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TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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Title	(NX23245) Trigger, Maurice (Private)
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Description	<p>Maurice Trigger, Rangetaker/Scout 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion, interviewed by David McRobbie for The Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939-45</p> <p>Discussing pre-war employment; enlistment; training at Ingleburn Camp with Vickers medium machine gun; embarkation on the Aquitania for Middle East and arrival at Khassa Camp; discipline; Mersa Matruh and creation of defence networks including trenches and "doovers"; shift to Hill 93 and Qastina Camp; another shift to Jebal Tourbol; pilfering by Australian troops; impact of new MK VIIIZ ammunition; return to Australia; move to Kairi Training Camp, Atherton Tablelands, Qld; embarkation to New Guinea and landing at Lae; battalion casualties; post-war health; anti-semitic attitudes of Australian servicemen.</p>

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE A

Tape Identification: This is the first side of the first tape of the interview with Mr Maurice Trigger. The address is

Morrie, can we begin by asking you when you were born and where.

I was born in Perth, Western Australia on 6th of October 1921. At the age of ten, we left Perth - this was the post-depression years - and we motored across the Nullabor Plains in those days - about 1934ish - with my brother, and we came by vehicle from Perth to Brisbane. We settled in Brisbane for a while - my father was in business in Brisbane - and went to Sydney. He died before the war and from Sydney I enlisted - in May, I think it was, 1940 - in the AIF. Previous to that I was in the militia for three months in the Royal New South Wales Lancers which was a motorised but, um, originally a mounted regiment that, er, were trained in the use of the Vickers machine guns. Subsequently the 2/2nd Machine Gun formed in the AIF was the, er, offshoot or the projection of the Royal New South Wales Lancers insofar as all officers, a lot of officers, a lot of men, from the militia unit transferred permanently to the - as a militia unit which was part-time - joined the AIF into the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion. Therefore a lot of 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion troops knew each other because of that original regimental comradeship that was there.

Is that okay?

Fine, just fine. Can we just go back again to - you must have gone to school in Perth.

Right.

So, er, and then you must have had more schooling when you came back to - came over to Sydney. Can you comment about ...

Well, yeah, in Perth I was at the - I was in an Inglewood State school but I was at Christian Brothers College for twelve months and when I came to Brisbane I was at the Central Practising School at Spring Hill.

When, er, you - before you went to the - joined the militia were you - did you have employment first?

Yes, I was employed - this was in Sydney and I was employed at a big retail firm called [McDowells?] and my mother had a winebar there when father had died that she tried but it was fairly - it wasn't a very successful project.

What sort of work did you do?

I was a - I was serving in the boys' clothing. I was apprenticed for a little time as a motor mechanic but I didn't follow that through.

And, er, what was the highest level of education you attained?

I didn't even - I left school, although I went to night school in Sydney, but I didn't - I left in the scholarship class when I was thirteen in Brisbane here - just barely - just into my thirteenth year. In those days they did leave early in the piece.

Fine. Now, when you - was your education, er, or the work you did - was that important in determining what fields of the services you joined?

No. The influence on the field of service that I joined because as, along with a lot of other men, my friends or mates had joined that battalion. I wanted to be with them.

Right. Can we now go on to talk about specifically your joining the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion.

Right.

You already had some service there. Now, er, you trained in New South Wales.

That's right.

But where did you train?

At Walgrove which is on the Parramatta - towards the Parramatta area with - yes, that's right, at Walgrove, that - no, just a moment - Walgrove was where the militia camp was established. But when I joined the AIF it was Ingleburn and subsequently to Cowra where a lot of troops went.

Right. I might just - when you joined the 2/2nd did you try to keep members of the group together? Did you join with some of the friends that you'd already formed?

Ah, yes.

(5.00) And, er, how many did you already know?

Well, er, originally, pre-war and in scouting, er, I had one particular friend whose name is John Baker - he's still alive in Sydney - and we stuck together and joined together. At this point in time I'd better tell you the, er, - the story is that being Jewish, there was this Jewish group that wanted to join in the - who were in the militia and joined in the militia - and John and I subsequently went together into the AIF. But also when we were in the Royal New South Wales Lancers, we were in a company there and we - we went into the same similar group in the AIF.

Fine. Now when you - do you feel it made a big difference to the character of the 2/2nd, the unit that you belong, because you have so many mates there, right from the start as it were? Did it, er, did it make it easier for you, or

There was a great camaraderie ...

Mm ...

... is that what you were looking for?

Yes, that's right.

There's a - there was a great camaraderie in our platoon - our immediate platoon - and in our company. But in our platoon there was definitely a strength of - a bond there. Mind you, there was always friction in these platoons. It was an instinctive friction that always happens between cliques or groups in the same platoon. But generally there was a very strong bond there.

Can you describe your training then please? Er, the basic weapon was the Vickers Medium Machine Gun. Can you - had you had experience with it before?

Only in the Royal New South Wales Lancers ...

Right.

We trained in - originally they had a couple of Lewis guns, first world war guns, and Hotchkiss - I think they were - and a few odd Vickers guns. But, no, the training was quite intensive once we got to Ingleburn in the Vickers guns.

And you had fully live ammunition for your training?

Ah, very rarely, but occasionally we had live shoots.

And, er, can you describe your training - how - you mentioned it was very intensive. Can you describe, um

Well, if you can visualise open paddocks and groups of soldiers in sub-sections - which was a sub-section which belonged to one Vickers gun which were - had allocated jobs on that gun, training in various areas on this paddock, with an NCO in charge who would train the men in the dismantling, putting together of the gun, the drill necessary to get ready for firing the gun, and various fieldwork that was necessary to operate the gun, etcetera.

Did you have a choice about going to the 2/2nd or were you ...

Oh, no.

... you chose to go there.

I chose to go there. On the - at that particular time, and this is just another point I'd like to make, I tried to get in early in the piece, or early in the war I wanted to join up fairly early. Parents weren't real happy about sending their kids in those days - especially young kids of seventeen or eighteen - into the army. However, my mother was a war widow and she recognised that I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps - he died from war wounds, etcetera. However, because of my height, they'd only - in the 6th division they were only taking taller men, and eventually they reduced the height to five foot five - and I was barely five foot six - so, er But I couldn't get in early in the piece. I think you had to be five foot

seven or something like that, five foot eight. And as soon as they - as soon as the height was reduced I joined up. And surprisingly - not surprisingly enough, in our platoon there was a lot of men my height - quite a few young fellows. Um, yeah, and when the recruiting was taking place - which was a very - the week's, that particular week's was quite intensive - there was all - as I recall, there was these various - after a whole day of examinations by doctors and, er, filling in forms, you were eventually led to various groups where you could join, from the Army Service Corps to infantry to machine gunners to anti-tank to whatever. And, er, because I knew people in the machine gunners I chose that naturally. And when they saw me, they said 'Yes, come over here Trig. This is where you belong.' Right? Okay.

And, did you know much about the Vickers gun before you joined?

Oh, no, no. I wouldn't even know which end of a rifle to handle in those days.

And, er, and so you started training in the Vickers when you got to Ingleburn?

Yes.

Can you now, er, spend a few seconds or a few minutes as it were and describe the gun and its characteristics.

Oh boy. I had a lot of faith in the Vickers gun. I guess the same as most troops in handling their weapons wouldn't swap their particular, er, type of fighting, whether it was tanks or artillery or trench mortars.

(10.00) And, er, we were trained and I always have the, er, opinion that the Vickers gun because of its what's known as 'cone of fire' which is a spreading of fire over an area if two or four guns are firing together, because they're not an accurate gun but spread a cone of fire around, they give a terrible lot of good cover on incoming attacking troops. And this was borne out later on in the desert because they were very, ah, important and very effective because of that, especially in desert warfare. And I'll be categorical about that. Where we were, there was the fighting - the guns did a terrific job in this cone of fire. Right. Now, the operation of the gun consisted of, er, one man firing, squatting behind the gun of course, and there was a number two feeding the gun with belt. They operated on a gas recoil system. There - we were trained fairly intensively in what they call I think 'stops' - various types of stops or breakdowns of guns and the various drill necessary to fix it straight away - to be recognised and fixed straight away under fire. It was quite a loud and dusty sort of gun. It was mainly used in defence, um, backed up by ammunition carriers, range taker, etcetera.

So, er, your training exercises basically were, er, dismantling, handling the gun, loading, and what about, for example, moving forward with the gun.

Yeah, of course, there was manoeuvres all the time in handling the gun and going through rough terrain, various members carrying portions of the gun - it gets dismantled and carried forward - camouflage and concealment with the gun, ah, recognition of targets and the capabilities of the gun in relation to those targets, um, having faith of course in our officers and NCO's in this respect, and a very ancillary operation of doing all this.

How many men would make up, would look after one gun?

Five men, if I recall. That was a number one who operated the gun and carried the tripod; number two who carried the barrel of the gun and assembled it onto the tripod; number three and four were there for repairs, ah, for carrying the ammunition, for carrying the spares, that is watercan cause it had to be replenished with water, for, er, yes, for carrying the various components that were - of a breakdown, a range taker which is a small - handles a small range finder to identify targets, and of course, and, er, the range finder - taker - would operate for say two or four guns a section - I think it was for two guns - and of course the NCO and the various - and the officer, and, er, of course, transport.

Right. Now, from this distance looking back, what - can you talk about your instructors and - did you feel they were good instructors, or

I had a lot of faith in my officers, in my NCO's, and, er, I consider that yes, they were very good because they'd previous training in the militia, one or two in the British Army on the Vickers gun, and we've got to recognise the fact that the Vickers gun came from the first world war and was still an effective weapon without being changed whereas a lot of other weapons, other than the rifle, were changed.

Fine. Can you give me a description of Ingleburn camp as you remember it at the time?

Right. It was on the outskirts of, say, a working suburb, outer area. It was undulating hills, dusty, a certain amount of shrubbery and trees about, and fields and creek, dry gullies, etcetera. It gave us scope for training. And, er, it consisted of course of areas where we trained in exercise and, ah, it - it had, er, long sheds that we all slept on palliasses, maybe thirty to forty in a shed, maybe a platoon, I can't recall. The sheds also, er, surrounded a parade area, with a cooking area, a centre flagpole, an office area. It was - it was fairly dry when we were there but, er, it wasn't as good as the subsequent camp at Cowra which was more open and gave us more scope for training.

The battalion had trucks that it had to have efficient drivers. Can - did that take part of your training, was that part of

No, I was never involved in the - that was a separate section, of course, who did their training and learned to handle the trucks.

Can we now move on to going - you going to the Middle East which was your first real action?

Yeah.

Now, did you get pre-embarkation leave?

(15.00) Yes, from Cowra, in New South Wales. We had a couple of false starts but eventually, if I remember rightly, there was a - we did have pre-embarkation leave around about just before Christmas, I think it was, or I - around about Christmas of '40, er, of 1940. Ah, it was - if you can visualise - it took about, I think, a day or three-quarters of a day to go from Cowra to Sydney, (phone rings)

Right. Well, go on.

Do you want

When you were, er, on your pre-embarkation leave, did you know where they were going to send you?

No. No, no we didn't have any idea - well, we surmised that it would be the Middle East or England. I just can't recall - I don't think the far east was, er, involved then because the Japs weren't in the war, ah, that was the 8th Division. But, er, there was a lot of speculation, a lot of rumours to where we were going and everybody of course was as keen as mustard and fired with the enthusiasm of being able to get on that boat and after all this training, be able to, ah, go to the other side of the world. It's understandable among young people, er, young fellows trained like they were. And, er, there was a lot of hustle and bustle and preparation in getting everything ready to go.

You must have had an idea when the - about - concerning the kit that was issued to you. I mean when you saw the kit

Oh yeah, I think - yeah

... you probably sort of said `Well, what' - you'd know you weren't going to

Yeah.

... to Norway or

Yeah, yeah, I'd say so. Yes, that'd be right.

Just before we go on, can we talk - you were at Cowra - can we talk about - there was a riot there and, er, various problems. Can you describe ...

Well, well if you

... your remembrances.

... yeah, well, Cowra is a beautiful little country town. The people were very nice to us. Some of the fellows, let's face it, were of rough character, and, er - some of them were quite okay - and drinking in the hotels and things like that was what they wanted to do, get drunk. At one stage there was a, er, friction between a hotel owner and the men and there was a riot at that hotel and the hotel got burned down, which was quite a sad thing. There was also fights between - in rivalry - between - I think it was the 2/3rd Pioneer Battalion mainly - we Right throughout the whole campaign, in the middle east and later, there was always rivalry and friction between these two battalions, the 2nd - I'm pretty sure it was the 2/3rd, but anyway it was a Pioneer battalion - and always we clashed a lot and there was - in town they'd go on leave and a lot of fighting went on and a lot of premeditated fighting went on. Cowra was just thronged with troops. We were the first troops there, mind you. The camp had been put up. The 2/13th and 2/17th Infantry Battalion marched from Ingleburn to Cowra over the Blue Mountains. We fortunately were taken up in transport - I can't remember - with trucks I think, because we had all our equipment - and Cowra camp was established. From, shall we say, a beautiful little virgin, er, country town, it was inundated with these troops.

You mentioned deserters during your time at Cowra.

The word 'deserters', I did mention it. They were not really deserters in respect of one the 'pre-em' leave was over everybody was restricted to the camp. It was right on Christmas, that's right, we had Christmas there. Some of the chappies took in their head to shoot through, go over the hill, whatever you like to call it. The ironic part of this group who were not deserters, but who took it into their heads to shoot off, five of them or four of them, who subsequently came back or were captured by the MPs I think from Sydney, brought back and put into a jail house sort of thing at the camp. I remember we all had Christmas dinner and they were in the jail area and everybody kept giving them food. But ironically as I say, practically all of them were killed later in action, quite a few of them. In a history of the machine gunners, that probably is available, I will show it to you, there is a chapter on our platoon, A/3 Platoon, it mentions this. It said the fates pursued them. Because our platoon took quite a lacing, this particular platoon of ours.

So you moved from Cowra to Sydney to join the ship. How did you actually travel?

I can't recall. I don't know whether it was by train or by truck.

The unit actually left on Boxing Day and arrived at Pymont on the 27th of December.

It was by train, I am sorry, it was train.

Yes, it was train, yes. You embarked on the *Acquitania*, there were thirty-six officers and 664 other ranks. How were you quartered on the ship?

(20.00) Quite comfortably surprisingly. In bunks, possibly four to a bunk. We were above the waterline. It wasn't a bad trip, as against coming home when we were very crowded on the *Queen Mary*.

Did you get a good farewell when you went up the harbour?

Fabulous. As I recall the beautiful Sydney Harbour was thronged with people, with placards and waving and everybody singing the Maori farewell - sailing ships, the whole flotilla getting together and sailing out of the Harbour. But there was literally thousands of people there, yelling and I could see somebody had a big placard, I still don't know who it was, my name and my friend's name, Johnnie Baker's name on this card and they were waving it. Girls they were, I just don't know which girls they were at the time.

The Maori farewell - there were New Zealanders on the ship too I believe.

Was that right, I don't recall.

You don't recall that. There were other troops from other battalions onboard. How did you get on with them?

Well, for a start this was the first time we had met our brothers from Queensland, the two other companies.

Yes.

Of course, you know we fraternised quite well with them, but there was always that division between the New South Wales and Queenslanders.

Yes. Were you comparing notes on your training and that sort of thing? Can you recall the sort of thing

No, not particularly. We did make friends among them though, a few friends among them.

Right. As far as the voyage went, what was that like? You went via Colombo and Suez.

Yes, Trincomalee was it or Colombo.

Trincomalee, yes that is right.

We changed ships of course there to a ship called the *Christian Huygens*, which was a much smaller ship and it was an Indonesian ship, or Javanese ship in those days. So we transferred from the *Acquitania* to that smaller ship. The *Acquitania* as I say was a huge ship and the food was not too bad, the food was quite good. And I remember seeing the Maldiv Islands, which was beautiful islands set in the Indian Ocean, then reaching Tripamalee [sic] and transferring to the *Christian Huygens*.

There was a German bomber that attacked the *Acquitania*. Can you recall that?

Yeah, I do. It wasn't very frightening. All we heard was the bombs going off and told to lie in the cabins. I think it was just one plane.

That I suppose you first taste of war.

Well, yeah, but it wasn't a taste insofar it wasn't even an appetiser, if you understand. We just thought it was a bit of a joke at the time. No, on the ships of course there was all sporting and boxing and various activities and training all the time.

You continued to train.

To the best of our ability we did. The officers tried to keep everybody active all the time. A lot of boxing tournaments and things like that went on. This sort of sorted people out a bit you know, and other activities of course.

Did you manage to continue training with the gun?

I don't think we had access to our Vickers guns onboard.

They were stowed away.

Yes.

You didn't manage to

No, I think it would be more theoretical training, I can't remember.

Yes, theoretical training and keeping fit.

Yeah keeping fit and keeping people active and happy.

When you arrived in Palestine you went to Khassa and you went to a camp there. They talk here about the battalion donkey races.

Yeah.

Can you recall that?

There is a photograph of them there actually. Right, yeah I recall those that was part of the fun that went on.

You actually hadn't trained as a battalion before, completely as a battalion because you had been broken up.

Yeah.

In different places. Do you think that was the normal thing for the other battalions in the army?

Well I'd say the infantry battalions would have been more insular. The 2/13th, 2/17th, they came from various areas and states, so I would say that they would be more together. But the machine gunners were split between the two.

When you arrived in Khassa you could then begin battalion training. Did that happen?

Oh yes, yes, intensive training took place again. Don't forget we were in a different area and we were training in relationship to the area that we were in.

Yes. So in effect you were literally at the place where you were going to fight under more or less Middle East wartime conditions.

Well, the fighting in the desert of course was vastly different geologically to Palestine as it was then. Palestine consists of low shrubs and small villages and cactus, little line trucks and hillocks and going on manoeuvres in these areas, old ruins. Whereas the desert warfare is a vastly different proposition to any other kind of fighting because it so open, with no roads and you can virtually move everywhere or anywhere. Any object is picked up fairly easy.

(25.00) So in effect you more or less had to play it by ear when you finally go to the desert.

Well, we did have the qualification in this respect that we had been told only, coming from Syria that we had met Australian troops from the 6th Division that had been in what they called 'the Bengazi Gallop', which was the original chasing of the Italians westward and they gave us a bit of an idea of what was going on. But if you want me to tell you about the desert warfare and landing in Mersa Matruh, which wasn't warfare, but it acclimatised us to the desert over those five or six months, it was quite a surprise.

We will get to that very shortly. At this stage you still didn't know quite what you were going to do. Did you know that you were going into the desert?

Well, we assumed we are because that was where the fighting was taking place. And already the Germans had come in from the west and were chasing the Allied troops back east.

Right. So you had a fair idea that you were getting ready to go have a go at them

Yes.

There is a question here, Eric Lambert writes of the '9-day wonder', that many believed that if they were going to develop gonorrhoea, they would know nine days after indulgence, they had nine days of wondering. Was this a common expression, can you recall?

The '9-day wonder' on what, on gonorrhoea?

Yes, you can't recall that?

On gonorrhoea, the '9-day wonder'. Vaguely, right in the back of my mind. Don't forget that the Middle East was fairly full of this type of disease.

Yes, I understand.

I understand there was wards full of them. I remember Eric Lambert, he wrote a book actually.

Right. Now Eric Lambert gives a picture of ruthless cruel treatment of the men who went to military prisons, do you have any evidence of any reports of how

Well, I will have to hark back to Cowra Camp. There was a jail or a barracks there and there were men in their for various offences - desertion maybe - I don't know, maybe for bullying or even hurting of civilians and they were very restricted and kept in little cells. I can remember being on jail house, or whatever it is, guard duty there at Cowra Camp, it was near the entrance. In fact I remember once relieving a chappie, or did I relieve him, or somebody relieved him and all they found was his rifle and that is the last they saw of that chappie, he had gone. He was left there on guard at the front gate and when they went to relieve him all they found was his rifle. They never found him from that day to this, (laughs). I remember he was a mate of mine, 'Bluey' something or other. Anyway, talking of the twenty-eight days in Jerusalem, the heavy punishment and pack drill. Yes, don't forget that this was just one step

away from colonial troops who used to shoot their deserters and things like that. The discipline was quite heavy on these defaultees.

Was it more so when you got to Palestine?

I think that there were certain officers, colonels, who - one of them they used to call him 'Colonel 28 days' or something like that, he was pretty heavy. He wasn't in my regiment battalion.

Then you went to Mersa Matruh west Alexandria in Egypt and you were instructed to dig in and men lived in what they called 'doovers', can you give me a description of that?

Yeah, right. We landed at Mersa Matruh in a sand storm, you might have that information there, a heavy *Khamseen*, they called them *Khamseen* or sand storm. When we got off the train, the train ran right through to Mersa Matruh which was purely a desert outpost with a few mud brick buildings surrounding a beautiful harbour. But you couldn't see more than two feet in front of you. We had to hold onto each other, we just really were bewildered by this *Khamseen* which lasted three days and tried to dig ourselves in makeshift sandbagged little 'doovers' to protect ourselves until the sand storm blew over. Don't forget the threat from the Axis troops was quite great then because they were surround Tobruk and Mersa Matruh was the next defence line that they had to take to continue their trek westward, eastward I am sorry to Cairo and subsequently the Suez Canal which was the all important goal. We knew that we were fairly spread out in those defences in this perimeter and they relied a lot on anti-tank guns and Vickers guns, not any infantry or very little infantry as far as I knew, maybe a bit, for defence of this particular outpost. We spent weeks or all the time digging a trench system and defence system. There were pillboxes erected and putting our guns in.

END TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B

Tape Identification: This is the tape 1, side 2 of an interview with Morrie Trigger.

Morrie, can we go on and talk about - okay you were basically on the beach when you were in Egypt at Mersa Matruh, did you get much chance to sort of ...

Well, if you can visualise a perimeter of hedgehogs and anti-tank traps surrounding this harbour. But we were inland a few miles, I can't remember maybe five miles or whatever it was into the desert, so therefore when we actually got to the beach it was actually a good break to go swimming, but it was mainly just sand desert and just minefields, a few dead camels and South African troops of course.

Do you recall Frank Hurley, the Australian photographer taking photographs?

Yeah I do actually.

The suggestion here is - what they want to know is the photographs, do you think the photographs were posed to look as if the men were actually fighting, or was he taking photographs?

I can't comment on that.

You can't comment, all right.

I wouldn't know.

In September '40 the 2/2nd shifted to Hill 93 in Palestine.

That was when we came out of Mersa Matruh.

Bill Oaks in the battalion history says, 'The return to Palestine ushered in what was to be one of the least happy periods in the Battalion's existence'. Can you recall that when you went back to Palestine?

I can't recall being unhappy.

You can't.

We were on leave, we had a good time. Before we went up to Lebanon and Syria, which is quite a lovely place. I can't recall it being miserable, but you know he is speaking from one area and I am speaking from another.

They want to know was the nearby Qastina camp any better - can you recall Quastina camp?

Yeah, I remember Qastina camp. I do remember the settlements behind it, one called [Pharbarberg?] another called [Beiatoovia?] and they were very helpful and friendly to all the Australian troops, because don't forget these people looked on the Australians as saviours to protect them from the Germans coming through from over in the desert. They were always very welcome the kibbutz they called them - made them very welcome, took them in dancing and things like that.

So you visited a kibbutz.

Well I visited the kibbutz quite a lot in Jerusalem because I was Jewish as I say, but the troops generally visited kibbutz. We used to go on manoeuvres and if we were camped near these kibbutz there was an open invitation. I can remember these Australian soldiers in heavy boots with young girls trying to do the hora which is a surrounding dance. You have probably heard of the hora, on Friday nights. Because English was pretty sparse - eating grapefruit and oranges and staying overnight there and everybody getting on real famously.

We were talking about a kibbutz and you mentioned a man was killed there. Can you tell me about that?

Yeah. From the camp areas we used to go on bivouac, they called them bivouac or manoeuvres, which meant we went out for three, four, five days out into the Judaeen Hills,

Hebron Hills, further up north and trained - sleeping out in the open you know to give us the necessary training. Attacked imaginary positions with our guns or dug ourselves in, which was the practice to do. Of course there were many kibbutz, that is the Jewish settlements around the place, which always made us welcome when they found us there. One at Hulda, which is a beautiful spot. We were training there and regarding the fact that we used to have live ammunition fires occasionally on rifle, a live bullet was left in the belt, they were dummies an attack. The live bullet was actually fired - went through the gun, somebody out in front copped it and was killed. That was at Hulda kibbutz and those photos that I have there are of that area.

(5.00) This would have been I suppose your first fatality in action.

Well it wasn't in action because he was killed in an accident.

In training then.

Yeah. I think it was after Matruh between Matruh and Alamein, in other words late 1941 or early '42, I think. I am not 100 percent sure, but the records would have that.

There is a question here - did the fact that you spent Christmas in the Holy Land have any significance for you?

Right, yeah, because I was really interested, and always have been in archaeology or ancient history and always found it very interesting. I went to Bethlehem and to the various christian places of sacredness. But more important to me was the Jewish holidays when I was there because our padre managed to get the local people to billet us over the passover and the various other times.

The padre at the time ...

Chaplain actually.

The chaplain at the time, did he minister to you on ...

Yes, he used to make his business - that story, that little story pertains to a chap I know from Goulburn who died. But he was a very active and very dedicated chaplain to the small, sparse and spread out Jewish servicemen from Australia.

He was Jewish?

Oh yeah.

He was Jewish.

Yeah, of course he had to be. He was a chaplain, just the same as they had Church of England and Catholic and Salvation Army chaplains. His role was to look after the spiritual needs of the few Jews that were spread out through the battalion.

Yes. In 1942 the battalion shifted north to Syria. Do you recall that?

Oh yes.

The question is - did you want to go?

Sure, sure. The highlight of the whole campaign as far as beautiful country and people was concerned as far as I could see was around the Beirut and further up at a place called Jebal Tourbol with many exciting stories up there. You know with the local people.

Did you get the news that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbour and Malaya?

Yes we did when we were up at a place called Jebal Tourbol, right up north.

Obviously that meant the war was much closer to Australia.

Yes.

Did you feel that you should be back?

Yes, everybody was a bit worried and said, 'What the hell are we doing here, let's get back over there?'

D Company was quartered in the Belmana Monastery, can you recall that?

No I wasn't in D Company, I was in A Company.

Did you learn much about local politics when you were there?

We always recognised that there was tension between Moslem, not so much the Druze, that was another type of Moslem, the Moslem and the Christian communities. There was always strife there. In the northern part, when we went up to Jebal Tourbol behind Tripoli, was predominately Moslem. We were in more of a, shall I say, more of a primitive area there than around Beirut, around that southern area was the christian area.

Some local people were stealing from the soldiers, can you recall this?

Right throughout the Middle East the Arabs were very active in stealing anything they could get their hands on. But on the other hand, there were quite a few Australian troops who were selling equipment, including myself. Let's face it, it happened that way. I'm just saying ... I will qualify that by saying that we never sold our rifle or anything like that. We were stationed at a place called [Romarna?] which is up in the mountains from Beirut which was an intelligence interception unit - Tommy unit and they needed guards because of the fifth column activity that was in that area. We were stationed up there and blankets and boots and things like that, it was pretty cold, they were pretty valuable. But because we were close to Beirut, which meant beer, brothels and good time, the blokes never had much money. (Laughing) I may as well tell you now, I am quite safe, nobody can court martial me now. We would be on guard in these places and I remember 'Bluey' and 'Mus' and I, they were two of my mates selling our blankets and being cold and going up to the quartermaster, Jim Cuddihy, who was the quartermaster saying, 'Look, Jim, we're cold, have you got a spare pair of boots for us or something'. He said, 'Look everything has been sold', and he opened the

QM store and there was nothing there, he had sold half of it. They would buy anything, buy anything.

(10.00) We were guarding a British QM Store and there were some tyres there and they got knocked off and sold. We were still short of money. Do you know what a 'blue light' outfit is?

Yes.

It is used with the brothel with the condom. All the boys used to use the condoms or French letters and they would not use the 'blue light outfits'. They would stack in the shed that we were on guard and there was piles of them. Blue said, 'Look we have got to get some money if we want to go to Beirut'. And so we grabbed all these 'blue light outfits'. Went up to the local fence and sold them as toothpaste. There were two tubes and we explained one was toothpaste and one was an antiseptic. He bought them as toothpaste, but they weren't for that at all. So I don't know what happened there. So there is a story there.

Now another time in regarding to the selling of stuff. When we were up behind Tripoli, we were on guard there also. We used go down to guard some important Tommy intelligence outpost there. We used to have to have our, we were camped next to an orange grove, we would go on shifts of eight on and four off hours. And the boys would come in, and they were told explicitly to put their rifles next to the bed, tie it to the bed because of the bad thieving that went on. I had come in and had taken my magazine out this particular night, because it was filled with live ammunition, I never liked to leave live ammunition in the rifle, I just put it next to me against the tent peg. The other blokes just put it against the tent wall, you know a marquee tent sort of thing with wicker baskets or whatever. Tired as buggery and the other guards went out into the night to patrol and during our particular sleeping the Arabs got into the tent, pinched the rifles and out again. Of course selling blankets is one thing, but a rifle is really bad and none of the boys would have done that. But nevertheless some fellows along the line must have done it because we were up for court martial because our rifles had been stolen and we had not obeyed an instruction. We were supposed to have tied them to our legs with our pull through ropes and things like that. We were up for court martial. The court martial was to go through, however because Jerry came down through the desert towards Alamein we all had to move down there. We were told we were going on manoeuvres, if you want to go through later. We moved down to the desert in these trucks, not knowing where we were going and the court martial was postponed.

Our lieutenant was a chap by the name of Wally Cochrane and he was killed at Tel el Eisa in our first action at the same time as Gus Longhurst got his MM and we got run over with these tanks, Boye's anti-tank rifle. He must have said that he didn't lay down the law regarding tying the rifles to us to protect us perhaps, I don't know. Because he was killed, I think they put it in that he had said that which got us off the hook, or exonerated us from getting actually court martialled.

The only thing is that with that magazine that I had taken out of my rifle. I had thrown it in my kit bag when we went, because I still had it and subsequently in a kit inspection they used to have back in Cairo or Alexandria, whilst we were up in the desert. They went through the kit bags, you would get your kit bag and things would be stolen from it, ripped open and everything. But anyway they had found this magazine and it had been put in a report. We were up in action where you get only at night, I think at a place called The Cutting [sic] if I

remember rightly. One night along came the jeep with the CO in it, Douglas Macarthur Onslow. They used to call him 'Urinating Edward' or 'Pissy Ted', he was always ... 'Urinating Edward'. Okay and he wanted to know why there was this magazine with these bullets in my kit bag. I told him it was from that period when we were up for court martial. I could have given him a half dozen rifles by the way, lying out around the place. But anyway that was the story on the court martial of the rifles. So I suppose it is part of the story of the AIF in an individual way.

Yes. They issued new ammunition Mark VIII's.

Yeah, Mark VIII's, that's right Mark VIII, Mark VII and Mark VIII.

Can you recall getting that ammunition?

Yes I do. I think it was prior to going up the desert. It increased our range, it was streamlined at the back.

They feel that the range could be two miles if you elevated the gun.

Yeah, right. That's right. We used to take ranges of a mile and onwards and all that. But I think it increased it to two miles, yes.

(15.00) The 2/2nd had been formed in May 1940 and other Australians had been in action in the 2/2nd had been in reserve for such a long time and on garrison duties. Did this have an effect on morale?

Yes. Naturally. Of course any of the troops who were trained, after they had been trained and then got stuck in a garrison situation where they couldn't get into action was bad for morale.

Yes. You felt that acutely.

Yes, they were so dead keen to get into action, not only our battalion but every battalion.

So when action finally came your way were you

You got your gutful.

Going to El Alamein in mid '42 the battalion began a major shift. You did not know whether you were going on an exercise or whether ...

Yeah, that's right. We were told actually that we were going into the Syrian desert I think, but we finished up going south and south and through Palestine and over the canal and up the desert. And the Tommys were coming one way and saying, 'Good on ya Aussie', and we were going the other way.

But at this time you knew that Japan had entered the war.

Oh yes.

And at one stage there was even a feeling that you might be going back to Australia.

Yeah, there were always rumours. The 7th 'Divi.' had already gone you see.

There is a suggestion that Amriya is that right - Amriya west of Alexandria, the 9th Division won its reputation as the '20,000 Thieves'.

That's right.

Was there much thieving? Did your 2/2nd do much thieving?

Yeah right. It centred around the fact that we didn't have vehicles. We were undermanned with all equipment in the Middle East and we didn't have vehicles at all. It was unofficially told, 'Go out and get trucks so that we can get up that desert and fight the Jerry'. Because, instead of being a platoon section and subsection to each vehicle I think there was a section to each vehicle or something like that. So out the fellas went and came back with all sorts of vehicles, Indian vehicles, Tommy vehicles, South African vehicles, they pinched them. Same as in Matruh we were pinching stuff there. We were pinching tinned fruit and whatever and vehicles. I am afraid it was just - whatever you would like to say - it was just a fact of life. But that stealing of the motor vehicles and any equipment we could get was practically essentially for us to get up to Alamein and Tel el Eisa. I can remember Gus and his platoon trying to push this truck through the sand on the morning of the attack at Tel el Eisa because it had broken down and they wanted to get into action so much and they were trying to get the bloody thing going you know. All pushing and us helping, keen as mustard to get into them.

That was when you had the toughest fighting. You were under Auchinleck then Montgomery as part of the army. At this stage can you talk about that experience for that time?

On 10 July 1942, our battalion went into action first and our platoon was the first platoon to get into action. Tel el Eisa was a little station, just a station on the railway line past Alamein, the one after Alamein. Alamein was where the main station was and where all the headquarters were. And we attacked Italian positions, or the 2/48th who we were attached to, a platoon of machine gunners which was attached to a brigade. Our section was attached to the 2/48th South African, Australian battalion. And they traversed and went over a hill from the coast down to the railway line cleaning up these Italian positions. It was our first attack against this group. We dug in on the other side of the railway line and waited counter attacks and they weren't too long in coming on the morning of the 10th of July. I can remember a water pipe - we were under shell fire, our first initiation to shell fire and barage attack, really we didn't know what hit us. On the way through just in passing we were full of death and glory and having a wonderful time hanging on the back of trucks and getting into action, and three trucks in front hit a land mine. I remember the yelling and screaming of the fellows, like dogs yelping after the explosion died down. Our death and glory attitude deflated like a bloody airship with a bullet in it you know, it just went straight down because here we were seeing what can happen and everyone was quite subdued after that. This truck had just hit a land mine off the track. Don't forget the engineers would cut tracks through the minefields for us to get through, and I suppose they would leave a mine occasionally and somebody went and hit this bloody land mine. There were only three trucks in front of us, it was a deafening explosion.

(20.00) We went into action at Tel el Eisa over the railway line and these attacks took place. First of all we saw enemy troops. We dug in. I had a Boyes anti-tank rifle, our only protection against tanks. A Boyes anti-tank rifle is a .5 calibre armour piercing weapon, we were doubtful of its efficiency, but I don't know. I was given it the day before because I was a scout, there were two scouts in a platoon. They said, 'Here you take this Trigger'. Then they gave me this anti-tank rifle and they put a kerosene tin in front, about ten yards in front, and said, 'Shoot at it'. I fired the bloody thing and I finished back about four feet, with a very sore shoulder. I had missed the tin anyway. There was a flash eliminator on the front of these long barrelled things and it was all loose and it had hit the side of the flash eliminator, half ruined the rifle, and shot off at a tangent. So they tightened up the jolly thing and gave it to me and say, 'You'll be right', so off I went carrying this jolly thing over the line at Tel el Eisa and next thing we were attacked by six German Tiger tanks and infantry. Of course our guns fired and the infantry dropped back and the tanks kept coming. Those photos I showed you are from one of those tanks at Tel el Eisa. We had been under a certain amount of shell fire first and anti-tank fire, quite a lot of it actually, but fortunately I don't know if we had any injuries. Anyway these six tanks came in from the east and started to run over our position. We were on a pimple sort of thing. One of the 2/48th said that he might go hell but he will take someone with him. I can remember this German fair chap with his head out of the tank and me with my anti-tank rifle pointing directly at the tank, coming at me. I was pretty blood scared. I was trying to work out where to fire, because I had not experience with this gun at all. I didn't know what to do, what to shoot at or anything. I was the only protection except for some 'sticky' bombs - 'sticky' bombs are bitumen enclosed fire bombs that some of the other blokes had including Gus Longhurst. I thought I would fire down the barrel of his gun as it pointed directly at me, because he saw me you see. I saw the machine gun on the righthand side swing around to fire a burst at me and I didn't know where to bloody shoot. The next thing he threw a hand grenade at me and then the machine gun bullets - I could see it was going to fire, I just ducked momentarily and all the sandbags just an inch above my head were shot to bits and the hand grenade he threw at me, and yelling, 'Hands up!', and that is the last thing I remember for a minute or two. I really should of, but didn't get a chance to fire that bloody anti-tank rifle. And it is in the war history there. I was really stunned. He ran over my feet, we were only dug in shallow trenches, one sand bag.

Gus Longhurst hopped out of the trench and chased one of them as they went through. By this time some anti-tank guns had come from somewhere over the railway line and they started to shoot inside. They knocked two or three of the tanks out, of the tanks out. The blond chappie who had told me to put my hands up, I think he got killed by a 2/48th with a Bren gun. But one of the chaps jumped out of the tank, dived into my best mates 'doover' and lay next to him - a German tank operator - and 'Blue' didn't know what to do with him - so he left him there. Then the last I saw of them they were running off. I was firing my rifle trying to shoot them as they went through, I don't whether they got shot or not. The two or three tanks - you can see I have got photos of these tank, thirty-two ton tanks they are or twenty-five ton tanks - and we stopped the attack and stayed there. That was the major thing. Gus got the MM. He also picked up the Vickers gun as they were running away, pulled out the pins from the tripod - they call it 'Victor McLaglin-style' and fired the bloody thing and Bill Selmes next to him held the gun which was very unorthodox. This also got Gus the MM.

There were some very brave people in that action. Our lieutenant was killed. There were other blokes wounded. The lieutenant turned to me to yell out something, a message, because there were more troops coming, and next thing I saw he got hit by an anti-tank shell in the

shoulder. They tried to drag him away - he was say from here to the door away - because we were all dug out. A couple of blokes picked him up under fire and dragged him back. He was put into a truck and I understand a bloody big old boiler for cooking dinner fell on him, and that didn't do him much good and he died. He was only twenty-one, a young fella.

(25.00) We were mostly without platoon commanders in the whole of our action and later at Alamein, the main show and everything we were without. Because we had another lad killed too. But that is the story of Tel el Eisa, generally what happened. There were other that happened, but that was major.

I believe the 2/2nd were critical of supporting troops, particularly the British. Why was this?

This is just my opinion mind you I can't speak for other people. There is always blame apportioned when things go wrong for a variety of reasons. Why they said that is because we were looking for tank support quite a few times and they were late in coming or didn't turn up, or whatever. I would be definitely be in no position to sit in judgment on any other troops. We were shot up by our own troops, by New Zealanders, and our guns shot up going through us from an attack later on. Aircraft disappeared and appeared all over the sky and sometimes weren't there when they were wanted. But I am not going to sit in judgment on this because I don't really believe - just the same as people turn around and blame your commanders for certain things that happen and people getting killed. But I believe that in retrospect it is easy to do that. It is like a football game, it is easy to sit on a football field and criticise blokes and generally I had a lot of faith in everything that went on there.

In December the 2/2nd there was a huge parade at Gaza.

That's right.

And you were praised and thanked for the battle. Do you take part in that?

Yes, I got a letter there from Alexander, that's right.

For that one.

Yes.

Then you left for Australian on the *Queen Mary* in January '43.

Yeah.

What was it like coming back to Australia?

The *Queen Mary* was - 11,000 troops were on that ship and there wasn't room to bloody sneeze. I was told that going over, the Yanks I think they had 16,000. It was so crowded down below decks that everybody, when they could would sneak up on deck to sleep, disregarding the spray and everything, just for a bit of coolness. You were half starved, until I found the greatest lurk of the lot, midnight, two bob, down for steak by the cooks at midnight. But you couldn't get any decent food when you were supposed to. And that was a fact. We found this later and boy I was never so thankful to pay two bob to get a decent bit of meat.

That was what was going on. They had these shifts all the time giving these blokes a certain amount of food, but you were hungry. I remember being on the deck and the waves coming up and trying to find a dry spot, it was rough and a bloke kicking me in the head real hard for some reason, because it night and he was wandering around looking for his own spot. It gave me a helluva headache. But it was rough going. Except the officers seemed to have it good they were always with the nurses.

Okay you went back into Sydney on the *Queen Mary*, what was that like?

Well first of all when we landed in Perth wharfies came ashore and gave us the rundown on how the Yanks were ruining the country, taking all the women and the Aussies were out on a limb, and we all hated the Yanks by the time we got across the Bite and got to Sydney. Some troops when off in Perth, some in Melbourne and some in Sydney.

Was this an organised thing on the part of the wharfies?

They came on board to help unload. They were the first civilians we seen. Everybody surrounded them asking them about word-to-word information on how Australia was coping. They said it was lousy with Yanks. It turned out half the wharfies were on strike anyway and not getting stuff up for the troops! But that is what I am told. But yeah, we were glad to get back to Sydney.

You marched with the 9th Division, there was a big welcome home in Sydney and Brisbane, do you recall that one?

Yes.

Which one did you take part in?

In Sydney.

The Sydney one. And then you had some leave, twenty-one days leave.

Yeah.

The suggestion here is that they also gave you travelling time, so people said that their parents had shifted to Birdsville!

I did that. I was discharged in Brisbane because my brother was up here, but I had all my friends in Sydney, so I worked that too. I finished up in a train and went down to Sydney and that is why I marched in Sydney, but I was discharged - not discharged given leave - from Brisbane, from up here at Eagle Farm.

You got a bit of extra time then.

I didn't get extra time, no. What I got was travelling.

Travelling.

Yeah all I got was free travel. I didn't get extra time, no.

The whole 2/2nd when into camp at Kairi in the Atherton Tableland to begin retraining.

Kairi.

Sorry Kairi, I have got it wrong.

Yes.

What sort of camp was that?

Excellent.

END TAPE 1, SIDE B.

TAPE 2 SIDE A

Identification: This is an interview with Morrie Trigger. This is tape 2, side 1 or tape 2.

We are back in Kairi on the Atherton Tableland to begin retraining. Can you tell me what sort of camp it was there?

It was a well established camp. By now we were a very experienced battalion in looking after ourselves in action. We had a terrible lot of faith in ourselves, in our officers, we had sorted the men from the boys perhaps I would say that. We could survive quite well and we were back in Australia and we were still fighting fit. We were keen with the jungle training and we knew all the lurks and how to survive. We knew every lurk there was in the book, the 9th `Div' by that time to survive. It wasn't long before our officers before our officers had organised decent timbered buildings cut out of the scrub, decent local food. We could go down and buy steak and eggs supplied by the local people for two shillings or something like that which supplemented it. Not a bad diet, because you know get sick of bully beef prepared in about fifty different ways. It wasn't too bad, but nevertheless steak and eggs were good. We had very good sports teams and sports activity, which was very good for morale. We fielded some very good football teams, the machiners gunners did, playing against the other troops. I was only in a company team but our battalion teams were top teams, we had some good men among them.

At this time of course reinforcements came into the battalion.

Yes.

And you were sort of battle hardened and well experienced. How did you treat them?

I am sure men took men as they were. Mind you some of them were supercilious a bit early in the piece. Shall we say the battle hardened veterans might have been `a bloody reo' sort of thing, but it doesn't take long for that to wear off and for people to find their level.

The new fellas were more or less treated just like the old ones.

I would say so from my experience, yes.

You then had to convert from desert fighting to jungle fighting. That is from fighting the Italians to fighting the Japanese. Did you have any ideas about what this new fighting was going to be like - the jungle fighting was going to be like?

I think we were a bit over-confident. I was only two or three months up in New Guinea and then I got my transfer. But we did see a fair bit of strife up there whilst we were up there.

Did you have any men back from New Guinea to instruct you?

I think we did, yes I think we did. We did a lot of jungle training in the rainforests of Kairi, there was a lot of rainforest around there.

You went from Cairns to Milne Bay and you prepared for the invasion of Lae.

Yes.

Did you have training in amphibious landings for example?

I think we did at Cairns on the way up.

Right.

Once.

And the 2/2nd was used a lot for cargo handling and beach defences, but you did have an adventurous beach landing from barges when you came under aircraft attack.

Yes. We were in I think the seventh wave that went into Red Beach at Lae. I remember being on the deck and I put my shirt and my identification disks and everything on the bloody rails and the next thing I said, 'Hey Blue that looks like Sunderland Flying boats coming in', and I looked shorewards, although the shore was well out, and there was this group of low flying sea planes or flying boats coming in low. The next thing I saw this splash and another splash and they were torpedoes and they were heading directly for the ship. And we were anchored and looking at these bloody torpedoes coming over. Our captain very carefully - an American LST, no LSM, I can't think of it, anyway it was of those that opened the doors at the front and beach up - turned his ship slightly towards the torpedo and we saw the track just slide in under the flat prow of the boat.

(5.00) One of the torpedoes hit another boat further over in the convoy. Then these planes flew at masthead height machine gunning us. I could see the Japs there and I remember one of the Yanks brought one of the planes down and it crashed into the sea in front of us. Brother I couldn't get off that bloody boat fast enough. On ground I could handle aircraft and shellfire because you could run away and get into a dugout or get behind a hillock, but on a ship you could only dive overboard, and that is what I was all prepared to do and everybody

felt the same way. There was another ship with troops and our troops got hit of another company and they suffered a torpedo hit. As a matter of fact, a strange thing, this ship was limping badly with lots of casualties. They had come out of the sun too, dive bombers had bombed this ship, it was some troop carrying boat. An American boat had to go and rescue the troops that were either in the water or rescued, get them off the ship. An American did do this from the convoy as it headed for Lae. About ten years ago I went to an Anzac Day service, a Jewish Anzac Day service, and the captain of that ship was a Jewish bloke - an American had settled and married an Australian girl - told me about his experiences. I said, 'I was in that convoy'. So that was coincidence, a chap by the name of Sid List, who is in our Jewish community here. I have known him previously, but I never knew that he was the captain of that ship - just an observation.

Anyway we landed at Lae all these ships beached and I remember we were handling cargo there. A bloke got run over and killed whilst we were unloading. An Australian, I didn't know him, he wasn't in our battalion. But he somehow got in the way of one of the little trucks or something that was backing out. We were standing right next to him and he was yelling out to us to get his webbing off. One of the blokes tried to get his webbing off, but he died, just another thing that happened there. I can remember later on going to some of the beached ships that had been bombed there and trying to get equipment and stuff off there to build our shelters.

You were handling cargo when you were there. Were you disappointed about that, or would have preferred to get back into action?

No, personally I recognised it as essential. Somebody had to do it and I can remember getting in these fast ship and unloading it and putting it on the shore. It was night time and there was a lot of confusion.

What sort of action did you have in New Guinea?

Myself, my action was fairly sparse. We landed up there, we unloaded and except for that action on the ship, I got malaria. We went forward and crossed rivers and I remember having a temperature of 103 degrees and I can't remember much about it. But our MO for some reason or other said everybody had to go forward. I can remember trying to stagger forward. In the end they put me on a truck and I fell off the truck. The CO was there and he said this was no good, 'Send Trigger back', so I can remember somehow or other marching, or with 'fuzzy wuzzies' getting back to a base hospital. But I can't remember too much about it because I had this terrible malaria. Me and another chap and walking with 'fuzzy wuzzies' and getting in a jeep and finishing up at one of the AGH's with malaria. When I was better I was sent back to my battalion and got up there somehow, I can't remember much about getting back there. But then this transfer had come through from intelligence came through. Then I had quite another epic experience getting back to Buna by a little small barge under fire and carrying food supplies in a little American barge - a little LCM - and eventually I was flown from Buna back to Brisbane and I landed back in Brisbane. I went to the pictures and they were starting to show the action at Lae, that's how funny it was you know. I landed back there with still half of the malaria in my body.

[Tape jumps here inaudible.]

... first at Tel el Eisa, but we were in a main called Trig 29 on 25 October but was quite horrendous. Our platoon suffered quite a lot. But in the Tel el Eisa show we left three or four chappies up on an escarpment when we went over that railway line and dug in on that area to protect Tel el Eisa station. They saw us go into action from the hill well up above. They saw all the action and the tanks going through us and they thought we were goners. These three young fellas, mates of mine from my platoon were told, 'Get the hell out it', by somebody passing. 'The Germans are right through and you've got to get out of it'. They somehow or other got in a vehicle and started to shoot back, right back towards Alex somewhere. They were picked up and court martialled because of desertion.

(10.00) Only a few years ago at an Anzac Day reunion I met one of them, Jackie Hadden, who told me, he said they were told to go and they went. One chap by the name of Arthur Emalis, young Greek kid from Campbelltown. All these boys came from the Camden/Campbelltown area. He was court martialled and he was put into jail somewhere or other either in Jerusalem or back here in Sydney and spent quite a lot of time in jail. A young kid - I personally don't think, knowing the lad, that it was the right sentence for him. But they were court martialled, he was anyway, and discharged dishonourably from the army because of this shooting through from action. So it just goes to show the many facets of thought and activity that took place. At Trig 29 we took a lot of fighting, a lot of casualties, a lot of men. It was a bad position.,

Did you have much warning that you were going into action? You mentioned before that you thought that you were actually going out on a training exercise.

That was from Syria, from a security point of view, we were told we were going into the Syrian desert to do manoeuvres. They just said, 'Grab your gear and get into that bloody truck', and away we went. We kept going south, south and then of course by the time we got to Palestine we realised that we were on our way over the canal and smartly into Cairo and into the desert and all the Tommys coming back, thousands of them because Jerry was chasing them back.

What did you know about the enemy? The Germans.

The Germans?

And the Italians.

We knew they were very efficient. The Axis troops had good weapons. The German 88 millimetre was a terrific gun, fabulous. Being on the receiving end of an 88 millimetre was not real bloody smart. Their weapons generally, their rifles were good. The Italian weapons were bad. The Italian troops were really treated a little bit contemptuously because of their fighting capabilities we thought. I can't say anything about the men themselves. But I don't think they had their heart in it and I think this was common knowledge. Their weaponry wasn't anywhere near the German weaponry, but the Axis troops were ... don't forget they had had no defeat until Alamein. The first time that the German troops in the second world war were defeated and turned back - they had had victories all the way through. We were the first ones and the Australians played a very important part and I will say that categorically, in that northern sector, they played an important part in turning back the 19th light infantry and their component troops because that was where a lot of the fighting, as far as I understand by Bill Oakes' history, took place. There were some brave actions and some brave men in that area,

in that fighting. The Germans were brave I suppose. We took prisoners and they were just like ordinary men.

Can you comment of the attitude of your mates when you went into battle. Did they surprise you?

Well, I would say that had I had many mates who had ran and broke and they were not the sort that don't give in, shall I say, I would have too. But because, shall we say, our sergeants and corporals - I'm thinking of John Kenyon and a couple of the others, Gus Longhurst - who had the stability, had the guts to stay there, we stayed there too. Because you thought, 'I must be a man', sort of thing and you stayed there. The observation I would like to make, I personally thought I don't care if I get killed very much as long as I die quickly. I would say that would not be an uncommon thing. I hope it would be a good, clean, quick bullet. You would say, just to lift up your head and breathe the fresh air was good, without being shot at. That is the truth at Trig 29 you couldn't lift your head up for five days.

Did you talk amongst yourselves about the prospect of getting wounded or dying?

I think the men in those days treated it as a sort of bravado thing and said, 'Yeah like to get an Alex', which was getting wounded and sent back to Alexandria. 'It would be good if we could get an Alex'. But you know I am there to stay and I'll cop it and bugger 'em', sort of thing.

But you had seen people getting wounded and obviously it wasn't just a pretty clean hole with a little bit of blood.

Yeah, I saw a bit of it. There were blokes killed and wounded around me, but I didn't make it my business to go and look at them very much. A few corpses and things like that.

After you had been in battle what did you think of the weapon, of the Vickers gun?

(15.00)The Vickers gun.

Yes.

We had a terrific amount of faith in the Vickers gun. You know what that Vickers gun of ours was full of sharpnel holes, we had pissed in it to keep the water up to it, because we didn't have water. We had first aid dressing around the holes to stop the water leaking out. When we had those stops, I think that was the name of it, you know we repaired it. And they sat back on their haunches these Vickers guns and fired at infantry troops and stopped the attacks. I spoke to tank blokes and they wouldn't be anyway than in a tank. Maybe 'Arty' wouldn't be anywhere but behind their guns. As far as I am concerned that Vickers guns helped in winning the war and boy to this day I felt it was winning the war. And that little pimple that we were on helped to win the war.

What did you feel about your training after the action?

Very important. I was a lad don't forget. I didn't think this way so much. I can look back in retrospect now and say all this. I just can't recall really how I felt when I was twenty-one and twenty. Your thinking is shallower or different in those days to what it is now.

What about after the battle and you look back and you think about the tactics you employed for the battle. Did you feel, we made a mistake there or that was the right thing to do?

I can't even say that because I was a little small part in a jigsaw. All we had to do was stay on Trig 29 and keep our guns firing to hold back all these counter attacks that were going on which we did.

You have spoken very highly of your officers and NCOs in this period.

Vic Knight mightn't have by his books, I don't know. But I could see that everybody has their individual ideas. Surely Peter didn't in his book *The Barbarian* did he? It took a lot of troops away. I notice what I thought was pissing blood about 29 October, this was on Trig 29 when the action was all but over. We had held this position and the troops had gone through and tried to shoot us up. The New Zealanders, the 2/15th battalion were told that we were - at night there was a night attack, they went through us and they were told anything in front were enemy troops. But we were in front and they shot up our guns, shot us up and a couple of blokes got wounded etcetera. But anyway this action moved forward towards the coast, they were condensing the German pockets. Condensing it and shooting and breaking it up other machine gunners and infantry. I started to notice I was pissing blood and I was as sick as a dog, sick as dog and I was pissing deep red. Some German crowd started to shell over us, but right next to us and we could hear the bloody breach blocks closing practically. We could hear the explosion of the breach shell that throws the shell out, the cartridge, that's how close they were. I was feeling as sick as a dog and I said, 'For Christ sake if they are going to kill us let's get it over with', anyway a chap by the name of Pat Nicholas came up at night. They could only get up to us at night, they couldn't reach us during the day on this Trig 29. It was a major point that overlooked the battlefield. I told him I was bleeding. He said, 'Have you been hit?', I said I didn't know and he said, 'You had better go back to the RAP'. They took me back to the RAP, it was a messy place. They said, 'Oh you've got yellow jaundice'. A lot of blokes were getting this yellow jaundice. I don't know why, but it is tied up with some other disease - I can't think of. They call it something different now. I was taken out of action then. There were only eleven out of 32 left by the time I was going.

The RAP was a field ...

A Regimental Aid Post, a forward post.

You mentioned you were not terribly impressed with it.

Oh I can't remember much about it, but it was the smell of death and gore and Christ knows what.

Have you suffered any consequences in the post war time of that ...

I reckon I was pretty shell shocked by the time they had finished with me. Whether I would have normally had it or not, but I had complexes and God knows what.

You had that when you were in the Middle East and you also had malaria, a bout of malaria. Has that recurred at all?

I had a very little one after the action, but I had one about three years ago. I had a standard malaria attack. It was amazing, I didn't get treatment for it, but it was exactly all the symptoms. I don't know how it happened. Might have been something else, I don't know.

You mentioned when you came back, talking with the wharfies about the Yanks taking over. Did you meet many Americans?

Yes, especially when I was in the intelligence unit after.

Right.

They wer Yanks there.

What was your impression of them.

Well first I bloody well hated their guts because they had it all their own way. But when I got to know some of the blokes I really liked them.

Is that the first time you had met American servicemen in Australia?

Yeah. I met one or two in the Middle East, I think they were driving ambulances. But there were troops there flying Mitchell planes I think.

(20.00)Did you meet the Americans through business or was it through recreation?

As I say I went to a radio interception, or A Central Bureau, which was a high intelligence unit.

Yes.

Through my old scout master actually. When I came back for the Middle East for various reasons I thought I would transfer out, I had had enough. I went up to New Guinea, but the transfer came through. But it was full of Americans, WACs, it had every type of servicemen was there. They were good blokes.

Did you have recreational interests with them?

Yes up to a point.

Did you compete with them for taxis, girls and beer?

Oh, you wouldn't have been human. God blimey, no.

Can you recall any resentment about the number of Australian girls that married Americans?

Yeah.

That was fairly prevalent was it?

Yeah.

Did you invite any Americans to your home?

Oh yeah. Yes. I met with them.

How did they treat you?

Very nicely. Little bit of anti-semitism, a couple of them, but other than that I found them quite good. There were a lot of Jewish Yanks too.

Yes. There wasn't any feeling of superciliousness towards you?

No, not really was you got to know you. I think men are men.

Did you see any fights between Americans and Australians?

Once or twice yes, in the Valley I saw a fight.

Did you have anything to do with black Americans?

No.

Nothing at all. The next section here, I am just going to rush through this. Taking prisoners of war, you mentioned a German who leapt out of a tank and lay down in the dug out with you.

Not with me, with Bluey Smart, my good mate. And Bluey left him in there when he went back. He left him and he went back to his own lines. Unreal isn't it? He was a good bloke Blue, but he didn't think to take him with him you see. We were told to withdraw from Tel el Eisa because we had had too many casualties and everything. Blue just left this bloke in the dug out. The last he saw of his he was heading off.

They took something like 40,000 Italians prisoner. Were you involved in any of that?

No, we took a few Germans prisoner.

Germans, yes. Were you given instructions of how to treat them?

No, not generally.

You just more or less played it by ear?

Oh there were a few Italians I saw captured. I didn't actually capture them myself. But the idea was all the Australian troops they just went through their pockets, took what they could,

and sent them back. I think one or two got shot. One bloke is supposed to have had a hand grenade in his hand and they shot him.

When you say sent them back do you mean

Sent back to the headquarters for interrogation.

For interrogation.

But it was different up in New Guinea. I witnessed a Jap taken prisoner then. They were going to shoot him and throw him in the river.

Could you describe that?

This was on my way - I still had malaria. But we were on our way behind Lae following up the infantry. We came to a river, I think it was called the Busu River, a huge wild river. I suppose it had crocodiles and everything in it. We had to cross it by wading through it. A couple of blokes got swept away I understand. On the other side, I came across two infantry blokes who had captured a Jap wandering around. They were debating whether to kill him and throw him in the river or send him back.

Because you have to realise that it is not a matter of hopping on a bloody tram and going back to headquarters. I saw this chap looking at me and I felt a bit sorry for him because he was just there and the blokes had the rifles in their hands and were standing next to them. He was trying for some reason take his buttons off his shirt and put them in his pocket, and looking furtively at me. To tell the truth I don't know what happened - what they did with him.

Another time we went into a little village up there. It was full of Chinese and the Japs had just left there and they were going to take the Chinese blokes because they were supposed to have been collaborating with the Japs. A little village that had shifted out from Lae, but that is the only times that I can honestly say that I tangled with them.

The Japanese claim - this is the only one that you know about obviously - the Japanese apparently claim that they came forward to surrender and they were fired at.

Well, I don't doubt it. I know that happened because the A3 Platoon - Dunker - Stan Dunker actually one dived into the sea. He chased him into the sea and stood on a rock and shot him in the water as he hung on the rock in the water. He told me. I thought that was pretty bloody terrible, but you know your outlooks change after being mucked around. I can't sit in condemnation on anything like this. They killed three or four and they chased the onto to this little island outlet and shot and killed them. This is my own platoon.

(25.00) Going back to the Italians that you saw being taken prisoner and also the Germans, what condition were they in?

Quite good. They had a defeated look about them. I suppose they were a bit apprehensive. The Germans were still full of arrogance that I struck. Full of arrogance. One said, 'No Hitler will win this war'. One bloke is supposed to have said - I wasn't near there - he said that we both should have been fighting the Japs, a young German. Another one in front of

our eyes at Tel el Eisa, this was just a day or two after they attacked us again at the side of the railway line, and they were mounted troops. They sent the 2/48th Platoon out to capture them. The Germans just stopped there and shot them up. Killed the officer and he threw his hands up. The next thing I see the 2/48th Platoon shoulder high carrying this stretcher with their dead officer on board, feeling very bloody crook about the whole thing. These Germans stiff marching in front with them coming across our lines through the minefield. Lots of the Germans surrendered there, that is just what happened. This really turned us up. The next night there was another attack and they had an ambulance among this attack and they were trying to recover these tanks that we had shot up. We were firing at them, but they got some of the tanks. They left some of the tanks there, but they had an ambulance and we thought they were using the ambulance in its wrong position. But I am not 100 per cent sure.

Yes. Can you make any comment on how prisoners were treated once they were taken back.

I would say within reason, in the desert, I think they were treated fairly. I can't say for the Japs from my limited knowledge of what went on there. I would say that was harder to survive in the jungle, but in the desert it was easy to survive. You could bring a truck right up to the front line in its right position.

You can't really comment on the treatment after because you were not involved with them.

No.

The war ended, there were two real days, 7 May and 15 August for VJ Day. What your feelings about those days?

There was a terrible lot of joy, a lot of celebration, the streets were full of people yelling and screaming, a lot in khaki. I remember I was at 2VE Day

VE Day, that's the German one, 7 May.

I was in Redbank and I was waiting for discharge I think. Everybody was yelling and screaming and I went into my hut and I was the only one in the hut, just a transit hut. I just lay there all night. I just couldn't join, but I couldn't, I just couldn't, because I felt for the blokes who had got killed in action. I just couldn't enjoy the fact. I was glad the war was over, but I just couldn't. I can't put into words. I lay there, if I could have cried I would have. That's the truth. That's a funny thing.

Can you describe the process of getting out the services for you?

I wanted to get out as fast as I could. Told them I didn't have wounds, nothing, I was as fit as a fiddle and it took days to get out. I just wanted to get out of bloody khaki. I just hated the colour khaki absolutely. But I must admit the Federal Government in rehabilitation gave me a very good deal and I reckon we were treated very fairly and good.

Did you take any army equipment?

Equipment, no I handed it all in.

You handed everything in, in effect you took nothing.

I gave a couple of souvenirs to the Yanks.

Right. So you had nothing like badges

I have got my greatcoat at home. I have got some badges. You know Australia and the AIF badges and my colour patches.

You were allowed to keep them?

Yeah.

You were expected to keep them. When you moved into the post war era, you were not demobbed, completely demobbed. How long was it before you began a civilian job?

I was offered through rehabilitation various courses and I would have liked to have taken them. Although I put in for some of the academic courses, in the end I thought I couldn't do it. I was pretty shell shocked, I couldn't concentrate, I couldn't do anything. I couldn't talk to people and I took a bricklaying course - not that I am ashamed of it. It turned out alright. I got to be a registered builder and followed through the main factory and all, so it didn't work out too bad.

So apart from that there were no real problems about returning to civilian life.

No.

How long did it take before that feeling began

Well to tell the honest truth it wasn't until I started to go with my wife, that I started to get confidence back in my life. I don't say it was from the war, I just don't know. I just don't know, but I just think it was.

You did a rehabilitation course.

Yes.

Do you think that your wartime experience helped or hindered your career?

END TAPE 2 SIDE A

TAPE 2 SIDE B

Identification: Interview with Morrie Trigger, This is tape 2, side 2.

Morrie you said it tempered your

This is just my personal observation, I am no philosopher. But I just believe that all my life since the war I have considered life to be not precious and to live it the best way I can. And adversity and trouble is nothing to the fact that you are alive and well. I think that stems from those days in the desert when just to breathe and live and to walk around and to feel you are alive is still with me. I believe when I go to those Anzac Day reunions that feeling is among a lot of the blokes.

Do you make it a point to attend all the Anzac Day reunions?

Oh, I like to go down to Sydney where my own unit is. We plan to go this time. I try to go to Anzac Day reunions, I enjoy them. As I said previously your war experience can get out of perspective. Some of these blokes in my opinion, that's their whole life. I am not sure if that is the right way.

You feel it is still the biggest thing in their life?

No, I don't. I think I have got to keep it in the right perspective. I think I could get it out of control. I think my wife and kids and living - I mean that was only a handful of years. But I do feel that there was a lot of bashing of the heavy steel in it in the furnace in those few years to temper your characteristics. I don't say war is good and I don't say it would do any good to the youngsters today. But I would just say from my point of view it was an essential war, an absolutely essential war, and I was glad I was in it.

Did you join the RSL?

I did and I got a little bit cheesed off about it.

Any particular reason?

Yeah. Because I went to one meeting and some bloke from the first world war got up and started to rant and rave about some Italian fruit bloke up the road and why was he running a fruit shop there. Even though I am Jewish, I have always it was ideal it was what we fought against not the country. Because I have met good Germans, good Italians and I think good Japs. Even in those days I considered that persecution of a person because of his race or country is wrong.

Do you think the RSL has been effective as an organisation in looking after ex-servicemen, or do you think it has been too much involved in

I don't like Ruxton if that's what you mean. I joined Legacy and I have done a lot of good work with the Brisbane Legacy and I have a lot of faith in that. I think they do a good job. I guess the RSL, if its politics are okay I would agree with it. I don't agree with some of its politics.

So you feel they are getting involved too much with things like Aboriginal and migration?

I am not real sure, but I treat a lot of their decisions with suspicion. But I can't be categorical and sit in judgment on it.

Do you think the war years are very important in your memories and do you often think about them?

Yeah a lot. I am always talking about aren't I Ruthie? We went to a reunion that they have every year at Sawtell down in that area. It was like steppin back in time meeting these blokes. We had such a good time and talking about things.

You haven't changed your willingness to talk about your wartime experiences. I know a lot of people don't want to talk about their experiences, but you have always been forthcoming?

After the war I didn't for a while, people kept asking me and I wouldn't talk about it for some reason. I think it was this complex I had, I don't know it was, especially the action and everything.

Do you find that people generally, I mean who have not had the wartime experience, do they get a bit bored with you?

Well for instance when I ran my factory the blokes at work used to be real interested in what I had to say. In fact my foreman, the bloke who called in here, he was born in 1942 in Berlin, his name is Adolf, the son of a SS trooper. He is interested in hearing all about it.

Did the war influence your religious beliefs and practices?

Yeah a lot, a terrible lot, a terrible lot.

In terms of your religious beliefs, how did it? Did it strengthen your beliefs?

(5.00) No. No I believe in God still. But the generation that I was brought up in. Jewish young fellas had a fairly decent religious education, it was proper to be Jewish and to go to the synagogue. In mixing with non Jewish fellows and making good mates, not only good mates, but relying so much in action for your very existence and for your life, it wasn't just an eight `till five relationship was it? It was all the way. It can't help but rub off, you lose the insular and encourage the secular thought. It did influence my life. Therefore I am not traditionally so much Jewish, not quite so much as my sons are.

Did the war change your political beliefs?

No, I don't think so. I didn't really take interest in politics in those days.

Right.

As much as I do now.

You have talked about this idea of the war tempering you. What was the important effect of the war on you?

Well as I said, survival, physical survival during those war years was quite - even going on bivouac and surviving and eating food. Surviving in the desert and a bit in the jungle and actually fighting. Yeah they are the things. Simple things being so important, even this day

and age. A lot of things are superfluous in my life, that's how I feel, that it is no necessary. I reckon having a wife and home and just living and enjoying life is so important.

I would just like to quote this to you. This is from a gentleman, Stan Arneil, who went through horrific experiences on the Burma/Thailand railway and he wrote: 'I do not personally regret having been a prisoner of war, perhaps it was a privilege.' Now while these people deplore the loss of life and the suffering, other ex-servicemen make similar comments that war was a kind of a privilege to go through that.

Yeah, I wouldn't use the word 'privilege'. It was an accident of fate that my generation had to fight at that particular time. And it was an accident of fate that I survived. Had neither of those things have happened, I might have been a lesser person. So in a way you could say it was a privilege, because of the fact that the war took place and I survived. And I think the world is a better place for riddance of this bloody dictatorship. So yeah, it was a privilege to have protected and fought for democracy and the existence of my race.

We know there has been a history of your unit written. Do you think it is an accurate history of the unit?

Well that action that I was on at Tel el Eisa, Bill Oakes wrote about me and it appears that I just put the rifle down and didn't shoot at this tank. But I tried my best to shoot it and that it the only thing that I can say. Trig 29 the other action he wrote about which my platoon was in was as far as I know fairly accurate.

Does that upset you or worry you?

A little bit. I am in print there that I didn't act the way I could've acted.

Yes. When that was recounted did you have a chance to put your side?

I tried to tell Bill about it. I was a bit disappointed. No I didn't really make a thing of it. I have told other men about it.

Yes. Can you say, is there more than one history of the thing, or is that the only one?

No, that's the major one.

Can I talk about your feelings of experience with anti-semitism during the war - can you talk about that?

Well it played a major part in my attitude during the war. Because don't forget I was an Australian soldier that went over to the Middle East and went into a country that was Jewish. A striving, survival thing for the settlers there at time because it was a British mandate. There was a lot of feeling among certain Australians about the local 'wogs' which include a - the Jews. Because of my sensitivity I guess I took exception to it. From that stemmed a certain division that I thought I didn't have among my mates. Don't run away with the idea that my immediate mates never would have said anything against me - not to my face anyway they stuck up for me, a couple of them especially. But blokes would come back from Tel Aviv or

Jerusalem half drunk and say, 'Bloody Jew bastards', and all this and four-be-tvos and what they did and what they didn't do, you know treat them like dirt. Because after all these fellas were fairly narrow minded - some of them coming from the country or from the city and anyone but an Australian - even a Tommy they hated. It affected me badly and that's what hurt me a lot. I guess that stayed with me for quite a while, but now I realise that I got things out of perspective a bit because of their attitude.

(10.00)I can remember on final leave I was in Ryde, which was a small semi-country suburb of Sydney. They had a big party for the troops going overseas at the little town hall. They invited all the local blokes who were going overseas except me. I think it was because I was Jewish, I'm not too sure. I don't know for sure, I might be condemning people unjustly, but I was not invited. I was only across the road in a wine bar, maybe because my mother had a wine bar I don't know. But were only across the road and the big party was going on over there with speeches and goodbye fellas sort of thing, look after democracy. And there was I stuck out it. I don't know how it happened, but I never forgot it.

After the war I may as well tell you honestly. After the war there was an Anzac Day turnout and they played the *Last Post*. At the end of the *Last Post*, it was at one of the reunions over at Sherwood at one of the blokes houses. As the notes of the *Last Post* died out, one ex-officer, major, turned around to me - he forgot I was Jewish. Queenslanders don't know I'm Jewish, don't know much about me. 'You know when I hear the *Last Post* I think of two blokes', he said, 'One was Gus Longhurst', who was my sergeant who was killed and he was a real hero to everybody, 'And the other was a chap by the name of Winkie Weinstein'. Winkie finished up the RSM and was a CSM. A little bloke about my size with hook nose, dark eyes, really Polish, semitic-looking bloke. He said, 'I always think of these blokes', he said. I said, 'You know Gus was a good bloke', he said, 'Yeah' and he said, 'Winkie was a good bloke too. He went as far as you could go'. I said, 'What do you mean? He went as far as he could go?', he was a major this bloke don't forget, fairly well up, he said, 'As far as he could go. He was a good RSM. He could handle those six foot blokes, stand in front of them and yell and scream at them'. I said, 'But what do you mean, went as far as he could go'. He said, 'Well, you have got to face it, he was little Polish Jew'. I saw red and green and purple, I said a few words. And my mate who was with me walked away because he knew what was going to happen. I told him a little bit, not enough of what I thought about it. But they couldn't have a Jewish officer in the officers mess apparently and this really brought back all those feelings of anti-semitism to me again. There is a bloke that died, he was killed at Alamein. Winkie Weinstein, was killed shooting a bloody Vickers gun somewhere along the line or something. I don't know how he was killed. He was killed. And there was a bloke saying that - a major. I don't think this was rife throughout the AIF. I was just think it was a certain clique feeling. After all our battalion especially was made up, our officers were made up of graziers. We had about six or eight Jews in our battalion. None of them got pips. Most of them, some of them got stripes, but none of them got pips. And I told my officer mate, he was my battalion officer, Jack Cochrane, about that. And Jack is a real good bloke, he finished up a captain, a brave bloke. He got decorations etcetera. He said, 'Trigger don't worry about it, it didn't happen', he said, 'That's not so', but I said, 'It did happen'. That is my observation after all these years. Whether it is right or wrong that is how I feel, and that's the evidence.

I am right up to the hilt on former mates and former machine gunners and I think the war was very important to me, because more than the others blokes because I wouldn't be here if the Germans had won, I would have finished up with all the rest of the Jews. God knows where. I joined up as fast as I could. Irrespective that were Jews in Sydney that were still bloody well

making money in the clothing factories. You got to face this and I will say that categorically too, it is a fact of life. But nevertheless that's how I feel. In the tents in Palestine, the arguments that I used to get in and the hurt. I would go out of that tent and practically cry because some bastard would say, 'Why aren't Jew mates here. Look at them they're robbing us in Tel Aviv'. I would try to stick up for it. A kid trying to stick up for what I thought was right and trying to keep the pride and dignity that I thought I had in my religion. Some of the blokes would say, 'Trigger, don't worry about it, you are good as anyone else. You ought to say if I wasn't a Jew I wouldn't be proud', sort of thing. That was their nature and some of the narrow minded bastards, ignorant bastards weren't.

(15.00)Did you find for example anyone who was particularly antagonistic towards you, changing their attitude when they got to know you?

Yeah. I would say so.

So at the end of the session with the men, do you feel that they had completely changed their minds?

I would say now, when I go to the reunions.

But not then?

Well some of them, two or three of them, not then. Maybe they didn't like me as a person. Perhaps that was the reason, a couple of them. Maybe I wasn't such a good bloke, I don't know. But I had good mates who liked me. Sometimes personalities clash. But I would think being a Jew wouldn't help. I don't say many. One bloke, Frank Pardey, now he was killed at Trig 29. He used to drive the hell out of me, but he came from Balmain. He was a real swashbuckling bloke that had lived in pubs all his life sort of thing. Frank used to take the shit out of me. But I liked him because he used to do it in way, and yet I knew he liked me. That was a different kettle of fish. Him and Johnno, they both got killed running after each other. He tried to save Johnno and he got killed at Trig 29. We lost a lot of blokes. But that was a different form. He would get in the 'doover' and say, 'Come on Jerry have a go', sort of thing. You know cocky as they come. Because I was a Jew, he would say, 'Come on you Jew bastard, why don't you get into it and get some tucker, get into it'. But he would say it as a joke. But that was different.

Did you have any mates you could turn to, people you could trust?

Yeah.

No matter what and

Blue would sympathise with me and Gus would and those. They would say, 'Don't take it to heart Trigger, it's silly'.

Were there other Jewish soliders?

Yeah, we had another Jewish bloke in my platoon, Johnnie Baker.

Just the two of you.

In my platoon, Johnnie and I. We both felt the same way.

In retrospect, looking back now, with all the horrors that went on in the German concentration camps. Were you aware of this?

We didn't realise until after the war. We knew that they were treating the Jews badly. In Palestine there were youngsters who had managed to get out of Germany. Also before the war we had a couple of letters, not describing, but saying, 'For God's sake help us get out of this country', from Mum's relatives somewhere along the line.

In England for example Jewish refugees were almost pleading with British Government and saying, 'Look conditions are terrible', but the British Government turned a blind eye.

They restricted the migration to England. I think in Australia too, I think America opened their doors. I can't comment on that. That is just a fact of history. But nobody, even we didn't know just how bad the final solution was going to be.

Do you want to say anything more yourself? There is plenty of tape. I am more or less out of questions. Do you want to say anymore?

No, I think I have said it all. I'm thankful to say it actually. I get a certain amount of satisfaction. I was young and I was very sensitive. I went over to the Middle East full of democracy and the right to fight and because of my Jewishness I found antagonism building up in Palestine and I let it get out of proportion. I let it get out, the perspective changed and by the time I got back to Australia I applied for a transfer, I think I had a few complexes about it. But nevertheless what I said, there were grounds and reasons for some of the things I have said. But don't take it that I hate everybody because I don't.

(8.45)

END TAPE 2 SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW.