well, they picked me out right in the start, "You and you." Just like that, they just...

**And what happened next?**

35:00 Well, we were both court martialled and I was given 28 days in the slot and strangely enough, one of the twists of fate, the

35:30 judge advocate, in my - at my court martial said, "I don't suppose you remember me." He said, "But I remember you." He said. "At Smith's court martial." He said, "When you failed to - And they called me a

36:00 something witness. Hostile witness. And which you wouldn't give your witness thing against Smith." I

said, "Oh yeah, yeah." So he said, "Mind you." He said. "They're terrible places, these corrective establishments." He said, "I'll hold up your

36:30 final thing and - for 28 days so you won't have to do much time there." I said, "Good on you, you'll do me." So, just you see the little things you get in your life so - but yeah.

**Well, aside from the leave in Malaya, the patrols**

37:00 **you were doing, what were those patrols?**

Well, they were armed patrols, very rigidly done, but course, you know the silence and sound carries so much further, and no smoking, full of

37:30 your legs, particularly, full of all those wormy creatures that get into your body and - blood suckers.

**Leaches?**

And they were everywhere. You'd - right up your body, everywhere. And so you used to take your shirts off and delouse yourself

38:00 with a cigarette butt, they'd all drop off you, soon as they're touched with the cigarette, but it was quite an experience, Malaya. But all had to do was fighting in Korea but Malaya was something else and you could always come across an odd tiger, strangely enough

38:30 and dirty big snakes. And all sorts of critters that'd come in your tent and jump on you and jump off and - but and where was I - oh yeah. Got bitten by a snake in Malaya,

39:00 my little finger. You can vaguely see the two there, right there.

**Well, how did you find, from Korea which was quite strenuous terrain to now, jungle and guerrilla warfare?**

Oh well, you - it's all the same, it's making use of the terrain.

39:30 And I'd been at it for several years anyway, so you know, I knew a bit about it but.

40:00 **So the transition for you, how did you find that transition?**

How do you mean?

**I'm just exploring the difference in the terrain and the type of warfare that you're coming across.**

Oh well, it's -

40:30 well I really didn't see any difference. I mean, you're accustomed and trained to all things and - so it just pretty - you're training to whichever avenue you're in.

41:00 But once you're enter that area, then you just put that to whatever and so be it, it's a - soldiering is no different from anything else that it's no different to an arid country to a jungle, except that, that's what you've been trained for.

## Tape 9

00:31 **So were you in Malaya at the clearing up stage?**

I assume you mean, Merdeka. Which is Malay for, "freedom." But no, I

01:00 went home before then. But actually I did apply for a position as a patrol officer there. But of course,

01:30 before this came through, the Merdeka did and it was wiped. All foreigners were given back over.

**When you came back to Australia, it was 1955, what did you do in the army when you got back?**

02:00 Very little, I believe, I just sat around and waited for my discharge, very little.

**You volunteered for this discharge, is that right?**

Yep.

**Why did you choose a voluntary discharge?**

Well, I

02:30 don't normally tell people these things because no one believes me, if I did. But -

03:00 I was sent down to Singapore to go home for a discharge, of my own request cos I wanted to, but - and anyway when I got down to the barracks down there I

03:30 was told the CO wanted to see me. So I walked in his office and in - and on top of a pile of papers was a folder that said, "Dunque." I said, "That's me, so I'll have a look." And I'd just got it back before he came back. But, in it, it said, "Colonel Ocoltry, CO of 2 Battalion, we have a request here from

04:00 Dunque, RE: [regarding] that he be discharged on his own request." He said, "I see you are backing this request and I'd have to say that I believe your something or other, treatment of Private Dunque leaves much to be desired." I thought, "You beauty."

04:30 And anyway, he said, "Alright, if you want at your own request, nothing we can do about it." He says, "Alright. Because you've had a second time." And so and then I just waited around and went home. And Singapore in (UNCLEAR nee soon) so strange as that may seem, it was

05:00 it's a factual account of - wish I'd been able to see the rest of it, but there you go.

**And how did you find settling into civilian life outside of the army?**

Pretty difficult really. No, not so much difficult, but different

05:30 just different. I don't know that's the word, 'different'. Yeah.

**What made it so different?**

06:00 I really couldn't tell you.

**Did you miss anything about the army?**

No, I don't think

06:30 so. But I must have if I found it different. But no, I don't recall - I don't think so.

**Well, how do you think your years with the army changed you?**

I don't think it did.

07:00 I don't think so.

**Did you have any nightmares when you got back?**

No. No.

07:30 No, no nightmares.

**Well, the physical scars have healed, do you think your emotional scars have?**

08:00 Well, I don't know that I ever had any except for other people. But no, I never really

08:30 got into that, no.

**What do you mean by, "for other people?"**

Well, you take it as it comes for yourself, but when you get someone else that's being short changed, then that's something that you can't abide. And I had that experience several times with some people, but you know

09:00 never got a good chance at things, but they should have. And but I

09:30 got away with enough in my time, to look onwards as evening up, but not some people that I saw that got the raw deal. And they were generally because they knew somebody, you know, that old phrase, "they

10:00 knew somebody." But I never thought my time in the army was too bad, but still.

**As much as you saw people getting short changed, you also would have seen some acts of bravery and courage what really stands out in your**

10:30 **mind?**

11:00 No, I don't, time's too short to give that one an answer, I'd have to consider that one very long. Yep. No, I couldn't answer that one off the top of my head.

11:30 **Looking back do you have any proud moments of your own?**

12:00 I don't recall - well that is - I'd have to say, I must have had but then is that a

12:30 shall I say a - looking for the word here,

13:00 **Well, can I ask you how you would like the men of 3RAR Dog Company to be remembered?**

The men

13:30 of 3RAR. Yes, of not giving up anything. Being ready to undertake anything,

14:00 being resolute on all they did and finishing off their job properly, yeah.

**Well, do you believe**

14:30 **as some do that the Korean War is the forgotten war?**

Well, I suppose it's not forgotten for all those blokes who were in it, but

15:00 I certainly - it certainly hasn't got the

15:30 publicity that the others have had. But then again, who wants to publicise a war, for heaven's sake?

**What does Anzac Day mean to you?**

16:00 The terrible slaughters of the First World War. But

16:30 hell, that's no more than their due and it's to publicise it again, and again, but if you ask the question in relation, one to the other. I don't think that

17:00 they - one should necessarily abide with each other because one's a small war. But there is no such thing as a small war. Or a big one. Because there are people involved, that make it so.

17:30 **Ron, just one last question for the day, this is a record that's going into an archive for future generations to look back on and to learn from your experiences, if you were to leave some advice or wisdom for these future generations, what would it be?**

18:00 Well, I don't suppose there's anything that's going to stop wars, but make sure you go to war with someone you like.

**Thankyou very much, Ron, thankyou for your time today.**

**INTERVIEW ENDS**