



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

Accession number	S00710
Title	(WX18987) Bluck, Harry (Signalman)
Interviewer	Bunbury, Bill
Place made	Dianellar, WA
Date made	17 June 1989
Description	Harry Bluck, Entertainer, interviewed by Bill Bunbury for The Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939-45.

Disclaimer

The Australian War Memorial is not responsible either for the accuracy of matters discussed or opinions expressed by speakers, which are for the reader to judge.

Transcript methodology

Please note that the printed word can never fully convey all the meaning of speech, and may lead to misinterpretation. Readers concerned with the expressive elements of speech should refer to the audio record. It is strongly recommended that readers listen to the sound recording whilst reading the transcript, at least in part, or for critical sections.

Readers of this transcript of interview should bear in mind that it is a verbatim transcript of the spoken word and reflects the informal conversational style that is inherent in oral records. Unless indicated, the names of places and people are as spoken, regardless of whether this is formally correct or not – e.g. 'world war two' (as spoken) would not be changed in transcription to 'second world war' (the official conflict term).

A few changes or additions may be made by the transcriber or proof-reader. Such changes are usually indicated by square brackets, thus: [ ] to clearly indicate a difference between the sound record and the transcript. Three dots (…) or a double dash (- -) indicate an unfinished sentence.

Copyright

Copyright in this transcript, and the sound recording from which it was made, is usually owned by the Australian War Memorial, often jointly with the donors. Any request to use of the transcript, outside the purposes of research and study, should be addressed to:

Australian War Memorial
GPO Box 345
CANBERRA ACT 2601

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE A.

Tape identification: This is tape one, side one. The beginning of an interview with Harry Bluck, musician - professional musician - and it's about his war service in Australia between 1942 and 1946. This is the first tape of an interview conducted for the Australian War Memorial by Bill Bunbury. End of tape identification.

Harry, before the war itself, you were already a professional musician, weren't you?

Yes, I was a young professional musician. I had already been working. At the war time I would be twenty-five and the - I'd already been working professionally since I was fifteen as a musician, right through the depression time.

So even before you joined up you would have had some, I guess, some contact with the troops you eventually came to entertain?

Oh yes, we used to entertain - particularly here in Perth - a very early war period at 1939, we were in great demand entertaining the troops here. There were quite a lot of camps around Western Australia and we went out with a group named Ron Moyle's Dance Band, which was the resident dance band at the Embassy in Perth, and Billie Barnes and I, who were teaching together at - in a building - a famous building in Perth called Bon Marche Building, full of music teachers - we were as part of the Ron Moyle's concert party.

How did you come to join up?

Well I think it was in everybody's mind. Every pretty well able bodied'd mind that the - everybody thought the war was only going to be a year or two and after it had been going since 1939, the - it become self-evident that there was a demand for more and more enlistments and getting around entertaining the concert. I know that the - Billie Barnes and I'd been working a concert party the night before we actually went into the army and I think it was very difficult if you were able bodied and at all sensitive to the environment that you felt that that was the right place for an able bodied young fella to be, even though you were a musician.

And it's an obvious question for me, because I know the answer, but for the purposes of this interview, what was your speciality as a musician?

I was - early trained as a keyboard player - as a pianist that the ... Bit precocious, I think, in my early - early training as a classical musician and worked as a classical young musician just for the record, about 1929 as a junior pianist - juvenile pianist - at 6WF, later to become the ABC, and I was trained with one of the chaps who was in - who was in the 4th Divi. Concert Party whose name will be mentioned, probably a little later - a famous teacher here Professor Nowotny. I think the professor was in inverted commas. They were an Austrian family and the - they called him Professor Nowotny. He taught most of the leading violinists in Western Australia, if not Australia, and his son Earl was in the 4 Divi. Concert Party.

With that classical background, did you find the entertainment you did eventually when you joined up, a different kind of work, or not?

Oh yes, yes. I was a stuck up little prig when the - you know, when I - when jazz first started to hit Western Australia and I thought, that's not for me. But I was lucky, like a lot of other professionals in Western Australia, if not Australia, to come under the influence of the YAL - Young Australia League - which had bands and also had variety concert parties which they'd toured extensively and they had considerable number of changes and I was invoked into the YAL as a musical director at the tender age of sixteen, and that gave me an opportunity to play not so classical music and introduction to the light music and jazz hit us all in the very early thirties, and it was hard to escape.

(5.00) So you - by the time the war came along, your - your musical taste was really broadened out?

Oh yes, I'd been playing ten years of jazz and classical and to be a full time pro, or try to be a full time pro, you had to be able to play, as we say, right across the board. A lot of us earned a lot of monies at the celebrated 'smokos' and they were quite frequent in the community and you'd have to be able to play a classical accompaniment, an instrumental accompaniment, your own solos, and play everything, as we say, right across the board. It could be accompanying a comic, or a - a baritone, tenor, whatever, and I did a lot of pit work. Working - that was a graduate from the way - oh we had a pit orchestra of some fourteen or fifteen musi... young musicians and we all had to play in the street band, of course. That was another story. But a lot of top-line professional musicians and entertainers, comedians and all - people like a name well-known, like Alwyn Kurts, who's probably, you know, an Australian celebrity now. He and I worked together in the YAL, but a lot of professionals got their early training, in the, with the YAL and went on into broader things.

Well, if we come now to that early part of the war, when you first joined up I see from your record, you were a nurse and you were stationed at Hollywood Hospital ...

... Yes.

... Now that was your - your military duty. How often at that time, were you performing as an entertainer for the troops?

Well, even - even before the Entertainment Unit was formed here, any of us who could do anything were always in great demand. Particularly down in the canteen on pay nights and things like that. Or we had, around the camps we formed ourselves into entertainment units at ... Northam was the big training centre here, and I can recall well in my training days at Northam, playing in the Northam Town Hall for dances for the troops and there was quite a celebrated musician there, Les Waldron, who was famous for his theatre organ work and had been at the Ambassadors in Perth, he was playing piano and I was play a very bad saxophone and trumpet, but they were very heady days. That was before we had the concert parties.

I - don't know - sorry - I don't know if you reflected on this in the time, but as a professional musician, did you see this in a way as a means of keeping your hand in or was it just a kind of means of passing the time?

No I think we were still very much also under the - the developing trends of jazz music and nearly all of us took every opportunity we could. In the '30s one did all sorts of jobs. I did

every sort of job that was round the place. I started off ... I matriculated in medicine and did one year in medicine here as a youngster, but we couldn't complete it.

> Harry, with this experience of playing to, um, army personnel, um, different from playing to the civilian audiences you'd had before?

Oh yes, I think so. The - while it's ... I don't think it's a great deal different from playing from - from playing to average listeners or audience people. Ah, it's the same today, if you're an operatic person, your audience is limited and you come down the various stratas of musical taste and just to get a very broad - without being disrespectful or disloyal - our average 'ocker' taste is pretty broad right across it. The - they'd always appreciate somebody brilliant - a person's sheer brilliance or a sheer personality would stand out - and that was the same, the time that I spent on things like smokos and touring with the YAL to - playing to a lot of country folk and everything else like that. But although jazz was absolutely the - you know, the thing of the day. It wasn't much point in playing hot jazz to say, country audiences and things like that. But we had ... In the army I developed through the '30s, like a lot of keyboard chaps did and I see in one of the books you're referring to here, chaps like Eddie Corderoy and these chaps playing piano accordion. Well most of us went on to piano accordions as a secondary instrument and that was very handy for army work, and in some of the places, even a bit later in some of our army experiences, if the reception wasn't too good we might be playing in front of a - a lot of troops who have been having a bad time, and they didn't want to be entertained except probably in their own way and their entertainment was pulling us to pieces.

(10.00) And they'd say, 'Righto Blucky, you better get on there with your squeeze box.' I used to sing - I think it was a bit badly - but still enough to be pleasant enough to - and I had a good repertoire of mother's songs, being a bit of a - a collector of all the different mother songs because in working to male audiences, you could always appeal to the 'mother' song and if things were going tough, they'd say, 'Right Blucky, get out there with your squeeze box and sing *That's What God Made Mothers For* and *Mother of Mine* and *Silver Hair and Heart of Gold*', and you could generally soften - particularly with the Aussie audiences - you could soften the, the attitude of quite a lot of the chaps who were ready to throw anything at you or say anything to you or not give you a hearing. But if you got out there and you made a few comments about how they missed their wives and their mothers and things like that and then sang a mother's song, you'd generally get some sort of hearing and particularly if they could join in with it.

> Were there things that you found it inadvisable to, to sing about? I mean, were there subjects that were just a bit touchy at times?

No, there came, like I think there is in every community, whatever's happening of the day is often reflected in the popular music of the day. So there was a great rash of wartime songs, you know, *Hang Out Your Washing on the Siegfried Line*, and *Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major* and all those sort of songs, and *Run Rabbit Run*. We used to change it to *Run Hitler Run* and there were parodies on all the well-known songs, all about our prime enemies. The prime Japanese people or the prime German people.

> I suppose by playing jazz you'd already, in effect, embraced your rival, but American music was having an enormous influence, wasn't it, on Australia in the '40s?

Oh Lord yes. We - we - to have something Australian was pretty rare, but - and the army did give an opportunity for some of the songs that, you know, were the - *Brown Slouch Hat with the Side Turned Up* and *Girl from Gundagai met a Bloke from Kansas City* and that sort of songs. Chaps like Jack Lumsdaine and O'Hagan and these sort of people, wrote songs prolifically and there was - they got a good hearing. But we did get a tremendous lot of American material, as we did right up till about the '60s or '70s.

Now in some theatres of war, there was a lot of ill-feeling between American and Australian soldiers, did your songs ever, sort of venture, into that territory. Or inadvertently ...

No, if we were into - into an area where we were entertaining Americans we found we possibly had to be a little bit more sophisticated and there was a big American base here in Western Australia at the time. I remember we went over to Rottnest as the official concert party - the Walocs - which was the reputedly one of the first organised concert parties in the AIF. But, we went over to Rottnest where there was a pretty hefty collection of Americans and ... But, we - I think because they carried a lot of entertainment - I saw a lot of their entertainment - and that was pretty sophisticated on our terms. You know, in our Walocs we had a - me on a - piano and/or accordion, a chap named Fergie Rose on piano accordion - one of Australia's leading piano accordionists at the time. A tenor, Pat Harrop; comedian, Billie Barnes from Perth, formerly of the east; celebrated musical comedy and operetta baritone, Vernon Sellars, who would always very much remind us that he was a partner to Gladys Moncrieff; and a fiddle player named Eddie Smith; an actor, Kevin Caporn, of Perth; and Alan Gough was a violin and saxophone. So we were pretty much something like the smokos. As a matter of fact we - a little touch of humour was that the captain in charge of us was a well-known musician in Western Australia called Billie Edwards and he was rather prim and proper and he had some experience in world war one. (coughs)

I'm back on record.

And Billie's experience as a wartime concert party world war one was with a - an outfit called, I think they were called the Branscombe Dandies, that were wartime entertainers dressed up as 'Pierrots' and so his first inclination was to the bunch of us chaps, about twelve of us chaps, into Pierrots and if you could imagine us pretty - pretty firm ockers - very much with an ocker attitude having to get dressed up as Pierrots and get out in front of Aussie soldiers like that, so we had an open revolt. We were nearly lined up and shot at dawn because we refused to take on the - the question of being Pierrots so I think if you could just well imagine me, about, you know, fourteen-fifteen stone, prancing round as a Pierrot and Billie Barnes, who was the comedian ....

(15.00) Well none of us really were the Pierrot touch so we were able to persuade them and I think I mentioned to you before we were recorded. Whenever I look at the - the BBC production, *It Ain't 'Alf Hot Mum*, I - every prod... every episode of that I see, I reflect madly on the days of the Walocs concert party.

Harry, were there ever times given that, you know, you were required to be Pierrots and you had the revolt, um, were there ever times, thinking of that sort of thing, when a concert really went badly wrong.

Oh yes, yes. It ... I've got vivid recollections of when we didn't win the audience and I think, one of the - I think it's like everybody's reminiscences, you could find those awkward moments and I recall very well, we went to a place in one of the suburbs around Perth, uh, I think it was the Claremont Teacher's Training College, which had been converted into a military establishment of some sort - or somewhere round about that - and it was one of the first times we played to a mixed audience. And some of the jokes were obviously have been risque and we didn't have time enough to mend the jokes and right along the front is the - as was the want of nearly all the concerts that were on - the 'brasses' we called them - the 'big brass' were sitting right along the front, and the big brass this night also had big brass females as well as big brass males, and some of the risque jokes and double entendre material of course didn't go too well with the brass in the front. At the back - the troops at the back were screaming mad - more so because it was a mixed audience and so we were taken to task. As a matter of fact, part of one of my other jobs - like Kevin Caporn the actor - when Billie Barnes, who was the chief comedian, needed a straight men to feed with him, Kevin and myself and anybody who happened to be handy, would be feeding straight into Billie Barnes and not being highly professional in the acting sense, we fell for all the traps where Bill and perhaps Kevin, could improvise very quickly and *ad lib*, most of us were left with our lines as we were and improvising on the spot and changing the script wasn't our forte and there were lots of embarrassing moments. And also the - and I recall that particular night with the first mixed audience that, I think they even thought that we were drunk, because the show wasn't going so well and we were improvising and changing numbers and doing the whole bit. It was quite a humorous thing for most of us and I think we felt like getting drunk. But, no, there were plenty of times. Even with the - when we went over to Rottnest with a lot of the Americans, I've felt always as American type of audience that, you know, we weren't sophisticated enough and they'd been spoilt by top-line American entertainers of which quite a few came out to the Pacific area and we were lucky to see some of those working. Particularly a little later when I was in New Guinea and New Britain we saw things - some of the American touring shows which were tremendous.

> Did the American troops ever show hostility then, to what you - you yourself perceived as a less sophisticated type of show.

No, I think - I think the Americans were - we always think our ocker mates, our Aussie blokes are pretty forthright in their thing, but we found the American troops were pretty forthright also. But I think there was a certain amount of sensitivity because it wasn't always peaceful between the troops. You know, we Aussies lay claim that we're not anti-this or anti- that but I think we have a sort of a - an incipient anti almost racist attitude as the east or the west coasts, and Aussies and Poms. We copped a lot of English troops that come down from the fall of Singapore and places like that, they were here, and the Darwin episode brought a lot of troops down here. But I think when the more serious part of the war, like the Darwin episode and the Singapore episode, made us - a lot of us appreciate what war was really about and a lot of these little minor prejudice went away. But the Americans were better fed than us and had more money than us and of course, they were new to all the females in the community and lots of other attractions like that nd I think we - I think we did have a sensitivity about some differences of opinion. But there's one thing about entertaining with the Americans, it gave some of us, who were a bit jazz happy, an opportunity to play jazz and that got a very quick acceptance by the Americans. They were looking for that sort of material.

> I was going to say something you said just now interested me, that at times, for example, like after the fall of Singapore or the bombing of Darwin, you must

have been playing to men whose nerves were pretty jagged and whose morale might have been ...

(20.00) Yeah, particularly around the hospitals. That was, you know, quite a standard area for us to go to, to do some entertainment. And particularly at Hollywood Hospital, and this is the place where I earlier had, in my early, just first few months in the army had been trained, down there. They trained as I was in Medical Corps then and it was - something was very worthwhile, even to do a concert in a ward and there are lots of burn cases and things like that. The chaps pretty heavily knocked around and for them to get some diversion and particularly given by us chaps who were in uniform - I think there was a general acceptance. Although there were a lot of community amateur concerts and other professionals working in the hospitals at the time.

I've just, I've just put that on the test for a sec ...

No, I was going to say, taking up your point earlier about the brass hats, did you ever sort of go over the top with an audience at times?

Yes, but, um - and I think the troops enjoyed that if we could .... And it was a common technique that was used, that you'd find out some of the characteristics of some of the leading brass and they'd be the butt of some of the jokes and you'd change some of the gags around so that they really had a piece and we'd get a tremendous roar from the troops if we were sending up the colonel or somebody else. Particularly somebody they didn't like. But ....

You'd go in and find out what that person ....

Oh yes, that was quite a technique that nearly everybody's developed and you find out ... Also another little trick we often used to use was to find out if there was anybody in the local group that we were entertaining who did something. Whether they were good entertainer or not, and we'd extract them from the audience and get them up to do whatever there was their favourite thing and that was always something that sold well. But some of the gags - if we got some encouragement - if it happened to be a night we were entertaining when they'd all been to the canteen, it was a, quite a common thing for them to turn the canteen off if there was a concert party entertaining the troops. So they'd come there sort of half hating you because the canteen had been closed while the concert was on and you'd have to get over that hurdle first and then perhaps if they'd had enough canteen some of the jokes that the comedians particularly ... And also I think, in our own group, without being too libellous or defamatory, we had a female imperson... one female impersonator who wasn't exactly the young type of person and he had some talent, no doubt that he could sing with a soprano voice and whistle, but he was a chap in, in his very late '30s and he dressed accordingly, and to see the chap come out and ... It was really turned into a comic act, but it wasn't intended to be a comedy act.

I'm always interested in the psychology of the 'drag' act. I mean, do you think, with soldiers, is it just pure comedy? I mean, there is something inherently funny for males - about the notion of a man in female clothing - but is there more to it than that do you think, in wartime?

Oh Lord yes, yes. The - I noticed this more when I was not in the entertainment unit, up in the Pacific. I was up in New Guinea and New Britain for a couple of years, and naturally, only there had to be a mention of music or a concert party and we'd walk through mud - miles

and miles - or get lifts and go to see these. And we had visiting concert parties, including Americans. We had Americans in the areas as well, and - but some of the 'fems', the - were very clever, very clever, and it was very difficult, and sometimes there were incidents that happened where chaps got quite carried away, went round backstage to meet the girl of their dreams. But when we got up into some of those advanced areas, there were quite a lot of females in the audience, like the American Red Cross personnel and there were lots of local, topical jokes there because a lot of the Aussie soldiers particularly, would get up to all sorts of antics to collect things. They'd acquire things, was the way you did it, and some of the things in the tropics were the beautiful big butterflies that made beautiful decorative adornments, jewellery or attachments like that. And there were all sorts of jokes of that - a Blue Emperor, you know, you could attract the attention of any of these resident females and 'course they'd became part of the patter for the comedians to say that 'There's a Blue Emperor flying over there' and they'd give it another name. And this would bring the house down.

(25.00) One of the - we were just talking about the difference. I was with an American unit - transferred to an American unit in New Britain - and the ... the provisional headquarters, they treated me very well 'cause I marched in with my own papers as a radio operator and Trade Grouping One was the one that we carried and they said, 'Oh, you're a radio man first class, aren't you, Mr Bluck?', and I said, 'Yes, that's what we'd be comparable to.' So they said, 'Hey Jones, take Radio Man First Class Mr Bluck down to the junior officers' mess', and of course I went down there and been there a few hours and they had a great big jazz band playing in the flesh, top-line musicians from American film studios and chaps that I got to know very well afterwards, and they had a fifty-four piece divisional headquarters military band, with all the different instruments. And that broke down to an eighteen piece swing band and also they were very good brewers of 'jungle juice' and they taught a lot of us Aussies how to brew jungle juice. But that was all in the entertainment side of it and ...

> Taking up that point, apart from brewing jungle juice, which is obviously an accomplishment not to be sneezed at, do you feel that in some ways the war sort of, advanced your own development as a musician? Were ...

Oh yes, I think it gave ... It stopped me ... I think most of us when we're very young, we develop some sort of conceit about our own abilities and I think trying it out in the real .... They were tough audiences and many, and most of the times and also trying ourselves out. To a lot of us chaps from Western Australia had never had a chance to go even to east or go to London. You know, you'd nudge somebody and say, 'Look there's Bill over there. He's played in Sydney or he's played in London', and to get out and to work against eastern states musicians and - which we did in capital cities. There was always a sort of a canteen - a stage door canteen - in the most of the ... in Melbourne, Sydney and places like that, and troops - other entertainers, you could go and sit in and do that sort of field. They were full of troops but .... It gave nearly all of us, I think, a better estimation of whether we were competent or not competent and writing was an interesting thing. A lot of us had an opportunity of ... particularly me working a wireless key, up there for a couple of years, we did a lot of shift work at night and it gave me an opportunity to write a lot of music and that had been one of my hobbies, writing music. But we formed our own .... I can remember in the ... in New Britain, there was an outfit in Hoskins Bay there that had not had a leave in Australia for about eighteen months and they were all in a pretty bad way and there were some chaps there from the remnants of the regimental band and we formed a concert party for the big Christmas celebration and that was a .... To write for that was good fun, and appreciated.

You're really building for yourself a big network, weren't you really in a way. Contacts and ...

Yeah, I think so, you know that - it would be nothing to be ... You were always in demand. Army education and army amenities, if they knew you did something. Even when I say I was a wireless operator, we had our own unofficial concert party, which we were in great demand. There was a - I remember Geoff Robinson, his son is a very prominent Australian musician now, but he was an organist and pi.... We had pianos up there. We scrounged a couple of pianos and in New Guinea they grew. The woodwork, and we used to have put electric - not electric - hurricane lamps alight inside to heat them so they could dry out the moisture. (coughs)

END TAPE 1, SIDE A.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B.

Tape Identification: this is tape one, side two of the interview with Harry Bluck recorded by Bill Bunbury of the ABC Social History Unit for the War Memorial. End of tape identification.

Tape running. Yes, that helps, the microphone I mean. Um, Harry one of the things I'd like to explore with you a little was this business of moving around Australia because after '43, if I'm correct, you were - during '43 you began to move right round the country, didn't you?

Yes, yes.

Um, what was that like in terms of sort of how the war was going and how your act had to respond to that situation?

Well, I don't think that - I think we were very lucky, the troops that were in Australia. Apart from the Darwin skirmish and the north-west coast of Australia and the Sydney Harbour incident, I don't think at many of those of stages, unless they`d been overseas like some of our infantry battalions had been to the Middle East and places like that, and some in the European zone. And some of the air force had been in the European zone, I think the greater majority of us had not really felt the impact of what we would say 'the hot lead' or anything else like that or 'shots fired in anger' and things. It was early days for us until we went up into the New Guinea area and New Britain area where that sort of deal was on.

So the entertainment side of it, I think, was - there was a tremendous lot of boredom in, with the Australian positions and anything like a concert party, good or bad, or even amateur or home-made or something like that was, of course, a relief. And as a lot of us found when we moved ... I spent two years up in New Guinea there and a lot of us found we did all sorts of things. For a quick example the army education, army amenities have something like - they decided to put a choir together. So I remember going down - one of the chaps told me, 'Come down there Blucky, there's a choir starting. With you as a musician, you can sing along'. So we went down and we joined the choir and had a good time trying to sing these sings were there with a very patient choir master. The next time we went down the chap who was with me, he said, 'Oh no, we're sitting over there'. I said, 'No, we're in the basses.' He said, 'Oh no, we sit where the canvas seats are, they're the best ones to sit on.' So whether you were - he

didn't - his theory was that no matter what your voice was you went and sat where the best seats were. And it - that sort of thing we did at all sorts of things, concert parties. We had some very good visiting ones. I remember my first view of the professional side of things was the Australian group who were based or allegedly based, from Tasmania, and they were called the Tasmaniacs, and I knew quite a number of the musicians that were among them, and they had some very good fems amongst them and that was a bit disturbing for some of the local troops. And ....

In what way?

Well, you know, the - anything was ... Again without looking too much at *It Ain't 'Alf Hot Mum*, the - the chaps there were fems and they got very close to having a female impact on some of the sex-starved Aussies that were around the place, and they'd get a big whistle, or a big come-on, and sometimes there'd be some of them playing the 'stage Johnny' role after the show, wanting to talk to the females. Some of them wouldn't believe that they were males, but ....

The motivation to - to do that on the part of the fems themselves, was there a sort of genuine transvestism there, or not?

Oh no, I think it's the same talent that we see with things like Les Girls and there's the unit here that is in Western Australia, out at one of the night clubs for a while was very similar to Les Girls at .... I think there's an odd mixture of - of the transvestite sort of syndrome in it and some of them are just straight out talented chaps who are - are born that way and they make the best of their talents. I know a lot of very clever and talented performers who sort of, cruelly a lot of the ockers speak of them, a lot of people in business, but ....

(5.00) I was going to say, out of - out of drag, were those guys ever sort of, um, you know, reviled or regarded as gays?

Well, I think either ... Yes, well I think there was a lot of gagging going on all time. Strangely enough we had two of our cooks in my unit, you know, and they came in when they'd be throwing the food onto your plate and the morning wasn't - plate, your food utensils had .... They were full of gags about it and - and to some of them it was unfortunate. I know a couple of them had to be mainlanded because they were homosexual and they just couldn't bear to be where they were and they were psychologically upset. But I didn't know of any performers that - because I say in my own concert party, when I was with the original Walocs, we only had the one fem in it and he wasn't at all enterprising in that way, or nor did he appeal but ...

He was straight.

Yeah, some of the other, but - and I know that when we were in places like Wau and Bulolo, up in the mountains where the average ockers, we weren't allowed to go bare-footed any time because of the peril of some other - wogs and things in the soil, but ...

Hook worm and stuff?

Yeah. The chaps would just walk around with - we got hot showers and they'd walk around with a towel and boots and that's all they were and - and there was an experience there with

some of the chaps who just couldn't ... It was psychologically upsetting for them, but there was a certain amount of pity. I met a couple of them afterwards - after war years - working in Sydney night clubs and things like that, but, no, I think that there's a lot of understanding of those sort of situations and attitudes and I think to our community credit there's an acceptance of it. Particularly in the professions. There we've got some very talented people and will be very lost, whereas a lot of years ago and back to the Oscar Wilde situation and these sort of things, you could count those sort of well-known people on both hands, but ...

I'd almost like to skip forward to the last part of the war when you talk about that because you reminded me there that of course, you ended up in the psychological area towards the end of the war ...

Yes, yes, yes.

Did that have any bearing on the kind of experience you'd had with concert parties and troop morale?

The, um ... I think that there was, like myself, to get your discharge at the end of the war, married people got out - the married chaps got out first - well females got out first - and some of us were unmarried stayed there, and I came back to the mainland here and we were all put through sort of vocational guidance tests and things like that, and I was a bit freaky I think, and I threw up some peculiar tests and they said, 'Well would you like a job in the psych. unit?', you know, any sort of a job was better than doing all sorts of other things that were around to be done, where as I say, very boring and the war was over, peace had been declared, so they gave me a job in the IV Aust. psychology service, first of all, as a vocational guidance person, because I think I'd had a lot of experience in every job around the place. You name it, and I'd been it, as through the '30s, you know, like a lot of us, and without being too immodest, I think I had a few clues and I threw up some shocking IQ things. I think they reckoned I must have been close to mad or something but the - it was good fun. It appealed to me, I was very interested and I was able then to have a closer look at the style of chaps that was going through out into the civvy street and then I became, what they called, a psychological examiner. We used to put them through all sorts of battery tests and - and other more refined tests and, of course, I study quickly and I swatted up a lot of the work and we're doing things like Binet and Rorschach tests which are well-known psychological things and I was nearly going to get my discharge, I was going to go to uni. which we're entitled to do as rehab. and do psych. as a - as a degree. But music was there - soon as I'd hit the mainland I was tempted back into a night club job and I was playing music again with some of my old musician mates and that put me back and the army gave me six months full pay to be rehabilitated as a musician, which I spent with a delightful friend of mind, a very noted West Australian teacher, Edward Black, and we argued about jazz music and everything else for six months and that was Edward's way of rehabilitating me. But he was ... I've got a lot to thank Edward for, straightening me out at the end of the war.

(10.00) Did you need much straightening out?

Oh I think that, you know, the classically I - I appreciated the opportunity to be able to explore with Edward, who was very - who was able to compromise very easily with me with the heavy jazz leaning and to be able to compromise the - the two main areas.

So it's a musical straightening out we're talking about really?

Oh yes ....

... not a ....

... I was - we were lacking in good teachers for orchestrating and arranging and a lot of us local writers here, like myself, Wally Hadley, Jim Riley, these local writers, we were all self-taught in these sort of things. We wrote what we heard and the theory side of it was secondary to that and I - I think the experience of both writing for the army shows and during the army shows and filling in a lot of time writing all sorts of things. I tried my hand at writing all sorts .... A lot of music and I still write as an amateur composer and as a professional composer.

> Harry, one of the things that I'm interested in, is you spoke of the war as boring in many places for long stretches and that's a view confirmed by many of your - your, um, contemporaries. But you were a signalman, you were a male nurse and you did a lot of different things in the war besides provide music, was there ever any conflict between doing those kinds of jobs and then having to go on and perform?

No, I think most musicians are .... There were very .... Those of us during the depression years probably claimed that we were full-time musicians but we were only probably full-time musicians because we couldn't get a job. You know, if we're being perfectly honest about it, because you'd play and the going rate was about five shillings a night or ten shillings a night, and if it was ten shillings a night you'd shut up about it because somebody'd do it for seven and six. But that sort of atmosphere and you were very courageous if you were a full-time musicians. Theatre orchestras were diminishing, the silent pictures had gone and talkies were abounding and the orchestral side was just in its infancy as far as Western Australia was concerned so, it was a great opportunity I think to be in the army shows and to have to write for them and even find a regimental band. And if you wanted to write, as I did up in New Britain, I wrote quite a few things for the Yank army when I was with their band and for the Aussie Army up in Hoskins Bay for shows and that helped. It helped.

> Getting around, both in Australia and later in Papua New Guinea, when you travelled to perform, were you - did you travel with your ordinary units or did you travel in a special entertainment vehicle? How did you move around?

No, well I was principally a wireless operator there, but there was plenty of opportunity to - to be involved in entertainment. If they found out that ... for instance in Lae, there was a big group of West Australians there and they found out that I was in this thing, so all of a sudden I became a Sergeant. I used to go down to the Sergeants' Mess because they'd found a piano somewhere and so my West Sandgroper mates got me a sergeant's shirt with stripes and I became a temporary sergeant to go down there to play the piano in the mess and that was good fun, you know, and all that sort of thing. Except when somebody wanted something more official and they'd ring up my unit and ask for Sergeant Bluck, who was, you know, the musician that .... That got a bit embarrassing because, you know, it wasn't officially, but I had some good experiences there with the Americans came through and they gave me first opportunity to see one of these caravan stages. They were called 'quartermaster's caravan' and the majority of the show were Negro musicians and some fine American musicians - very fine

- and I was able to learn a lot and I was even cheeky enough to want to do a couple of writing jobs for them.

> Do you have memories of any outstanding personalities who you - whom you played along with or saw perform at the same time as yourself?

Oh, we saw lots of visiting shows like, you know, the, um - the .... Similar to the Bob Hope, the Jack Benny Show and these sort of things, and Jerry Corona and the Gracie Fields. I remember Gracie Fields coming up and - um, we were in the audience and some of us they knew we were entertainers, we'd get round and talk to our fellow musicians and that were travelling with the show and that was ....

> Did you meet Gracie yourself?

Did I meet ...?

> Gracie Fields yourself?

Oh yes, we went backstage and met her and that ...

> What was she like?

Tremendous personality, tremendous, I think as ever was ... and went over very well with the Aussies.

> Because I was going to say (cough) she'd have come from that English tradition and she went down well with the locals here.

Oh yes, I think so. Well you know, we were only about, sort of one generation off the - the English background. The majority of us had.

(15.00) And she sort of fitted in well and ...?

Oh, easily, yeah. But, uh ... and she knew how to win the troops very easily. She sang not down to them, she sang for them and not at them, which is a common mistake with a lot of entertainers and they'll sing at people and or work at people, instead of for them, and it was nothing for her to do a cartwheel at the end of the performance and that sort of .... Nothing to do with singing but it was a good trick.

> I think I know what you mean (clears throat). Can you define singing for people instead of singing at them?

Well that's still - that's still a hallmark in entertaining now. I find just recently, I've been doing some concerts for the very senior citizens and lucky enough to front a local eighteen piece band. Not so to the concert hall crammed with the mature senior citizens and here's a nice eighteen piece band that's going to play for you, not at you, and sadly some of the young musicians of today, who play so loudly, and some very talented kids in rock area for instance ....

[Break in recording.]

Harry, we were talking earlier about personalities, were there any outstanding characters you'd like to recall?

Well, I think the - the list would be endless of lot of the top stars that entertained to the troops and were in the army entertainments and I think it would not be doing completely satisfying the whole list. But I think, without being too parochial, perhaps pay tribute to - I've just been looking at a publication here which is about war-time entertainment, and I think it's probably from Michael Pate's *An Entertaining War* where he pays tribute to the 4 Div. Concert Party and the band in the 4 Div. Concert Party was pretty near all Perth musicians and even some of the performers were well-known here. Like Ren Nolan, who was Lorenzo Nolan, but chaps like Les Dixon. Les Dixon was accomplished keyboard person. Actually he preceded me at the YAL on keyboard and Harold Taylor, they talk about him. Harold was my drummer for over twenty years and his son Robert Taylor is - became quite famous as one of the young, early rock musicians and George Kirkby (clears throat) worked a lot with myself over the years and is still around. Bernie Conlon, trombone player, we had those style of musicians. Earl Nowotny, I'd mentioned Earl's name before because I was lucky to have some early tuition with Earl's dad who was a celebrated violin teacher here and I was one of his few piano students. Billy Kerr of course, Bill Kerr the boy from Wagga Wagga. I don't know whether he's still pretends to that name or not but it stood him in good stead when he went to - early to England and people thought it was a, quite a - quite a good gag for them to be able to say the bloke came from Wagga Wagga, but Bill Kerr of course, is now one, like myself, a very mature senior person. Always use that word very kindly, we mature, like cheese, using some of the comic's gags, and he's becoming more than well-known, he's quite a celebrated senior actor in both film and television and on stage. But a lot of those chaps who are obviously their talents continued well after the war, right up 'til most of their life times. Bernie Conlan was with the ABC Symphony Orchestra on trombone for quite a lot of years. And even some of the chaps who, you know, was talking with a little bit of a smile, about some of the chaps who were doing the fem work and some of them after the war continued for a little while, but as I say, you'd have to be looking fairly young to be a continued fem ...

Unless you're Dame Edna ...

Yes, some of the, you know, the people that we often worked alongside, George Nicholls, and these sort of people, Kenny Lester, they're names that are well-known in the profession and I think that they'd all be pretty well like myself now, well into their three score years and ten and some of them are lucky to be, like myself, around to be able to talk about it.

There's an impression to me of being enormous energy coming out of all of these - these characters who entertained the troops ...

Yes, yes, yes, I ...

You were an energetic bunch?

Yeah, well I think that was part of - you had to be - and I think it was part of a very, sort of, fundamental make-up, that you had to entertain. There were plenty of comedians around the army tables - mess tables - and around the canteen and everything else like that, but to be able to do it in a serious way and to do it properly and everything else like that was a tremendous opportunities for those people. And I think performers like that have got this, what I describe

sometimes as bubbling over inside them and an opportunity to be able to display their talents is very satisfying.

(20.00) And yet there's an inherent conflict between this sort of energy and perhaps, um, you know, tendency to send up things and the requirements of military discipline. Were you ever unpopular because of this?

Yes, well, strangely enough you will find people who are musicians, quite often in public life, will say that they owe a lot of their own personal disciplines because they are performers. For a quick example a former pres.... a Premier of the State, Sir Charles Court, an eminent young musician in his day, publicly announces, even today, that he owes a lot of his personal disciplines to the fact that he worked as a professional musician and you had to have a discipline. Even a comedian has to have discipline.

But that wouldn't endear you to the (Harry clears throat) brass would it, won't because often you are saying and doing very libellous things, you've got a different routine ...

Yeah, well, the diff.... The discipline is not so obvious to them that you have to be. For instance if you're a pianist working in the pit underneath a comic up top, and if he takes a breath in a different place you immediately alert yourself because he's outside his normal discipline. A lot of comics do have some ad libbing situations but they're well rehearsed and well played chaps that you work with and you get used to it. But the army discipline - oh yes, that was - that was sometimes completely incompatible, completely and utterly incompatible but - and there was nothing better for some of the hardened old types. Like in *It 'Aint Half Hot, Mum*, they'd love to get us, um, concert party blokes out in the 'bull ring' they'd say look: 'We'll teach you to be bloody soldiers, we'll show you how to do it', and they'd love to get some of us blokes out there and if we could get by enough, okay. But you could imagine what it'd be like to get us out there in the bull ring with your pack on and the rifles - .303 over your shoulder and getting bellowed at and shelled at. But if you're a symphony musician you would detail discipline as an orchestral musician, not just for symphonies but into the pit, you had to be there and you can't afford to go outside. One second out of a beat, you just can't be, and you just - the disciplines for a working, top-line professional musician, working from the dots is probably more severe than any army discipline could ever be.

I appreciate the sense in which you say that. I was wondering whether you ever - were ever resented by other ranks as having any kind of special privileges. Would that have been fair comment, or not?

Oh yes, I think so because quite often you'd get an entree in to say, the officers' mess. You know, you'd get invited up there and of course, you're a comedian and they'd say, 'Let's comede', or if you're a musician, you know, they happened to have a piano there or do something and you get a few privileges and things like that.

I can remember when grog was hard to get and they want you to put on something extra and say, 'Right, well, that'll cost you a couple of bottles of whisky or a bottle of Dad and Dave Rum', which was shocking rum because it was so strong, but you'd get a few privileges like that. Or down at the canteen if you were really broke you could get your piano accordion out and play for a few bob, that if you were on a bob-a-day like I was for a long time, for misdemeanours. But, uh ...

You played up, did you Harry?

Well, I think nearly every musician ... You know, if you're near a place, I played in all sorts of places over Australia. If there was a dance handy - because musicians were a bit scarce and you could get ten bob for going down to ... I remember playing in Rooty Hill, outside Sydney, at the old time dance there at the - at the thing. Now it's quite a famous place. You often hear people gagging about it, but I played there for ten bob and reckoned I'd made a fortune. But that was - you go over the fence to do that.

You were disciplined as you say because being - to be a professional musician demands that, what about the - the actors? I'm thinking here of the Peter Finch, Billy Kerr sort of characters, who were very much part of that scene, were they disciplined in the sense you've described?

Well actors are tremendously disciplined, just like musicians. An actor is playing a written role in a play and it's very seldom do they ad lib unless the part calls for ad libbing. But again as I said, if they took a breath in a different place when they did, out of usual, people would be alert. But there's a dickens of a discipline for actors.

But there's a temptation to do as Bill Kerr once said, isn't there, is to take advantage of your gift for mimicry and your ability to impersonate ...

... Oh yeah ...

... and get on a plane in a uniform ...

Yeah, well it's ... And also our attitude to some ways of life, you know. I'd love to reminiscence - reminisce with dear old Bill because, um, the story ... A lot of us were very, you know, the stories about our behaviour in private and in the lines, in the tents and things like that and our attitude to discipline there, yes, I'd be less than honest if I didn't say that our attitude .... Because you'll find a lot of people who are performers like that, particularly actors and comedians, are very good observers.

(25.00) I guess also because you're used to what one could call 'internal discipline', being prepared yourself to play and know that you had to not miss a note, as you say, and be there, did that in turn affect your attitude to that externally imposed discipline of the army?

No, I think, that, you know, we were very ... There's one thing about - in the performer's area - that you got this very little time for fakes.

Mmm.

And I, without being too disloyal to the cause, there are lots of officials in places like the army and the forces where they were carrying out roles and in our terminology they were faking. They weren't the real thing ...

... what sort of thing do you mean ...?

An actor has to fake when he plays a role, plays a part, and you'll often find some of the more mature blokes say, 'I'm not going to do what that, you know, hairy-arsed young Louie just come out of an officers' schools gonna tell me to do. You know, who's he think he is.' But ...

> Was it also because some of the discipline seemed meaningless? Sort of the square peg in ...?

No, I think that we average Aussie blokes, if we were honest with ourselves, I'd say, 'Who the hell thought up this bastardry', because there was nothing to do, they'd always find something for you that you didn't like doing. Like digging holes. They were going on a route march or doing something which was quite, you know .... But some blokes might enjoy it but - but it was a discipline that you had to bend to and I think that we performers, we didn't succumb too easily to that sort of thing.

> Harry the last part of your, um, war, before you returned to Australia, was spent in Papua New Guinea, what sort of experience was that for you? Was it the first time you'd been off Australian shores?

Yes, the - and it was very revealing and particularly ... I had a good time in New ... I would say a more entertaining time in New - in New Britain because I was with the American Army there for quite a while and being a bit of a gourmet and a food worshipper I was always interested in looking for things that were better than army fare and as I pointed out before, with the Americans to be there and get real butter and real meat and then hear a real live big swing band playing, that was a - that was a tremendous experience.

> I believe you were prepared to go to some distance to get to those concerts yourself ...

Oh yes, you know, we would go through mud and slush that we, nowadays in civvy street, you know, we'd stay home rather than walk through mud and slush but that was par for the course. You'd get out and you'd thumb a lift, get a ride somewhere, miles away from where you should have been, sit out in the rain watching films on the mobile cinemas that were there and everybody shrieking when there'd be beautiful girls come on the screen so you couldn't hear what the dialogue was about and all sort of rude and sensuous and sexy remarks about, you know, what would happen, you know, if they could get a little bit closer to t e - to the actresses and all this sort of thing. No, it was, I think a lot of us were - were different animals in the army service. It was a great leveller, it levelled us all down to ... and you were what you were and as I say, there wasn't much time for faking.

> Was there, um, an opportunity for Papua New Guinean people themselves to hear this music or was it all just for the troops?

Oh yes, yes.

> Yeah. What was their reaction to things like jazz, for example?

Well I don't think that there was so much the real jazz played but that sort of entertainment was - was very much to their liking and likewise some of us. I tried to study some of the flute playing that they did and some of the drums - the koondoos - that they played and I transcribed quite a bit of that sort of music as I did with Aboriginal music in Australia. But I

think a lot of musicians here, if you hear noises like that you're apt to write them and also in writing descriptive music. A good pal of mine wrote the *Charge of Gaza* which was a fantastic piece of music, it was very descriptive. But I think we - we influenced by the sort of environment you're in and if you're a sensitive, artistic person, be a painter where you were going to paint, or perform or something else you ... But the, you know, other ones that you'd - when you're entertaining, how many times I had the *Road to Mandalay*, our baritone sing those sort of things and the troops almost knew how to sing them as well as anything else. And I noticed in - in Keith Smith's book writing about his army experience, he's talking about the, singing the - the baritone singing the *Poise* song and he used to slide down at the end and the whole audience would join in - the end of the song. You know, it - it was a tremendous environment. I thought I was lucky and - lucky to have escaped anything serious in the army services, but thank God I was able to help them entertain.

> Is that an evaluation of what the war was like in your development as a musician?

Well you know, those of us who - who weren't exposed to the tragedies of war, yes, it was a tremendous experience. Spiritually, and I think, and the - it gave a different set of values - human values - it gave us very much, very down to earth appreciation of your own, um ...

END TAPE 1, SIDE B.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A.

> Tape Identification: this is tape two, side one of an interview with Mr Harry Bluck of 96 Homer Street, Dianella, WA, 6062. Recorded by Bill Bunbury of the ABC Social History Unit for the Australian War Memorial. End of tape identification.
>
> Harry, looking back on that - that whole war experience, from your initial recruitment to your working at Hollywood, your travelling around Australia, your work in Papua New Guinea, how you regard the war interruption to your career as a professional musician or more than that?

Well it certainly interrupted everybody's and one sometimes tries to evaluate if the average chap who spent four or five years away out of his natural or normal environment, whether they're sufficiently recognised after the war, and that sort of thing, and I don't think there's sufficient compensation for all of those sort of things around. But for myself personally, I found it was a tremendous opportunity to evaluate so much in human values, comradeship. There was absolutely amazing and the question of things like personal honesty. All of us Aussies, I think every other, we all acquired things. If we were in a place you'd acquire all sorts of little things which you'd probably get twelve months jail for otherwise, but you didn't acquire it off your mates and it's the same as us people who are performers. You're able to evaluate how you're affecting yourself on entertaining, what the actual presentation meant, how good you were or how bad you were, what you had to learn, and you'd have to be very insensitive if you didn't start to take notice of these sort of things and I felt that there was a tremendous opportunity to evaluate so many things about living and gave it different perspective on the question of human values and to be able to - to thank somebody that a lot of us weren't exposed to the real tragedies of the war that people suffered so much and thank

God that a lot of us didn't have to suffer those sort of deals that ... And when I look at some of what happened to some of the POW chaps and read the experiences of them trying to entertain themselves. Making up little orchestras, making instruments, doing all sorts of things that they'd walk a million miles in civvy street before they'd do. And think that we chaps that were able to entertain that - weren't exposed to those extremes of those chaps were and still came out of it and I, looking back reflectively over the whole thing, I thank everybody concerned that I was able to have that sort of an experience and - and just - not just as a sort of mate to mate and diggership, that was something that happened sort of anyhow. But as a performer I'd - it served me well after the war. I couldn't make up my mind what I was going to do, whether I was going to study law, study psychology, study medicine, study this or study that. Well I got back amongst the musicians and fortunately since 1946 I've had everything I wanted to do about musicians and music.

Has the war ever come back to you in terms of people coming up to you and saying, 'I can remember a particular concert'?

Oh yes, yes, yes. You know, like a lot of old soldiers, as we call ourselves, in our time of life, you're prone to go in for medical services and things like that and you walk into a place and people say, 'Oh, Blucky where's your trumpet', you know, 'come on - play us a tune', and they imagine that you've done all sorts of things that you didn't do really. I know I played a trumpet badly and I played a saxophone badly, but played it and played a squeeze box and, but they'd often get me mixed up with other performers, but that's nothing for me to go now into a - the Repat. Hospitals or repat. lineups or anywhere else like that, and people say, 'Oh I remember you. I saw you in Wau, I saw you in thing, and I remember you in Sydney, and I remember you here', and all this and you get a little tickle about it, but - and that sort of thing. But it's, it's amazing how people do and it's amazing the pictures they build about you.

(5.00) This is a bit of a backtrack, but it's just occurred to me. When you were entertaining those people, there's always that awful first thirty seconds, are you going to get them with you? How did you warm your audience up?

Well, you know, we all had pretty much standard. Again, here's this question of disciplines. We had sort of standard things to do about it and one of the best things to do is always make sure that you got your humour up early and then you took a risk after that. If there was something a little bit more serious, like the tenor singing a song, he'd have to sing a darned good song and if he was sensible about it at all, he'd probably mix it very easily. The Verne Sellars I spoke to used to do Pagliacci *On With A Motley* and all these sort of things and that was pretty - pretty devastating for the ocker troops, but inevitably *Mandalay* or something like that'd come on and we'd do something and I'd say if it was getting really crook then we'd start and do something sentimental or some community singing.

Did you get the audience to - to join in with you in these things?

In the community singings, they did.

Right. What about sort of repartee? Did you engage the audience in a - in a dialogue? Did the comedians do that?

That was - I think most of them would have found that was a little bit dangerous unless they had - had it well rehearsed and knew what it was. Even today, you know, you'll find lots of

these top-line people, you don't ask the audience questions. It's a sort of a standard technique and you might ask a rhetoric question ...

... Mmm ...

... But if you ask the audience a question and expect an answer, you might get the wrong answers or you're not - you'll fail miserably in getting some response like that.

Well getting back to the humour then, I mean what kind of ways would you - would you get them on side in those - those vital first few minutes?

The comedians I think that worked in those days - well not much different from the straight comedians - there were very few who worked blue and a lot of us old performers haven't got a great deal of time if you've got to get your laughs and giggles out of people who are what we call 'blue'. I don't have to explain that.

No.

But there's a technique that you can have. You see a bloke like Bob Hope gets up in front of thousands of American people who - audiences are quite sophisticated - and he'd no more work a blue gag than to fly in the air and lots of those sort of top-line people like that, they're good performers, they're well-rehearsed. Our own comedians here that - chaps like Bobby Limb and these sort of people, they get up there and they've got good routines and you admire them. They've got their routines worked out, they're good observers and you'll find that they're - nearly all those people, that they've got some little facet about human nature which they amplify and we love to have a good laugh at ourselves.

So it might be for example, mimicry of the camp commander?

Oh yeah. That was quite a technique. They'd find out something about the local blokes.

Right.

Somebody had red hair or freckled or he spoke with a lisp or something or he did something peculiar, they'd certainly load that in and give that a lot every now and again.

Well we talked about this before earlier in the interview and I meant to ask you, did the top brass ever recognise themselves and either take offence or have a good laugh at themselves?

I seldom heard about people taking offence at it because I think they - they probably a bit concerned that they might be misjudged if they reacted in that way, that they mightn't be good sports and they'd had to be good sports. But they'd find out we had some real characters like in - in - you know, names that were famous like Red Robbie, you know, who was known for great discipline and everything else like that and the gags that went on about Red Robbie, you know, that ... They'd work them in very cleverly.

What was the Red Robbie significance then?

Oh, Red Robbie he was one of our top Australian generals and wherever Robbie went, he always seemed to demand or command that we were all out of physical health and we needed a lot more physical training. So whenever Red Robbie went through the district you could, well, expect to have some more what we call 'bull ring' work or route marches or PTs - some physical training and all that sort of stuff, but very difficult. The food was also always a - a good gag line. You could always make gags about food, you know, and there's the standard one that's lived forever. You know, somebody sort of - who called the cook a bastard and who'd called the bastard a cook. You know those standard Aussie lines and I think they became pretty universal lines, but that was ... All those sort of gags were well worked out and I think our - our writers were very good on it and they - they'd seem to pick up ... As I say good observers. You'll find that those sort of writers are tremendous observers. And one - I know I get very jealous that I'm not capable of observing. I see what David Williamson writes in his Aussie plays and I hate myself for not being the sort of observer and observing and missing so much in life. But the comedians in the entertainment, and the army chaps, they'd work it out well - get a good response.

Harry, thanks very much for talking to me about all this and appreciate your time.

Well, as I said, that's the price you pay for getting any of us old diggers to carry on. You need about a hundred tapes.

Well you ...

END TAPE 2, SIDE A.