

Australians at War Film Archive

Eric Flood - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1926>

Tape 1

00:31 **Now Eric remember as we talked in the other room, I would like you to start off giving us a summary of the brief milestones of your life if you would?**

Milestones. You mean those simple things don't you. Well, I was born in a place called Yenda, in

01:00 New South Wales, on 23 August 1925. Yenda is situated near Griffith; it's an irrigation area, soldiers' settlement after the first world war. I went to school in Yenda up to the 6th Grade and then to Griffith High School to the Intermediate level and then I did the final two years in Sydney, at Sydney Boys' High School. I left Sydney

01:30 Boys' High School, and for a few months worked with the Irrigation Commission in Sydney. And from there I enlisted into the army on the 7th October 1943, I was discharged in 1946 after service within Australia and overseas. I didn't return to the Irrigation Commission, I had a feeling I wanted to go into teaching whilst I was in the

02:00 services, and I took advantage of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Scheme, it was called CRS. I did tertiary studies at Sydney Teachers' College. I started teaching in 1949. I married in 1951. Did teaching all over New South Wales and retired as an inspector of schools and when I turned 60,

02:30 that was in 1985, I met my wife who was at Sydney Teacher's College and we married. We had one son, whose name is Gilbert, he is now a surveyor in Goulburn. And after retirement we lived in Sylvania for a few years, having taught all over New South Wales, and then we decided to retire here in Erina,

03:00 Gosford, Central Coast. And that's where you found me.

Indeed, after some trouble.

Yeah. Finding our way around the streets.

That was fantastic, perfect for a brief summary. I am going to go back now, right back to the beginning, and talk about your early days. I believe your father served in the first world war?

That's correct yes.

What did he do?

He enlisted - he was in France in 1917-18, he was

03:30 in the - I think it was the 5th Field Ambulance, he was a stretcher bearer in the Australian Army, the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. He served in battle fields in France.

Did he ever talk to you about his experiences?

Intermittently, he did. Not - he talked to me about the horror of it all. He would talk about some of the distinct

04:00 things that he found distasteful and horrifying. His attitudes towards war and towards governments were very negative. He didn't sort of sit down and go into a coherent discussion, it was odd times. Some of them quite graphic. But he didn't dwell on it. But he talked about the dreadful

04:30 nature of war and the disappointment in the result and the social and political aspects that followed didn't seem to be positive outcomes for what they thought they were fighting for. And I think his whole attitude towards social life and political life in particular were influenced by his war time experiences.

05:00 **Do you think the war affected him?**

It did healthwise; when he died he was a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pensioner], he had

suffered gas experiences in France and that didn't help him. But affected him, I think any sort of experience that put you through that kind of condition affects in both overt ways and perhaps covert ways that perhaps

- 05:30 you didn't realise. That things shaped your whole thinking and I am sure it shaped his. He was very much a hard working man, and was highly motivated to do the best for his family. But he had gone through tough times. He had gone through times in the late 1890s when there was an early depression and his family had broken up,
- 06:00 and he was a young man or a young child, became part of a fractured family that went to different parts of Australia. He went to Hobart and strangely enough the first job he had was working as a projectionist in the theatre down there. And it was a pretty primitive operation. But he enlisted from there. And he came back and the repatriation of those troops was something
- 06:30 that the government took on. And the irrigation area, the moment the irrigation area had been foreshadowed as an area in which ex-service personnel may be repatriated. And whether they had any agricultural experience or not, and some of them elected to go there, and down they went, um, and there they cleared the land and had to start an agricultural sort of system
- 07:00 that was irrigated, and for the first time in Australia almost, irrigation farming took place in a very concentrated style by people who didn't know how to use it, or didn't know the outcomes basically and they had to learn by their experiences. And with all that they came back and cleared land had to - orchardists in that case, in his case. And small
- 07:30 acreages 18 to 20 acres, and they planted trees and grapes and that sort of thing. It took 5 to 6 years before the farms came into production and at that stage they ran into the Depression of the 1930s. There was that kind of continuous anxiety and conflict of purpose and worry and so forth. So his life hadn't been easy right up until then. I don't know to what extent you want me to develop that,
- 08:00 but I know that in that period as a child growing up there, I was a fringe dweller to that kind of thinking and way of life that occurred.

What was your father's name just for the record?

His name was Eric, just Eric.

So that community where you lived in Yenda, your father's situation was pretty typical of the neighbours around you?

Oh absolutely. That was - it's hard to believe that the

- 08:30 type of settler that went there, for example, my Mother who my Father married before he went away in 1917, lived in Hobart. Her father was a jeweller in Hobart and she lived in a very comfortable home. And when he went to Yenda and cleared the land, there was no housing. They built - they were first of all housed in tents, and then they built shacks out of the off cuts of the timber, they called them round backs with
- 09:00 bark on one side, and straight cut on the other. And he sent for Mum and she came from Hobart, and she had one child at that stage, and he was a boy. And she came to live in that situation. And a lot of the other wives all of them did the same kind of thing. And they had to start families there and a way of life that was pretty basic. A shock to their whole way of life, and it needed a great deal of determination and courage to keep
- 09:30 going. And a lot of the men there, it literally broke them. They either didn't farm their land - their orchards - very well. They would find refuge in drink and then the Depression occurred, and they were in such debt to the Rural Bank at that time, he sort of financed the whole thing to get them going.
- 10:00 They couldn't pay back that money. I think that it was in early 1930s, that the early settlers, the farmers were in such financial situations were offered the chance to leave their farms, wipe the debt and take £300 and go. And that occurred to [a] large number of the farmers, they were soldier settlers. And it was in that period in the early 1930s that the first Italian
- 10:30 migrants began to come into that area. They must have been our first sort of immigrants. I remember going to school and the first Italian we saw was rather an amazing creature for us, we had never had seen outside the channels outside the irrigation area to know they had come from Italy was - we'd thought they had come from Mars, and we were not really that receptive and kindly to them. Most Italians that came were
- 11:00 labourers in the first instance. They brought their families and relatives and they were - they must have come from a background, and the families lived together and they worked very hard and they seemed to be able to cope with the farming situation in a very skilful way, and to the extent that they managed and now Griffith and that area is not dominated,
- 11:30 but to a very large extent the population is made up of those descendants who came. They took the place of those ex-servicemen initially who tried to get the place going.

Why did your father opt to take that settler's block?

That's a good question, but I think it was some opportunity that he saw; he was unskilled, uneducated. He had to leave school - he said that he left at

12:00 13 and he used to be chased by the truant inspectors they had operating in those days. He had to try and get jobs to keep his mother and he had 3 or 4 sisters living in Bondi at the time and he just took up odd jobs and he fell into this business, he had a relative strangely enough who was involved in the development of the film industry in terms of the theatre, theatre

12:30 projection and that type of thing. And he was a young man of about 17 or 18 and he went into this and then they decided to go to Hobart - the thing I am getting at is he was unskilled basically. He saw this as an opportunity, and it was painted as an opportunity for them: here was a chance to become farmers, a new venture, make a living, find your way in society and so forth, and so they took it.

13:00 Much to his chagrin I think in a way.

To your knowledge what sort of assistance did they get in skills and equipment?

Well very little, from my knowledge, though they were subsidised in the first instance to build their homes, which eventually they did. Very basic sort of homes. And I took it - I used to see some magazines he had, some agricultural magazines, but generally speaking it was very

13:30 much a trial and error situation. They didn't know that if you put irrigated water on to land, that you had to have an adequate way of draining it off, and what effect would it have on the land, and some of the soils were different from other soils. Some of them were receptive to that sort of thing and some retained the moisture and eventually the water table developed and seepage, they called it seepage but

14:00 salt took hold in some of the places. And some of the crops they tried to grow there were unsuitable and that type of thing. The advice they got was exploratory from both sources, it was that style from those who had planned the whole project and those who were implementing it too, feeling their way. And it's only

14:30 now, in more recent years, I suppose the last 20 years that they have found out that to irrigate land you have to be so careful as to how you handle that without destroying the environment, which they did. They cleared the land - you go to Griffith, I don't know whether you have been to Griffith. Flat as a board, only trees, citrus trees and that sort of thing that they planted, but they cut everything down. The whole lot.

The land is quite fragile out that way. How do you think your

15:00 **mum coped with this situation?**

With great difficulty I would say. She had 5 children there in that place. I can recall there was a fuel stove. We had electricity. We didn't have a telephone until I was about 12 I suppose so there was no way of communicating with other people. We didn't have any transport, only the horse and cart, until

15:30 I was 12 also. And so my 3 sisters were older. We had bikes or a horse that we used to ride to school. My Mum had to cook over that stove in that style. She had to wash in a copper, I remember out in the shack, which was a fuel copper, one of those black coppers, and she would put the clothes in on Mondays, and chopped up soap

16:00 to help the process and put it in the copper. She didn't even have a wringer, she had a pot stick and she used to dish the clothes out and put them into concrete basins and she would wring it all by hand. She had Reckitts blue bags; I remember as kids we loved to get it and put it in the water and turn the water blue. And she put it in that and she squeezed it out and carried out and put it all on the clothes line that stretched out between two posts

16:30 and she had two props that had a fork on the top that held the line so it wouldn't fall over. The wind would catch it and it would all have to go in the dirt and she would have to start again. Some days when she did the washing, I couldn't understand why she was always unhappy, but I can understand now; as we grew older we did. But everything she did, she did by hand. There was no modern conveniences, the toilets were pit-style toilets and

17:00 the tank water we used, it had a windmill, we pumped water from the dam, then we would catch rainwater for drinking and chip heaters for baths. Lino on the floors. It was very much, very basic life that she had and she did it with those 5 children, and I think she gave her life. I can show you a picture of her later on. It shows the woman she was that went into that

17:30 situation. Nowadays I think that marriages would have broken up, they would have said, "Bugger this I am off out of here." I suppose it was a social milieu in those days that you didn't do that kind of thing to that extent. Maybe I am trivialising the thing a little bit, but for families to stick together under those circumstances,

18:00 it certainly placed strains on relationships. Because without a doubt the folk there had trouble in raising their families to a standard they would have perhaps liked. If they wanted to give their children opportunities, they perhaps doubted they had come to the right sort of situation.

What level of hardship of work fell on you as the children?

- 18:30 Well, we did a lot of work around the place, see it was a fruit farm and we had prunes and apricots and oranges and table grapes (as opposed to wine grapes) in those days. And they were hands on things, so when they came into maturity for example the prunes were never harvested until they fell on the
- 19:00 ground. And you went around and picked them up. And there would be days when you would go out and there would be just a mass of haze of blue stretching about 100 yards up in a row of prunes and we had to help Dad pick them up before we went to school, because if you left them on the ground, they matured in the summer, and the heat was such the ground became hot and the prunes would split open and they would lose their value. And that type of thing,
- 19:30 picking apricots at the back of a lorry, with only a horse-drawn cart, and driving the horse while Dad guided the plough and that sort of thing, driving the horses when he had a spray, they would have to manipulate the brakes. I don't recollect that we ever stayed away from school to do those things. He just insisted that we went to school, but we used to work before school and certainly after school
- 20:00 on that type of task. My sisters always milked the cow. We had a cow - that was something I didn't do, they did that. But I was always helping with countless jobs. Always helping, always the tasks of getting the wood in and splitting the wood. Countless jobs that went on. I am amazed now when I was working in Sydney and they opened up the new area of Menai and Bangore and that area,
- 20:30 I suppose you know of those. But we used to meet with the citizens and the Council members and they would say, "What facilities are we going to provide for young people in this place, there's nothing here." Housing and schools, what are kids going to do after hours, and this type of thing, and there was a whole social problem seemingly of what had to be done to keep children involved in a productive way. Well we never had that problem as young kids. There was always
- 21:00 something to do that was dutiful in a way and also pleasurable. Because we used to do other things besides those and build cubby houses and go out into the bush beyond the farm areas and so on. So there was plenty to do and I can't recall, when I say there was plenty to do, on reflection, I remember my Father took me to a football match in Griffith, which was 10 miles away.
- 21:30 Yenda had a football team and we went with some people in their car, and there was a bridge over the channel, now the channel would be about 15 metres wide, the main canal. I remember going over this bridge and saying to my Father, "Dad, is this as big as the Sydney Harbour Bridge," which I had heard about but never seen. So, we had plenty to do, but as far as an intellectual awareness of wider context, that wasn't there
- 22:00 at all. I didn't see the sea until I was 12 and I only came down there then to get my tonsils out. To Camperdown Hospital. So we were very limited in that regard. But I suppose we were active, and we were healthy, we were healthy I suppose because we didn't know of a sort of a situation that was different from ours. My Father had some
- 22:30 war pictures, a little war book that he brought home from the first world war, and it was pictures of the war, and we used to sit and look at this on rainy days, and eventually it became tattered but some of there would be villages of France and he used to tell us where it was and other times it was pictures of dark-skinned people he met when he went over on the troop ships. He used to tell me about he went through the Suez Canal and they used to lower a basket down to the Egyptians,
- 23:00 he used to call them Gypos I suppose, they used to put things in them and pull them up again. I couldn't imagine what this was like, I couldn't imagine this would happen, it was a magical world that might have existed over there but about which we knew little, just fragments of information and the type of education we had was very much based on the old British Raj and that sort of thing, and we knew about how the Empire developed and I knew all the
- 23:30 train stations across Canada and all the naval bases that Britain had all over the world, and how Cecil Rhodes wanted to build an empire of red from Capetown to Cairo. I knew all those things but I knew it in theory only, and didn't understand the problems that went with that regarding the destruction of a society that they had taken over. That didn't come to me
- 24:00 until much later on, but I thought that at that stage that it was a rather magical thing that happened, that Britannia ruled the waves and what have you. And those things and the fact that Sir Francis Drake was a great hero and I didn't find out until later that he was the greatest murderer unhung and that Queen Elizabeth was the first gold digger that existed and that it wasn't Goldwyn Mayer's girls that were the gold diggers, he was and she was, and
- 24:30 he took 14 Spanish ships and didn't take a prisoner as he sailed around the world. We grew up with a myth of what was to be valued and admired and in the long term it turns out that those things should have been questioned. We didn't know at that stage. Our world was textbooky and it was based on
- 25:00 allegiance to the thrown and all that sort of thing, and didn't have a thought anything that might [have] led to republicanism. They were very loyal and didn't question anything, we accepted authority a lot, most of us. So that's the sort of thing that happened in Yenda, as far as our education was concerned. It

was

25:30 cohesive in a way that was and we were very confined in another way and we were very ignorant people, although very happy in our ignorance.

Do you think there being that community of returned military people affected the community outlook and spirit?

Yes. It was amazing once I spoke of my Father's

26:00 doubts about war and reasons for war, whenever there was an Anzac Day or 11th November (Armistice Day), the schools and all the community things that went on. Red Cross Country Women's, they used to assemble and would march through the little town of Yenda, and we'd go to the Cenotaph that had 3 rifles up on top and we'd lay wreaths, and I know all those

26:30 hymns that we sing on Anzac Day even now, but we - they were very cohesive and what bound them together was not only the war experiences, which tends to - people who have a common sort of experience tend to be more cohesive in one sense - but the problems that they were having in their way of

27:00 life, also brought them together. There was a mutuality that developed. There were all sorts of isms that started to emerge, I remember one fella, my Father used to call him Bolshy Bill, and Bolshevism started to penetrate the thinking of some of these people. Could we have a better society than we had? That kind of questioning

27:30 the men endured in their turmoil to seek answers to things, but without great solutions.

So Anzac Day and Remembrance Day were big days in Yenda?

They were, absolutely, and we never did question [them]. It was part of the curriculum, in over the mantelpiece in 6th Class there, I think it must have been issued to all schools, there was a picture

28:00 of the landing of Gallipoli and it stood in every school. And we saluted the flag every morning and that type of thing. We were very loyal citizens and accepting of those things. In a way it was memorable and it fashioned my thinking and when I went into teaching, and went into schools, I made

28:30 sure if there wasn't some recognition of those things that it did occur. And I didn't find it a difficult thing to resurrect, but sometimes it had fallen into some sort of corner that didn't quite receive the emphasis that it might have at one stage. But I don't think it was a bad thing, I think we tended to value

29:00 service and effort and grew up having a respect for the price you pay for something, be it in human terms or in physical terms in some way. Nothing comes about unless you do something about it.

What did you get up to for fun in free time with your friends?

We used to - a lot of our, I don't

29:30 know whether my answer will amuse you or not, but I suppose we lived in a world of imagination sometimes. We had a very strong boy scouts organisation in Yenda, and that brought us young ones together. We played our sports but we didn't have any inter-school sports, it was all within the school. I think whilst I was at Yenda I can remember playing one inter-school sport, it was against Yugali,

30:00 which was a little school about halfway between Yenda and Griffith. But we didn't get that kind of sufferance in that regard, but we were keen on sport and played it pretty well. Every country town in those days had tennis courts and cricket teams and those standard sports were a very big part of it. But what did we do? If we were lucky we went to the pictures; there was a little picture in Yenda on a Saturday afternoon, there was a matinée on there which used to cost us six-

30:30 pence to go in and we'd get threepence to spend sometimes if we were lucky, and with that generally you could buy a little block of Chocolate. But mainly we made our own fun. As I said, we played bobbies and bushies and we rode out into the hills behind Yenda and had picnics and that type of thing. We shot plenty of Indians; cowboys and Indians was all the go in those days.

31:00 But they were very sort of innocent amusements. Nothing too cultural, not at all. I remember the fellow down the road, his family had a piano and he used to learn the piano somehow or other and I used to go and look at him in amazement, but none of our family had that, very few of the families had that, any cultural thing we did was by the expertise or interests of the teachers at school.

31:30 But, I don't know that the fun was just in doing what we were doing. Doing a bit of rabbiting; we used to go out shooting a little bit, another fellow and I.

When you weren't shooting Indians were you ever shooting Germans or Turks?

Strangely enough we didn't, because that seemed to be the thing that was on the screen, but

32:00 I didn't grow up having a dislike for the Germans. My Father had a great respect for them.

I believe also there was some religious tension that came to the town after the opening of the convent school?

Oh yes. Did I mention that to somebody? It was a very strange little community, very cohesive as I said, you know there were 15 or 18 acre blocks, so within a range of 10

- 32:30 miles that was perhaps the diameter of our area, there would be several hundred families. So we used to meet quite a lot together and initially there was one primary school in Yenda and it went to year 9 and they called it a super primary school, and the kiddies who went on to year 7, 8 and 9, gained their intermediate certificate at that level at that one small school. Nowadays we might call it a central school. But it
- 33:00 brought the whole town together. But right next door the Catholic Church opened up a convent and they brought out nuns from Ireland to be their teachers, and they knew nothing about those conditions, poor souls. And the school split, I suppose one third of the population went into the Catholic School, into a little convent and it took away the strength of our school in terms of numbers and in terms of the school's ability to go on to that secondary top. And I
- 33:30 can remember in the 1930s as we grew up as kids, there was a great suspicion of other religions. If you weren't Anglican or Press Buttons (Presbyterians) - and they were a bit different, and the Methodists were a bit odd too, and the Catholics were something again, and they used to even go to Church on Friday nights and not eat meat on Friday nights and that kind of thing. I think it was a social thing in those days that there was that
- 34:00 division. You didn't even marry a Catholic. My Mother used to say to my sisters, "Don't ever go out with Joe Blow, he's a Catholic, and vice versa, because when you are married you are supposed to sign yourself up to the Catholic Church and bring your children up as Catholics. And all this kind of funny thinking went on. And they used to look across the fence and look at us and call us 'Protestants' and we used to call them 'Tykes' and all that kind of thing, and we used to love playing them football. We were
- 34:30 greater in numbers and we always used to give them a bit of a beating, but whilst there was that sort of feeling, it didn't transcend to the kiddies, because we had grown-up with the children and whilst nominally they were Catholics and Protestants, in the total picture it wasn't all that divisive. It wasn't a lasting division, put it that way. But it was there, it was a social thing. And I don't think it was common to our area,
- 35:00 I think in those days it was - there was that kind of feeling about different beliefs.

What about the Italian children, how did you treat them?

Well, I don't think on looking back that we treated them very kindly. We thought they were - they were prepared and able to live in situations that were poorer than ours.

- 35:30 They worked hard and they had different ways. And at times at school we used to call them 'dirty dagos'. And they were few in number and I think we didn't make them as welcome as we might have.

They weren't going to the convent school?

Some were. Some went to the convent and some came to the primary school. I can remember the first Italian coming to our school was called Ugo Domini, and to have a name like

- 36:00 that for a start was a little bit different, and of course he couldn't speak English poor kid, and he had come from Italy, and here we were - well suspicious, we were a little bit suspicious because we hadn't been outside our boundaries. But, it only took a generation I would say, when I went to High School in Griffith, there were lots of Italian children in the secondary school.
- 36:30 And they had been born first generation. But after a generation that had gone. But initially they had a rough time. And as I look back and how we try to bring our migrants into our country and offer different schooling situations and supporting schooling situations and the migrant classes that have developed...
- 37:00 Far, far different, but I can acknowledge that those people who come out here are not first generation Australians from another country would have difficulty, particularly with the language, and I don't think that quite often the work force is still that accepting of some people who have that background. We are a bit suspicious of them. We say now that maybe
- 37:30 we ought to have looked at our migration a little more carefully.

What was your secondary schooling like?

What was it like?

Yes. What sort of student were you.

I thought I was a good student until I went to high school. You see, in the little school at Yenda, there were 6 classes and we would have had up to 30 or 40 in the class I suppose, and I always managed pretty well there,

- 38:00 but I was always up the top. But when I went to Griffith, and once again this is coming out of a small environment into a much bigger environment and I found it difficult. And there I was and I found high school difficult to adjust to initially. And I just plodded along at Griffith and I found the style of teaching quite different to what I had known at primary school. At this stage of course the war was on and my
- 38:30 eldest sister was married and living in Sydney and she had 2 children and her husband had gone overseas, or he was up in Darwin, and it was thought that I should go and live in Sydney and help with the kids. And I went to Sydney High School, and going to Sydney Boys' High School after Yenda and Griffith, not ever having been to Sydney in my life, was a bit of a shock. Do you know anything about Sydney High School?
- 39:00 No. Initially it was a selective high school in Sydney and for a little country boy to go in there that was quite - not a wise thing to do really, the induction procedures were non-existent, and I did my last two years of leaving there.

How did you feel about moving up to Sydney when your Dad told you?

I felt sort of hope actually, but

- 39:30 in some ways I had my hopes shattered a little bit, because it was a very competitive school in terms of scholastic ability and in other ways too. But I managed in some ways, I was only small in stature when I went there, I was only 7 stone 7 when I went there in 4th year, and I ended up coxing a 4, which is something.
- 40:00 It was completely out of my dreams that that would happen. But because I was small in stature, they thought I would be wise enough to do that sort of thing. And the school football team and my Yenda cricket came to the fore and I managed to get into the second grade team. I held my own in some ways, but scholastically I was very middle of the road, and I got my leaving certificate there,
- 40:30 and at that stage it was hard - I didn't think I was of sufficient calibre to go to tertiary studies at that stage, and I wasn't ready for that. When you - I don't know - there was a manpower shortage during the war and as soon as you came on the market you were allocated to certain industries or situations unless
- 41:00 you got yourself a job. And I went down to - related it to the Yenda situation which was the Department of Agriculture, in a sense because they were controlling the water and that sort of thing. I went down there and I got a job in the accounts department of the irrigation commission in Farrer Place in Sydney and I was there for 8 months and then I enlisted.

We'll get on to that, we are running out of tape. I did want to ask you though, how did you feel the first time you saw

- 41:30 **how big the Sydney Harbour Bridge was?**

Well, I must admit that when I asked that question, I hadn't seen pictures of the Harbour Bridge. We didn't have any books at home, no library books. We had no book - we had one book, it was about this thick and it was called 'Chatterbox'. And it was tattered and torn and my sisters used to read it to me and my younger sister. But there was no - and after that of course I eventually I saw pictures of the Harbour Bridge and I realised how silly it was; I was.

- 42:00 But having seen it,

- 42:01 End of tape

Tape 2

- 00:31 **What was the standard of education like at Sydney Boys' High School?**

What was it like? Well, I think that I mentioned that it was a selective boys' high school and in those days it was purely selective. You had to get into that school purely on the basis of ability, and when I came down from the country, I entered that school at 4th year and I went for an interview with the

- 01:00 Principal, a fellow named Jasper Killop. And he interviewed me in his office and he accepted my enrolment, but don't think that academically that I was up to the standard of the other boys who had gone through their first 3 years there, they were very confident lads that the educational methods there at that school I found quite different, because

- 01:30 many of the teachers there assumed, this is on my recollection, assumed that the boys were bright enough to be able to make their own way and know what they are talking about. And I found that I had trouble keeping up and there were no remedial classes there or anything like that. You just - the boys, some of the top boys were quite outstanding, really remarkable kids and they made their way into professional life

02:00 into very high aspects of social life in the way of educational endeavour you know, doctors and lawyers and judges, you know. Lionel Murphy was an old boy of Sydney Boys'. They had an elite cream there that you had to admire, even at my tender age and lack of perception, but it made me realise that my own self image wasn't all that enhanced by my time at Sydney Boys' High School.

02:30 But on reflection it may have. You know, as I grew older and matured and was able to look back on those experiences, maybe I could make something of them, but at that time I thought they were sort of debilitating in a way.

What role did you play living with your sister?

Well, she had 2 young kids, they were 5 and 3 if I remember rightly, no Kerry he was

03:00 a bit younger than that he was about 2, but I was more supportive than anything, I was company for her living like that, and I used to help around the house and the garden and I don't know that I was a great sort of support other than I was another bod around the house who was a little more mature and could do that, and I can recall distinctly putting sticky tape on all the windows to stop them

03:30 fragmenting in case of bombing and when I was living with her when the Japanese submarine came into the Harbour and shelled Sydney Harbour and I helped get the children under the table, and we piled books on top, but I was just a support I think, another person who may have been able to take a bit of weight off her shoulders.

In terms of - you mention sticky-taping the windows in case of bomb damage. What else did you do

04:00 **around the house or in your life as precautions for war?**

Well I - one of the things I didn't mention, I joined the cadets at Sydney High School. And that was basic preliminary training at school, we dug air raid shelters in the back yard and trenches of some sort. That type of thing and

04:30 later on outside school I joined the air corps thinking I might go into the air force when I became of an age and did that type of thing. But I was the young adolescent of 16 or 17, approaching 18 and the girls who lived next door were more of an attraction than the consideration of what I might do for the war effort, you know in my

05:00 shy country style way of life I noticed that they were about, without doing a great deal about it. That was more a perception than a fulfilment. I don't think, as a young person helping my sister I suppose there was that sort of contact that having someone there that was a bit older that could help. But I don't know that I did anything deliberately, just the day to day living and the comfort

05:30 that I may have provided, perhaps the anxiety she had over me was perhaps not studying as well as I might have, although she wasn't aware very much of what I did in that regard. So I didn't get - this is a bit of a negative, I didn't get any support in terms of study habits or encouragements when I was in year 4 or 5, my last 2 years at high school, that I might have had had I been in another situation.

06:00 **As the war progressed from 1939, what was the mood like in Sydney?**

I thought - I didn't think the mood was negative at all, it was as though we could not be touched, there were dreadful things that occurred when the death list came out, the casualty list came out in the paper. And I knew of boys that

06:30 I went to school with in Yenda, who were killed and didn't come back, and that was - it made you think really about it. But, on reflection, Sydney life seemed to go on. There were limitations in terms of rationing and that style of thing, but Sydney was fairly optimistic, it was almost as if they were untouchable. I think that people

07:00 had no doubts, although they had some early shocks when the Japanese came down and took Singapore and came into New Guinea, but there was a feeling that it wouldn't get any worse than that, that we would come through it that way. That was my perception, even when I spent those 8 months working at the Irrigation Commission. Whilst the ladies in there used to knit socks and send them over

07:30 in comfort parcels, to the troops. There wasn't a great negativism about it, there wasn't a doom and gloom sort of thing. If there were I didn't feel it. I was living for the day when I might turn 18 and that's when I would go into the services. That sort of thing I thought was inevitable and I accepted it.

Was the enemy Germany or

08:00 **Japan?**

Well I think from our point of view it was very much Japan after that 1942 period, when Singapore fell; it became very much Japan. Although a lot of the newsagencies still published the European war and we still had troops over there, particularly in the air force, although we brought a lot of our

08:30 troops home and Mr Curtin made that plea to America and the troops were brought home. And the 8th Division got caught in Singapore. So from my point of view I thought it was Japan, but I didn't sort of

quite weigh it up like that. But I did think that my Father - we grew up having the impression that the Japanese weren't very great you know, we [were] always told not to buy Japanese pencils at school because the lead would always broke and the rubbers

09:00 wouldn't rub out properly, and if you bought a pencil sharpener that was Japanese it wasn't very good. You bought it for a penny or something. And we thought they had aeroplanes that just flew with rubber bands in them. But it turned out they didn't of course. But the Japs, as we said, I believed that they were a little bit less than we were in terms of ability, but we badly misjudged them obviously.

Tell us about your early training in the air

09:30 **corps, how did you get involved in that?**

Oh well as young boys do, I had a fascination with flying. When we were in Yenda in school, the teachers used to let us out when an aeroplane appeared. Charles Kingsford Smith, I think he used to go on barnstorming tours in the country. We never saw an aeroplane. To see one was pretty good. And I suppose we grew up with an expectation that to fly was the thing to do. It

10:00 was fascination and the air force was a glamorous kind of life seemingly, they had a lovely uniform and silver wings and flew in the sky in these magnificent planes, and as kids we made planes out of wood and what have you. We thought that was the way to go, it was attractive, romantic, exciting - so that was why I joined the air

10:30 corps, in the hope that it might lead into the air force. But it didn't.

Where did you do your training for that?

Oh, we used to march around the Domain in Sydney, there were some places in Sydney I used to go to, but it was very not exciting sort of thing, we spent some time on aircraft identification and I could identify the silhouettes of the planes and so forth.

11:00 But then mainly it was drill and they told us every now and then that, you know, you are a man in the army and a gentleman in the air force, that sort of thing that was the attitude for some reason. But nothing exciting at all, very ordinary sort of stuff.

Were you issued with a uniform?

Oh yes, I had a blue sort of uniform and a forage cap on that I used to wear, but

11:30 not with great distinction I don't think. I wasn't really committed to it.

Do you remember how frequent the meetings were?

Yeah, they were weekly: weekends, on a Saturday.

And what would you do?

Well that kind of thing, we'd sit - we'd have talks about - basically it was about aircraft style, different types of planes, bombers, fighters, reconnaissance,

12:00 silhouettes of planes for identification and basic drill that you do, marching, slope arms, forming fours and all that kind of thing.

How did it come about then that you didn't join the air force?

Well I did try to join the air force. They had a recruiting station down at Woolloomooloo, which doesn't exist any more; it was down in that rather tawdry section of Sydney in those days, at the bottom of Palmer

12:30 Street. And I went there and went through various tests and they found out that I had a perforated ear drum and that if I wanted to get into air crew, that I would be unsuitable. The pressure of the planes, well they weren't pressurised, and that I would have trouble, and that I would - I could join the air force but I could go into ground crew. And being the romantic that I was at that age,

13:00 and being upset by the statement about men in the army in general and gentlemen in the air force. And I thought well my Father was in the army, that was good enough for him, I will volunteer for the AIF and that's what I did. And I was passed A1 and into the army I went.

So can you tell us about being recruited for the army?

Well, it was the most primitive affair that you could imagine. Finally you registered

13:30 and you got notification that you had to appear at a certain time and you went in with lots of other strange looking fellas like yourself, wondering what the devil is going to happen and they ask you questions, and you got lined up, and 20 of you waiting to go and see a doctor, and you had some preliminary examination and you were passed out fit, and then you went before some fella there who had a bible and I don't know who he was now I can't remember but you all stood around

- 14:00 and you swore allegiance to your country and all this kind of thing. You know, it was a very perfunctory unimpressive induction into the service. You went to the quartermaster's store and he looked at you and said, "Mmm." And grabbed some clothing and you didn't have a chance to try it on; that was yours. Some fellow gave us a ground sheet and some
- 14:30 webbing in a haversack. I don't know what you want me to say about it, but the induction in the army was almost degrading and de-personalising. It was not motivating, it didn't bring you into a situation which made you feel as though you belonged and were welcomed. You were just a person that became transformed into something in a different type of thing,
- 15:00 and you had to get a palliasse and a straw over there, and this fellow gave you this ground sheet. I remember him saying to the group of us, "Look after that ground sheet, it'll keep the rain off you but when you see a dead body you lie the ground sheet on them and wrap it around them to stop them from swelling." This was the first couple of days, it was that sort of awful stuff. That's true as I sit here it was said to us, and here I was almost an
- 15:30 innocent who didn't know how big the Harbour Bridge was and that kind of thing that's thrust at you. Not the most uplifting. So you really had to reorient yourself and make sure your thinking didn't become subjected to a non-personalised kind of thing that you dropped any feeling or value of feeling about things. But
- 16:00 interestingly enough, if I can go on. At that stage, it was 1943, they decided that they ought to test the abilities of their recruits so they can suitably place the recruits into appropriate situations in the army, so we all, for the first time, did intelligence tests. So, we went into this hall and all these tests were given out,
- 16:30 so we did these tests, and you can imagine the results of all these guys, I forget how many were there. There must have been 100 blokes in that hall. And they finished up with a profile card with all your abilities graphed across the page. I caught a glimpse of some of them, and they were quite different, some of them had the bar graph started here and it went straight across. So they obviously had some abilities in some directions. And we were
- 17:00 interviewed and asked what we wanted to do in the army, and I had a feeling that if I went into the army, I ought to come out with some skills, so I said I wanted to go into radio location because I thought that radio and that kind of thing might be an industry that would develop after the war. And they asked me why I wanted to do this and I told them. Anyway, to cut a long story short, having spent
- 17:30 several days doing this screening test, we were all lined up, and they called out our names, and where we were going to be drafted, "Smith: Infantry; Jones: Infantry; Flood: Infantry," and so we all went into an infantry battalion, it didn't matter one iota, it was just a procedure. They just wanted men to reinforce the battalions that were suffering losses in New Guinea. So I was given a rifle and went into an infantry training section.
- 18:00 **How long was the time gap between enlisting and going into training camp for the first time?**
- Not long, I suppose we wouldn't have been in the showgrounds for more than a week. They then put us on a train and sent us up, strangely enough, to Warwick in Queensland. So there was some fear, there was the concept of the Queensland line that was drawn -
- 18:30 they thought that if there was sufficient stress on Australia, they would give up that northern part of Australia, and so they wanted to bring the services up there, so I went to Warwick. Do you know where Warwick is? Across the border. And we did our initial training and that was the start of it. The start of that training.
- When you first got on the train when you left the showgrounds in Sydney, what did you think?**
- 19:00 I don't know, it was all a dream, even now it was something that you were part of but you weren't part of. I can remember being there and wanting to belong, but being on a whole train load of strange men, a lot of other fellas that you didn't ever know before and being forced to live in a situation side by side with somebody that was different from you in terms of their outlook and their behaviour and that sort of thing.
- 19:30 That's a real shock, but initially it was all talk, it was all bravado and there were - some fellas were quiet but I can remember some of the conversations that went on; they liked to talk about girls and that type of thing, girls they left behind and girls they knew and like to know more about, and that kind of thing, there was all this bravado, this real macho sort of stuff I suppose. But one of the beautiful
- 20:00 things, when we pulled up at certain stations, there were women organised on the stations to give us meals and that sort of things, and they were lovely, they were people like my Mother and that sort of thing, obviously many of them been through war experiences before, and they had tea and coffee and sandwiches and hot dogs, and there was a gentility
- 20:30 and a care that transformed the platform at that instance, and that was nice. But the rest of it was an excitement, an expectation, a sort of realisation that you were growing up to realise there was a difference in your life and that there was something that was going to happen of which you were not too sure. But you didn't seem to be afraid of it.

- 21:00 I am sure at that stage we weren't, were living some sort of horrible excitement and thrill I suppose. It was something about human behaviour that's rather odd, that you are going to do something that maybe will give you some sort of satisfaction or
- 21:30 pleasure, without knowing the awfulness of it. Without realising there was that balance to it that ought to make you almost turn away from it. But at that age, we were only young; babes: uninitiated, immature, untrained. We were lambs to the slaughter,
- 22:00 and as I look back we really were, some of those kids had never picked up a rifle, they didn't know how to shoot. And yet they were going into an infantry battalion.

Did you ever think about dying?

Not until I saw the first person, then I did.

We'll get to that. But what were your first impressions of Warwick?

My Mother was still in Yenda when I left, but I saw my aunty who lived in Bondi, and I

- 22:30 said, "Maybe we'll be able to get out onto the stations and farms and ride horses." That was my first impression. But we were in the training camps, which was about 20 miles out in the scrub from Warwick: army barracks, tents, that sort of thing. We went into Warwick several times to dances there. But they were a disappointment,
- 23:00 the girls were few in number, and the aspiring people that wanted to dance with them were much more multitude so you had to be pretty quick to get a dance and make some sort of acquaintance. That aspect of Warwick wasn't great. The training I hadn't experienced - there was a military hospital in Warwick and I had to go in to have something done to my ear.
- 23:30 I went back; I have been back to Warwick several times in latter years, going through Warwick and tried to find out where - thousands of troops trained there - the training camp was, and it's unmarked, even went to the RSL [Returned and Services League] at Warwick and dug out some secretary, and he said, "Oh there's a farm out there and there's a picnic area nearby, but there's not anything there to say that
- 24:00 on this site several thousand Australian soldiers trained here in 19- whatever it was, it is just gone, it's just transitory, meaningless to people who go through there now, and it's memories that have been lost by those who went there. It doesn't matter really in the long term.

What were the living conditions like there?

Oh you know, grass, straw

- 24:30 palliasse; they filled your palliasse with straw. And the toilets, have you ever been to a you know - the toilet seats - you could go to a 10 seater or a 15 seater whatever your fancy took, you know they were down there, and they were pit toilets and they had structures built above them, but you sat alongside somebody if you wanted to go to the toot [toilet].
- 25:00 No privacy, not at all. You see somebody sitting there with a bit of paper and another fella would say, "You finished with that bit of paper?" pass it over to him sort of thing. Dehumanising situations, you accepted it, but if you were asked to do it now, you would say, "Go to hell, I am not going to do that." We've got two bathrooms here, in our old age we're better off than we
- 25:30 ever were. They were crude, there was crudity about army life, a crudity that brought about a almost a - not a barbaric sort of feeling, there was a savagery, a fundamental sort of thing that developed, I suppose they were developing in people, whether they were doing it consciously or not but it developed because the niceties of life were
- 26:00 stripped away. Those that you clung to were those that you had ingrained in your own beliefs perhaps, and your association with people. I don't say that you threw all standards away, but on the exterior the army didn't encourage anything but a very routine, disciplined, non-thinking almost style of life. That's what I found and en masse generally.
- 26:30 I suppose there were those that had authority and were supposed to see all and know all, and perhaps be more discerning. The compassion that arose, arose not from the contrived things by the authorities, but by those that you generated by other men that you met, you gravitated to because of similar sort of feelings.

What do you remember of your daily routine, what time did you wake up?

- 27:00 Well, the bugle used to blow, that was reveille about 6 o'clock I think from memory, but it was always early, and you had to get up and there was a muster and you went out and they paraded and counted, there was a roll call, always a roll call. And then you did your ablutions and you went to mess early, about 7 or so, and then you went into basic training. It might be a route march, it may be drill, it may be
- 27:30 learning how to use a weapon of some sort, or gun fire, or whatever it was you know. It was graduated

from a simple to a more complex style of experience in terms of army life. You go to the rifle range perhaps and on other occasions you go out and have tanks shooting bullets over you as you went through a lower area. It was a whole

28:00 gambit of that kind of thing. You would have to know to know what I am talking about. We even went through experiences with gas, you had to go into an airtight room and they would release gas so you would get an experience of what it is like to experience gas and put on a mask to overcome it. But it was almost saying that if you want to a child about burning your hand,

28:30 you put his hand on the hotplate and make him touch it and then say, "Don't do it any more." That's what they made you do with gas, they made you, because they made you - people were reluctant to put on masks because they were uncomfortable. So they made you experience what it was like to have the experience of that type of thing.

What were the masks like?

Oh they - you carried them on your chest in a pouch here, always. And they had a mask that fitted over your face and it was airtight and sealed and had goggles

29:00 that you could see through. Much the same sort of thing they still use today, when people have to put on respirators that are tight.

How long were you in Warwick for?

About - it's hard to say, we were there for I think it would have been no more than 3 months, but strangely enough they brought us back into

29:30 Bathurst. We went out to Bathurst to do further training there for another 3 months, - yeah we went back to Bathurst and that was a different sort of environment altogether, because there were huts there and we lived in huts and they had far more - that was where, strangely enough someone found my card with that test - you know that induction test, the screening I told you about. And I was sent away to what they called an intelligence school,

30:00 lasted about a fortnight I suppose, it might have been a bit longer. We did an intelligence training school anyway, which dealt with all aspects of seeking and interpreting information, and making use of it and advising. And that came to the fore later on when I was drafted to the 2/9th Battalion. I was in an infantry company for quite a while and somebody saw that

30:30 card and I was put in the intelligence section. So-called intelligence. They called it that, the I Section, it didn't mean you were bright or anything like that, but it meant you had some training in certain areas, specific areas. And I became an 'I person' attached to a company and I did work in that direction with the commanding officer - and I don't know how far you want me to go into that, but that kind of thing.

31:00 You went with him on conferences and you had maps and you plotted the map course and you took map references as to where you were. If you were in a position you worked out the position if you had to call down artillery fire, it was my job to pin point our position so that I could send that information back to the artillery, so they would shell over your position sort of thing. If you took a prisoner or you picked up some equipment, or you found something in a situation

31:30 which you were placed and you had to interpret to see whether it gave signs of what the behaviour of the enemy might have been, and what caused them to do that, and was it any indication they were in a certain situation. All that kind of thing.

What did the officers teaching you tell you about being in combat?

32:00 They didn't tell us much. No we did all sorts of funny things. You had to do a lot of physical training, you went through obstacle courses, you climbed up rope ladders and down rope ladders and you swung across on ropes and you were supposed to get fit, and you did route marches for miles, 20 to 30 miles' march a day and that type of thing. You were fairly fit

32:30 and you ate basic food. There was no - nothing that would sort of put on weight or anything like that, you didn't have anything that was undesirable in that direction. But as far as basic training, they gave you a bayonet and stuck it on the end of your rifle and they had dummy sacks that you ran at and you knew how to stick the bayonet in and pull it out, and reverse your

33:00 rifle, and all that kind of thing. You know there were basic instructions on how to kill and to protect yourself. What action you would take given a situation. How to, particularly with Bren guns and that sort of thing, the procedures you would adopt if the gun jammed. You knew those routine things you had to do in case of emergency, you didn't have to

33:30 think, you automatically did it. First of all at all times under certain situations. But when we went to Canungra, which was advanced jungle training up at Queensland, you went through all kinds of dummy situations where you would go through a maze and someone behind you would pull a lever and a silhouette of a shape would

34:00 quickly fall out from the side of a tree, or there might be a silhouette hanging from a tree and you had to walk through and be trained to pick up these things as quickly as you could and to react to them. And

take the appropriate action.

How cold was Bathurst?

Awful, awful. I slept on this palliasse and I had newspaper under the palliasse and quite often I would sleep in my whole uniform to try and keep warm. It was freezing in winter,

34:30 Bathurst was. The only thing was there was a great social life in Bathurst, I could go to the dances in Bathurst, not that we were [there] that long, but I remember I had a nice time. We used to have leave on a Saturday night and in country towns there was always a dance, and that's the way you entertained yourself in those days. I had a pleasant association there in that regard, but it was very cold. I have been back there since, periodically when we drive through

35:00 we always go out to where the camp is, there are still some huts out there, but they are used for other purposes now. They have plaques there on the entrance there: 'This division trained here' or 'This battalion trained here'. Without going into specifics of names but just generalising.

Who were your mates at this stage?

Well see in those early stages, we were

35:30 going through a transition of training from one camp to another and people would be changing from one camp to another, so your friends sort of fell out, you didn't always stick with them, it wasn't until I was drafted to the battalion to the 2/9th Battalion that I made closer contact with people, that I still make contact with as a result of that.

So how long did you spend in Bathurst?

Oh

36:00 see you are asking me questions of time and I am not sure, but it wouldn't have been any more than 2 months.

And then where did you go?

That's when we went to the advanced training jungle training at Canungra and I was choofed up there, and that was from memory, 28 days I think. That was - I suppose you have heard of people talk of Canungra, it was a hell camp really. It was advanced training, very rigorous and very

36:30 hard, and you always went there - there were stories about Canungra - with great trepidation.

What were the stories?

'Sorry!', 'If you get through this mate you will be lucky', and all this kind of thing. It was physically hard. See at Canungra you woke up in the morning - you were in tents - the bugle blows, you had to grab a towel and you had [to] run, jog down to a creek a mile away

37:00 and you would wash in the water and shave in the cold water. Whistle blow and run back again, you would have breakfast, and then the activities would start up the jungle area. It is a mountainous area around Canungra, I don't know whether you know that McPherson Range, it's up near O'Reilly's Lookout and that sort of area. It's a great tourist area there now and you can go in and walk, but to walk in there in those days was pretty tough, and

37:30 you had to get used to being in rainforest country and to be able to survive and to do the kinds of things you are supposed to do as a rifleman in the army. We were 28 days there and that really was hell. I can remember we were leaving Canungra and the train was going out and one of our fellas called out to the new recruits, "You'll be sorry."

38:00 They grabbed him and identified him and put him back and made him go through the 28 days again. It was one of those things you might read about or think about the things they might do these days, in sort of indoctrinating and think that the Americans might do it more, but to think that we did it there in that situation. But then from Canungra, that's when we got word and I was drafted

38:30 up to the Tablelands to join the 2/9th division, which had just come back from the Owen Stanley Ranges. And I think there were only about 3 or 4 of us at this stage that went to that battalion, which was an infantry battalion, and I was marched in there without decorum and told to go to Kendex down the road there or whatever it was. I remember going in and seeing

39:00 you had to hang your uniform up in a certain way, that was when you were back in base like that. And they had chevrons on their arms to indicate the number of years - one chevron meant you had been overseas, the second chevron meant you had been 12 months overseas, and for every year you got a different chevron, a blue chevron and some of these guys had 3 or 4 all up, not 4 but they had 3 chevrons on their army sleeve. And I knew straight away, that I was in

39:30 amongst men who had seen action and were far more experienced than I, and here I was, really a bloke going into this; that was, made me take stock of myself.

How intimidating was that?

It was very, and of course when they came in these guys, they came in and put down their gear and looked at you as much to say, 'Who the hell are you?' It took some time - a newcomer coming into a group - it took some time to be accepted and to get to know.

40:00 But I was surprised after a while about how kindly these guys were to the new recruits that came in, they were accepting, although they had experiences that they used to share with you that sort of tended to shock a little bit.

Such as what?

Well those guys had been through Buna, I don't know whether you have heard of Buna, and that was hell. And that battalion was front

40:30 line in that they lost 90% casualties, either with wounds or in illness. And they used to tell horrific stories about that, and about Milne Bay. The Japs were turned back at Milne Bay for the first time, and a chap called, what was his name? It just escapes me, but he won a Victoria Cross, but he was from that battalion. And sitting round at night they would start talking, some were more graphic than others, but

41:00 it made you realise that you started to belong to a group of fellas that had been through something that you were going to become part of and whether you were up to scratch to be able to sort of meet their experiences and their standards. So, but if I can just say in anything that happened in the army, there was never any controlled induction or into a group that you might experience if you went into any work force.

41:30 It would be essential that the induction of a person into some sort of work force was so important to get that person involved. But not in the army, you were just expected to be part of a jigsaw that fitted together because you had been trained in a certain way. But it was very perfunctory and elementary as I see it.

41:53 End of tape

Tape 3

00:29 **I believe while you were at Sydney Boys' High you received a visit from Roden Cutler?**

That's correct.

Can you describe that visit for us?

That was moving. He was an old boy of that school and some of the lads used to leave and come back on occasions and we'd see them in uniform, but this day was announced that Roden Cutler was to come to the school to speak at the assembly. We knew he'd win a VC [Victoria Cross] in Syria, and

01:00 the assembly took majestic form at that school, it had a gallery at back where the senior year 5 students sat and the rest of the boys sat down in the main, but when the Headmaster walked in, the staff were on stage and he would walk in and the whole school would stand and it would be quite solemn and quiet and he would march up to the stage, and he'd sit and we'd sit, but this day he walked in and we knew he had Roden Cutler with him. Well, Roden

01:30 Cutler at this stage didn't have his artificial leg, he was on crutches and we were all school boys, school boy hero stuff, read about them in comics and stuff, but in walked a real hero to our eyes. An old boy and he distinguished himself in this way, he had been recognised in this way, and the school just burst out in applause, and it was a lovely feeling, I have not

02:00 sort of felt anything like it since I don't think, it was just something about it, it was quite a wonderful kind of experience and he's such a fine sort of person, Cutler, as he proved to be even in his latter life. And he handled himself on that occasion, I can't even remember what he said, but it was just what he'd been and what he'd done and what he stood for that we recognised. It sort of typified what existed

02:30 beneath the surface of the whole community; that we were in this situation of war and conflict. He was a man who had proven himself to be a hero in one sense, he was a pretty valiant sort of a character. He was an old boy of the school, and that was whacko sort of stuff.

Do you think it boosted enlistment?

I am sure it would have enhanced people's motivation

03:00 towards war causes, and that sort of thing yeah.

Put in hindsight and in perspective of what you later saw of war, do you think it was fair to bring that sort of person in to school boys?

I had never looked at it in that light, but it's a good question, I think it could be an enticement that was blinding the boys to the reality of the situation really.

03:30 Yes perhaps it wasn't, but it was done for good reason mind you, but if you looked at it very carefully, had they used him to get a balanced view, get a pro and con situation it might have been better, in terms of the education of those boys. It was very much one-sided

04:00 acknowledgement. Perhaps it wasn't as wise a thing that was done, as you suggest.

Did the fact that one of his legs was blown off intimidate or reflect on the negative aspects?

Not at all. It sort of made me feel a little more, certainly, respectful,

04:30 but it was a very much glamorous situation, and this is a man who has gone through the situation, and here he is, in reality given his handicap, he had managed to achieve something and be recognised. That was a very adolescent perspective of it at that stage.

Your father being quite a reflective man about war, what do you think he felt about the outbreak of the second world war?

05:00 Well, he thought it was pretty awful, but he tended to blame, he tended to be blame the political situation and the economic situation, and the capitalistic influence of countries that brought about differences in standards of living in one

05:30 country and another. He had a great respect [for], as he called them, the Huns. He thought they were great fighters, put it that way, and he regarded them highly. But about the Japanese, he didn't have any respect, I remember him saying, "Well I am old now, but if they gave me a rifle I would be prepared to stand up and do what I could, even if it meant I wasn't going to last very long." But

06:00 he don't glorify the war at all, in fact he thought that the causes of the war lay way back and they hadn't solved their problems by the sacrifices in 1914-18 and this wasn't going to either. But, on the self preservation side he was disparaging of the, I suppose regard them the yellow invasion and that type of thing.

06:30 **When Italy entered the war, how did that affect relations in the Riverina, when there were so many Italians?**

A lot of them were interned immediately. They must have had records of these people, they had them - not that they had done anything subversive, but they were newcomers and they were interned almost over night, they were taken away from their homes

07:00 and put into camps, and there's a case, a particular case in Griffith now where one of the fellows was interned and when he was released he came and lived in the caves above Griffith, and if you go to Griffith you can go and see where he lived in the caves. I had left Griffith; in 1941 I left to go to Sydney Boys' High School, so I wasn't a close involvement

07:30 in that social context, but there certainly was a suspicion, but those that were regarded as such were interned. And those that weren't carried on and laboured, and they were not highly regarded as being dangerous. Some of them were looked down upon really, they were just peasant type workers. That was the general feeling that

08:00 existed.

You were in Yenda when the war broke out in Europe though, weren't you?

Yes I was.

What did you see from Yenda of men and boys going off to war?

Well, if you go to Griffith now, if you go down the main street of Griffith - several years ago they had - they put up a cast of a bronze - of two figures, there is a man standing with a single (UNCLEAR) plough, and he represents the old soldier that settled in Griffith,

08:30 returned soldiers. And the young man with the slouch hat on and the old man's holding the plough but handing the rifle to the younger man. And that depicted that society, the re-settlement by ex-servicemen and their sons going off to war, the old soldier handing over the rifle. So there was a motivation that was unquestioned. The young men were a little older than

09:00 me, but they went, and they immediately enlisted when they were able. And I know of families where they went straight away, I was in Yenda about six weeks ago, I just happened to go through Yenda and I looked at the little cenotaph and all the names of those who lost their lives and all those men there that I went to school with, that went. Some of them were killed in all the services,

09:30 army, navy, air force, pilots. There was one family, the Pooles, they lived out at the hills outside Yenda at a dry farm (that's outside the irrigation area), and they used to come 6 miles to school in Yenda in a sulky. There were 3 girls and 2 boys and they would drive in on frosty mornings in this sulky, and they

would take it in turns to run behind the sulky to keep warm, and 2 boys went and 2 were killed out of that family; the Pooles didn't come back. Down the road there was Andre Beal,

10:00 and his father incidentally had married a French lady in 1918, they had come and settled in Yenda, and Andre Beal, he became a pilot; he was shot down over Germany. Numbers of them, no hesitation they went.

Were there any send-offs from the town?

Always, yes. In the Country Women's Association whenever it was possible, that the fellows came home on leave before they went away, they always had a little gathering, and even at the railway station, groups

10:30 would gather as they went. Very patriotic and very supportive.

Was there a feeling of king and country?

Overtly there was, yes there was, but in the back of their minds, people like my Father, he didn't question it openly, but I know that he felt doubts about it and this chap down the road, I mentioned 'Bolshy Bill' they used to call him, Bill Davies, he

11:00 brought elements of social communism in its early days, and he used to talk it in the pub and that sort of thing. There was always a social order they felt that should come about. There was a movement, some social order, I forget what it was called, but if you read your political history about this time, this politicalism emerged and people were coming out of the Depression and talking about a new order that would bring about some change in society,

11:30 and these things were always critical in a way of the authorities that existed and the traditions that existed. But we would always stand up at the pictures for the national anthem and that sort of thing. It was a breeding ground for that sort of change in attitude that developed. And it came about initially from king and country I suppose when they went away in that

12:00 first world war. But attitudes started to change, and Australia became more worldly as a result of that involvement, not as worldly as it is now, but they became more, and the seeds for change were sown in those days, that manifested itself in the next generation, and more so today even, and I think it all started from there.

When you moved up to Sydney and

12:30 **the Japanese entered the war in late 1941, how do you think community's atmosphere and apprehension changed?**

See I was part of that and whilst I was aware of it, it didn't sort of frighten me, it didn't occur to me that there could be any invasion of Australia, it

13:00 didn't occur to me that that could happen. It was perhaps not facing up to reality at that stage. But I - personally I didn't see a close reflection of it in the community. At Sydney High School, for example, it never came up as a topic for discussion, it was never an issue. I gathered the impression, and that's from my point of view, that we didn't realise

13:30 how close we were to a catastrophe. We just didn't face up to it. But I suppose had we not been successful and the Owen Stanley and Milne Bay areas, when they first turned back the Japanese, God knows what would have happened. In fact if the Japanese had not landed in New Guinea, and bypassed and came straight down, it might have been different. But they were the situations that weren't prophesied and didn't happen. It was -

14:00 we had great faith in ourselves. We thought we were bullet proof in a way.

What did you know of a place like New Guinea before the Japanese turned up there?

Very little. We knew at school that there was a Port Moresby there, and that the Germans had been - that part of New Guinea had been settled by the Germans at one stage and they handed it over after the First World War. And the Dutch had been involved. But apart from that I knew where it was on the

14:30 map, but I didn't know too much about it.

What did you see of Americans arriving in Sydney?

Quite a bit actually, that amazed me. I remember when they sent a fleet out here and they marched through the streets of Sydney one afternoon and it went into the evening, and crowds of people flocked to see them, you couldn't get a vantage point. You talk about crowds at an Anzac Day march; when the Americans marched down George Street and Elizabeth Street, and

15:00 I went in to have a look, and they were 5 and 6 deep and these American soldiers. Of course we all had visions of Americans from movies and so forth. So, they became part of the scene here in Sydney, and they seemed to be a bit brash. I didn't take to them too much, but the girls seemed to like them, I noticed that even as a young man. But what was it they used to say? They are 'over

15:30 dressed, over paid and over sexed – and they are over here’, that was the sort of thing that started to generate. But I used to be fascinated by their planes, you know the Lightnings with the twin fuselages and that sort of thing. Yes they became very much part of the scene, we were very much aware that they were there. But there was some sort of – a little bit of a division by their presence because of their way

16:00 of life. Their style; ‘they could suck as hard as they blow’ sort of thing, ‘they would take Australia’ – that kind of thing was common.

The attack on Sydney Harbour, what are your memories of that?

Yes. Well strangely enough as I said before I was living at Coogee at the time or Clovelly it was. When that occurred and the

16:30 sirens went off and it was an unbelievable thing. With much regret we piled lots of books on top of the table and got underneath for a couple of hours. I remember I had to put all the books back the next day. It was a sort of unbelievable thing that happened, and then slowly as it unfolded, it became all the more incredible when they salvaged

17:00 one submarine in particular, they had it down near where the Opera House is now, they had on display for sometime. I went to see it. But once again it was a sort of unbelievable – it didn’t sort of penetrate in my mind that there was great danger, it was more of an experiential sort of situation that was unreal.

17:30 But it was under control. We were innocent to the possibilities that might happen.

You said with regret that you crawled under the table.

Only with regret but that it was my task – see I stayed with my sister and her husband was a bit of a scholar and he had walls of books, and we read somewhere we put some books on the table to give it support from anything that might fall should there be something, some debris.

18:00 And I had to put all the books back in the right order the next day, so that’s why I say – that was the only regret I had, a selfish one at that.

So, from your boy’s perspective, that attack on Sydney Harbour didn’t cause you any great outrage or fear?

No. It made me wonder because you won’t believe this but I had an uncle who was on the boom ship at Sydney Harbour. Now that – I don’t know whether you realise or been told,

18:30 that there was a net that went right across the Harbour and he was on the ship that opened up the net to let the Manly Ferry come through. It dropped the width of a cricket pitch or a couple of cricket pitches, the net was dropped down and it was pulled back too, and he was on the little boom ship that did that, and the Japanese sub. so they feel, followed one of the ferries through, that’s how it got into the Harbour. And

19:00 even despite that, it was more of an exciting story, rather than a threatening you know, life-threatening story. But I was close to it from that point of view even.

Speaking of innocence what was your interaction with females like at this point of your life?

Non-existent. It was

19:30 more from afar. If there was something wrong with going to Sydney Boys’ High School, it was that I had left my peer group that I had grown up with in Yenda and Griffith High School. Had I stayed there my social development in terms of my relationships with other people might have developed more logically. Instead of that I went to a boys’ school, where I felt my self image was pretty low and I didn’t get to

20:00 know girls, only in perfunctory ways and I was very shy about it in fact despite your companion sitting there, the chaps in the army used to say to me, “You’ll die a virgin Flood if you’re not careful.” That’s what they used to say to me. Fancy going up here and getting shot and being in the state that you are in. I was pretty innocent but I used to put up with those sort of

20:30 barbs. If they were that.

It was not for the want of trying?

I suppose I had a relationship with a girl in Bathurst, whom I came very close to without any ultimate intimacy occurring, but when I went away, sadly for some reason or other we stopped writing to each other. It didn’t ever eventuate

21:00 into anything, but I remember her very well, with regard.

Now you were in the air cadets but you were also with the army cadets?

That was at school, the army cadets.

Did that High School have a big military tradition?

The cadet corps had always been a part of Sydney Boys' High School, yes. It

21:30 wasn't strong, it wasn't great in numbers, it wouldn't be battalion strength at all but I felt motivated to join it. I didn't get anything out of it much, it was a very stilted kind of thing.

You weren't an avid participant?

No, I was actually called up because I went AWOL [AWL - Absent Without Leave]. I went for 12

22:00 months and then I dropped out because there wasn't anything in it for me. I remember being called up and asked to explain why.

How did that explanation go over?

It was accepted.

At what point did you begin to get the idea that you did want to enlist?

It was a thing that I had to do when I was 18 regardless, and I think that most of my peers

22:30 were of the same mind. It was never discussed. Just accepted, but when I look back at old reunions, I see fellas that went and did university work somehow or other and they didn't go, chaps I perhaps I thought might have gone but didn't.

What age were you when you left school?

I turned 17 in August

23:00 so I was 17 and 4 months when I left and I enlisted in the following August.

Can you tell us about the job you had at the end of school and enlistment?

WC & IC [Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission] which was water and irrigation and was related to the irrigation area at the end of Griffith, the MIA [Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area]. I worked in the accounts office, and I suppose I was called a junior clerk at that stage.

How did you get hold of that job?

23:30 Ah, I applied to the public service from memory, I can't recall the exact details. Anyway I was accepted, I think I had an interview, and was deemed to be satisfactory for position.

Was it just by chance that you ended up in a relevant part of the public service?

Oh no it was deliberate because my Father said to me, "You want to go to the Water Commission, son,"

24:00 it helped us on the farm and so forth. I could have gone anywhere I suppose at that stage. But it was purely by association.

What were your duties there?

Very clerical. We are talking about. A lot of irrigation works were going on and maintenance and we had to process all the claim forms and do the back up work for that and

24:30 get the cheques paid out to the country areas and so forth. I remember I had a dreadful job, one that was called town pay, and you had I suppose about 150 cheques that the junior had to take around, made out to various people who worked in various irrigation officers throughout New South Wales, Jemmalong, Griffith, you name it, and each pay was paid into the worker's account, and each had a different bank. Here

25:00 am I, I hadn't been in Sydney too long, I had gone to Sydney High but I didn't know my way around Sydney, I had to go to the Commonwealth Bank, the Commercial Bank of Sydney, the Rural Bank, ANZ [Australia and New Zealand] Bank and all these banks, there would have been a dozen banks, and you had to go there with all these cheques, each fortnight to the appropriate bank and pay these cheques into the various accounts. And I remember on one occasion I got mixed up with the Commercial Bank of Sydney and the Commercial Bank of Australia, and I paid cheques into the wrong

25:30 bank. And the silly teller accepted them and paid them, and when I got back to the accounts office and I realised what I had done and I told the chief accountant, these fellas won't get their pay because it has gone to the wrong bank. But to me it caused me nightmares, because I thought I had done a dreadful thing. But that was what I did, it was pretty basic sort of clerical work. I suppose I could

26:00 see that it didn't have a future, put it that way.

Were your employers aware of your ambition to enlist?

Yes they were. No hesitation in supporting that; it was accepted. It wasn't a protected industry so it was just a matter of going when the time came.

What did you think of men you saw walking around Sydney who were obviously of the right age and fitness to enlist but hadn't?

26:30 Only one time I was concerned about it was that I had a friend who lived in Yenda, who was my age and lived next door. And his parents were on a rice farm and they sent him to Scots College in Sydney, you know one of the GPS [Greater Public Schools] schools, boarding school in Sydney. He went to Scots College the same time I did, Sydney Boys'

27:00 High School, and he was in the cadet corps, he was a cadet lieutenant, wore the kilt - and he came out of school and went into BHP [Broken Hill Proprietary] as a cadet engineer. I came out of school and went into the army; he didn't ever enlist. I often wondered why that was the case. But otherwise it didn't worry me that it was happening. Some people were in protected industries, some people were unfit. Some used to wear a V badge, it was

27:30 a little silver badge, it meant that they were volunteers but were unaccepted because they were in a protected industry, weren't allowed to go. It didn't worry me. I didn't know about conscientious objectors. I didn't know about draft dodgers, so it didn't occur to me that that was an issue.

When you went to enlist did you require your parents' permission?

Well if I hadn't enlisted

28:00 you had no option, I certainly had to get my parents' permission to go in the AIF. If you hadn't enlisted and you were called up, if there was a compulsory call up, and at that stage you would have gone into the militia, so I did have to get their permission yes.

Why did the AIF seem a better option to you?

Well, my Father was a volunteer and I believed it was better to volunteer than to be conscripted. So I

28:30 didn't want to be conscripted, I wanted to do it on my own bat. I just felt that was the right thing to do.

Did your father give you any warnings or advice or...?

Little, very little. See at that stage he was still in Yenda, and I spent the last few years in Sydney, but I think he wondered about me. He wondered about how I would cope I am sure.

29:00 But he didn't - whilst he did ever say it I felt he felt it. He knew what he had been through and he hoped to God that I wouldn't go through the same. I remember when I came back and was discharged, he took me into the Yenda Diggers' Club, which was only a small club, but he promised the fellas there that when Eric came back he was going to get drunk. And Dad had a few too many to drink, and I remember taking him home and my Mother,

29:30 we came home late and I can still see her now coming out of the bedroom and saying, "What's happened?" She was a bit disgusted in a way. But in the back of his mind, he must have been - because the things they experienced on the battlefields of France must have been unbelievably shocking. Ours were bad enough, but they were perfunctory things, they happened in their way, but that trench warfare

30:00 where you sat for months and months facing one another was shocking.

You've already talked quite a lot about training at Warwick and so on, I just wanted to ask you a bit about the intelligence school you went to while you were at Bathurst. What sort of things were you learning there?

Yes, they were higher order things. For the first time since I was in the army I became aware

30:30 that there was a bit of a soul and a decision-making process based on information and that someone had to provide the information for someone to make the decision and the masses were instructed to do things, they carried those out. And so we were involved in problem solving situations, we were involved to a degree in terms of map reading, interpreting evidence and information that

31:00 came your way. Of being with - being in a situation where information was handed down and you had to help in its sifting and its sort of spreading or passing on, and you had to dilute the information so it was appropriate at another level. I was involved in that, it was such a responsible job, unbelievably

31:30 responsible, but you - at that stage I was just a private, and I had to make decisions about our location and where we were and that sort of thing. Verify those situations by references by mapping or whatever, whatever information you had, and that had to be the basis of the decision you made. You had to go and find what was the best place to cross a river or something by interpreting a

32:00 map, and pass that information on the way that you should go. And if you were in a fixed position one of the tasks was to make sure the fire power was so arranged that it overlapped and there was no dead ground where the fire power couldn't touch. So you had to go out and each set gun position where there was a machine gun of some sort, a Bren gun, you had to use your compass to work out

32:30 how far the range of that machine gun would cover and the next post and how it would interlock and what was the dead ground in between, sort of thing. You had to get information like that, and so the training was involved around the precision of interpretation of material I suppose, and of locating positions and fixing them.

It seems quite a lot of pressure and responsibility for a

33:00 **private in the army?**

It was, it was. And when we landed at Balikpapan, that painting you can see. We had great aerial maps that at this stage were taken, and the aerial maps were of this area of that cove at Balikpapan and I remember the company commander saying to me, "Eric, I want you to get those maps out and put them in order and I will get the platoon officers to come in and I want you to

33:30 run them through the interpretation of those features that you see on that map." And he was asking me to do that. Admittedly we had had some briefing on it beforehand, but that was the kind of thing. That was a bit scary, but.

Ultimately men could have lived or died based on your interpretations.

Well, I suppose that's so, particularly when you call down artillery fire on a certain position,

34:00 that's when you crossed your fingers and hoped the damned things would land a couple of hundred yards further on and come back a bit. It was.

In a case where you are, as you said, mapping out fields of fire for machine gun positions, how would much more seasoned troops take your direction?

That's interesting, you know, surprisingly when you got in a situation...

34:30 I remember one fellow saying to me, he knew I had been to school and that type of thing. And many of them hadn't. I just say that the way it was. And he was a wise man, he said, "Eric it doesn't matter what damned school you went to when you get into these situations, it's the type of person you are that will count, forget that school, that won't carry you through, it's what's innately in you." Strangely enough when you got into those situations and you started working with people, they

35:00 came to accept you on what you could do and what you couldn't do. If you showed competence they would accept that. If you went out to use a compass and said, "That's the bearing there and that's the bearing here," they accepted that. Once it's been done several times and it's proven to be right, then they looked to you for that information. You are going along a road, and you have got to report your position in; it was the 'I

35:30 person' who had to identify that position and report it in. It became accepting. If you couldn't do it, if you didn't do it, they would soon lose their faith in you. They'd say, "Piss off," or something like that, whatever. I can remember we got on to Balikpapan, we got up on to the headland overlooking the harbour, and one of the things the

36:00 'I bloke' had to do, you are with a front line group, and you had to report in immediately and the question came to me, "How available is the harbour for shipping? What can you see? What are the facilities like?" That kind of thing. And you had to try and get a picture back of that. The immediate lines were from intelligence officer to intelligence

36:30 officer sort of thing. The intelligence bloke attached to a company was called 'acorn', and I was acorn of C company - "Acorn, what does the harbour look like? Could we get a ship in there? Is there shipping in there, are there other ships? Are the wharves in a situation that could be used?" That kind of thing. It took you above the menial task of just humping the rifle around.

So how did you feel about being selected for that work?

I didn't mind it really, I just accepted it I suppose.

37:00 It didn't occur to me in any way that I had any skills over and above anybody else. Just that I could do it and I did it.

How do you rate your training?

Which training? The overall training?

Yeah, when you actually went into battle, how well prepared do you think you were for your job?

Well, you know talking about the things I have just mentioned to you, I realise that the sort of training we

37:30 had was very sketchy when you think about it, we knew basic things, we knew how to fix positions, we knew - but overall I think that the - see we were volunteers and we had to go into a situation and you have got X amount of months to get troops into a certain situation, and whilst you have put them through a particular routine, I think the training was bloody weak. They put men - young men - in

38:00 situations for which they weren't prepared. They weren't trained properly - as I mentioned to you fellas [who] had never picked up a rifle before were asked to shoot a rifle and shoot it accurately and so forth. There was a limited amount of training in that area. I believe the training for those - for the sort of army life that I led was very superficial. You learnt from your experience and you learnt

- 38:30 from your peers, who had learnt the hard way. That was the basic learning; you learnt more from your peers than you did from your pre-training. You had a perception and an expectation to a degree, but you had to become innovative and reactive to situations that just came from the sort of person you were or the sort of people you were with. The army training was disciplined and rigid that you had to do certain
- 39:00 things together and that sort of thing, but as far as a great amount of thinking you just had to rely on your own instinct a lot. There was a certain dependence on one another that gave you strength, but the technical skills that you had were very superficial. It wasn't good training. If you had a group of men you wanted to run a company and you
- 39:30 trained them like that, you would go broke. In the army they couldn't sack you because you had to be there or be - get out or whatever, but you were in a permanent job.
- What about the training of the riflemen you were working alongside? And I don't just mean weapons but in ability to read a compass or read a map?**
- Well then perhaps the platoon sergeant might have had a map that he could read that he would
- 40:00 take to orders or briefing from the company commander and they would have them there and they would go through them, but they tended to rely on the other agency, the acorn was there to provide that information. They were more concerned with tactics and controlling of men and that kind of thing and leading in that area. But they would call upon people to do it. But the general soldier didn't have a map
- 40:30 or anything like that. He just went where he was told to go. Quite often he didn't know what he was doing half the time. You always felt you were uninformed, that was the general feeling a lot of them had; they didn't know what the hell was going on, who's running the show, sort of thing.
- 41:45 End of tape

Tape 4

- 00:32 **Eric in terms of training, did you get out of anything that the other diggers had to do by doing the intelligence work?**
- Not at all. The only time we left them was when we went to that school I mentioned. But you are attached to a company, and I was attached to C company, and wherever C company went I went. You were part of the establishment and
- 01:00 any returns or training they did you were involved with it. Except the only thing, you carried a map as well as a rifle and a compass, which made it a little more cumbersome in a way.
- Did you feel - you spoke before about the dehumanising aspects of the army - once you were made part of a company, did that change for you at all?**
- Yes it did. I suppose -
- 01:30 I think you had to do that, the men had to do that to survive, be normal. You were thrown into a company at close quarters and you did things together, you played cards together, or you played a cricket match together, or you had these other military activities, but you did bond, but it wasn't generated from above, it was generated more from within,
- 02:00 it was the intuition of people to survive that contributed largely to the esprit de corps almost. The army is, well it was, very dehumanising, it took away your ability to think and to question, you weren't allowed to do that, you had to conform.
- 02:30 I have seen men in training that - one man I can remember in particular who was a journalist, and something was being said by the platoon sergeant, he stepped forward and said, "Sir, I resent that statement," he was referring to our conduct or our demeanour or whatever it was. You know, he was quickly cut down to size. In disciplines you couldn't do that if you were in the ranks, you had to accept [what] was said, what was given. It was only
- 03:00 when you got together in the situations that you mentioned that you managed to become a part of a group and you recognised the human qualities in others and that sort of brought you closer, and I suppose there was the threat of danger as well that tended to make you seek self preservation and you became dependent on others for things. So you came together that way. But overall the
- 03:30 army is - well in those days it wasn't the most thrilling or uplifting sort of thing for a person.
- When did you get news that you were going to leave and go overseas?**
- Well we didn't know, we were on the Tablelands training and as I mentioned to you I was with this battalion that had had experiences in many theatres of war. They were in Tobruk, the battalion

- 04:00 I joined, initially before the 9th took over. So there was a corps of men that were vastly experienced, and I was surprised of their acceptance that there was going to be another sort of - they used to call it 'another show' of some sort, but they didn't question it and we didn't know. And we were on the Tablelands and there was a rumour that we had to go down to Mossman, which was on the coast
- 04:30 of Queensland, which is now a sort of lovely holiday place. And that we were going to go overseas and we didn't know where we were going. We were allowed to write home but not allowed to indicate where we were going. And I can recall going over the mountains to Cairns and through that station at Kuranda, I don't know whether you've been there, I mentioned it, you would know, it's a most attractive little railway
- 05:00 station, it's covered with ferns they had grown, and down to the beach area. And this battalion, there was a whole division that went, we were lined up on the beach just in battle dress and all that we were carrying, and it started to rain, a cyclonic storm came in, and here we were standing there and drenched to the skin everything we had. And then these landing ships came in, LSTs they are
- 05:30 called, Landing Ship Tanks, and they are flat bottomed things, and they are hollow inside on which they land vehicles and they can drive them right up on the beach and drop the tops down and the tanks can then drive out. And we were to get on these things, and we came in and we got on these landing ships - we thought we were going to be down in the hold, instead of that we had to go up on the open deck of this ship.
- 06:00 And there we were huddled and we were going overseas somewhere.

What about pre-embarkation leave?

Nope, none of that. Not at that stage did we get any leave, none at all.

You showed us off camera a photograph of your mother that you took with you, can you tell us the story of that picture?

Well, Dad carried a little wallet, a fold over wallet, and it had a picture of

- 06:30 my Mum and my sister, my eldest sister who was born while he was over there, which she sent to him. And on that wallet it had 'dinna forget', you know, Scottish, and he carried that through the war and my Mother gave it to me to carry.

Did you carry anything else personal?

No, that was all. I have had that picture enlarged since then, and each time I send a Christmas Card

- 07:00 to my sisters, I get that and put it on the front of their Christmas Card, so they get that photo. So that was rather touching.

Where on your person did you keep it?

You had these pouches on the front of you, your webbing, and you had things stuck in that or you always had a little smaller haversack, but it was very difficult to carry anything personal. We never had cameras; you were never allowed to have cameras. When you

- 07:30 were in the infantry battalion, it was forbidden to take a photo, in fact cameras in those days were bulky. The only time troops took pictures was when they were in base camp and somebody turned up with a camera or they smuggled something, they took a hidden camera or something. But normally most of us, we didn't have cameras. So I had nothing personal, I couldn't take photos of anybody to bring back because you

- 08:00 didn't have anything to take, because you were in that situation. When you are in an infantry battalion you are only led by what you carried, and you had basic things to carry and some of them were essential things. The non-essentials weren't carried.

So on top of the essential things that all the battalion carried, what did you carry on top of that?

Well essentially I had a prismatic compass, and

- 08:30 that was the main thing, and I had a map case which I carried, and a map case that had in one sense - in one part of it had a transparent cover, and we had a china graph pencil so you could write things over, have it over the map and mark things on the map with this china graph pencil, and it would wipe off as well. But they were the only extra things that I carried.

- 09:00 There was a wireless - always a wireless operator somewhere nearby, and that poor fellow carried - humped a sort of a radio on his back which had a bit of an aerial and you could go to him to pass anything back for messages or anything.

Do you remember where the maps were made?

That's a good question, most of them were ours, Australia's. And when we got to Borneo of course and

some of them had been taken off aerial photographs that had been taken;

09:30 not always accurate because the mapping wasn't refined as all that. But the near shore area, the places with which we were going to be engaged, there was better detail there. But once you got inland things became hazy and tracks weren't shown at all. You just had to sort of use your natural nous [intelligence].

Did you ever notice maps made in Japan?

10:00 No I didn't actually. Not the maps that I used. But I wouldn't be surprised if that had occurred in New Guinea. It wasn't my experience.

Okay, in cyclonic weather you got on landing ships, did you get seasick?

Oh absolutely. Do you know what they did, I don't know whether you can visualise - you would have to see it to know what they are like, they would be about 200 metres long,

10:30 they are flat-bottomed things, they have got a bridge at the back and a flat deck on top, and what they did, our company lined up, that's couple of hundred men, lined up on top of that deck, and they got a wire rope that stretched from the bridge up to the front of the boat, the bough of the boat, and attached it, and they got canvas which they pulled across that and somehow attached it to the railing of the ship, and then, they had folding stretchers there that we

11:00 folded, and we put them on the deck surface and that was where we slept from the time we left Cairns to and finished up at Morotai. We ran into a cyclonic storm in the Coral Sea, and those flat bottomed ships, they just bucked about and the stretchers moved all over the place, and it was exceedingly dangerous. It was an American crew on that, and even they were seasick. And they said, "I am not coming across this damned Coral Sea

11:30 again." They were dreadful. And the toilets, there were no toilets. I seem to have a fixation about toilets don't I? Up at the front of the boat, they had a platform rigged out, a seating, and it had holes cut in it and it hung over the water, you could see through the hole in the seat and see the water below you and you had to sit on that toilet, you had to sit outside - you had to hang on to the wire rope

12:00 of the railing, and that's how you went to the toilet. There were a couple of hundred men did that daily. Awful. Highly motivating and they wanted to go land you somewhere and go and rush up on the beach and be brave heroes. And here you were - you wouldn't send a football team out like that, they put them in buses and molly coddle them. Psyche them up.

Did you see other ships

12:30 **or aircraft on that trip?**

Oh yes we were in a big convoy. The whole 7th Division went up like that, sometimes they were in sight and sometimes they weren't. The convoy broke up in the storm that I mentioned to you, but eventually we landed at Morotai, we got there safely fortunately.

Was it a long journey to Morotai?

Three days, maybe a bit longer, three or four days. But it was pretty rough and most of the fellas were seasick.

13:00 And the Americans had a galley, a cooking galley at the end of the ship and you had your dixies, you know those metal things that fit inside one another, and you walked down one side and through the galley and they dolloped food on, and they put all sorts of strange food, they put marmalade and jam on top of things that you didn't - they had rather delicacies. As you walked out the other side the wind was blowing so strongly quite often it would all blow out of your dixie as you went out the other side. It was

13:30 quite funny when you look at it.

Was the American crew significantly better?

Absolutely. Oh yes, it was.

As you approached Morotai, what evidence could you see of battles that had been fought?

Nothing at Morotai, because Morotai was a staging post - we had occupied Morotai and the division landed at Morotai. We

14:00 were formed and the mother ships came in the HMAS Kanimbla, the HMAS Westralia, I think it was a couple of others anyway, and they were the mother ships that were going to take us across to Balikpapan and we were there for a week and we did some preliminary training of getting - strangely enough the little landing craft that took us ashore, were American ships. American boats and American crew, there were 2 men on those boats, 2

14:30 Yankees. They had come up to the mother ship and we would climb down into them, and away we would go and we did some training with them, we did one training expedition with them at Morotai and then we learnt that we were going to Balikpapan and that's when got those aerial maps and so forth that I

mentioned. We had a look at those and so forth and then we set out across that sea, and the 9th Division had already landed up at Labuan - was it Labuan?

15:00 Anyway they had landed on the north of Borneo and we were going into the oil town of Balikpapan, and that's when it occurred.

How much did you know about the area you were moving into?

Very little. Well, we perhaps knew more about it than we imagined. I told you we had the aerial maps but they were taken at a time when the place hadn't been

15:30 bombed and that sort of thing, so we visually understood and some of the land features were given Australian names, the ridge behind where we landed was called Parramatta Ridge, so we knew where that was, and there was a hospital there and there was a brothel area that had been marked and identified that the Japanese had been using, housing - but when we actually got there, all that had been blown to blazes, it was terrific

16:00 bombardment had taken place on that place. And so those things that we had identified on the aerial photos no longer in existence in the form we expected to see them. But, the place was ablaze; that picture there, you can see that painting, shows something of it. It was an oil town and we knew that there were going to be oil tanks, and when we got there they were burning. And

16:30 the bombardment that took place on that was terrific, unbelievable.

Before we talk about that, what kind of acclimatisation, if you like, did you do on Morotai?

We were, I think no longer than a week, and it was basically familiarisation thing to get - to familiarise yourself with the mother ship - the

17:00 HMAS Kanimbla was the one we went in on. And there's still a Kanimbla ship in the Royal Navy, but not that one, it was an old coastal boat that used to ply trading around New South Wales, and they had converted it, and the idea was to become familiar with the set-up on the ship and the ability to come off the ship and meet up with these little landing craft, and get on to those and away we would go.

17:30 And it was just basically a staging post and reorganisation thing, and a familiarisation, the place was identified as to where we were going. A little, some knowledge of it. But we didn't know that there were people living there other than the Japanese. We didn't know much about the Malay people who were living there, what affect it would have on them, what affect it would have [on] our landing, or whatever. That

18:00 wasn't a consideration; the consideration was to go in there and take the place, take airport and stop the oil supplies and by hell or high water do it. But at no stage were we aware that civilians were living - if we were aware it wasn't a consideration that there were native people living in that township. It was just one objective and that was it,

18:30 and other aspects of it weren't considered. I don't know whether war is always like that, I suppose it is, but it strikes me now that it is a consideration that is very lacking. Whatever you might do in that regard.

What role was the mother ship to play?

The mother ship was basically just the conveyance vehicle.

19:00 It was the first time in the second world war that an Australian division had landed from the sea. They had time when the brigade had gone in, but here the 7th Division was to be landed on the shore of Balikpapan, and so they needed - see, how many in a division, do you know, a couple of thousand men, so you have got to have shipping appropriate and as well as that you have back-up support. See you not only have men with rifles, but you have

19:30 tanks and you have to have facilities that are going to develop roads and all that kind of thing. And then you have got ammunition supplies and a whole range [of] things that would sustain a unit such as that. Completely - very complex and the army was good at that kind of thing, putting those things together. Better at doing that than looking at the personnel in it perhaps. So that's what happened

20:00 and that's why you needed those mother ships, and some of those agencies that I am talking about came afterwards, a day or 2 after, but the initial thrust was to get the men on the place to take hold of the land areas and consolidate and these other things could come in.

Before you left Morotai to go to Balikpapan, were you addressed?

Never, never, never. Never had any

20:30 motivation at all; when we got on the mother ship, I remember we all lined up there and someone said, "Go along there and you will see the aerial maps that are set out and that's where we are going" and so forth, but we were never given any motivational talks, we were never given any sort of spiritual talk or anything like that. There was a padre attached to a battalion

21:00 and he was a Catholic man and I did meet him once on the landing, but there were none of those niceties, or motivational or encouraging, you were just going in there and you knew you had to get in there and into that boat and land there and reach this ridge by a certain time and that sort of thing.

I can't imagine how out of the depth it may have

21:30 **seemed so big and no kind of coaching on what to expect?**

We had had - we were aware of what it was like to go off shore and on to a landing ship and how the front of the thing fell down and all going well you were on the sand, because they were flat bottomed things and away you went, and your company commander or your platoon sergeant organised his troops, you were

22:00 trained in certain areas of manoeuvring and what to do. But as far as - there was no - they didn't have the devices to talk en masse to people, there was none of that, you were just - you just felt, I don't know there was just some - whether you could be critical of the training or not but there was some ethos that had developed that you were going in as a group and you all had to be in it sort of thing. It was

22:30 something to do. But there was no medical examination to see if we were suitable to go in or anything like that. I can remember one fella sitting on the bottom of the boat as we went in, and I looked down at him and he was shaking like that, and he was one of those experienced men who had been through the whole war, he had been to Africa, and he should never have been there. But his sort of bravado and sense of belonging, he wanted to be there but when the occasion came

23:00 he was gone, shot to pieces. He was trying to roll up a cigarette and he couldn't.

What affect did seeing that have on you?

Well it amazed me because I had seen him in other situations but I have never seen him in this one. He was an authority figure, he was a man that - he had a Queensland number, he was with a Queensland battalion, it had only 2 digits in his number, so when you had 2 digits it meant that you were one of the originals. QX.

23:30 But he was a sergeant as well. The Americans make films about it, that kind of thing; someone who is a bit sort of under pressure becomes a bit troppo and makes bad decisions and so forth and goes to boards and tribunals and so on, it's done that way. But it does happen and it did happen, I saw it with

24:00 that man, and he was there, and here am I, and the others around me, we all saw it. So, you know it's - you asked what war does to people, you don't really know, it does some things to some people you can't really understand. I don't know whatever happened to that man, I take it he's not alive now, perhaps he's not because he was an older man, but how it affected his life

24:30 afterwards, if he survived that campaign. But he wasn't fit to go into it. But, if you were putting your football team, if I can use that analogy again, you wouldn't use a man who pulled a muscle in his left leg. You would pull him off and put someone else in, wouldn't you. But you don't have time for those niceties sometimes, in that kind of situation.

In the situation you went into, do you think your ignorance of

25:00 **battle combat was an advantage?**

It could have acted that way, yes, it was an unbelievable visual situation to see what went on there, from the bombardment that took place and so forth as well as the actual experiences that happened when we got there, but there was an excitement

25:30 and a mystery about it, it was almost unbelievable. I imagine the men who had been through that kind of thing before would have had doubts and perhaps been more cautious in some ways, maybe we were not as cautious as we might have been, it might have been an advantage in some ways, but I think that maybe you are right; ignorance is bliss sometimes, having known what happened you would have doubts about things.

26:00 **Can you describe the day that you left Morotai, what kind of weather was it that morning?**

It was bleak, bleak as anything, it was overcast and I think we had 1 or 2 nights on the ship. I know when we came, it wasn't

26:30 right at all, that painting shows that it was overcast, and I can remember that the water was choppy because when we came down these rope nets - you had to clamber down the rope nets on the side of the boat - the assault ship at the bottom was, one moment the net was in the bottom of the boat and the next it was up out of the boat, and you clambered down into these things,

27:00 and it was not rough but choppy, and I can remember when the things went in the water it was splashing it back over the front of the little boat.

What was the atmosphere like on the boat?

Quiet. Deadly quiet. The 2 American sailors had those white American sailor caps on, I remember I had

those jolly things on, here we were

- 27:30 in tin hats and they were in the back they didn't seem to realise - didn't seem to anyway. The Yanks didn't say anything to us, they didn't say, "Good luck, boys," or anything. They were just intent on getting us there and out again, they were out on a job. There was no - I can't recall a word being said other than, "Get ready," or something like that when we got close. We just knew what we had to do at that stage. We
- 28:00 weren't the assault wave, one of our companies had gone in ahead of us and they went a certain way, and they had to move up and we had to move in through them. So we were the second wave in, we knew that. And because we went through that and we went through too quickly, we became under fire from our own planes because they had an air raid called in on one special feature of Balikpapan, a land feature, it was timed at a certain
- 28:30 time and we weren't supposed to be there at that time but we were there, and the attack hadn't been called off because communications had broken down between us and the planes. They came in and strafed us and shot rockets at us and all kinds of things. One of the worst experiences we had, looked up and they were our planes. And that's where I talked about the padre, the Roman Catholic padre, we had advanced to this
- 29:00 position and held - you had to dig, you had a little entrenching tool that was fitted on your belt and it folded it over and when you unfolded it one side was like a little hoe and the other side had a spike on it and you had to dig and dig some sort of spot, hole that you could get into, and the ground was pretty hard and I can remember digging away - but that's what we had to do, and I looked around and the Catholic Padre is up there coming to visit to
- 29:30 see how the boys were getting on and these planes came over - this is true - I went to dive in my hole and the padre's in it, he dived in it and I had to take cover where I could. I can remember him being there and I thought at the time, "You bugger!" Maybe he thought it was there for everybody's use, I don't know, but I can remember it happening. He was a nice bloke too, and strangely I don't think anything unkindly of him, but I can remember that
- 30:00 experience.

What was it like landing on Balikpapan?

Well it was a beach area that we landed on, the beach was not very wide, I suppose, I don't know what the tide was, it wouldn't have been more than 30 metres wide, and was gritty sort of sand. But the beach was lined with palm trees and they had all been broken and hit and there was not a palm

- 30:30 tree with leaves on it, they were all over and when you landed you had to clamber over these trunks of these trees to get further inland. And the settlement - there was a residential settlement that the Dutch had, and obviously the Japanese were using that - lay beyond that. There would have been a road 100 metres in that ran parallel with the beach. And I can remember at the time that not a damned tree standing,
- 31:00 they had been blasted to smithereens. It wasn't picturesque in any way, there were no waving palms it was just a mass of fallen trees and logs and holes and shells and things that had occurred from that type of thing. The houses that lay beyond were ruined as well; most of them were.

Having landed what were you instructed

- 31:30 **to do?**

Well see we took over from the - I don't know which, say it was A Company but they had gone through and advanced to a certain position and they had stopped. We had to go through them and go further on and we had to go through this housing area and we moved to the left towards Parramatta Ridge, as I mentioned to you before, and we went to a certain position and we had reached that position and we were told that was our objective for that morning. They didn't think we'd get there but we

- 32:00 did. As I said, we got there too early and got there quicker than expected, and this raid had been called on that particular feature, a bit of high ground, and we were there, so that occurred. So that's what happened on the first day at Balikpapan.

What time of day did you land?

Oh early in the morning, it was sun up; army always does things at dawn or dusk you know, you stand to at dawn,

- 32:30 because it's traditional that's when everybody attacked and you stood to at dusk too because that was another time. But we landed at dawn.

What was the terrain like to move through?

It wasn't a problem, as I said it was pretty flat country, there was a coastal area that was reasonably flat and the hills rose behind it,

- 33:00 the ridges of land, so the only problem that we had in that area was getting through the entanglement of trees, the palm trees in particular that had been damaged and the buildings that had been partially destroyed. But no, the only time we had to climb was when we had to climb on Parramatta Ridge that overlooked the harbour that I mentioned and that's when I got
- 33:30 first sight of the harbour and we reported that we were overlooking Balik [Balikpapan] Harbour and the message came back, "Detail of facilities that are usable from that position," that we were in.

What could you tell them there?

I told them some details and I said, "The situation is too complicated to give you an accurate description, send someone with greater authority to assess that." I opted out of that.

- 34:00 The wharves were destroyed; there was a Japanese ship that was sunk because it was tied up to the wharf area, you could just see the funnel sticking up. And many of the oil wells, the tanks were still burning and oil was flowing down, like lava coming down, but oil had been escaping and there was smoke and a horrible stench of burning
- 34:30 oil existed that hung over that facility.

What else was in the harbour?

What else? There wasn't much else, there were - see Balikpapan was an oil-distributing centre and the Japanese were getting oil from there that the Dutch had developed beforehand. So the wharf area was quite extensive, there would have been 4 or 5 finger points of

- 35:00 wharf running out, and most of them had been targeted and bombed and some were in existence and some were broken in part or completely and the wharf area naturally was an area where there had been transport areas for supplies to get on to these ships and that had been bombed. So there was a sort of a circular quay area that was flat back to some of the main
- 35:30 buildings, and then the major buildings started.

Was there any evidence of locals, natives?

No, not then. They materialised later, they had sort of withdrawn. Initially there weren't a great deal of casualties on that beach area because the Japanese had withdrawn into the high ground and the natives had gone too. And you would be surprised that in that area they have -

- 36:00 there was a harbour area and lots of rivers flowing down, the Rico River and others, Panaja was another, and in those areas there was natives, they call their little villages kampongs, and the Malays had retreated to these areas and were sort of back in off the area where the heavy sort of action was taking place, but it didn't take them long once we sort of
- 36:30 took over for them to come out and to materialise and many of them had been hurt and killed by the action before we got there because the actual bombardment had taken place. In fact, we overran a hospital on that area, that had been absolutely almost destroyed, but there were bodies in there that were obviously patients that had just been left there. An awful situation they looked.
- 37:00 I don't know what kind of - we tried to work out what it was, because part of the hospital obviously had cells and the cell areas were still in existence and there were bodies in there, for some reason. And we could never find out what happened. Not that it was our task
- 37:30 because we moved on and left that, that was left for other authorities to investigate.

What nationality?

It was hard to say. Some of them were locals, we thought they were perhaps areas where people were being held for some sort of reason, whatever, I don't know, it might have been opposing Japanese rule, or authority. Some of the

- 38:00 bodies were in a state of bloat, they had just been left. So nothing much was ever said about that area, because later on the whole area was destroyed. When we moved out of it and weeks went by, the first use, talk about DDT [Dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane] being used; the whole of that area was sprayed with DDT to kill anything, as some disease might have emanated from that type of area. And a lot of it was
- 38:30 burnt after that, destroyed. So there was something that went on there prior to our landing that was - I have looked up the history of the landing of Balikpapan and it is not even mentioned in there, but we saw it, we found it, it was there. So there had been some type - maybe an atrocity, I don't know what it was, but it was certainly something out of the usual. It
- 39:00 wasn't all that pleasant.

At what point did you visit the hospital then?

Well that was part of the landing, we were there in the first couple of days, we were the initial force then, we front lined as we moved through that area. And there it was.

Were the buildings around Balikpapan, where you landed,

39:30 **built far back from the sea? Was it a big place?**

Yes it was, see the harbour at Balikpapan was an internal harbour and we landed on the shores, this side and we had to take that beach area and go back over that ridge, to the harbour which was inside the bay sort of thing. And the Dutch - it had been a Dutch settlement, it was Dutch occupied before, a Dutch colony and they developed the oil fields, and there was a community of Dutch people who had

40:00 lived there. Quite extensive, it was quite a big town, and that housing area had been damaged heavily. So it was sort of a port facility and a residential facility, and we came in on the residential side. And we went in to the harbour by traversing that Parramatta Ridge area that I mentioned to you.

40:30 **Was it Asian or European architecture?**

European in the main, yes it was, the Dutch, European. Afterwards when it was all over, we occupied one of the houses and did it up and used it ourselves and it was very much European in style.

That first night on Balikpapan, where did you sleep?

On the ground on that jolly sheet I told you

41:00 about. The weather-proofed sheet. I remember we had a bath; we found an old house and there was a barrel, you know the old fashioned picture of a barrel and water running down into a barrel from a roof, and we had been on these ships with salt water and that sort of nonsense for showers and I remember we took it in turns to hop into this barrel. A bit lighthearted and -

41:25 End of tape

Tape 5

00:31 **You mentioned that prior to the landing at Balikpapan that you were involved in briefing platoons in your company. Can you tell us what that involved?**

Well I went with the company commander a chap called Colonel East, he was a captain then. He got the relevant company commanders - officer in

01:00 charge of each company - and they had some of their platoon commanders with them, and they were told where we were going. They were told at Balikpapan and the general information of the division would be landing and so forth, and we had at that stage made on board and carried on board ship, a sort of

01:30 model of the beach area as we interpreted it. We made it out of out of paper, the intelligence section did that, and we had it so we could see the elevation of the land and so forth, and on that we had marked areas that we had identified from the aerial photos. We had those arranged on the board as well, so they were briefed as to that information that we had.

02:00 I was there with our company commander, and I had to explain any significant features about the aerial photography that was there. It was more of a fixing sort of step to familiarise people with the situation. They knew where they were going at that stage, they knew it was an oil town and it was just consolidating the visual

02:30 impression that they may have had.

What sort of questions would they ask you?

Sort of basic things: would there be a water supply there; are we sure there is going to be Japanese there; and those tunnels there, are they storages or are they actual fortifications; how far do we have to advance, what's the area that we have to reach; the airport, what if the airstrip is up

03:00 the right hand side of the invasion. Our company, C company, was concerned with the port area, so we had to just distinguish between the sort of 2 areas of target if you like. They were basic areas. Do we expect there will be much hostility, much opposition. All that kind of thing. From the information we had we had to relay

03:30 that.

Did you have all those answers?

No, not at all because as I said when we got there the jolly terrain looked so different. It was trying to draw a relief map of something to scale and visualising reality, it's difficult and particularly when it has been absolutely pounded by the bombing and the shelling that took place there. All those features we thought we had identified by air were no longer there.

04:00 **How did you feel briefing officers?**

Um, they looked down their nose a little bit at me at times, but I didn't do all the major briefing. If I were called upon it would be to give additional information, "Eric will tell you about this particular thing," and it was just a matter - and they would talk and react to it, and talk amongst themselves and perhaps ask the commanding officer something.

04:30 I was a supplementary person, I wasn't in charge of the total briefing.

While we are at this point, let's talk about how the intelligence section was distributed through the battalion and the company. What was the complement of intelligence men for your battalion?

We would have had a dozen personnel. There were 4 companies, A, B, C & D. And each company had one, then

05:00 there were those, there was an officer in charge, there was a sergeant, a corporal and there were - that's 7 and there were 5 others that were there. And they were related in collating mapping and resources and that sort of thing at an intelligence level, and quite often they would be personnel that would be opted out or drafted to do extra work should that be necessary, for example, when we came to

05:30 the wharf area that we said, and I called for more help to interpret, another I person came down. So in the battalion there was a so-called 'I section'; it had 12 people in it, it had an officer in charge, it had 2 non-commissioned officers and the rest were also ranks. And they were men who were skilled in certain things, some of them were skilled in design and art and that sort of thing. And they could reconstruct

06:00 situations. Not only verbally, but visually. They coordinated a lot of the information that came in. Passed it on to the battalion commanders or passed it down, but the role that I played was attached to C Company with a link back to intelligence. For example we came under fire from a source that we didn't think was there

06:30 and we were in a situation and I was relaying the information back and who answered the phone? It was a field phone, but who got on but the company commander and I was speaking directly to him. He said, "Where's the fire coming from, what sort of fire is it?" So sometimes you had that kind of unusual direct link but normally it was through the intelligence section. The intelligence section was supposed

07:00 to be the brains, I don't mean that in the wrong way, but it gathered the information and it saw to its dissemination and it kept feeding back and so forth, so anything that the battalion did, it relied upon the information that came through the I section. If the battalion commander went to brigade for briefing as he did, he would take the officer in charge of the I

07:30 section with him. They brought the information back that way. You were always there. It's like these politicians you see talking and then there's someone standing behind them, a member of staff, and every now and then they get a whisper and the little bit of information that hasn't been relayed you give.

So, in a theoretical infantry attack or manoeuvre, who would you be with?

08:00 I would be with the company commander sometimes but if there was a platoon out on patrol, as happened quite often, I would be with them, and relaying information back as to what we were doing and what we were finding and so on.

What was that chain of command for the intelligence then?

Well my chain of command was directly back to the company commander, that was the first one.

08:30 And then if I needed information or further information I would consult directly the intelligence section back at base. Basically my line of reporting was to - I was the servant of the company commander basically.

And how did you also service the needs of your intelligence infrastructure then?

Well, I had sessions with them quite often,

09:00 if I had a need to report on the condition of a certain facility that was there. For example, we were up on a post that had been vacated and I had to let them know that I had a view of the Rico River from that position, and that made the information for them, or that we had picked up some material that might be - in one case we picked up; the Japanese are great on optics, even then they had better telescopes than we had, and there was a fixed

09:30 telescope that we had on here, and would this be of any use, could they make use of it. Another time we found a portable Gestetner [duplicating machine] that you could roneoed sheets off; could I section use this sort of thing.

So, your small reports filtered back up to battalion and brigade level then?

Yes. That's true, we were adding little elements to the picture, and from the other companies the same kind of thing would be coming in.

10:00 Ours would be part of it but at the same time we wouldn't be usurping the role of the company commander who had direct access to battalion headquarters and he was the chief, you know, messenger I suppose. But if he was a good company commander as we had, he would be talking to people.

What were the officers in C Company like?

Generally pretty good. I had no complaints. One we called, one was a

10:30 young man we called 'the boy bastard', because he was all of that you know: finicky, Duntroon-trained bloke that didn't allow any latitude or anything like that, no concessions, but generally on the whole the officers that we had apart from that man, some of them have come up through the ranks, for example, the officer in charge of intelligence, Steve McCreedy, he had been a sergeant and gained his promotion in the field sort of thing,

11:00 and he was fine. But most of them - they were intelligent guys most of them, and after a while they saw where the rough edges were and where they needed to be trimmed. Personally I had no complaints except for this one man who I didn't like.

In the case of you finding dead or captured enemy, what would you be trying to look for as the I section?

Yes, we had an experience, we found on the first day,

11:30 we captured one Japanese and we wanted him taken back alive, and it was supposedly my task to search him. To find any information that he had on him, but as he was taken by some of the soldiers, obviously some of whom had gone through his pockets and so forth, but he was brought back to me and I remember undoing - he had puttees tapes around his legs, and undoing those, to see

12:00 they might have weapons on there or something. But the poor guy was in a pretty bad way although he was able to walk about. I didn't find any information on him, he wasn't carrying anything. I can remember that case. But in that role it was my task - I reported back to headquarters to A com. that we have a prisoner, get him back alive, get him an escort and so we tried to escort him down Parramatta

12:30 Ridge and some of the troops didn't want to escort him down there, or they couldn't be bothered or "We've walked our way up there, we don't want to take that B [bastard] down there," or something like that. They weren't kindly disposed to him. They didn't feel that he ought to be treated very gently. And it turned out that he had a wound in his back, see I found this when I looked at

13:00 him. You could see where he had been shot in the back, but it didn't look a major wound. But obviously there was damage internally. But you asked me about my role, that was my role. The role was to if there were information that came either physically alive or otherwise, just try to ascertain everything that looked as if it could be helpful.

13:30 We could read their language if they had letters, they had to be sent back but if they are emaciated looking or poorly clothed, you tried to deduce that the morale or their troops were in a bad way or something like that. You would try and make some guesstimate [guess-estimation] of the situation.

Did the soldier make it back?

He made it back but he didn't live. He died soon after he got back.

Were the Australian

14:00 **troops taunting him?**

They did actually, some of them quite clearly and it shocked me a little bit. They were saying, "Who's winning the war now, you little bastard." And give him a bit of a shake, they weren't belting him or anything like that, but they were confronting him. And of course this bloke couldn't understand I suppose, to my knowledge he couldn't speak English. He obviously would have been threatened by

14:30 that; he wasn't accepted very kindly, put it that way. And a lot of the troops felt they should waste their time on getting him back.

How did you feel towards him?

Compassionate in a way, I felt sorry, and I felt shocked at that reaction. I felt shocked in terms of

15:00 two things, I felt shocked because of the humanitarian side of it. And I felt shocked that they couldn't see that he could be of value to get him back to a situation where he could talk. They more concerned 'bout the immediate issues - they had been built up - you asked me about feelings, and whilst we were in training we had - there was a certain build up of tension and

15:30 anxiety and an explosiveness almost in the minds of people, even though it wasn't programmed deliberately, so it occurred and there was that kind of reaction, "Those buggers," you know, "look what they did," that kind of thing. Some of these guys that we were with had been in Buna, or if they hadn't

been in Buna, they had heard about it and they had been on Shaggy Ridge. But that side of

16:00 humanity, if you call it that, that didn't appeal to me one bit. I couldn't see that it didn't grab me that way, and I suppose there were lots of others that it wouldn't have occurred - wouldn't have behaved in that - I wasn't an isolate. But some of the other guys weren't inclined to view the situation as I did.

In your experience was it unusual to take a Japanese alive?

16:30 We had - we captured others later on, but it was after - no we didn't capture them in the field, it was after the war was over and they came in rather reluctantly. But that was the only live one that we captured.

Why do you think so few were captured?

Well I think that poor blighter as it turned out, in my opinion, he was wounded in such a way that he was unable to get away, or he didn't get

17:00 shot completely he was - I often thought afterwards did he break away from his own troops or was he trying to - I don't know what happened, but anyway he fell into our hands on that ridge and we didn't take; he was the only prisoner that we took. I don't know if there were any others taken at that stage. Because they weren't inclined to hand themselves over. There

17:30 was an inclination not to receive them as such either.

Other veterans we have spoken to have said there was really no quarter asked or given, would you agree with that?

There was certainly none asked, I don't know if none was given, I think that's perhaps too general a statement, I feel that whilst those instances that I mentioned were

18:00 unacceptable, I think there would be other occasions when people would have reacted differently. I think it's absolutely behaviour that under certain situations certain people exhibit. You have got to be there to see it or realise, but people act differently from others, and I saw an example of that - I saw people do things that

18:30 I wouldn't have done and others in my company wouldn't have done either.

Can you elaborate on that?

Not in any detail other than to say that some people were a little more reactive in a sort of violent way. They thought they had a task to do and the task was to do the

19:00 ultimate thing if they had to do it.

What sort of extremes of behaviour did you see - bad, brave, cowardly?

Yes. I don't think I saw - I did see something I thought was cowardly once when - it amazed me that - we were out on patrol and we were right up the Rico River at this stage, we were supposed to be on an

19:30 exploratory sort of exercise, and we came across this little - it wasn't so much a village, but there was a hut there, and they make them out of palm leaves, and it was obviously a native hut. And we'd stumbled across a Japanese supplies base, and one of our fellas, there would have only been a section of us, there was 10 of us

20:00 there. And as we came into this place, on the ground there was one of these Japanese - they called them, sort of - not ack-ack guns, but they had a distinctive firing style, they sort of stuttered, and rather a big machine gun thing.

A Woodpecker machine gun.

A Woodpecker, that's it. And it was wrapped in canvas and one of our fellows - we didn't think there were any Japanese, we thought they had gone further along.

20:30 He went round the front of the hut and suddenly there was a gun shot. And this chap had alerted the whole section - this chap came back - our fellow came back to our section with a funny look on his face, and he had come face to face with a Japanese in the hut and he had fired, first. And he was shocked by the situation and he came back to us and that put us all on the alert

21:00 and I was there and suddenly the fellas - the forward scout on the tracks came back to the end of the section and then the corporal in charge of the section gave the nod and we went. And I remember we withdrew from that situation, hurriedly. It amazed me, nothing was said except the overt behaviour of a couple of them, and it sort of caught and they all went.

21:30 And I went with them and they had all gone. And when we got back to company headquarters and we reported in, the first question was asked, "What did you do with that Woodpecker, did you disassemble it? Did you take the firing pin out of it?" or whatever. And we hadn't, we left it there, and that was an example that some sort of fear had crept in and over-rode

- 22:00 any logical thought of - I must admit we were a long, long way away from any support. We had gone forward on this patrol and had we got caught there we would have been isolated. Might have precipitated the action by the section leader at the time. But I thought at the time that that was not done with the right reason, it was done out of a bit of fear actually that occurred, that
- 22:30 I didn't quite understand. But that was only the one occasion that that occurred, on other occasions there was never a sign of that. But I can see that - and do you know what we were told to do, we were sent back out there again, we went back to the same site, the gun was still there. The dead Japanese soldier was lying in the hut.
- 23:00 The hut was filled with bags of rice. And obviously they had been using it as a food base for themselves and for their native supporters. But the shot had been sufficient to alert the Japs too, they must have been concerned about it - and they withdrew too, and we carried that jolly Woodpecker thing back. There was lots of trouble because being as we were
- 23:30 we set it up we had never fired one of these things before, and we thought we would set it up and on this forward outpost, it had been a Japanese outpost and they had a lookout built, made out of logs, it had been well done, they had one of these powerful telescopes through which they could look, it was a U shaped telescope and they could see right across Balikpapan where we came from. Anyway we set it up there and down below was the Rico River and the rainforest went over
- 24:00 and overhung the water, because these Aussie soldiers sometimes decided to do silly things, they set the jolly thing up and they pointed it and started firing it, it was about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Bang bang and it was tracer bullets and we could see these tracer bullets go flying out, and suddenly fire started coming back at us from the river. And it turns out there was an American patrol boat down there
- 24:30 and they were coming back down the river and they were under the canopy of the trees and they couldn't see and we couldn't see them, and they pulled out in the middle of the stream and they returned fire from the direction of these tracers you see and we came under fire again from our own side. And that's when I got on the phone and rang back because they didn't know it was the Yanks at that stage. And I said, "We are under fire from such and such," and they wanted to know a battalion - from where was the fire coming and that's when the battalion
- 25:00 commander got on the phone and said, "Tell me more. Where is it? What sort of fire is it?" and that sort of thing, and then we identified the ship, the American craft. And I had to tell him what happened, that it was a false alarm, we had been firing this gun and obviously we had been receiving fire back from our own ship, and that was part of that day's experience that was a little bit sort of unusual. And you asked me about the first instance
- 25:30 and that was an occasion where I doubted, but on other occasions you never questioned, you never doubted. Because we went in to - we took on situations where the fighting was light compared with other areas of activity we had experienced, but they went into areas where it was foolish to go. It wasn't necessary, it was a small place at Balikpapan
- 26:00 and we were hopping in there when all the time the Yanks were bypassing and they were going into Iwo Jima and they started to drop things on to Japan and so forth and we were engaged in these fiddling little island things - in hindsight they were fiddling - and we were losing men there. When it could have been unnecessary. And at the same time we were patrolling into that area, trying to find out - make contact with a retreating sort of situation
- 26:30 and we should have - I can remember the air force used to come over and they used to have these little Oster planes and they would come over and spot. And they would drop things down; they would flutter down like streamers. This day they came over and they dropped something down and we opened it up and it said, "Pull your head in boys, I think it's nearly over." And that was the first indication that perhaps we'd had that the war - we were miles into rain forest area behind
- 27:00 Balikpapan.
- All right we'll back up from the end of the war, I just wanted to get a bit more description about the Balikpapan landings from your point of view. What sort of pre-landing bombardment did you witness?**
- Well a lot of area of bombardment went on before we got there, that was obvious. And it had gone on in a preparatory stage I suppose for weeks. But
- 27:30 we couldn't see the war ships that were there because they were behind us. But the shelling that took place was tremendous and the aerial bombardment that took place prior to landing was - it was like rocket night in Sydney, like cracker night when they put on those visual displays. The planes just came in, it was unbelievable, they came in, they strafed, they bombed, they fired rockets.
- 28:00 Things which would just screech as they leave the plane, you could hear them going in. It was - it was something that I would never forget, it was awe-inspiring really, it was more of a spectacle than anything from one point of view, but it was reassuring of course from another. But we - you can see from that photo over there some water spouts coming up, and suddenly we started to see

28:30 plumes of water shooting up and we were being shelled from the other direction, the other side. And that sort of...

Could you see the flashes from the war ships firing behind you?

Yes. You could see them.

What does it sound like with a big naval shell going over head?

They whine, yes, they really do. And seconds seem to pass and suddenly you see before you hear and you see the explosion and then the sound comes to

29:00 you. And the American Lightning planes, I don't know where they were based, they must have come in from Morotai, because they wouldn't have come off ships but they were coming in and strafing. They were peculiar planes, they had twin fuselage and they were a rather special looking plane.

Who was in the landing craft you were in?

Well, it was one of our platoons, one

29:30 of the C Company platoons and the man that I said had got the heeby jeebies [creeps], he was in that plane, he was in charge of that group that we were in there. And our platoon commander he was in there as well, because we had an officer as well. On that thing there would have been - in a platoon there is 3 sections: a corporal, a sergeant and the officer and me.

30:00 **How close did the fire get to you that was coming in?**

See it landing next to you. "What was that?" Or, "Look at that!" There were no bullets coming at you, it was shell fire and we found out later whence it was coming. Once we got in...

So there was no small arms fire?

There was no small arms fire at that stage. They had withdrawn from the beach area because of the intensity of the

30:30 situation; evacuated that. Although when we got there, while the casualties were light, there were casualties inflicted, and I can recall that very well.

Did you see any boats hit on the way in?

No.

This was young Eric Flood's baptism of fire; how were you feeling seeing those shells spouting next to you?

It's strange you know, I can't look back and say... I wasn't frightened,

31:00 I was excited I think more than anything else, it was almost as if I was watching a film but I was part of it and didn't realise I was you know. I was able to stand back from it and see it without realising I was in it, in one sense. And even now I think about it and I can't imagine that it happened. But it did. The reality came

31:30 when we got there, and I was telling the young lady on the telephone, she asked me something that led to this and someone said, "Hey Dig, hold this," and it was a stretcher, and they were trying to get a stretcher; collapsible stretchers they had, over those trees and someone had been hit and it was the first man I had seen that had died. He was an officer and we knew him, and we knew that he was married and his wife had just had a baby,

32:00 and here he was. That kind of thing, that's when you start to get the heeby jeebies a little bit. But survival is a funny thing, it tends to block out some feelings. You tend to fall back on what you are supposed to do or what you know you are supposed to do or what instinctively you know you have got to do, you have got to

32:30 do it. Back off it.

Was there any chatter on the boat going in?

I can't recall any. Strangely enough, it was quiet. Everybody seemed to be awe-struck; we were taking in the scene, many of them were thinking. The poor sergeant down the bottom of the boat wasn't - he was trying to roll a cigarette and couldn't.

Any words of encouragement

33:00 **from the officers?**

Can't remember a thing. Not a word, we knew when that thing fell down, we had to go.

What else can you hear?

Well, you can still hear that bombardment that's going over and beyond the beach and you can hear the

occasional, you know, staccato of firing that was taking place. Mainly not rifle fire so much as Bren gun fire I could

33:30 hear.

What could you smell?

Well, the smell that was so pronounceable was the oil that was burning, there was a great - if we had a fear it was the rumour that went round that oil was going to be turned down on the beach and be lit somehow or other, but that wouldn't have been practical but it was something that had been sort of contemplated. But the bombardment had set off a lot of those oil tanks and in certain sections it was black and there was

34:00 black pall and the smell of burnt oil. I can smell it still.

Describe to me when that ramp went down and those first few seconds?

Well fortunately we were on the beach and I could feel the gritty sound that we felt under our feet and then before - it seemed to be organised but disorganised, there were troops that got there

34:30 ahead of us but got there before us. Already they had been passing back this stretcher that I mentioned so there was some - people coming the other way and we were going forward, and we had to clamber over, I can remember, the palm trees that had fallen. They had been knocked down and sort of figured of what I had seen of war pictures where this beach situation had occurred. And it was just a feeling

35:00 of just getting there and hoping something would happen I suppose, I just didn't know what it was, but we were geared to do what we had to do and I knew what I had to do and I was looking to do it. And we - it just happened. Sometimes things happened and you didn't know how they happened but they just happened. We did it because of the emotion of the moment I suppose.

35:30 There was a tremendous excitement or an expectation that the worst could happen. That wasn't completely blocked out but it didn't loom as a possibility; we thought that it would be all right.

What cover is there on the beach?

Very little; fallen palms mainly, at that stage

36:00 and until we got through that and there was the wreckage of the debris of homes. That was the cover. There was no shrubbery or anything like that behind which you could hide. It was all open. And when we got shelled by that fire that I mentioned, we were completely in the open on an open sort of ridge, I can't remember any sort of vegetation at all.

36:30 What evidence of Australian casualties did you see?

Well, there was that particular case that I mentioned where I struck that first case, and then there were several others that came in with shrapnel wounds, we always carried a bandage, a special bandage that goes on their face. But

37:00 in my particular section, and we were a front line section, we were lucky enough not to suffer any radical casualties. The casualties that occurred in Balikpapan in the main occurred with the 2/33rd area - they were part of 7th Division but they went towards the air strip and that was heavily protected and in the initial stages where we were in that area, the casualties that

37:30 I mentioned and the ones I didn't know about, because I didn't come into contact with and the other casualties occurred when we - and I started to tell you about that other situation - went across to the bay to Penajam, because they found that the shelling was coming from a situation over there that hadn't been touched on the Balikpapan side, so we had to go over and take that and clear that land.

38:00 So you landed on dry beach or in the water?

My recollection is it was dry. I could feel the grit. The assault craft got in very close, they were very shallow drafts and it must have been high tide I suppose, I can't remember. But I may have - I can't recall water, I just recall getting off this thing. Nothing

38:30 came at us and we got out of it.

After I guess the very high of adrenaline of running to the beach and hitting the beach, was there a feeling of coming down again afterwards?

It seemed a piece of cake, after a while you wonder what the devil was going on, and then we got strafed as I said, and we reached such a point of hysteria that we all jumped in this barrel of water towards the end of the day I was telling you about.

39:00 That quickly passed because in a couple of days we were put on landing ships again, a different type of landing ship, they were called alligators and we were sent across the bay to a point of Penajam to clear the land over there, and that was dangerous. If you read the history of Balikpapan, the commander of 7th Div. says that for the first time he felt anxious, he sat and watched this battalion go across into an area which they hadn't shelled - whereas Balikpapan had been pulverised -

- 39:30 and now he was sending a battalion of his over into areas where they hadn't touched. And that's where we went, but fortunately - we were fortunate in so many ways - it wasn't quite as disastrous as we thought it might be.
- 39:53 End of tape

Tape 6

00:31 **Eric what was the AIF's opinion of the militia?**

Initially they used to call them the Chockos, there was some disrespect shown, but as the war went on and particularly as they got involved in some of the campaigns in the New Guinea area (and they were difficult campaigns)

01:00 in my view the opinion changed. Disdain grew more into respect for what they had done. Mine wasn't a lasting impression of lack of respect, maybe initially I wondered about it, but it wasn't enduring.

01:30 You asked me what the AIF's view, I couldn't speak for the AIF. Having learnt of their experiences in some of these occupational war-time sort of situations, I couldn't think any less of them, perhaps more, think better of them put it that way. I suppose,

02:00 I don't know that - I just noticed that in some of our experiences, that there were fellows, particularly in the I section for instance, when his group ran into trouble, he requested straight away that he not go out any more, that he stay back at his base or headquarters or wherever that may have been. It would have been in area but not face to face situations.

02:30 And I thought at the time, I questioned in my mind his decision, but he had responsibilities that may have promoted that I don't know. But getting back to your original point, no I - initially but later on no, did I have a lack of feeling for them. I don't know whether that answers the question.

Yes it does. What

03:00 **were your thoughts about the natives who supported the Japanese, did you ever witness any bad treatment?**

No. In fact we only struck the people who lived in Borneo, the Malay people. They were very friendly to us. I had no problem at all. The - some of them obviously fraternised with the Japanese because

03:30 they - some of the female population came very close to them. But there wasn't I think an overt support of the Japanese, it was more forced upon them. And in that Borneo campaign I didn't see any sort of feelings of

04:00 hostility to them nor they us. In fact it was just the opposite; they were very co-operative, and the women folk who became involved in that I think they were basically forced into that type of occupation, that's not quite the word but certainly they were used as comfort for the troops at times by the Japanese. I

04:30 think in that aerial photography, there was an area that had been designated the brothel area. It was obviously a Japanese set-up. But there were signs that that sort of cohabitation existed but it didn't influence our thinking of them. Not with any hostility put it that way.

05:00 The attitude of Malaysia towards Australia in recent years surprises me given my experiences with them, and the Indonesians, and some of them were of Indonesian descent, they were very compatible, very supportive, very thankful. First of all the Japanese had done something to the Dutch and then

05:30 we had released them from the Japanese and then in turn they became independent because of a sequence of events, and we were part of that.

Do you know if the Japanese soldiers brought over Japanese prostitutes?

Yes. We had an experience where a Japanese was captured - was brought in, and he

06:00 had obviously been living with this woman. And for some time, because she regarded herself as sort of being, not his wife, - she was attached to him and depended upon him because there was obviously some emotional involvement. Because when he was taken away you could see she was left in a desperate situation, she was isolated, perhaps from her own people,

06:30 and he was taken away and she was taken back to her village and I had the feeling that she may have had some trouble in being accepted; that would seem that way for me. She was in a state of confusion, she didn't know what was going to happen to her.

How aware were you of the progress of the war when you were in (UNCLEAR)?

We weren't totally aware, we knew -

07:00 we had snippets of news that came through, but it wasn't only towards that situation where the plane came over and dropped that. But we knew it was going towards the end, but we were in a situation where we didn't get a lot of information, we were away from a base situation, we were well out into remote areas

07:30 behind Balikpapan. We didn't know what was going to happen because we were almost ignorant of the world wide situation. I think that wasn't a good thing, I believe we should have been more informed of that. The hierarchy might have known but it wasn't translated down to us.

So when you received that flier that said, "Pull your heads in boys, it's nearly over," can

08:00 **you describe what you thought?**

It was very comforting - very suspicious of it of course. Well, we hoped it was true, but on the other hand we didn't feel inclined to slacken off a little bit in terms of keeping a watch out for things, but it certainly didn't promote us to go further into the area we were, we sat tight until it came through officially.

08:30 **What was life like on Balikpapan?**

It wasn't very stimulating at all, we spent most of the days there in areas outside the township of Balikpapan and when we did come back after it was over, there was nothing in Balikpapan at all. Some of the Dutch started to come back, but the energy,

09:00 we had no social life, there was nothing there to alleviate the situation. If you were in London or France or Germany, at least there were civilisation in town that you could go to but, in those places there was nothing, you had to create all that yourself. We had a visit by Gracie Fields, the English comedienne, she came in and gave a concert to hundreds of troops in one spot, and she got up and sang

09:30 her funny song and told jokes and so forth. But there was nothing else. We played a bit of sport, we played basketball among ourselves between other units. A bit of softball was played I remember. But apart from that some film nights they had, every now and then we would have a film night when films would become available and we would watch those; they were generally British films.

10:00 That were major stuff throughout the war in England, with Phyllis Calvert and I remember 'McDonough of the Seven Moons' was something - you probably have never seen that, but it was a real startling film. But it became very boring and it became boring to the extent that it led to great dissatisfaction,

10:30 a feeling of unease. You had a desire to come home, but unfortunately your order of demobilisation was based on your length of service and whether you were married and they worked out demobilisation points, and the higher the points you had the sooner you would come home. So a married man would get more points than a single man. I can recall they started to break up the units and there was no marching out or no ceremony that indicated that the units was to be

11:00 disbanded, you were just taken and put with another unit. And I remember I was taken from the 2/9th battalion and put with a more historical unit that was a small section that was attached to divisional headquarters in Balikpapan, and I was supposed to become part of that unit. But the induction into the army as I have indicated to you, I think was

11:30 pretty poor in terms of the operation and the demobilisation that took place when the unit was broken up was just as bad, you were just sort of taken out. There was no marching out ceremony or nothing said in your honour, the unit just dispersed. Some fellas heard overnight they had to be down at the airport tomorrow, at such and such an hour, be ready to move. And they were being sent home. The others stayed there.

12:00 The unit was being broken up and we were sent to holding units and my points were such that I was put on a boat and off-loaded at New Britain at Rabaul and we were there to guard Japanese prisoners that had been taken on the island.

This is after war's been declared over?

Yeah, but to answer your first question, the organisation that would be

12:30 responsible for the morale of people didn't keep pace with the events that occurred. The let down that happened and certainly whilst the war was on there was none of that at all. Didn't have any entertainment, there was no entertainment at all.

While the war was still on what was your life like? How long were you staying back at a base?

We were never in a base, we hopped

13:00 across to Panagin and we formed a base there but there were patrols that were going on and on and on all the time we were there, they just kept moving forward. You would be relieved for a few days and on you would go again. So there - the Americans did more for their troops than we in that regard.

While you were moving around such a lot, how threatened did you

13:30 feel by ambush?

All the time. We were in one situation where we – they had a commando unit attached to a lot of divisions, and the commandos were an elite group of men who volunteered in to that work and they would go out and do further reconnaissance work. And I remember we were in one position we had occupied and holding still, and then out of the blue unknown to us came 10 men and they were commandos

14:00 and whilst we were stationary it was their role to go out and to seek further information. Three or four days later six of them came back, four of them didn't. They had run into an ambush further on you see, they had gone out probing – but later on we found where the four had been killed because we went forward again. But there was that kind of – the sort of organisational things

14:30 of an army or a battalion or a division, were operational and the operation tended to proceed whatever the circumstances, and the commandos had a role to play, and so despite the situation or the time of the duration of the war they kept going to do what they were supposed to do or what was written they were supposed to do. It was sort of deferment or modification, and those poor guys didn't come back and there was no need for them to go.

15:00 And we kept going on and we pushed into that area. And we kept going on and as fast as we were going out the Japanese, thank goodness, were pulling back all the time and we kept running into the places where they had been. We found their signal wires and they set up little perimeters and they tied tin cans to – they had black signal wire, quite black, and they had obviously camped there and this wire was with the cans were attached so if anything would happen the

15:30 cans would be disturbed and they did simple things like that, but they were – but each was watching each other and they knew, they must have known they were inferior in force to us at that stage given the history of the occupation. We were looking for them all the time. It was that kind of action, so there was an inherent

16:00 danger, unnecessarily so as I look back on it. We could easily have given the situation – the war was developing in the Pacific and the way the Americans were advancing and they intended to drop atomic bombs on Japan and so forth. The little – our occupation there was – whilst it was threatening to us it was insignificant basically. To the total

16:30 war result. The 9th Division who went around the other side to Brunei, and they exposed the prison camps at Kuching and Sandakan, they got there a bit late unfortunately; the Australian prisoners of war there were put on that march and most of them died as a result. But the climate of the Japanese occupation at Balikpapan was different,

17:00 they didn't have any Australian prisoners, they had some Indian prisoners. In fact we were guilty of shooting an Indian prisoner and he was trying to escape and coming towards us and he was mistaken and he was shot. He was quite lucid when we brought him in and our doctor came out and he had a wound in his chest and the fellow was clutching his Koran – he had his bible and he was

17:30 clutching it to his chest, he felt safe because he had his Koran. He didn't survive the night. But that was the kind of – it was an intermittent operation as the days grew on. But your original question, did we feel that we were in trouble or could be in trouble, yes we did. We didn't know what was ahead, particularly when – so when you got away from the controlled area of the beach head where everything

18:00 had been organised and strategically sort of damaged by the air force and that kind of thing. That's one of these structured situations where the military can move, plant this, move that, bomb this, but when you get up into the unknown and to tracks that are not marked on maps and you are going along and finding that your traps are booby-trapped and all that kind of thing and the opposition is not visible

18:30 to you and you don't know where they are, you know it's a sporadic type of thing. It's a different kind of operation, it falls back on the intuitive nature of your small control when you are out there. It's unknown, it was an unknown situation. In one sense there was a known there, that it was dangerous, but it was unknown as to how it was going to develop. Except in that type of thing. We found

19:00 at certain stages the track would be booby trapped with mines that if you put your foot on they'd go up. The engineers, if they found them for us, if we found them, they would then explode them and they'd leave a hole in the track half the size of this room. That was another fear that you sort of had to watch.

What wound did you fear the most?

19:30 Stomach. That was the thought that if you got hit in the stomach.

What can you say about the nerves of the forward scout?

Yes, that was the worst job of the lot. Sometimes it was known that they would let the forward scout go through and then catch the body of a

20:00 section that might be following. But some fellas liked it, we had one chap who – a Queenslander, he

delighted in it, he wanted to get out in the front all the time. He won a military medal in Buna that same guy, he got behind the tanks, they brought tanks into Buna for the first time and he was speaking - he had an intercom and he was speaking to the people in the tank, directing to as to where the fire was coming from. But he was crazy, no one wanted to go with him because

20:30 he always brought trouble because he looked for it. He liked putting a hand in a bees' nest, he liked doing it. But I was never a forward scout because I was within a section, the forward scouts were out - but I was as I said with the map trying to work out where we were and how far out and that kind of thing.

What did you

21:00 **learn about the Japanese as fighters?**

Oh, they were certainly unforgiving. They were tremendously courageous in their own way, they didn't give in easily, put it that way, just the opposite. They seemed to have a belief that if

21:30 they died that way it was a pathway to - or that's what we thought they believed - to some sort of salvation. I didn't find them anything but uncompromising and certainly not to be underestimated. They were pretty tough. You know, I was critical of our own training, our own sort of procedures, but the fact that we were able to combat that type of thing perhaps

22:00 showed something of the nature of the Australian too. We - I don't think that we lost anything in comparison, perhaps the opposite. But maybe we were a long way from home and the lines of communication were great, maybe we had greater gun power and all that sort of thing. We were able to sustain the effort thanks to the Americans

22:30 who came in, otherwise it might have been a different story. Because they certainly caused some diversion along the way because of the activities they were involved in. You only have to look at the American of Iwo Jima and that sort of thing, if you know anything about that history, the loss of life there was tremendous on both sides. It was just death for death - so the Japanese were no pushovers, they were just the opposite, cunning, do things

23:00 that we wouldn't do.

How much experience did you have engaged in direct combat with the Japanese?

Well only those that I have told you about. I can recall being out on a patrol with that fellow that I mentioned, and we heard voices down the track asking us to come on out, and advance to us. They must have had an English-speaking person

23:30 in their group. But the sort of action that we were engaged in after the actual landing and after those early experiences that I described, it was very sporadic, it was hit and run sort of thing. It was encounter, as soon as they knew we were in contact they kept retreating into the highlands, into the inland part of Borneo, and so casualties weren't

24:00 heavy, it was more fatigue than anything else. I can remember being in situations where I wouldn't have cared whether I lived or died in terms of absolute exhaustion. Of being on forced sort of marches from one point to another. I say marches in movement, they weren't marches from one area to another and we just had to keep going, there was nowhere to stop and we just had to keep going until we found a spot suitable to stop. And just lying there

24:30 and we didn't care what happened. Physical strength absolutely sapped.

Was that when you thought about dying?

Well I can recollect on one night I wouldn't have cared what happened. Because of that just sheer exhaustive state that we were in.

What had led you to that state?

The fact - the physical duress of the whole thing. We were

25:00 done in. We had been forced to sort of do too much, to go too far. To find this situation where we had to sort of stop in a spot that was suitable. And the unknowing, we had to keep going because we didn't know, had we stopped in a certain situation what might happen, but we had to get to a suitable spot where there was a clearing, where there was high ground.

25:30 The day closes in and you are still not there and somebody in charge says you have to keep going. There were those situations. But that occurred to me only once when I felt in that state of mind. And then I was a bit disgusted the next morning to find that I had been thinking that. But the most fearful situations that I found was

26:00 you are in that situation and you have got to do sentry duty and you have 2 hours on and 4 off sort of thing, in other words you lie down for 4 hours. You go on duty for 2 hours and you are watching in the dark, and it is so dark you can't see a damned thing but you feel you can hear everything and anything,

you know that sort of thing. If someone is 10 metres that way and that way and that way, but if someone is 10 metres away and you have got to wake them up and you wonder whether you should fire at

- 26:30 nothing and be called a fool for having fired and there's nothing there and everybody gets up, you are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, but the silence and the loneliness of it and the time it doesn't move but stands still and you imagine all kinds of things. We struck the Japanese in certain parts there, they had long spears, bits of long stick and they had knife-like things attached at the end and they were used at
- 27:00 night. We anticipated they were used at night, instead of shooting and making a noise they would probe with these things. We always had images that this might happen, or I did anyway. But on reflection as I looked back they were just in the same situation as we were, they were hoping that we weren't going to intrude on them at night. Not that that was the kind of operation we engaged in but there was always that mutual fear I am sure.
- 27:30 You think of all the obscure things that might happen as well as the obvious. So there was great anxiety in your mind as to what might happen at all times. You know things would happen when you least expected them too so you had to be very careful.

28:00 **How did you sleep?**

I don't know, you did, you get into the habit of it you see. You didn't sleep on a bed for months, just all you had - when you were away you didn't have a palliasse or anything, you had that jolly waterproof sheet I was telling you about, that formed the basis. Quite often you set up some sort of wigwam effect with sticks and you put those - you joined them at the top and put it over the top to try and keep the rain out. Because in the tropics

- 28:30 it rained fairly regularly and you just slept where you lay. Put your head on pack and you wouldn't take your boots off for days. Just did.

What were the most common health complaints?

Well malaria was obviously one of those that was effective, but by the time I got into the services they had combated

- 29:00 that with a dose of a pill called Atebrin, it's a pill that turns you yellow but you had to take it I am not sure whether you took it once a day or twice, it was compulsory to take it, and you took on a yellow exterior - even the white of your eyes became yellow, your urine became yellow. That was for malaria, that was the most common thing, but food poisoning, stomach trouble, dysentery you know
- 29:30 when you had to go to the toilet and there was nowhere to go to the toilet and they're uncomfortable awkward things. And feet, tinea of the feet because of the dampness. Infection under your arms with perspiration and your groin area. Tropical ear was another one that fellas got; infection in their ears, and a nasal problem.
- 30:00 A problem that results - you get discharge from your ear. Mercurochrome was the thing that the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] used to put on all those kinds of things, you see fellas with purple ears, they would dab this stuff on to try and stop it. They were the main illnesses I think at that stage. In New Guinea obviously malaria had a stronger effect on
- 30:30 the troops and Dengue fever than it did when we were in Borneo. It was more prevalent there. And the Atebrin wasn't used then to combat malaria as much as it was later on.

What kind of wildlife did you see in the jungle?

Didn't see any actually, but heard one. That was a disappointing thing in Borneo, but I remember going across an area

- 31:00 we were just coming out - we had patches of clearing jungle and then there would be a grassed area - and I heard this horrible noise and I was in a section of 10 men and we all threw ourselves to the ground. And we realised afterwards it must have been a gorilla and not man, or one of those ape-like creatures that it was calling. It frightened us. The occasional bird about you could hear those but didn't see any
- 31:30 carnivores or anything like that. We weren't sort of environmentalists or ornithologists, we weren't looking for those things. I imagine the type of activity that was going we tend to scare off those animals and it was not - the people there led a subsistence sort of a life -
- 32:00 the Malay people. And they were congregations of villages and it kept wildlife away, and they had domestic type animals, pigs mainly, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and fowls. There was a strange mixture in those villages of Chinese as well. There were Eurasians, they were half Dutch and half Indonesians and then there were the Malay people themselves
- 32:30 and there was a Chinese element there that had inter married. The Chinese made their way to all parts of the world. They are very adaptable people. But they were - the Eurasians and the Chinese were very attractive sort of - I found them attractive development of that had emerged. Quite unusual -

- 33:00 so we had a situation where these - this is a little bit rude, but the Chinese, they were great scavengers and wanted to - they were survivors, they used to come in and want to buy things, if you were camped anywhere - when we were back in camp we had mosquito nets, that you put up and they would want to come and buy your mosquito net for 2 pieces of fruit or something. They couldn't talk but that's what they wanted. They make a damn
- 33:30 nuisance of themselves. They had coolie type hats on, black tops that hung over their pants. One of our fellas was coming - you know we had showers rigged up and they would have showers, this was back in Balikpapan itself, and he came back and this woman was poking around his - wanted to buy his mosquito net and all he had on was his towel, and a big pair of boots. So he yells out at them, and rips his towel, and says, "Get outta here!" and chases them.
- 34:00 See these Chinese ladies running down there. He was running after them with his boots on and not a stitch on. They didn't come back. Only done in humour, but it got rid of them. But that was - there were the Malay people who didn't worry you at all, there was that type of person and it was part of a society that developed there. Sort of society that the Chinese played initially.
- 34:30 **Did you ever notice physical beauty in the surroundings you were in?**
- No not really, I wish I had, now I go back to the McPherson Ranges in Queensland for example, and I find them absolutely wondrous places in those rain forests. But I didn't see any of that, it was all a challenge to us and a hurdle to us, and strangely enough, maybe
- 35:00 it was my age, but given and the circumstances, but given that I didn't say that that was a beautiful place and I would like to go back to it or there was something magical about it. You hear the wonderment about the sort of rainforest which was different from ours and the fact that people lived there and made a living and lived the style of life they lived. And how they used the environment and how they used the river for all their needs, whatever it was from
- 35:30 A-Z sort of thing. But I didn't get any inclination that I thought it was majestic or eye catching or anything like that.
- How long were you in Balikpapan for?**
- We were there on the 1st July, I am not sure when we left but it would have been at least 6 months after that that we got out of there.
- 36:00 See, it was after the war ended, October-November, in that area and they started breaking up the units and I wasn't discharged until December 1946, so there was a - it was over 12 months after the war was ended that I was discharged and a period of that time I spent on Balikpapan.
- 36:30 And then a period I spent on New Britain in Rabaul, and then I came back to Sydney and I had a section - of all things I was allocated to a stores unit where we had to go and guard army stores at White Bay down in Sydney. Do you know where White Bay is? Matt [interviewer] would know perhaps, Lilyfield down there, and they had huge
- 37:00 warehouses of canned food that been sent to the troops, were to be sent to the troops they were still there in the warehouses, great tins of blackberry juice, that was a favourite thing they used to send, and we used to - we were supposed to guard this at night, and you had to sleep in the warehouse, and the tins would pop at night with expansion, that's sidetracking the issue, but they were the kinds of experiences that happened, I was in Balikpapan
- 37:30 the dates I am not sure of the duration, at least six months in Balikpapan, another 3 months at Rabaul and back home waiting for demobilisation.
- While you were still on Balikpapan, what sort of physical shape were you in?**
- I think I was pretty fit. I didn't carry any weight, I am sure I was fit.
- 38:00 We all were, we didn't wear shirts or anything like that or to get brown as you could was the thing to do. Not knowing about skin cancers and that sort of thing. Being exposed to the tropical sun nobody told you about that, didn't know about that. I was quite fortunate I didn't have any physical - I was able to cope. I was small but I managed.
- 38:30 **Did your ear play up again while you were away?**
- It didn't, no. I had that treatment in Warwick in HH.
- That was actually mentioned off camera, so what treatment did you have for your ear then?**
- Well they related it to ear drum problem, see, there was bad drainage in this ear drum here on this side and they operated and deepened the channel somewhere between the nasal cavity and the ear drum so that any
- 39:00 mucous that flowed from the sinuses could escape. And that had been affecting my ears and fortunately that cured that particular thing.

By the time you finished in Balikpapan, do you think as a unit you were malnourished?

If we'd had a longer period

39:30 than that perhaps I could say we would have been because we lacked a variety of diet. There was a basic diet of meat and tinned vegetables, I can't - there was nothing exotic at all - I would imagine that subject to that type of diet for any lengthy period could have had some effect. But for the period of time that I was involved in it, I don't think it did. If I was affected by the diet of the army

40:00 it would be because the general diet and lifestyle and the affect it had on me intellectually, socially and emotionally, rather than physically. The disabilities that I suffer now have been recognised are only for carcinomas of the skin as a result of exposure to the sun.

How cold did it get there at night?

I can't remember. It didn't get cold, I am pretty

40:30 sure it didn't. The wasn't a great range in temperature, put it that way; irregularity in rain fall but not in temperature.

40:41 End of tape

Tape 7

00:33 **I was going to say let's go back a bit, I think we've left out part of your campaign on Balikpapan and that's the work you did on the Rico River, I believe there was a ship captured, tell us about that please?**

That's right. See the Japanese were playing a withdrawal game in all that campaign. They estimated that was the tactic

01:00 they would do. The oil wells had been destroyed. There was nothing to sort of fight for really. But as they retreated they took a lot of their materials with them, and they had a ship - it had [a] particular name, it just escapes me, the something Maru. But our - I wasn't involved in this - battalion in one of their patrols - we had companies going different ways - captured a small coastal

01:30 ship that the Japanese had taken up the river, it would be almost as big as one of the Harbour ferries, the sort of ferry that goes across to Neutral Bay, not the South Steyne or the old Manly, but fairly big lump of a steamer. But, when they found it had cargo on it, but apparently one of the pistons had broken down and the engine was half sort of in a state of repair when they

02:00 found this jolly thing. And it was in the banks of the river under the trees. Anyway, the result of it was quite hilarious, an infantry battalion had captured the ship in the first instance, secondly, they set up an ambush on that ship and the Japanese coming down the river towing 'praus', the Indonesian or Malayan boats

02:30 - p-r-a-u I think they spell it - and they were taking supplies past, and these fellas on the ship were able to take action that overtook that situation. Eventually the cargo ship was towed back into the harbour of Balikpapan. And it appeared in all the history of Balik and it was quite a unique thing that happened.

03:00 Quite unique and it belonged to the 2/9th Battalion and we had all the various schemes: we were going to get this ship going and we were going to take it back to Australia, and we would make our fortune doing coastal trading up and down the coast of Australia. This is what we had planned in our ideas because it was beyond the realms of possibility. It is interesting enough, when we were approaching Parramatta Ridge going back, we

03:30 came across a car, the most modern looking car, it was obviously the Japanese commander's car. It wasn't a Cadillac style but it was almost that. I remember this thing standing there, it was absolutely amazing. Anyway, that was handed over to brigade and the brigadier of the 18th Brigade, and he drove that car around Balik for sometime before it was left. So we had been recognised as capturing

04:00 a ship and a modern car. That was operational.

How would you describe the state and the equipage that the Japanese had when you invaded?

Well, obviously they had been there for some time, see, this was 1945 and they had come down there well before then and they had settled there and they had taken over society and they set up their own barracks,

04:30 they had set up their own entertainment and relationships with the natives, and they were very much in command and they had some very sophisticated gunnery around that place. We found them later on, on the highlands and they were highly operational but subject to the attack that took place, a lot of their potential was destroyed. So we had the feeling

05:00 that the Japanese soldier on - in that area had become more entrenched and was more commercialised than the front line troops that had occupied other parts of that Pacific area. And as such they were less combatant I feel, and I think that was the general feeling, they were more intent on survival of stop and hit and move, it wasn't a sort of an

05:30 adversarial role there that they played, except around the airport. And that was a bit tough.

So you think that mainly they were garrison level troops?

That's the way I would interpret it yes.

Rather than the fight to the death?

That was apparent because of the style they had developed whereas people around Kuching and Sandakan area, they were a different breed

06:00 altogether, seemingly, by the actions that occurred. There wasn't a great deal of fighting there, that was confrontational but the way they treated the Australian prisoners of war there indicated a different attitude.

Did you get a look at any of the tunnels they constructed?

Yes, we explored them quite extensively, stupidly, after we bypassed them initially and of course they were

06:30 declared free after certain action, but after the war was over and we were stationed there, we used to try and find out what was in them. They had dug tunnels everywhere and these were all - had you been a miner you'd be proud of them, they were all boarded up and they had burrowed into the hillsides. Lord knows what was in them, supplies initially, but a lot of those tunnels remained unexplored.

07:00 They had an anticipation that something may happen, but their sort of reactive role to the happening was more nominal than real in that area.

The penetration the battalion made along the Rico River, how did that affect the Japanese supply situation?

Well, it - obviously it must have nearly stretched it to the limit, because

07:30 I mentioned that situation where we found that rice depot, and they were dependant on that, but there were funny instances occurred. I can recall well when we advanced, we landed an Panajam and we pushed up to this Japanese lookout, where I mentioned that telescope they had and so forth, and the Japanese had withdrawn and we found a bike,

08:00 a bicycle and it was buckled and the wheels were buckled on the back and it squeaked. And I got on the bike 4 o'clock one afternoon, and I rode back to battalion a distance I don't know, must have been a couple of miles and I was pedalling along, squeaking like mad, eventually I left the bike there and I walked back, or did I get a ride back? But somehow I got back. But later on that adventure we had with that

08:30 rice depot place was almost adjacent to the road that I rode down, on that noisy bike, and that area must have been occupied by the Japanese but we didn't know, because we went back down and when we came around, then we came back inland a little bit from the road, and they were there, um, but they - I didn't know what happened, they must have been observing, they couldn't help but know,

09:00 that there was presence and particularly my presence, and I often think about how lucky I may have been that I did get back, because it was a silly thing to do, but we thought we had cleared that area, we didn't realise until later, but their supplies, the further they retreated the more difficult it became for them and they were dependant on the native kampongs that they withdrew to and they had a good knowledge of those because they had been there some years, but when peace was declared and those

09:30 prisoners came in, they came in without any trouble at all.

The vegetation in that region, how dense is it?

Oh, tropical, quite dense yes.

It must be hard then to be sure you have cleared an area?

Yes. It was, and see, between each kampong, the tracks went from village to village and they were the lines that the Japanese

10:00 used and we would make the contact and make the movement and they wouldn't be there, there's evidence of them but they had already gone. But we weren't sure in hindsight of the adjacent sort of track development that we didn't know about that they could have been on. But basically they were going one way, they were - the evidence was intelligence-wise they were retreating in one direction, they were retreating inland. Away from the

10:30 coast. But I don't know what they hoped to achieve, but they must have known the inevitable was happening or would happen, but they were going away from it.

So the state of the war there would have been you just trying to catch them up and fight them?

Well that's right, we were trying to make contact, which we did sporadically as I said around the airport. It was far more

11:00 resistance there, they didn't want to lose control of that but they did. But then it was more of a retreating chase type of thing. It was nothing like the New Guinea thing where they stood and you had to force them back inch by inch almost. It was a different type of campaign altogether from that waged in other places and which we had waged.

11:30 **You mentioned before that you felt it was unnecessary to push them into a fight. Did that strike you that way at the time?**

No it didn't. Only on hindsight and when I look back on it and I look at the map of the Pacific area and see where the Australians were put, where they went, did I think - others did too - and we wonder why in hell we went into there, because it seemed insignificant

12:00 to the total picture, because those Japanese forces had been bypassed. They were there but the allied forces had gone further north and they were cut off basically. Japan was threatened and those islands around Japan, Okinawa and so forth. But maybe we were fortunate because Mountbatten came to Balikpapan, you know, Lord Mountbatten, and the word went round that he had a scheme,

12:30 he wanted Singapore liberated by the British and the Australians because they would have been driven out of there and that was the anticipation, the furphy that went round that we were going to go, but fortunately the war ended before that happened. Just as well it did we didn't go there that would have been awful, Lord knows what would have happened to us had we gone in there. It was one of the myths that

13:00 some people in higher places have. This image, 'we'll get back our great Singapore that was forced from us' and so forth, 'and we will do it in glorious style: we'll land from the sea,' and the prisoners of war would perhaps have been killed and loss of life would have been tremendous, so it didn't happen. But the significance was that when I was on the beach at Balikpapan, I saw General MacArthur, he landed, several

13:30 waves after he was with our senior officers, and after that came Mountbatten, so it was very much an occupational area, it was of some significance for those men to come.

What did you think of MacArthur at the time?

I didn't have a great deal - I didn't have any valuation, I knew he had made those comments that I will return and so forth, and that he said about the Philippines and he was the general

14:00 commander, but he obviously had an awareness of what was going on and an interest, and he appeared there, it must have been quite an effort on his part, because he had his eyes on bigger stakes I think than Balikpapan. But it was a combined operation, the Americans were involved naval and air-wise in that, and they had a contingent on Balikpapan, they called them the SeaBees [US Naval Construction Force] or something, and I think they were responsible for the building of some of the facilities

14:30 and what have you. They used to have ice cream in the mess, and we used to wonder how they did it. They had machines that made ice cream. We didn't know what ice cream was. The last time we had ice cream was at the pictures in Sydney.

What about your thoughts at the time on General Blamey?

Yes. I wasn't very political in those days, I didn't know - some of the older troops would say things about Blamey and they were a bit derogative

15:00 and hinted at his shady past, but I had no thoughts, it didn't occur to me.

That's an opinion in its own right. As the Intel guy I could say in the company, were you considered by the ordinary rifleman to be somewhat in the know?

Well I didn't see it that way, and they didn't treat me that way at all. They saw me - when I look back it was amazing, I was a go-between, at some stage I would

15:30 be with the company commander and other times I would be attached to just an ordinary rifle section that is made up of 10 - in a platoon there are 3 rifle sections. The platoon would go out and sometimes the section would go out or whatever, but I would moved between the two sort of levels and I didn't regard myself, I thought I was just part of the team, I didn't see myself in any

16:00 way superior or otherwise, and I don't think they did either. They would ask me things and they accepted that that person, whether it was me or someone else, was part of that unit and had a role to play and that's the way it worked, and they would give me information, and they wanted to know where

they were, feed this back that kind of thing.

So did they ask you, Eric, what's going on, what are we doing, what's this all about?

Well they would be briefed

16:30 before they went out hopefully, maybe by the platoon commander he would have that information and I was his supplement if necessary, and he would refer to me to check a map measurement or something like that, but then I would go with that unit and carry on from there. No I don't think that ever came up. Quite often I didn't know any more than they did.

I just wondered if they were trying to get inside track from you, thinking you might

17:00 **know?**

No, not really, anything I had I told them.

You carried a rifle?

Yes.

Did you ever fire it?

Yes.

In what situation?

Oh, just in a defensive situation. Aggressive situation.

Do you know if you ever hit anybody?

I don't know.

17:30 **What was perhaps your most frightening experience while you were there?**

Frightening; I think frightened of the unknown sometimes, "What the devil is going to happen?"
Frightened by when I saw those things on the track, those little booby traps, those foot sort of mines

18:00 that were there and seen them blown up and seen what they could do. That scared the life out of me. Because you are always conscious then of where you are going to tread. And I think I said before, frightened at night when you had to take up your duty in the darkness and the stillness and the thoughts that went through your mind. I think I was frightened when those American planes strafed us initially.

18:30 It's silly to say you weren't frightened of situations, but nothing that caused me to want to back off or, I have those memories, but they don't traumatise me or something like that. Maybe I was lucky that it wasn't quite as dramatic or radical but the point was that I was only a young fella of 18 and I was thrust into that situation.

19:00 And therefore it's a different experience, it's like a near fight in an exciting unbelievable situation an incredible situation with the mass of men there, going about something about which they weren't too sure what they were supposed to be doing. They had a general idea, but as far as being close to the decision making or anything like that, it's amazing how an army works, it sets up these

19:30 mechanics, but then it's mechanical in itself, and then it relies, maybe it knows, but it relies unknowingly or knowingly on the courage or the intelligence or the survival concept of the people involved. They really are the meat in the sandwich when it comes to the crunch; they do it. People can set up all the programs in the world, but how they

20:00 perform on the field depends on the chap carrying the ball quite often.

When I just asked you to talk about frightening experiences, most of the ones you listed were environmental tensions I guess, mines, night time, you listed those rather than the time we were ambushed or something. Why do you think you were more frightened of those more drawn out environmental things than the action?

20:30 I don't know I was, when we carried that man I told you about initially when I came first of all and I didn't regard myself as a Digger, I thought I was very - didn't know whether I was entitled to that. And then when we found those commandos, those bodies just left, those sort of

21:00 situations, sort of frightened me, but it's - I don't know it's like finding a football, are you frightened to run into the scrum or what? You do it but it doesn't scare you afterwards. Maybe you think, "Hey, that could have hurt me," but at the actual time it's - it doesn't - it didn't occur to me anyway, it didn't come as a

21:30 game but as a crisis that you had to do something positive and you had to think about what you were doing rather than not thinking of what you were doing or not thinking about what might happen to you. But what you had to do and what was best to do. Maybe it was because of the circumstances I was in,

maybe it was different from some of the others, the Buna and the Lagona situation where it was

22:00 hell on earth, but I was alongside many of those people later on who had been through that. I didn't think they were scared by it, they were perhaps disgusted or horrified by it, disgusted they had to do it, disgusted they had lost so many people. But I think they questioned a little bit the purpose and the reason.

22:30 The method rather than the fear of it.

There's a saying, 'there are old soldiers, there are bold soldiers, but there are no old, bold soldiers'. Did you find those older, more seasoned guys more cautious towards the end of the war?

Yes. They were wiser I think, one or two of them - there's one chap, I was telling you about him, he was bold, he was foolish, and people didn't want to be

23:00 associated with him because he looked for trouble. He would go where he didn't have to go. But generally speaking I think that the older soldiers were wise; they were more cautious, they were more calculating, they thought before they did something, but when they did something they did it

23:30 with a practice that was supportive and was valuable, whereas the younger person tended not to have that background but you were influenced by these people. But at no time did I hear or see a withdrawal from a situation, because of their past experience, but rather a better approach to the situation because of it.

24:00 **Were you ever ambushed?**

No, we were never ambushed but we witnessed a situation where we could have ambushed, in other words we were out on patrol and a situation and it was a recce [reconnaissance] patrol. The recce patrols weren't supposed to do anything provocative, they were supposed to look and see. And we were in a situation where a group of Japanese

24:30 went down the track and they were two large in numbers for us to do anything, had we done anything it would have been dangerous, but that wasn't our purpose, our purpose was to find and we sat holding our breath while they went by and - not sat we lay - and we hoped to God that they wouldn't see us, and they were going down the track and some of them were chatting and they didn't realise we were there, but that was the nearest

25:00 of an ambush in reverse. But I wasn't ambushed.

It must have been very nerve-racking lying there waiting to see if those Japanese discovered you?

Frightening. You have dreams about that now, not about that but sometimes you dream of yourself being in that situation and you hope they don't see you. And you know they damned well see you, and when they see you, you wake up. They didn't see us, they kept going.

I imagine your heart was beating pretty loud?

Yes, you felt it

25:30 was making more noise than it should. But they're the things you do, if you are doing recce, reconnaissance patrol you had to avoid contact, because your job was to get information and get it back, it was more important than the contra version. So, as soon as they came through I am sure it was out of our knowledge of what we were supposed to do, some of it might have been motivated by fear, but it happened that way and

26:00 we managed to get out of it. But it wasn't the most pleasant moment.

The company that you were with, what sort of losses did it suffer on Balikpapan?

I haven't got the exact figures of Balik, of that total campaign, in the history they will say the losses on

26:30 Balikpapan were light, but that doesn't say that they weren't 100 or 200 or whatever, because there was a war cemetery that we left behind on Balik with the names of fellas and it's still there I suppose, but our battalion, because of the way we were committed to certain areas, we were fortunate in that you know. I don't know that our losses would have amounted to more than a dozen killed in that campaign,

27:00 in the company I was with, put it that way.

How did you - what ritual did you go through for death there?

They took the bodies back in the most part without our sort of presence, it was only when we came back and found that a war cemetery had been established and that burial had been taken. But those commandos

27:30 for example, that we buried, we buried them right out on the track, and we took their meat tags off and they were sent back, but to my knowledge they would still be there. I don't think any War Graves

[officials] would have gone out to recover them. But the situation I were in the bodies didn't remain in situ, they were

28:00 carried out.

What contact did you have with home while you were there?

Very little. I remember my Mum writing to me and saying, "Where are you? What division?" See they were on the fruit farm, and she said, "Give me a number of the number of grapes we might harvest per acre, which would indicate the division you are in." So I wrote back and said, "I hope the

28:30 yield you get this year is good and hope you get the 7 ton per acre for the grapes." Headlines in the paper read, 'Australian 7th Division lands at Balikpapan'. So she knew then that I was in Balikpapan but she was very hazy about those details prior to that. All our letters were censored, they'd get home and parts would be cut out. You couldn't say you were part of the AIF, of 7th Division or, "We are going soon."

29:00 And if you had a girlfriend and you wrote to her it was most embarrassing because someone else had to read your letters. We sent the most sterile letters home, and all your relationships broke down because they thought you didn't care.

Were there men whose relationships broke down?

Well I imagine so, um, I am not aware of any details of that, but fellas used to come to me and say, "Have you got any girls to write to?"

29:30 I can give you an address," sort of thing. Because they knew I was young and perhaps I didn't have those attachments. And some of them used to talk about their associations and what they did on leave. They used to try and write and they were always upset because their letters - they were told that their letters arrived but they were decimated and some of the officers were a bit prissie [fussy] about letters, and

30:00 would say that you shouldn't put certain things in, they'd take exception to fellas getting personal in their letters.

Do you think that level of censorship was warranted at that stage of the war?

I think the personal side wasn't. But obviously the military side of manoeuvres and statistics and so forth probably was.

As a young man inexperienced in relationships, mixing with older men who

30:30 **might have had a bit more experience, do you think you got a strange picture of women?**

I think I may have, yes, I think I did. A lot of them had been to the Middle East and they had experiences there that you could only guess at if half of them were true. And coming home some of them stopped off in India and that sort of thing. Bombay

31:00 and what have you, and they seemed to know more about interpersonal relationships than I did, put it that way.

I imagine talking about women and sex takes up a large amount of the conversation amongst men in those situations?

Yes, it does, a very important part. Yeah. They are part of human behaviour and a very human dynamic, you know you have a relationship with the

31:30 opposite sex and it is very important and some of it is very personal and intimate and I imagine - I couldn't imagine - I know now how married men must have felt away from their wives and young families, it must have been horrifying in a way, really, but there was a tremendous gap in their lives, and vice versa, the women at home ever anxious about every letter that came and every knock on the door.

32:00 Memorable, you never forget those sorts of things. I know my Mother must have thought the same way. She must have been - I was the only son in a family of 4, she must have been worried stiff. My Father too, knowing what he went through, he probably was also.

Did you ever get any letters from your Dad?

No, never wrote, Dad didn't. "Dad said such and such," but funnily enough Dad didn't ever write.

32:30 He wasn't the one to do that sort of thing.

It's a fairly common story actually.

Is it?

Yeah, a lot of guys have told us that their dads never wrote, their mothers did it.

I was telling Kirsty [interviewer] about the time I got off the train at Yenda, I don't know whether you

overheard, and I walked towards the small township of Yenda along the bitumen road, metal road, and this lady was coming towards me, and it was my Mum, and I am struggling with my kit bag and she was running to meet me. I was coming home

33:00 from leave. It was the most touching thing that I will recall. You ask me things about the war, and I remember that. To see her and the warmth and the meaning for her and for me in the long term, unforgettable. Those tangible but intangible things that you can't describe but they are there. And that must have happened I suppose to thousands of families and to those

33:30 who had loved ones who didn't come back at all, the whole futility of it all. You just can't understand. But whatever happens or whatever they say, you know we talk about the disabilities that ex-servicemen have, but the fact that people were put into those situations, had to live in that style and to go through those experiences, you can't measure the influence that

34:00 it must have had on people and could have had on people and the underlying feeling and development and so forth. It's quite unique. And it's not because they were brave or whatever, it's the fact that they were of a generation but timed their growth with a situation where war was on. Any generation and that age group would have done the same

34:30 thing when a war was on. But it so happened it befell that generation and the generation before them. And now it's impinging on some of the generations now, but it's just coincidental and it's why society as a whole should recognise that some had to do this, if they wanted to, not because of character or anything, but it was because they were just there at the time; wrong time,

35:00 wrong place almost.

Do you resent the lost years you had in the army?

No, I don't really - I don't because I was of an age I think that if there were some benefits of me because I was an adolescent searching for a path a way to go, and I think the experiences

35:30 I had helped me find myself and find the direction I wanted to take. It helped me in the development of perhaps my values and my understandings. I think it must have been a vital part. Maybe I ought to come to these things in a different way, but I don't glorify these things, I don't go back and rejoice on Anzac Day and that sort of thing, I acknowledge they are there and I engage in the

36:00 memory of it all, but I don't think it's something you should worship year by year or you should or, "Look how clever was I," sort of thing, and then I have got those medals there, but I hardly ever wear them because I get embarrassed about them. I think it sets me apart from others and I don't feel justified. I don't think I did anything that anybody else wouldn't have done given the situation, it's just that it just so happened that way at that

36:30 time. So if there were positives I would say that it helped me and I am sure it helped others, although I think there were the tragic sides of war that you just can't understand and the impact that would have and the wounds and those disabilities. But I would think there are positives that come out of it too in terms of our understanding

37:00 of human beings and how things worked. They must do, but sometimes you have your times when you doubt all kinds of things, don't you. Even in this modern age wherever we are, we still think there is one way out of it and that's to go and do something that contradictory to what we believe in.

You said you kind of found the path in the army, you were obviously quite

37:30 **sentimental when the unit was broken up?**

Yes I was. See, it was a Queensland unit, the 2/9th Battalion originated in Brisbane, and they were Queenslanders, 'QX-ers', and you know what Queenslanders are like today, they are proud of them and it was a proud unit, and as the war went on and they lost their people from their ranks they didn't have enough recruits coming from Queensland, so they came from interstate, and I came

38:00 from New South Wales. And when they disbanded, we didn't have that sort of detachment with one another when we left, we shook hands and said goodbye. And we didn't have the opportunity of saying, "Hey we'll meet in Brisbane on such and such a day," it just sort of dissipated like the wind in the night sort of thing, but in so doing whilst I lost that contact with people, I didn't lose the sort of ethos that was

38:30 there and the spirit that was and the immeasurable things that happen between people that are there, that you still have and you still remember, and you value and recently I have gone back to some - caught up with some of the old fellas, I say old because we're old but they are older than me, and I find that in looking at them I don't recognise them and I see no personal attachments to them at all, because that all went, but I

39:00 see a deeper attachment that goes beyond the image of the person sitting opposite me. And I see the sort of things that might influence me, along the way I talk to my son or my grandchildren or - not in direct terms but in covert behaviour.

What were you doing with the military history unit when you were in 2/9th?

For the first time I found

- 39:30 they had masses of photographs of Balikpapan, they had a historic photographer there and we didn't know such a person existed, and they had magnificent prints and I found I had access to this and then that unit broke up and was sent home and with it went all the gear. I was just helping him collate it and get it all together, but I had no possession of it. But somewhere in the archives is this wonderful pictorial
- 40:00 history of those places, of Balikpapan and other places. You talk of Damian Parer the New Guinea photographer bloke, but those people existed all over. I only wish, I don't know what value it would be to me, I know they exist and I got the thrill of my life a couple of years ago when I went to the war museum [Australian War Memorial] in Canberra, I hadn't been and there was a scene there I could have - that painting there was almost
- 40:30 taken from it. It was the landing of Balikpapan, and the palm trees were all knocked over and it was all there, I visualised it, I suppose it's gone now because those displays are transitory.
- 40:44 End of tape

Tape 8

00:31 **Eric did you every encounter any experiences from the fire?**

Yes, those that I have all recounted to you they were the two occasions that happened. So you don't want me to go over them again.

01:00 **How did you handle seeing Australian soldiers dying and dead?**

Well before I went away, the fellas, the older soldiers used to say to me, "You don't seem to be too concerned when you see the opposition, the enemy

01:30 killed, but when you see one of your own it really brings it home to you that life is so short and fragile. It's not until you do that." That's what they said but as far as I am concerned any sort of casualty was traumatic, it wasn't a pleasant experience

02:00 at all. But it's worse if someone is close to you. But even so it's a life that's gone, someone else's son or wife or husband or something like that, all kinds of thoughts. It makes you think. It makes you think more sort of deeper thoughts about life and death and the meaning of it.

02:30 It's beyond the physical state of the body lying there, that's nothing really, it's the feeling beyond that needs to be considered and gets at you. The body is the trigger that perhaps leads you to that, but it's not easy. It's not

03:00 something that you accept with ease.

When people from more recent conflicts talk about post-traumatic stress disorder or battle fatigue or shell shock, what do you think of that?

Yes. Well I only saw the one experience of that and that was that chap I spoke about in the boat as we were going in. And he was obviously suffering from that, his nerves were obviously gone when he

03:30 became anxious and I am sure it was attributed to his past experiences. I work with Legacy and I work in the pensions area helping widows apply for pensions and I don't know what it is, and I have noticed and I know it can be proved statistically, that the Vietnam veterans seem to have more TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension] recognised

04:00 per [capita] than any other group of personnel that was engaged in war. I might be wrong statistically, but it does seem - I think there is an indication that kind of disability seems more prevalent in more recent conflicts that formerly. Maybe it can be

04:30 related to the fact that we are far more sensitive in our application of those conditions. Application for those conditions and the [Department of] Veterans' Affairs are more sort of understanding. But maybe there was something that happened in Vietnam, that a psychological thing that they followed and it seemed to be recognised, so I imagine it to be a dreadful

05:00 condition to have if you have that sort of traumatic experience that leads to that. It hasn't affected me that way, and I haven't seen many of the older soldiers that have that condition. In my observation it seems to be more recent, a recently acknowledged condition.

05:30 I would have thought that many of the men in the first world war must have warranted that consideration but perhaps didn't get it. They get it automatically now, the widows do, if they're the

wives of a First World War one, but must have gone through a lot of trauma, a lot of agony without getting recognised. That might be a subjective sort of evaluation, but I

06:00 believe it to be the case. It would be worth looking at, someone ought to do some research on that and they might come up with some interesting figures.

What about from your own experience, have you ever had visions or nightmares that you found difficult to shake?

No. No I haven't. I found things that disturbed me, but

06:30 maybe I didn't suffer enough. I can live with those memories, I can remember them, and they concern me and worry me a little bit, but not fixed or become obsessive, I can cope, they are tragedies and traumas that you have, some are more lasting than others, but I have been fortunate enough to be able to not be influenced by them to that extent.

07:00 **While you were overseas what did you most look forward to about coming home?**

I suppose home, how do you describe home? You can't describe it, the love of a home and of the parents and brothers and sisters. I will never forget when we sailed into Sydney Harbour, and we were on that troop ship and the Manly ferries tooted and it was a lovely

07:30 sunny day and the ocean was blue and it was just a glorious feeling. It was great to be home and away from the bondage of army life and all the possibilities that went with it.

Can you tell us about hearing that the war was over, how did you get the news?

Well, that little plane flew over, that Oster, and left a little message down with - it had red streamers

08:00 fluttering off this object as it came down, and they were very accurate, "Pull your heads in, it's going to be over." It was tremendous. A great relief and a sense, was it all worth while. I suppose we came out on the right side of the ledger,

08:30 I didn't look much beyond that except that it had ended. We could go back to the things that we hoped for, not only me but everybody else. The lights come on again.

So when you got - how did you come about that these units were being broken up

09:00 **and sent back individually. Were you living in a kind of barracks or camp?**

We were under canvas at that stage and we had those collapsible stretchers. And in fact we were up near the oil tanks that were bulldozed in that area and we were camped on this bare patch. And

09:30 it wasn't a case of 'it's over and we'll pack up and send the 2/9th home' or the 18th brigade home together, it was on that priority list that I already mentioned. So they began to send people home in order of priority as determined by the points system. A lot of the older and married men went home first, and as the numbers diminished the units had to disband. They didn't have any need for an infantry battalion or 18th brigade any more; they were broken up, they were going

10:00 home. And so they sent some home in a staggered sort of way, and some went to other units that had other duties to perform, and so we were taken out of our unit and the pride that went with the 2nd battalion that had been right through whole bizzo had no involvement in a farewell, in a disbanding of a unit that brought

10:30 distinction to itself and brought, you know, great feeling among the men who were involved in it, it just went like that in bits and pieces. And it was such a let down, as you look back it was a disgraceful way of doing things. No acknowledgement, no word from anybody, no gathering together and being told, "You've done a marvellous job and now the unit's going to break up and we are going to

11:00 have this function to celebrate, say your final goodbyes in a way that was meaningful and that was recognised." It just dissipated like leaves in the wind, and so you came home that way without that sort of attachment, you were just depersonalised again, you were just another bod they had to get rid of somehow. And the

11:30 chap that wrote a book about the battalion, Bill Spencer, he says exactly the same thing, he says he looks back and sees the tragedy of the way it ended. Not because the war ended, that wasn't a tragedy, but those men that had been bonded together like that through circumstances. Suddenly, just pulled apart.

What did that do to morale?

No - awful you wondered,

12:00 "Heck, here we are just sort of individuals lost again," sort of thing. It was awful, really was. I thought it was - you know the army, I know they have got their methods, but the hierarchy, they ought to be ashamed of things like that, the fact that they used you, needed you and you offered your services but they were

- 12:30 terminated in a way that was not recognised in any emotive or meaningful way. And of the fact that people gather together on Anzac Day in unit battalions and so forth is an indication of the feeling that people had to want to get together. They had experiences that they felt were valuable that brought them closer and brought them an
- 13:00 understanding of each other and they valued things that they all did together and the reason why they did them and the quality that it brought out and the inequalities, but basically the quality. It made people realise the strengths that exist within others in times of adversity and they are the things that bring people together and go to battalion reunions or whatever and the fella that likes his Beaufort plane and that sort of thing.
- 13:30 They are the things that bind, but the service themselves, the army services that I experienced on Balikpapan did nothing to foster that or recognise that. We entered the army in one way which was uncharacteristic of any sort of development of an understanding and a bonding
- 14:00 and we left the same way, and in the middle we did something. But it had no beginning or no ending of any significance other than the fact that thing was over. So there's a - you are - admittedly they offered you - they tried to repatriate you in some way, the benefits of the reconstruction, the RTS scheme [CRTS - Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme] that offered you retraining if you wanted to, those kinds of things were there and they were valuable, very important.
- 14:30 But in human terms, those terms that matter, they weren't there, you had to do that yourself. And that's why you find the fellas putting their medals up, glorifying certain things and you wonder why. But there were very immeasurable things that happened, and you don't boast about them. Things that you wouldn't want to do perhaps. But because of
- 15:00 necessity they did happen. But you value the relationships that existed, that allowed you to survive and come out of that situation. It's a little bit roundabout in answering your question, but the ending was disappointing in one sense; grand in the first instance, but in terms of considering
- 15:30 the human worth of people and the meaning, unrecognisable, didn't exist.

What were your first impressions of Rabaul?

Rabaul. That was a dreadful place. I spent the most miserable time in my life at Rabaul. The whole motivation had gone, my whole desire to continue in the army had disappeared. I wanted to get out and

- 16:00 I was sent to Rabaul, and we were doing menial duties, there was nothing there of any purpose at all, there were lots of Japanese prisoners that were being guarded, I was drafted into some clerical sort of work, I can't remember what I did but it had no meaning. It was boring and frustrating and useless; meaningless.

16:30 What sort of work were you doing there?

Well I can't remember - I remember I was doing something with numbers and it related to the personnel there and the supplies that we needed. We had a sort of a shelving on the top of the table which held books, and it was subject to borers. Infested with borers, I can remember I spent most of my day with a pin

- 17:00 trying to dig these things, trying to fill in time. It was depressing. That was more daunting than anything I had experienced in the war, that waiting meaningless sort of existence and somehow or other I found a - we must have had an army newspaper that came out, and there was a message in it from the Victorian Government,

- 17:30 and they were looking for teachers, people who wanted to be teachers. And if you reported back a certain date or you applied by a certain date you would be considered for the enrolment to go into teacher education. And I have looked at this and I remember going into the commanding officer of that particular unit, and said, "Look I want to do this and if I don't get back by this time I won't have access to this

- 18:00 course." And he was considerate enough to give me a bit of priority and pushed me up on the list so I got on the next boat out. So I got to Sydney a little earlier than I would have, but it was long enough to know that I had been there too long. But when I got back to Sydney, what did I do, I went to Sydney I didn't go to Melbourne, I went to the Department of Education in Sydney and gained access to training there.

What physical

18:30 difference had the Japanese made on the landscape?

In Rabaul? I don't know. They spent their time when we were there, they filled their day in, they would have an officer in charge and there would be a group of 100 men, Japanese and they had long machetes and they are out cutting kunai grass and they did that hour after hour, and they did that to keep themselves busy, keep occupied. We used to walk

- 19:00 through them and they used to look at you, but if an officer walked through there would be a sharp

command from the Japanese officer in charge, and the men put their machetes down and stand to attention as one of our officers walked through. They were highly disciplined. But I wasn't there long enough to know what they did during that occupation, but the history tells us they were very cruel and rather ruthless in that occupation of Rabaul.

19:30 They killed nurses and settlers that were left behind. Rather a merciless sort of an occupation.

What did you see of the tunnels around Rabaul?

Quite a few, it was very mountainous and volcanic as well. But I didn't have a lot of experience in exploring those. They were just visually there that I noted and apart from my despondency I didn't notice anything

20:00 else.

So how did you feel getting on the boat to go back home?

Absolutely relieved and I didn't feel that I had forcedly justified, I wanted to go into a tertiary course that started in the January of that year, so I had a legitimate reason to get there, and the officer in charge

20:30 saw that, and whilst we were much of a muchness in terms of points, he said, "Well, I think we can squeeze you in." You asked me earlier what did I think of officers, well I thought very kindly of that one, he was understanding and I must have convinced him.

What did you first think of breaking into the teaching profession?

Strangely enough, we talked about the Rico River, I didn't know what I was going to

21:00 do after I was discharged, I knew I didn't want to go back to that job I had, and I was sitting on the banks of the Rico River just near that kampong - one of those villages. And suddenly it occurred to me, in fact I saw -

21:30 I don't like talking about these things, but I will mention it to you because you asked me directly - there was a body floating in the water, and it was a Japanese soldier, and his bottom was up in the air and his head was down there, the upper part and the lower part of his body were submerged and his arched back was visible. He was in uniform and he had been shot further up the river. And he was floating down there and I recall he was spotted and some of our troops went down

22:00 and fished him out, and did the obvious search to see if he had anything, but then put him back in the water and let him go and drifted down wherever they went into the ocean between Borneo and the Celebes. But somehow as I was sitting there it occurred to me that I wanted to teach, I wanted to do something to make people think,

22:30 and I was so convinced that's what I wanted to do, it just came like that out of the blue. You hear about people seeing the light and that kind of thing, but I don't know about those kinds of things, you imagine they don't happen or they do happen, but that happened to me that I had this inspiration that motivated me to go into teaching and that's what led me to do that. And fortunately through the CRTS

23:00 scheme, I went back to Sydney. They were short of teachers, a lot of men had gone off to war and didn't come back and that sort of thing. There were great gaps in the teaching ranks. They wanted teachers, and I went down to the Education Department at Sydney, a big stone grey building in Farrer Place, and I applied and I was told to go down for an interview, and I marched in. And if you have been in a bureaucratic building, they had brown lino tiles and the walls were painted brown up to a certain height and then cream above and the corridors were austere and the offices were all enclosed. There was

23:30 no open space, and I had to go and be interviewed. And I had big boots on, army boots and I was as yellow as can be and I walked into that building and I knocked on the door some place, and some clerk looked at me and said, "Yes wait outside." And I sat on the hard bench and waited, and a man walked by carrying some papers and he came back again and he said, "Are you being looked after, soldier?" And I said, "I have come in for an interview." And he said, "What's your name?" And I told him,

24:00 and he said, "Just a minute." And off he went and about 5 minutes later I was called into an office, and it turned out he was the Director-General of Education that had walked by and had taken the trouble to stop and talk to me, he had seen me you see. Maybe it was the shabby appearance of someone in a uniform and boots sitting in that building that caught his attention. But I went in for an interview to see whether I was suitable for teaching, and there was a bloke sitting there and he had a pile of files that seemed to go up to the ceiling, and I thought

24:30 if they ever fell over he would do himself some damage. They were the sorts of thoughts that occupied my mind and he talked to me and interviewed me and he said, "All right, you would like to go into teaching. All right, I would like you to say a poem to me." And here I was, I had left school 3.5 years ago and he wanted me to say a bit of poetry, and it took me a while to think of what to say, and suddenly something came to me: 'If music be the food of love, play on'. "That's not the way you would say it

25:00 to a class, stand up." He was talking to me in this tone, and so very embarrassed, I was, I wasn't too

sure of too many lines, and I wondered how far I could get. I stood up and I must have looked quite a sight, quite a picture. 'If music be the food of love, play on, give me...' And so he went on, "That'll do, sit down." To this day he was impressed or embarrassed.

25:30 Anyway the interview went on, it was so simplistic, he gave me something to read and took it off me and he said, "Now tell me what you read." And I had to try to - and of course he had access to my leaving certificate results, they had come through at this stage. He said, "All right I think you might be suitable for teaching, I will put your name down for a scholarship and you can start your course." And the details were then provided, and

26:00 that's how it happened. I was still in the army when I made the application and was accepted into teaching. That's not the way they accept people into college, it's purely academic, you go in and someone at the school when you do your HSC [Higher School Certificate] or leaving certificate and you apply and they say, 'suitable for teaching', and then it depends on your academic results and the level of your

26:30 passes as to whether you fit into the quota. And whilst you are doing your course in education they determine whether you are suitable or not and whether you pass your exams or not, but I was accepted on the basis of that interview and obviously because of the shortage they had in manpower in teaching. I forget the question, whether it was related to that or not.

No, I asked you how you got into teaching.

27:00 Oh yes I see, well that's how it all started. From the Rico River and that sighting in that situation and the realisation that came to me and then my subversive attempts to get home earlier from Rabaul and the interview I had at the Department of Education, having been spotted by the Director-General. Maybe that was a sign, my star - someone recognised me early

27:30 on that I was going to be a satisfactory teacher even before I started.

How were you received as a returned serviceman?

Yes, well we were naughty - I suppose you can use that term - I was not the only ex-serviceman that went into teaching, many people had started their courses before they enlisted and some must have applied as I did and went into

28:00 teaching, so there was an ex-service element through the teachers' college, and here we were men in their 20s who'd had experiences rather worldly, and into the college came a lot of girls that had just come off their Leaving certificate, and having freedom for the first time away from school and home, and looking young and delightful and there were a lot of other college boys that were of the same age as the girls, but there were a

28:30 few that were more appreciative of the situation in terms of the girls that came there. The vitality and the attractiveness of them, and those of us who had been denied any contact with the opposite sex, found ourselves in just the opposite situation. We were in sections with them, that's what they called it, but we were having

29:00 classes with them, and we had a good time whilst we were there, and that's where I met Doreen. So, we did fairly well in those terms, and we did a lot of good for the teachers' college, which was a pristine sort of place run by restricted people with the girl supervising - got the girls in the hall and told them not to wear red to college

29:30 ever, because it excited the men and we didn't want that kind of behaviour; the girls' warden it was. And the ex-servicemen came in and poof to that sort of restriction, they were far more worldly and tended to break down the barriers and challenged in lecture situations, they would be far more challenging and they brought a maturity to the educative sort of process. They brought answers and

30:00 ideas they hadn't seen before, you had people coming in directly from school as opposed to people who had been out of school for a few years, and the maturation effect. It was an enlivening and enriching experience for the college, it had not had it before. Ex-school kids in those days, in 1945, the kids that came out of school in 1945 were very innocent, restricted, they didn't have the freedom of expression the student has

30:30 these days. They were still young adolescents, inexperienced in so many ways. But the ex-service personnel brought a spark to the place and I think it brought a change by the lecturing staff to the students as a whole, to treat them as young adults and give them more responsibility rather than oversight of them continuously.

31:00 Did you band together as ex-servicemen?

Not really no, there wasn't that sort of clique but you were within the sections, and you knew Joe had been in the air force or whatever, but it didn't influence us in that way. Although there was some commonality of experiences at times you know; the football teams of the ex-servicemen were physically stronger and

31:30 bigger, and it brought them together and that type of thing.

How involved were you in Anzac Day straight after the war?

Not really, I didn't get involved all that much, I didn't feel an inclination so to do. I became a teacher and I did most of my teaching in country areas and I became associated and identified with the type of Anzac Service that took place in

32:00 country towns. I didn't come to Sydney to march or anything like that, I became localised in my involvement, and I did more for Anzac Day through the school than within an overt external group. I got the kids to think about Anzac Day and to write about it and to perform duties that brought them into contact with the concept of Anzac Day rather than me be a beneficiary of such a thing.

32:30 You know I think it's valuable but it's meaningful to reflect on it; it's not to glorify or to eulogise about those experiences that you may or may not have had, I think they have happened and they are past, it's a more global and long term view that

33:00 we ought to be looking at because of what happened than going too much into the incidentals of things. They can be personalised too much rather than looked at in the broader sense. That's the way I look at it, but not all people agree with me.

How did you settle into civilian life?

33:30 Took me a while to become too settled, I think you missed - despite my criticism of the service, there was a certain formality and a structure and a bondage if you like, if that existed and that's gone and you are more of an individual now and you had to make your own way. A lot of ex-servicemen did take time, they wanted to kick over the traces a little bit, they didn't want to tie themselves

34:00 down, a lot of the younger ones. The married ones were perhaps a little more committed. I just felt that perhaps there was a breath of fresh air, a freedom that I didn't know existed, it was like going into a new sort of environment that was not restrictive or threatening in that sense, it was threatening in the sense that you had to achieve and do something, you realised that but you couldn't just fall back on the army

34:30 situation to keep you going. Whatever you did you were still there, but you knew now that you were going to fall out somewhere and where you landed, don't know sort of thing. I suppose it took me a while to discipline myself into thinking of organised study, but I think we were allowed to compensate a little bit because of the maturity we brought to the situation and in the long term we were more mature

35:00 and indeed lurking in the background more motivated because we knew that given the situation that we had been through we now had to do something; we had found ourselves to a degree. The younger ones coming straight out of school were still experiencing that first blush of adolescence and were seeking their own identity and so forth, whereas the ex-service personnel, we had that advantage, whilst we might have been a bit

35:30 restless, in the back of our minds we were a bit more focused, and I think once again there was a spin off for the younger students sitting in with us, they caught that determination that a lot of the ex-servicemen found they had to sort of express because of the situation from which

36:00 they had come, and they tended to follow a little bit. So there was a rub off effect I suppose. But it didn't take me long to settle down. I was a bit restless for a while and breathed the air of freedom and opportunity, you know, academically and socially. And that was enlightening, it was a release. I went on my way.

What skills did you learn

36:30 **in the army that you think benefited you in your teaching career?**

I don't know that I learnt any sort of skills in terms of measurable skills. As I said, I think I matured and understood and valued personal relationships and I understood what it was to be responsible. I understood what it was to carry out a

37:00 task that others may depend upon. And I think I understood the value of having the opportunity to do something with myself for myself a little more than I had done prior to going into the service. I think, as I said, it was a maturation and a motivational thing that happened to me that assisted me in

37:30 making an adjustment, and I think the army helped me do that despite the experiences that occurred. See it's like any clan situation, if you become part of the totem the primitive people had a ceremony at a certain age when a tooth was knocked out or something or a scar was put on you, and you jumped the bridge and you became part of that next little group whereas in our society,

38:00 the bridge between adolescence and manhood or childhood is marginal and you are rejected by the younger group which you left, or you reject them, and the older group reject you because you are not ready to reject them, and so you try to create a way of life yourself and we do it more nowadays, you wear jeans and funny dresses and skirts, and you know the sorts of things that teenagers do, the music

38:30 they listen to, it becomes a sub-cultural thing. We didn't have that in those days so much, it didn't exist to that extent. But the army helped me break the jump between childhood and adulthood I feel. Much

the same way as those other initiations that took place or take place in some societies, that's the parallel to the experience that I had and to many men.

39:00 The guys that didn't make it, quite often I am critical, I think they found solace in the service, they found something they didn't have, mateship and all that sort of thing. When they came out they couldn't adapt and missed out but I think they might have been the type of person that would have missed out all along. They found a security that they didn't have, when it wasn't there they didn't have, you know, the ability, is that the right word

39:30 but they didn't have the something that enabled them to readjust again. And they might have been losers all the way through.

Did you ever feel nostalgic for the mateship you had in the army?

Yes, I missed some of the guys that I would have liked to talk to, or some of those that dropped words of wisdom to me, even indirectly to a young fella, the things they would say. I knew what they were getting at. But there were some I didn't ever want to see again.

40:00 But there were lots, in fact there's a fellow I still go and see up Buderim, he was a corporal in the I section and he is a meaningful sort of a guy that I like to see, and I had another fellow or several of them, one chap wrote to me the other day, and he's dying of cancer, he's 85. And he said, "All I want is a tent to put out in the back yard to erect and I want some of my army mates just to come and sit with me."

40:30 I would love to be with him, but you know, he's not long to live. But I remember that guy because of his kindness and support, and understanding of me as a young fellow, and he was helpful without being obvious.

Speaking of the ones who you wouldn't want to see again, was that because you'd had a blue or you just clashed?

No, didn't have a

41:00 disagreement, but they thought differently and acted differently from me and that's not the sort of companion that you would want to have as a lasting friend. But under the circumstances when you are together, you work together but you knew you were different from them, and they would know they were different from me too and the feelings would be reciprocated. You just can't put hundreds of people together and find compatibility. It's

41:30 bloody awful at times, to put it crudely. Because you are selective of your company now aren't you? And the things you do and it's the same in that situation; because you were all in uniform didn't mean that everybody was buddy buddy. You knew you were comrades in arms sort of thing, but the sustainability of that relationship wasn't going to occur after the war.

42:03 End of tape

Tape 9

00:32 **Now this time I am not going to say let's go back except just one question, something you said earlier on intrigued me. You said that you never thought of yourself as a digger except at a certain point when somebody called you that. Why was that?**

Well the Diggers were - I associated them with the First World War and the images I have of what my father told me and the awfulness of it, and they were the original Diggers, and I didn't ever

01:00 sort of see myself as being worthy of that imagery, I was too much of a neophyte to have that label put on me. But I realised, and I should have realised it, I was in one sense, I was there to do the same sort of job that they did, given the circumstances that they faced and I faced, certainly the outcomes would have been the same. But at that

01:30 stage I didn't think I was worthy of such a title because to me it is a sort of a title I revered in a way, you know the concept of the old Digger and those young guys that went from the outback of Australia and the innocence of it all and the bravado of it all and they went over there and copped the shellacking which they didn't deserve to cop and didn't come back a lot of them. And to me they were

02:00 the real Diggers. And I didn't see myself quite in that image at that stage.

As you have worked in education for over - how long were you a teacher for, sorry?

For 45 years.

As you worked in education over those decades, how have you seen young people's attitude towards

02:30 **war change?**

You know strangely enough, they have changed, and they have changed significantly. There was a period I found in society, particularly about the time of the Vietnam War, when there were great protests. There were protests on the university campuses, there were protests in the streets of Sydney.

03:00 There was a feeling of anti-war that existed, there was also at that stage a feeling of anti-authority, that people didn't want supervision, they wanted freedom; they didn't want a stylised curriculum, they wanted a curriculum based on the needs of people and the needs of the individual; and they didn't want to be supervised or inspected, they wanted to regard themselves as professional people who could manage without that sort of overriding

03:30 authority. And at that stage, it almost became a dirty word to go and acknowledge Anzac Day. You know it was something that fell from a certain status that it had and it was related to the discontent that existed, that came out of America I think with all those rock concerts and all those mass groupings of people that went to those shows. And

04:00 there was a cry from that element of that young age group, we had the university students writing a none square and we had Richard Neville, that man who is now the Editor of the Bulletin who has been put in goal for exposing or judged as being lewd in that day, and everything is being challenged. And the pop song is challenged,

04:30 and the pop song became the authority and took over the minds of a lot of adolescents and it influenced the way we thought about things and the way we valued things. But as we've gone through that period and that generation has become older, there has become a realisation again and recognition of the need to respect and to honour things

05:00 like Anzac Day and Remembrance Day and the value of war and so forth. Without a doubt we have moved back, we have young people now going to Anzac Cove on Anzac Day and cry as they read the names and the ages of the people who were there. And there's been a swing back, a recognition back to that. I don't mean there's been a conformist in their thinking in that they have become very

05:30 restricted again, that's more expansive than ever; its expansive but still saying, "Hey we've got to remember, we can't throw everything away, it's still of immense value." I think that's a cycle and I saw it go through schools. It would be critical of a school Anzac Service saying, "Why are we doing that? It's glorifying war," and that type of thing. But it's not any more, it's just the opposite. We have Anzac Day

06:00 services here and who gives the address each term? One of the high schools sends a student along to give the name and address in Gosford. You know there's great recognition - a greater recognition than there was formerly. That's my perception.

How would you feel when a young radical teacher would say, "Why are we having an Anzac Day service at school?"

Yes I didn't feel too kindly;

06:30 I was sort of understanding of their point of view, I think I was, but I would talk about it at staff meetings and we would come to some arrangement whereby we felt that despite our individual concerns that the children were entitled to have a perspective of this and that it was a societal thing that had been carried on and that we

07:00 ought to have some function, or we would have some function. Which we did, and it became accepted. But it was accepted with some critically to a degree. I don't know what those teachers would think now of the situation. They are much older now. But it was part of the way they viewed education and society in a way.

07:30 It was a culture that developed, it was challenging, you know, 'make love not war' sort of thing. Where you had it expressed in the Beatles' singing, where they become the message. It was far more influencing than the teacher or the parent listen to this more. The vacuum that was there in their thinking was filled by the media in terms of the way

08:00 it was broadcast, it became prominent.

Do you think that might have affected the Vietnam veterans?

Yeah it did, I am sure it affected the attitude of people outside those who went and the draft system that applied at that time didn't help. Didn't help one bit. And

08:30 I think the Vietnam people, the young fellas that went over there, felt they were disowned to some extent and weren't acknowledged for what did at that time. They must have for some years felt that way that they were a desperate group. I believe now that that's changed. But obviously it did.

Have you ever been involved in the RSL?

I was for some years,

- 09:00 but not actively. I joined the RSL because I thought it was the thing to do. But then as the RSL became more extreme in its expression, I disassociated myself from it. I didn't like the views that Mr Ruxton and others purported, I thought they were obnoxious and unsuitable and too extreme, and it gave the wrong impression of what a
- 09:30 majority of ex service personnel would have felt. I think the majority of people in my view, people I talk to don't concur with that extreme right element that took over the RSL and make these startling comments at times about society and values and so forth. So instead of getting involved with the RSL and doing something about it, I withdrew from it.
- 10:00 Numerically the RSL is not a strong organisation. The number of ex-service personnel who belong to the RSL who are active would be limited. And it's left to just a cadre of people who do it. And he would seem to make policy without contacting ex-service personnel. The policy of the RSL is not reflective of
- 10:30 the body of ex-servicemen. They do good work in terms of welfare and that sort of thing. I don't deny that but in times of societal values and political direction and so forth, I think they are way out.

Can you give us a run down on your work with Legacy?

Yes. I don't know how long I have been in Legacy, at least 30 odd years I suppose but I became a

- 11:00 Legatee in Lithgow, that's an organisation that's devoted to providing service for the widows and dependants of ex-servicemen who lost their lives or as a result of service and over those years we have worked with families; a young widow who has lost her husband at war and has several children, we've worked with her to support and guide and supplement her income and so forth.
- 11:30 But to be a regular contact. And more recently I have been engaged on the pensions side of Legacy. And each week I do interviews on a Monday with widows who have lost their husband sometime recently or suddenly in the past, they come forward, they lost their husband in 1970 or 1980 and try to find out the reason why that person died and whether we can relate it to war experiences and so forth.
- 12:00 We work in that direction and as well, Legacy - now in Gosford for example, we have a Legacy hostel where there is 54 villas we have provided for widows. We have a retirement village with the same number of widows. Have units and we have a nursing home we sponsor as well. And as well as that, because the ex-service personnel are getting too old
- 12:30 to do the footwork and see people face to face, we employ 3 social workers who work with Legacy and we identify the problems and they go out and diagnose and come back with information and suggest action that might be taken. So my work with the ex-service organisation is more related to that type of support than with the political
- 13:00 nature of the RSL.

Why were you interested in getting involved with Legacy?

Well I didn't - at first - it's strange, at first I went for a few years and didn't know what Legacy was, until someone came and asked me one day had I ever thought of joining Legacy. And I enquired more into it and found out that it's a voluntary organisation, it's not sponsored by government in any form, it depends on contributions from the

- 13:30 community and they have a badge day annually and that's how they raise their money. And nowadays people leave bequests to Legacy, but I saw it as a service that may help - it sounds a bit wet, I don't mean it that way - but if there were people who served and they lost their life and they left a wife and kids, it's up to the surviving serviceman to see if they can lend a hand to those people
- 14:00 who are there and in need. It was a positive step to help in some material way and also in some personal way. It's a psychological contact as well, I know the widows know that there are members of Legacy that they only have to lift the phone and make a call. The numbers of Legatees are numerous. And they come from various backgrounds,
- 14:30 and widows come up with problems of various kinds and quite often within the framework of a Legacy meeting, there's someone with the expertise that can help. It might be in law, or medicine or in education, or in social affairs or in banking or whatever, there's someone there, because the membership is a cross-sectional thing.

How has the role of that organisation changed over the years?

It's changed

- 15:00 dramatically because of the ageing nature of the Legatees. The Second World War Legatees are all in their late 70s or 80s. They themselves are now getting fragile. We are now recruiting people who didn't see service, people in the community who want to join Legacy. Strangely enough the Vietnam response to Legacy has not been great, we don't have a great number of Vietnam
- 15:30 people who enter Legacy for some reason or other, but we have serving military or service personnel joining Legacy now as well. So the recruitment is changed, it's not of the magnitude that can lead to a carry on of the work of Legacy, so professional staff are now being appointed and employed in terms of

the social workers,

16:00 to do a lot of the work of Legacy. And as well as that the widows of the Second World War that we help are of an age now where there is an ageing problem. That you have to try and help them with rather than a developing problem that a young widow may have had, educating a child and that sort of thing. The sort of advice that they need is different and quite different from what it

16:30 was, so it is changing in nature.

Is it winding down?

No, I think you would be surprised. I think by the year 2010 the figures show that it would almost reach its peak in terms of numbers and this is taking a cross-section of the widows as they age and then there will be a decline, but depending upon the circumstances that exist overseas now, see a lot of those fellows who are serving,

17:00 their widows would be eligible for Legacy entitlements should they not come back or die as a result of their experiences or something of that nature. So there will be - unfortunately it would be lovely if it dissipated, but there will be a leakage in but it would be of a different type I imagine. But you know Legacy, it doesn't mean that every widow

17:30 gets help. It depends on their needs. They might be financially very viable, and they only need advice, or support but there are some, they are on a pension or something, and they can't fix up the fences, or the tree that needs lopping off or can't change the electric light bulb or - found a widow the other day, she had lost her keys poor soul, went to visit her and she hadn't told anyone, she had the laundry open, she had a ladder she climbed up through

18:00 the manhole across the ceiling and she had another ladder inside and down into her house that way. Because she was afraid to tell anybody she had lost her keys. You see she was lonely and isolated and insecure. That's an extreme case, but it's the loneliness and uncertainty of things. And the multiple things that now come out in the social welfare program that you need to be a lawyer to understand and read it. It's disturbing and frightening and so that

18:30 kind of understanding is generated anyway, and I think we are successful in some cases. So you asked me and that's what I do. And my wife tells me I go out too often to Legacy, I go each Monday, and the first Monday of each month there is a welfare meeting where we discuss the welfare case. So I would go to Legacy 5 meetings a month. To do that

19:00 sort of thing. So that keeps me occupied. Sometimes to my detriment at home. I have 4 sisters all of whom are widowed, 3 older and 1 younger and I find myself in a contradictory situation, I find I am spending more time with the widows here helping than with my sisters in Sydney who need my help and support or I would be able to help them. So

19:30 you run into conflicts, paradoxes and so forth. Where should your loyalties lie and your own health is a factor too. We lose Legatees; every week someone passes away and that kind of thing.

The sacrifices that Australia and the rest of the world made in winning the Second World War, do you think that paid off? Have we won the peace?

20:00 Well we were supposed to have stopped Japan but I think Japan commercially almost infiltrated and conquered the world by other means rather than military means. In a sense I think it has brought us closer to the rest of the world. We are not as isolated from the rest of the world as we were, there's no doubt about that and our involvement now has just in the back door brought us into all sorts of trouble. But in the Second World War

20:30 have we won the peace? I don't know I think the emerging sort of Asian area would indicate that we haven't, I don't think we have won an understanding and a recognition, of those places. Certainly we stopped the horrible regime of Nazi Germany spreading, and the aspirations

21:00 of an emerging Japan; in a military sense we stopped that. But I think other problems are emerging, they have got China now coming into the picture and you've got Indonesia and those countries, Malaysia. I don't think we are going to win those by war, I think we have got to adopt other methods.

We've talked today off camera about how this tape might be in the records for many

21:30 **years to come. If you were talking to someone in the future, perhaps hypothetical great-great-grandchildren, what would you say, what message would you leave them about serving your country in the time of war?**

Yes, well I think I sort of expressed, slightly expressed that outside: that it's the fate of each generation to face up

22:00 to a situation that might be threatening for your welfare and your very existence. And the history of the world seems to indicate that if mankind is to survive and protect the values we have, we seem to find it necessary periodically to stand up and say, "Hey that's enough" and we take up arms. I would think it would be encouraging to

- 22:30 find other ways to solving the problem in the first instance if that were possible, but if not then 'it's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all' as they say. And if you believe in something I sometimes think you have got to stand up for it. And if it comes to the extreme situation you have got to stand up and be ready to say, "I believe in this and that's far enough." Because the alternative might be even
- 23:00 worse and you have to weigh that up, and I think it will be the way of society always, and as a young person you ought to be informed and try to understand and be prepared to take a stand on issues that affect you no matter where they are. If it's unfortunate for it to be in a military area, then so be it.
- 23:30 I think you have to make that decision at that time. But it seems to be inevitable that you were going to be faced with those kinds of problems and if you are going to be any sort of a person at all, you ought to be looking in your whole life for a way of solving problems that are not hurtful and not degrading but are understanding
- 24:00 and supportive of people without losing sight of your own values. But you mustn't destroy the sanctity of an individual just because of your own beliefs. It's deeper than that and it requires a greater depth of consideration than just the overt action of picking up a gun
- 24:30 or pressing a button or whatever.

Eric is there anything that you would like to say on the record that you would have liked to say today but we haven't talked about?

Only that I am trying to reflect on something that happened 50 years

- 25:00 ago and I came into the services at a tender age and I mightn't have had the depth of experience that others had in the situation, but I bring the point of view of a young person coming into a tremendous turmoil, critical of the manner of the induction and the termination of the whole process.
- 25:30 But I am presenting my views from my point of view and the experiences I had during the services and my experiences I have had in terms of my social and educative life. And naturally I bring those impressions to bear on those experiences, and they may differ from other people and they might be quite wrong, but they are my
- 26:00 views as scattered and verbose as they may appear.

Thanks Eric.

26:11 **INTERVIEW ENDS**