TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

Identification: This is tape one of an interview recorded on 24 November 1989 in Perth with Fred Marchese who trained in the 5th Anti Aircraft Battery then served in Darwin in 1943 and 1944 as an anti-aircraft gunner and then overseas with the 63rd Infantry Battalion and Morotai and Ambon Island. The interviewer is Jane Fleming Panegyres. End of identification of tape one.

Now, your legal name and you are generally known as Fred but, in fact, your baptised name was an Italian.

Yeah. I was named after me grandfather, Fortunato, which is similar to fortunate the only thing there is where there's an e there's an o, that's the only difference.

And what made you decide to change your name?

Was actually it wasn't that I was made to change me name. I knocked around with kids, you know, British ... children of British descent and we used to run around together around Fremantle. I suppose they couldn't pronounce my name so somebody must have suggested: oh, call him Fred. And from that day onwards, I'm talking about the time when I'd be around about maybe six years of age, maybe a little bit earlier, there abouts that, so the name stuck to me. And it's been a good thing really because it's hard to tell people, you know, your European name because nine times out of ten they wouldn't be able to pronounce it, you know.

But you actually got round to changing it officially eventually?

Yeah, eventually my christian name's Fred - just plain Fred - and Joseph was a confirmation name when I got confirmed and that's about it.

Where did your parents come from in Italy?

My parents came from a place called ... Mum comes from Capo d'Orlando in Sicily and Dad comes not far distant, a place called Milazzo. And, of course, eventually when they got married they got married at a place called Capo d'Orlando. But Dad, he was in the Italian navy as a young chap and he went on to go to China during the Boxer rebellion. And when that was completed he more or less left Italy and he came to Australia. By memory I'd say between 1902 to maybe 1904 but it's a guess, but no later than 1904 I'd say.

Do you know why he chose Australia? Did he have friends out here or any family?

(5.00) Well, it's quite possible that there might have been a relation or a friend that came out here. Now the people that I refer to come out around about that era, maybe some towards the late 1800s to the very early 1900s and they all come from areas very close to one another. And, of course, when they came out here their employment was fishing. The people that I knew well were mainly fishing. Of course, eventually when children come along they either went fishing, some that were more fortunate learnt a trade as a barber or a hairdresser and others boot makers and that was about it. But most of the children went either fishing or working in gardens, working in fish shops and things of that nature.

You were actually born, though, down in timber country?

Yes. I was born down at Wellington Mills which is not far from Bunbury on 22 April 1918. It was policy, not only by my father but many other men, where they left the fishing industry and went to work in timber mills and then they'd probably go back fishing again. And that was sort of the procedure of that era. I believe that during the first world war there was quite a few of them down at Wellington Mills and I can also remember my aunty telling me that the women folk used to do a lot of knitting for the soldiers, you know, that were in the first world war. They used to do quite a bit of knitting. My aunty she was about ninety-three when she passed on. What else can I tell you?

Now you grew up mainly though in Fremantle; your father moved back permanently, did he?

Yes. We went to Geraldton at one period of time where one of my deceased brothers was born. He was born there in 1922. And, of course, when we left Geraldton we come back to Norfolk Street again and I suppose we were there for a few years and then we left Fremantle and went to Mornington Mills and we came back to Fremantle centenary year 1929. I had an elder brother, he was born in Fremantle, in fact it's unbelievable, he was born the day the *Sydney* sank the *Emden* in 1914. Of course there was another sister of mine, she was born at Wellington also, my sister Vincentzia but she eventually got to the name as Vincy. Then there was, I told you, Silv, he was born in Geraldton. My sister Mary, she was born in 1928 in Mornington Mills. I forgot to mention my brother Joe, he was born in Norfolk Street, Fremantle in 1925. There was two infant children that I don't remember because one died in 1917 during the flu epidemic in ... well, around the metropolitan area. My other brother whose name was Antonio, and he died in 1922 in Fremantle but it would be foolish of me to say I don't remember him. So there was that I don't remember. The only one to come from Italy was my sister Becelia. She was born in 1910 - December 1910 - and she come out on the boat with my mother in 1912. But the rest of us were all born in Australia.

So your parents were married before your father came out here or did he go back and then marry your mother and come out again?

No. He went back in 1909 or thereabouts, got married and then Mum followed in 1912. And as I said, there was only one child born in Italy which was me eldest sister Becelia.

(10.00) Now you went to school in Fremantle did you mainly or ...

I started school in Fremantle, Halmer Street. I went to what they call the, well, the infant school I suppose and I was there for some time before we shifted to Mornington Mills. What else can I tell ... that's right. They did want me to go to the school before you start school. What do they call those?

Kindergarten.

Kindergarten. But I wouldn't go. I was a stubborn kid.

You also went to school in Mornington Mills.

Oh yes. Well, by then I was a bit older. I think we were there not quite three years. When I left there I think I was in ... that's right, I was in third or fourth standard by memory and eventually we come back to Fremantle and once again I done another foolish thing. They asked me what class I was in and to be smart I told them I was in third standard so it would easier for me. But they're just the pranks I suppose kids got up to.

What sort of a school had it been in Mornington Mills? One teacher or ...

Oh no, it was a State school. I can still remember the headmaster, his name was Mr Nichols. There was another teacher that taught me, Mr Smart, and there was a Miss Reid. That was a well-known name down the timber mills, Reid. They were mill bosses and whatever. And that's the only three teachers I remember: Reid, Smart and Nichols. But, oh no, I enjoyed meself. I enjoyed the kids I went to school with. There was the odd time where somebody might make some smutty remark and then you stood up and be counted, do you know what I mean? In fact I can remember a time after school I kept gettin pestered so when we got near the mill - there used to be the mill, the butcher shop, grocery shop, post office, all close together and of course I only lived across the road from the mill. We were one of the closest houses to the mill. In fact, prior to us going there one of the mill bosses lived in there - but to cut a long story short, we got stuck into a bit of a fight outside the post office and the next thing you know everybody knocked from the mill to watch us. And, of course, when I went home I didn't say nothing to me father because Dad was, you know, quite strict. Anyhow, he found out the next day. Somebody said to him, he said, 'Your boy's pretty good'.

What started the fight? What did they say?

Oh well, I suppose some smutty remark of being of European nationality I suppose and, of course, as I alway said, I mixed with a lot of British ... children of British descent and of course I think they, in some way, they taught me to stand up. I can remember one day back at school at South Terrace somebody was giving me a hard time and one of me mates that I knocked around with, he said, 'Go on, Fred', he said, 'You can beat him' and I think that more or less prompted me to stand on two feet.

There was another Italian chap, or friend of the family, as kids he used to get around with a pair of boxing gloves and he used to get the kids to put on the gloves and have a bit of a punch and I think that also helped a bit. Do you know what I mean? But I was never a vicious person, never in my life, I never looked for trouble but I didn't like getting pushed. But you had to be intelligent as well. It's no good ... you can't fight the world. I was a great believer, you photograph their faces and then when you met 'em on their own you'd see how good they were. You found out they weren't too good.

When you say 'photograph', in the memory?

In the memory, yeah. I had a good memory for faces, et cetera. And that was my life throughout and I used to, when I got older naturally, then I started working in this fish shop in Market Street, Fremantle. I used to love dancing when I picked it up and I used to love to go dancing and I'd go as far as Perth with a late friend of mine, we were good buddies. We'd go to Perth, all the dances in Fremantle. And then in different periods of the year you might go to a dance in Cottesloe, Mosman Park, you'd go to Scarborough, Hamilton Hill, Beaconsfield and places like that which was your entertainment and enjoyment. But as I said, once again,

you had occasions where there'd be a problem but if you was sort of sensible it didn't last too long.

(15.00) When you say a problem, what, people picking on you because of your background or ...

Of your nationality but as I says, once again, I had a lot of good Australian friends. Well, I can mention something to you, it'll make you laugh when I tell you, there was a period of time, North Fremantle was, you know, known to be a pretty ... tough sort of a joint and I can remember sometimes I might be escorting a girl home who lived over in North Fremantle and you'd get to the bridge and that's where our problems used to start. And you'd hear voices from the other side saying, 'Who's this coming over? Who's this?' and then you'd here somebody say, 'Oh, it's Fred from the fish shop, let him through'. So I was lucky in that respect, but that did occur. But as I said, I was pretty well-known and I suppose I had a lot of good friends. I can't say I had bad friends because I'd be telling fibs. But all in all, I think my family, brothers, we had a lot of good Aussie mates and I always notice one thing; European ... children of European descent that make good Australian friends, they're friends for throughout their life; never ending. And I tell you what, they'll stick by you more than anybody else. No, I must admit that, for sure.

What age were you when you left school?

I was about thirteen and eight months and, of course, I ... up till then I had been helping my late uncle who was very good to me, he used to give me ten shillings a week, which I used to pass onto my mother because things were pretty tough. But when I got to the period where I was leaving school I decided I'd give a fling at fishing and in those days the younger lads they'd be put with a relation or somebody on a particular boat. So I went with my late cousin, Joe Marchese. He had a fishing boat called the *Lavina* which was a cray boat; it had a crayfish well. In those days they used to have a well in the centre of the boat built up and they used to carry their crayfish alive. And I suppose I went for one season with him and, in fact, as I say, people don't realise how bad the fishing game was for those people that were in fishing. There was no price. Crayfish was a few shillings a dozen. You'd get snapper at a penny ha'penny a pound; jewfish, tuppence farthing; herring, whiting, skipping and fish of that nature were very cheap. Cobblers, they'd just about give 'em away and the same with crabs and rock cod - no price for 'em you know. So as I said, I stayed for a season. In fact at one time, and not too many would know this, we used to take crayfish by boat to Rockingham, and we used to fill what they used to have, like a cray box, under the jetty and we used to fill the cray box up with crayfish and come back to Fremantle and I don't think too many ever knew that. Of course, the fishing, craying men in Fremantle, they had tray boxes under the jetty also. But once again, I say, there was very little price for it.

What else was I going to tell you. I remember a time, there used to be fisherman that they used to refer to them as the 'Rockingham Company'. I don't know, have you ever heard of them? They were Italian fishermen and they were stationed at Point Peron. I think they were involved as far as Safety Bay, they were involved, and they lived in this hut on Point Peron and nothing on the floor just sand. They had a big ... they used to have a fire going all through the night in this hut with their billy of coffee alongside. And how I know this, at one time when I went fishing with my late father and they bought a boat with my late uncle called the *London Belle* which was a sailing b at over, you know, on the river and of course eventually they done it up as a fishing boat. They changed the name by memory. I think Dad

called *La Paloma* meaning the dove I think by memory. And that's how I come to go there, to Rockingham, because we stayed there for the few weeks we were getting this boat changed, getting a new deck combing, mast, et cetera. Dad made all the sails because he went to sea on sailing ships prior to him joining the Italian navy. And he was quite brilliant really. And I went fishing with me late father. But prior to getting away from the Rockingham Company I can remember as a kid being down the Fremantle fish market and this double ender which they had called the *Aquilla* came in loaded with salmon. So the skipper, I think that was policy in those days, the skipper came off the boat into the market trying to get a price for his salmon. The price was so good, he went back on his boat and went out a fair way from the fisherman's mall and they dumped all the ship in the ocean. So that gives you a rough idea. People don't want to talk about hard times. What else could I tell you now?

> You would have had to leave school when you did, you know, in order to help at home I suppose, but would you have liked to have gone on any longer?

Well, put it this way, I feel ... I think I had the ability and so did ... and my eldest brother he was brilliant. In fact the headmaster at Mornington told me Dad he was the best kid in the school. But, unfortunately, we were in that circumstance and not only us, most kids were in the similar position where we run around to help our family. If you told kids this today they'd ... 'Oh that was in the old days'. But, as I says, I can remember three of us brothers, because the other one was a bit young, we used to get up with Dad and go down the fish market I suppose no later than five to six o'clock, no later because Dad ... sometimes when they went fishing they left four o'clockish, around about that time. And we used to get down the market and if I told you my late ... a cousin of ours he used to open the markets up and it used to be comical sometimes because they had a little door to get into through the big door before they opened the sliding door. So, you just imagine adults pushing up against a sliding door because they wanted to get into the market to get an early position where they'd sell early, you know. And I can remember my cousin - cousin to my mother really - cursing and what ya call it, swearing, anyhow, eventually the door would swing open and there'd be men running through, paddles on their shoulder, kids running through too and dogs. Anyhow they'd get their position where possible in the fish market and things would quieten down a bit eventually and, of course, you'd have a trolley early in the piece - the market used to be right at the end of the jetty. When we come back from Mornington Mills the market was being shifted to where it is today but I don't think it's similar to like it used to be, do you know what I mean? And, of course, the fishermen would bring in their fish, et cetera, because you'd be helping to push the trolley and so on and of course they were good hearted. There'd be nothing to get a feed of fish.

If I told you one day, one of the chappies I was giving a bit of a hand for, I don't know whether you know the apple dump cases, he gave me one of those boxes full of fish. Of course, what I'd do, I'd sell them. There's always somebody ready to buy 'em off you. Sometimes you go selling before going to school. Where am I; getting ahead of myself.

And then you'd be surprised to see the people that came from the esplanade. They'd been sleeping under the pine trees or whereever because there used to be a lot of trees alongside the railway line going from, say, the fish market right down to as far as ... not far from Norfolk Street where the toilets were. And, of course, people, they had no work and that's how they used to live. And they'd come in the market. I don't know how the poor so-and-sos got on when it was raining. And you had to see it to believe it. It's hard to explain.

(25.00) I'll tell you another thing might be interesting. My late father used to tell me in the early days that he came to Fremantle and so ... the other ones that came with him, they used to pull up their boats in what is part of the esplanade today, quite often they barter a snapper or a jewfish for a jug of beer from the Pier Hotel ... gee, I'd nearly forgotten it. So you can understand, you know, the times those people went through. I believe they also used to tie their boats up on the north side of the south mall in those days. So, they used to chuck out an anchor and probably pull the stern back and they'd get up on the rocks when they wanted to go for a walk into Fremantle, or whatever they did. I don't know what their entertainment would have been. It wouldn't be too much I don't imagine. I think a drink of beer would be about it if they were lucky.

Allowing for the fact that, you know, times were what they were and there was no choice, if you had though been able to do something else, had you any idea in your mind of something you'd liked have done; some sort of ambition?

Well, you couldn't really turn round and plan because as I said, our parents or our families were very, very poor and the attitude of children was to be able to earn a shilling and bring it home because your sisters, there was no chance of them being sent to work because they didn't believe in it, full stop. There might have been the odd occasion, I realise that it was too stupid for words but, then again, that's what they believed in. The girls didn't leave the house. My sisters, I'm certain, they never ever went out with boyfriends, I'm certain of that.

You would have had to go with them if they were ...

Well, normally that was the procedure. When a girl went out they'd be accompanied by the menfolk, fathers or brothers, et cetera. But, you know, it must have been hard for them too. But that was the policy. There was the odd European girl that did work irrespective of whether they were Italian, whether they were Slav, Greek or any nationality of European stock. There was the odd one but not too many. Of course, sometimes it's possible they might have had a family business which could have made the difference, you know.

I'll just turn the tape over.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

You say you had a sister that went to tech.

Yes, she went to tech at Fremantle and as I said she was quite good at sewing and eventually she took on hat making and I believe she got a certificate for hat making; she's one of the best I believe. But, of course, the problem was with our families, the women folk stopped home. She did do some sewing during wartime. I believe she used to have nurses from the Fremantle hospital that used to get some sewing done by her and probably even up till know she still knits and God knows what for her grandchildren, et cetera. And even my eldest sister, she was in the same boat. She was very good but she learnt her sewing from families, you know, from one family to another. She even learnt to write Italian because she was only two years of age when she left Italy to come here. And she learnt to read and write Italian but she passed on quite some years ago now.

How much Italian did you end up knowing?

Well, I was fortunate in this regard that as a kid like others the elderly ones, people, used to ask us to do some shopping for 'em or go along to interpret for them and so therefore they couldn't speak English so you'd pick up Italian.

So you spoke Italian at home in the family always?

My late father, God bless him, he used to always say, 'When your home you speak Italian; when you go out you speak English or Australian' and this is what we stuck to. So fortunately - that's me name - I learnt to pick up Italian. I can converse, but the Italian dialect not pure Italian. The pure Italian I believe comes from Florence or thereabouts - Rome, places like that. But anyhow, even today, I can still converse. I don't say I'm the best but I can still make meself understood and I could probably interpret it for a person. In fact in later years - this is getting off the track a bit I suppose - I went to work down the wharf and the late secretary, the late Paddy Troy, he used to be our secretary and quite often he'd ask me to go along with him to be an interpreter. He might have been doing a job for some Italian who wanted to get a pension or had problems of some sort or fill in taxation forms and I'd do this for him, which he used to appreciate.

At what stage did you go into the Militia and why did you do that?

Well, when I ... I went into the Militia, it's only natural, like others I got called up. So at the time I was ... I'd taken over my late uncle's round in Perth. I used to ... he used to supply these particular places which I took over - the Royal Hotel, the Savoy, the Australia, Perth Club, W.A. Club, he used to take orders to Tattersall's Club, Forest House - I don't know if you've ever heard of those places. And, of course, there was other people that used to get a bit of fish of a Friday like there was a boot shop on the corner of Wellington Street and Barrack Street - what was their name now, can't think of the name off hand - but anyhow I used to take fish there. I even took seagulls down to Tattersall's Club in Perth because they used to have seagulls for cleaning up the lawns. Did you know that?

(5.00) No, I didn't know that.

Yeah, that's what they tell me. So anyhow, this particular time the fisherman from Rockingham sent me down some seagulls so being young and trying to get a shilling I took them up to Tatt's Club in Perth and they paid me a couple of bob a pair or whatever the case may be and there was a few bob for me.

So when you went into the Militia where ... if you can tell me about that, you know, what the procedure was and how much time it took?

Well see, what happened, well first of all, I couldn't do the supplying any more so that had had to be finished. But I suppose I got a letter from the army to report to ... I think I had to report to Hobb's Barracks down here at Karrakatta and then eventually we got sent to Narrogin and of course the procedure was we went on Howitzers and 25-pounders by memory. And we did a bit of training there. We used to go on what they call bivouacs. I think one time we went as far as ... not far from where ... Bunbury I think it was, just out of Bunbury I think we were. I just can't think of the name of the place. But I was there, I suppose I did three months and then we got sent home again. I probably got a job ... I think I

got a job out at Rob's Jetty on the sheep or the pigs. I was out there for a period of time on the lambs. And then I think I did a bit of necking wheat on the wharf for a while and then eventually I got called in full time.

How effective afterwards did you think your training had been, you know, in the time you were down at Narrogin, after you had a bit more experience?

Well, to tell you the honest truth I was really very ... I was very tied up with gunnery, it just done something for me; I liked it. In fact, I liked it so much that I got to know it very thorough, Howitzers. But as I says it wasn't long after that I'd gone back for full time, or when I went in for full time, that I ... they wanted volunteers for the ack-ack and I think the case was that they'd bombed Darwin at this particular time so I ended up going ... leaving Narrogin and I went to Buckland Hill where I continued training but different guns. But, as I say, when you're really interested you pick up quite quickly.

Did the idea of the ack-acks appeal to you particularly?

Oh, I loved it, yeah, for sure.

What was it that ...

Well, I think they were a gun that they were static but when I say you went through the motions of doing every position. Now the ... I think the two, No. 2, used to elevate and depress the gun through the degrees and No. 3, by memory, used to traverse the gun through a large arc. Of course I could be wrong with the numbers at this particular time because it's a long time ago. And then I did the position on the gun laying. The gun layer had to sit on the seat and he had to watch the dial, et cetera. And, of course, then there was the other positions such as loading. Then there used to be the ammo numbers but I done every position. The only position I didn't do really was firing the gun even though the person is the gun layer he is really the person that fires the gun by word, do you know what I mean?

Mmm.

You give the order to fire and No. 1, he pulls the what'cha call 'em, the trigger and away she goes.

Could you at this stage recall, you know, the sequence of the loading and aiming and firing and so on in any real detail now?

(10.00) Well, I don't think it would take you such a long time to pick up. See, as I says to you, it's quite possible I could make a mistake through which numbers did so-and-so. But I think within ten minutes of being back on an ack-ack gun I'm certain I'd be able to do every job which would be asked of me. In fact I can remember a time when they used to send chappies to me that were going for stripes, going through a course to do stripes, so they'd send them to me. So, if they sent them to me they must have thought I had the ability of telling them and so forth, you know.

Well, could you, to the best of your memory now, run through the sort of sequence of how it proceeded?

Well, the only thing ... there used to be a bit of a sort of a parody. They used to say, 'One, sees that the bore is clear; two, elevate and depress the gun; three, traverses the gun through a large arc; four, does the gun laying and things of that nature. Now, I could get mixed up. But, see, there was quite a few on a 3.7 gun. You had to have what they meant was ammo numbers like, for instance, if you were firing a few shots it'd be no good having one person, you'd had to have at least three going into the gun pit getting the ammunition. Of course they were not a bad sized ... it wasn't a bad sized projectory, I think they call them. I think they ... they'd be at least two foot six at least in length and they were quite a good weight. And, of course, they went into what they call a loading device: you pressed a lever and it pushed it over into the house position. There'd be another number with a lanyard that you'd turn around and say 'ready', he'd pull the lanyard and the projectory would go into the breach of the gun and once it went right in the breach would slide back over the projectory, do you know what I mean, and of course when it was in the position - of course, we're only talking about doing a bit of training - this we used to do with the gun, a dummy sort of shell. Gee, it come to me now, a shell, and that's what you used to do. You went through ... the sergeant in charge would give an angle, he'd give an angle ... whatever gun angle - 2.5 or 3.5, et cetera, et cetera - bearing 250 or something and then they'd load. When it was in the loading position they'd say: 'fuse so-and-so'. So the person that was doing this would have to set the fuse in motion and there'd be a bloke that would pull a couple of levers that would set the fuse to the fuse they wanted, see. But the order 'fire' was the person that was giving ... not setting the fuse, but the person who more or less, he'd have like a little lever and of course there used to be a whatchacallem, inside the dial going around and you had to keep a little bit ahead of it - by memory - and you had to do it so that when it came to the ... you had to give yourself enough time to load and order 'fire' when the fuse dial come level with the dot on the fuse dial. See, you had the lever, fuse lever, and you also had a dot going around and you had to keep just that little bit in front to allow you to be able to load and give the order 'fire' when it more or less coincided with the other. But as I say it's a long time ago and it's quite logical that I'd make a mistake; it wouldn't be hard to make a mistake.

Did you actually get any practise with live ammunition?

Oh yes, for sure. In fact we used to fire at drogues. I suppose you know what a drogue is?

Mmm.

And we used to have a live shoot. They used to have a plane towing a drogue; lucky for the pilot I don't think. But anyhow to cut a long story short, but, of course, with the firing of ack-ack ammunition it used to break into pieces. Now there's a word for that, I just can't think of it off-hand. But anyhow ...

(15.00) What, it just disintegrate into ...

It'd break into pieces. Not fracture ...

Shatter? Not disintegrate?

No. But anyhow it would break into ... See, it wasn't the one shot when you shot at a plane, it was ...

Oh, and it scattered.

It scattered. Gee, I can't think of the word, you wouldn't read about it. And ... it will come to me probably too late. But, anyhow, that was the idea. You'd fire at the drogue and you had to more or less - when you fired - you had to keep those bullets ... not bullets, the ammunition close to one another. They used to like the ... when they exploded but they were pretty close connected.

So it, what, it ended up like a sort of shrapnel almost then?

That's the word, shrapnel.

Oh right.

You know the word better than me. In fact, one time, when I was in Darwin they had a live shoot up there and I was in the position of giving the order to 'ready' and give the order to 'fire'. In fact I got congratulated by a bloke who was one of the ... well a head officer and we were firing at this drogue and I believe he was very impressed in the shots where I was in charge of giving the order 'fire' where all these shots were very close in .... In fact, at the time, I was only a gun layer and believe it or not I got told later on by one of the officers that I should go through a predictor course which I did do and I got through quite good. But, as I say, it's hard to, you know, remember everything correctly. I'm sorry about this.

What were the officers like that were training you?

Oh they were quite good; there was very good understanding with the officers. I can't say that I had any dislike for 'em. They were quite good I thought. There was never a dull moment. Well, you all become, you know, very close to one another. If there was a dislike, well I think it would only be minor, you know. I don't think there'd be any viciousness of that sort. In fact, I was always a clown in the army; in fact I was clown all me life and I become very ... I think I was quite popular really in fact. There was one bloke who come from the eastern states, one of the captains, and he thought the bloomin' world of me, I don't know why. But it was real good, you know, and of course getting back to Darwin and as you say, there wasn't a great deal for us. A man has to be honest, I wouldn't like to turn around and say I was any hero. I was like thousands of other servicemen, we got sent where they wanted to send us, do you know what I mean?

While you were in Buckland Hill and so on, before you went up there, how much did you hear about what had happened in Darwin?

Well, you used to hear ... you might say some was rumours but we'd heard that Darwin had been badly bombed. There were occasions where some of the men from that early bombardment came down to Fremantle, they come and see us at Buckland Hill and you used to, from time to time, heard stories which, as far as I'm concerned, they'd have to be right because they were there at that particular time. I believe there were people that did receive injuries but once again it would be wrong of me to say who, how many, what for, et cetera, et cetera because it's only hearsay, you know.

Did the experience that they'd had up there have any influence on the training and on the way that the guns were used or anything like that to your knowledge?

(20.00) Well, I don't think you could change any of the training. See, the main thing with ack-ack gunnery has to be I'd say to get in readiness as quickly as possible. I think the main thing to know would be bearings and range so therefore when they set a shell they set it as close as possible to that height and range otherwise you'd be firing and there'd be no ... well, it wouldn't be much use, would it? But I think it done good for people to come and talk to us from time to time and, of course, being young at that particular time you'd be hoping that you could get up there because it's no good saying you didn't get bored; you did get bored doing nothing and you'd hear a lot of rumours. In fact rumours are the known thing when you're in the services.

> By the time that you were in Buckland Hill, for instance, all the gun emplacements were in and everything like that? They'd built it all ... all the gun sites round Fremantle way too, hadn't they?

Yeah, well see, those gun sites when we got there I'd say were finished. By memory the only thing may have ... was needed to get done, we used to put grass on the outside of the guns like camouflage and they'd camouflage our guns, that was the in thing sort of thing. But I think, by memory, I think we put a lot of lawn on the outside because you'd be in for a lot of dust because Buckland Hill is more or less a ... what would you say, it's pretty rocky and there'd be a lot of dust from time to time blowing around.

> Was there much of a feeling that there was a chance of Fremantle being raided or invaded?

Well, to tell you the honest truth I can even remember on some occasions I was sent, with others, down to the wharf. Some of the ships had come in and they used to have like light guns on the stern and the people that had manned them during the trip coming over here were probably tired and needed some rest and they used to send some our blokes from time to time to man those guns. But the only thing I know by memory, there were occasions where they reckoned that there was planes or boats close by. But to be really honest I, once again, you're only sort of guessing.

> Where were you at the time that they started to intern people of Italian nationality and background?

Well, I was living in Howard Street, Fremantle and in those days most people if they didn't know one another they knew each other by sight. And of course it was unfortunate, and I say this sincerely, because being of Italian extract myself even though I was Australian born, the people that got interned - but once again I wouldn't know every individual - but the ones that I did know, they had their families here and nobody can tell me that they'd go out of their way to do something detrimental to Australia. If there was an odd person, well, I wouldn't want to know 'em and I didn't know 'em. But what I'm saying is these people were fishermen or they worked in places like fish shops but as I say I can't remember anybody to my knowledge that worked in a fish shop that was interned. I think it mainly leaned on people that were working maybe in the fishing industry. Maybe some could have been gardeners and things of that nature. But, once again, a lot of it is only hearsay but the main point I'd say is that most Italians that I knew that had families here, there's no way where they'd get themselves involved. I think I mentioned at one time there were a couple of people to my knowledge that were interned. They'd come to Australia as kids or children and during the first world war

they were called back to Italy which they served and when that second world war started they were interned but by memory I was told that the RSL got them out of the internment camp. But, as I say, a lot of it is hearsay.

> Were you aware of people in the community, generally, being suspicious, being made suspicious by this happening of what ...

Well, I think meself I'd be wrong in saying that they didn't become suspicious because, let's face it, suspicion is a terrible thing isn't it where a person gets interned say for instance, then the family for some unknown reason might begin talking then other people might say things so it let's them off the cuff, et cetera. I'm not saying for a minute, there'd probably be suspicion and there'd be stupid things said and done. There's no way in my mind that that didn't happen. In fact on a couple of occasions, but this is after the war, where I'd be drinking in a hotel in Fremantle and you'd hear people after no doubt a few drinks say, 'Oh, yeah, I knew so-and-so. Oh yeah, they interned him. He had a fishing boat and they interned him for sending information to somebody' and of course I was very ... not bad tempered but those things used to get on my nerves because I knew who they were referring to and I knew the crew could not read or write. So, for God sake, you tell me how those people are going to send messages away if they cannot read or write and furthermore where they were fishing was alongside the coast, near the reefs. So I can't imagine too many ships, submarines, wanting to come close to there. But, once again, it's hearsay, but I think the reason why I always sided with them because I knew a lot of them could not read or write. So if you can't read or write I can't see you doing much damage, do you know what I mean? And not only that, they were getting their living here and they had their families here.

Of course, there were chaps still left fishing even after quite a few did get interned. I can remember my eldest brother bringing a boat or boats from Geraldton back here because the crew or the skipper had been interned and he done that, I believe, on a few occasions. But it's very sad that war does create a lot of bitterness and it's sad, you know, because, as I say, most of the people I know, if there was an individual that was a bit thick in the head, well, I wouldn't want to know him.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

> Identification: This is tape two of an interview recorded with Fred Marchese who served in Darwin as an anti-aircraft gunner and then overseas with the 63 Infantry Battalion. The interviewer is Jane Fleming.

> When people were interned their ... the men would have been interned but the women were left at home?

Oh yes, well, they had their children see. There must have been a lot of sadness and it's only natural, don't tell me they wouldn't be upset the poor so-and-sos. But it was part of life unfortunately and I suppose, you know, well there'd have to be bitterness because you can't turn around and smile if your husband's interned and you've got of family of say five or six kids, it wouldn't be too good would it?

> How did they manage and what sort of help was there for them?

Well, see, once again I can't tell you exactly whether it was their own money or whether they had some endowment bonds. But, once again, I wouldn't know for sure but I do believe they'd have hard times.

It would have been hard on the kids too because ...

Oh, for sure. See, the kids were all born here, or most of them to my knowledge would be all born here, going to school here. So, you know, it's not an easy thing. It's hard to explain really unless you've been involved in certain things. See, why I can relate to some things because I can remember as a kid, you know, what you go through and growing up but with me fortunately I had a lot of friends and a lot of good Australian friends. Gee, our place was always full of local lads, et cetera, and I got no complaints. You had the odd person, well, all right, you can always ... you cope with that.

Did you ever get any sort of rubbishing in the army from people about it?

I can only remember on maybe one or two occasions. But I'll never forget on one occasion, of course this chap was a bit younger than me, and I didn't feel putting me hands on him because it would have been too bad for him, so anyhow I didn't bother touching him. I just made some remark and left it at that. But do you know that the unit I was in nobody would talk to him and eventually a few days later he came back to me. He said, 'Fred' he said, 'I must apologise'. He said, 'If I don't apologise nobody's going to talk to me'. So it give an idea that people were kind to me and I respect those people for that.

There was another occasion before I went to Darwin in Narrogin. Of course you get in tents, I think they had about six in each tent at the time, and somebody must have made a remark, I didn't even blooming hear 'em to tell you the truth, and this friend of mine turned around. He said, 'If I ever hear one remark while Fred's in this tent', he said, 'I'll break your so-and-so necks'. So, if you understand what I mean. I think I was always gifted or lucky that I had so many good friends. See, at an early age - getting back to me childhood days in Fremantle - we were very close to a family, a British family, the children were born here, in fact two ... at least two to my knowledge through my Dad telling me went to the first world war. One lost his life, was in either the navy or merchant navy. But the other one he came back home. In fact, he only died about twelve months ago, if it would be twelve months. And, of course, then there was the other brothers that were a bit older than me but more closer to my eldest brother and they were all in the navy reserve in pre-war days. And, of course, my eldest brother he was in the navy reserve and of course there was quite a lot of young Italian extraction - boys of Italian extraction - in the Italian navy and so were Greeks, Slavs, so if you understand what I mean, there was always that influx of ... and they got on real well together. Do you know what I mean?

In the Australian Navy that was?

Mmm.

Yes. When you learnt that you were going to Darwin, did you know specifically that you were going to Darwin or just that you were going away?

No, no. We knew we were going to Darwin. ... Well, as I say, we were told a few days before that we were going so eventually we all packed our gear and I think got on a ... I just can't remember if we got on the train at Claremont - more than likely I suppose we did - and away we went. And I'll never forget when we got on the Nullabor Plain somebody had written on the carriages 'Look out Tojo, here we come' and there was hell to play. But still that was one of the things you know young men get up to. I remember also, you know, the trains used to pull up at different, you know, so we all got fed. Some were cattle trucks, some were like the passenger sort of carriages to take you away. By memory I think I was in a cattle truck, they used to call 'em, but still that was part of life and I think it affected everybody at sometime or other.

We used to pull up, have a meal, you'd put all your scraps in a heap and I'll never forget, I remember all the Aborigines used to come around and they'd all have pets you know and who do you think would get first? The dogs first, they'd let them eat, and after they'd go and eat themselves. So it just goes to show you, you know, how people - it's the first time I'd ever seen that - so ... and I must admit of all my time in the army where I passed Aborigines or I spoke to Aborigines I can never ever say a bad word against them. It's surprising what happens these days but once again if you don't know, well, you can't comment. But I do remember as a boy in Fremantle one of the greatest Aborigines I ever met was a chap called 'Black Paddy' and his offsider 'Wandie'. Now those blokes used to go around with several others. There was never any trouble that I can remember - bad trouble - I'm not saying there wasn't a difference from time to time. In fact, in later years getting away from the ack-ack, when I worked in this shop it was policy to give them a feed around about half past nine or ten o'clock at night. They'd come in and we'd give 'em a feed of fish and chips, give 'em a bit of bread we had in the cupboard and away they'd go. No trouble. But any rate, back to the ...

The train trip.

The train trip. And as I say, the Aborigines in that particular era I can't remember any trouble. In fact it used to be beaut to talk to them and of course we didn't go right into Adelaide. We went as far as a place called Port Augusta. I think we stopped up there for about maybe two nights at a racecourse - I can't remember the name of the racecourse in Port Augusta - but we slept there in the grandstand or wherever and then we moved on. And when we moved on I can remember calling into a place called Quorn and the people there - I just can't remember whether there was that ladies' ... women's turnout or whatever they turn on a meal for us at Quorn and I'm certain every serviceman on that train trip enjoyed and I imagine they thanked 'em muchly for the work, you know, that they deserved for what they did for us. And then we continued on.

(10.00)I can remember pulling up at a place called - other places - but, Oodnadatta was another place we pulled up at and then eventually on to Alice Springs. We might have stopped there overnight at the most. And then we got on these semi-trailers. And, of course, at that particular time from Alice Springs to Darwin it was a gravel road and by the time we got to our destination we looked all like red indians, you know from the dust. We pulled up at Ayers Rock I can remember, in fact, by memory I carved me name on the Rock somewhere. So that might be something; I must go and see if it's still there but I probably won't get to it. But it was quite a nice trip. As I say we were young, it was hot, dusty and you pulled up from time to time to have a meal or whatever and, you know, there's some places ... I forget, I think there was a place called Matarankah, I think Katherine come to me mind, and various other places where we pulled up at the side of the road.

I'll tell you what was worthwhile remembering: there were odd places were there was like a little shop and there'd be an old couple in there and I often thought, you know, through the years what courage those people must have had to be so far out on their own. Dinky-di, it's unbelievable that those people lived that sort of life. But still they did and I suppose the only people they see would be the truck drivers or service people going by.

So, as I say, eventually I went up to I think Adelaide River by memory, gee whiz, I think they'd had quite a bit of rainfall and it wasn't far from the railway line really, or not much below the bridge when we went over it. And, of course, as I say, we continued on till we got to Hughes and Livingston Strip and of course ... I think we were on the Livingston side strip and of course at this particular time I can only remember Kittyhawks - I think the Americans had them - they were a fighter plane by memory. I think Kittyhawk, is that right? And I remember the odd Brewster Buffalo which were ... well, they wouldn't have been much good for anything I don't think.

So, anyhow, we eventually went onto our gun site and you wouldn't read about it, the first bloke I met was a bloke I knew from Fremantle. He was a football player for South Fremantle. A bloke by the name of Donnie Wies believe it or not. So, anyhow, got on our gun site and, of course, eventually the people we relieved got on the trucks and away they went because I think they came south after that, but then again I could be wrong too.

How much chance did you have to talk to them before they left?

Oh only minutes; not too long. But it was surprising that the first bloke I ran into was a bloke I knew, God almighty.

What was accommodation like there when you got there?

Well, to tell you truth, I'll show the accommodation if you like - it's in here somewhere - but ...

I suppose they'd got a fair bit fixed up by that stage, you know ...

Yeah. But ... well, actually speaking what we had was like a couple of branches and you had like ... some hessian and you put your bag in between it, your mattress. You used to have like a palliasse they used to call it. You know I've got it here somewhere.

(15.00) I'll just hold the tape for a minute. That's the photo there.

Well, see, that's the photo. That's me standing in front of it and I think by memory I might have had a bottle of beer in me hand. But to cut a long story short, the shed was more or less just an ordinary semi-flat room - I wouldn't say it's exactly flat but not far from it - and in the front here you can see that's all bark, that part is sort of bark just tacked there and it goes right around but it doesn't go right down to the ground. As you can see ... you can see people sitting in there. In fact, my bunk used to be right there. I was the first bunk in there. And, as I say, it was quite warm of a night, I don't think you had any worry about getting cold, and you only used to sleep more or less ... you might have had a pair of shorts on and that's all. And as can see ... I can't remember by memory how many would be in there. I suppose it could have been maybe close between twenty-five to thirty at the most. There was another

one almost opposite this one - another hut like this. I'd say there'd be about three or four huts that we had. Of course the officers had their own tents, et cetera. Then we had the RAP, like a first aid. I won't tell you about what happened to 'em the first day.

Why?

Well, (coughs), excuse me. There used to be quite some characters. This particular night, I think we'd had a few beers, so anyhow a couple of them got hold of me and somebody must have gone and got a large bottle of tomato sauce and chucked it all over me body, you know. And then they carried me to the RAP and I'll never forget the poor bloke who was in charge. They said ... of course, you'd only have like a bit of a wick in a small tin of kerosene, you know, about the size of a jam tin say, with a wick so there wouldn't be much light. So anyhow they carried me in there and of course we had to keep a straight face and they told him some story that I'd been hurt and of course he didn't know where to start. They had it all over me face, top of me head, over me shoulders, chest, et cetera, and the poor bugger didn't know where to start. But eventually he got the message. I think he smelt the tomato sauce. But that's one of our pranks.

But, as I says, they were quite comfortable, these huts. Well, that's the thing, we were young and you're apt to, you know, live with that sort of thing.

How good were the rations that you got? Do you know, did things get through reasonably well?

Well, as I says once again, what are you going to complain about? It's not going to do you any good. I remember one bloke ... now what did he use to say, they used to give him a hard time, one of the cooks, and he was English speaking person that hadn't lost his accent and they used to give him a hard time and he used to turn around and say, 'Oh, your mates ... your mates have got it all, your mates Joey'. You know, things of that nature. But with all due respects you more or less grin and bear it and you survive.

You mentioned beer, was there a reasonable supply of beer or what?

By memory I'm not sure if it was a bottle a week and what used to happen, some people didn't drink so they'd get rid of their bottle of beer to the ones that did drink, but what we used to do is you'd save it for a few weeks and then once every blue moon you'd get together and make a fool of yourself, you know, sort of stuff. But what else was there to do? That's all you had.

In some places people were home brewing too a bit. Did any of that go on in your ...

Well, I'll you what, I made a home brew meself. One Christmas time we got a ... what do they call it, we got a package from the army I suppose and I had quite a few raisins and dates left over and of course you hear a lot of things as you're getting older. So I put them in some boiling water and I let 'em stew and when they got ... when the contents got cold I strained 'em and put 'em in bottles. If I told you I couldn't keep the cork on those bottles and I'll tell you what it ended up better ... it ended up like a clear wine by memory but I'll tell you what it turned out nice to taste. But there were people that used to make their own brews, do you know what I mean? But I can't ever remember any trouble even with people making a brew from time to time. But I never heard anybody dying so it must have been all right.

(20.00) Did people get sick much from other things, not from the home brew, but from illnesses up there and ...

Well, the only illnesses I ever remember them hearing talking about was dengue fever. I can't remember hearing about malaria. I think malaria is more in the tropics, so I'm told. But the dengue fever is more so in parts of Australia.

Were there any problems with, you know, snakes and things like that?

No. Well, to tell you the honest truth the only thing I can ever relate to, probably it's only hearsay, but I'm told there was servicemen lost their lives up in Darwin by being dragged into the rivers up there from ... but there was many or few, I just don't ...

By crocodiles?

Yes, by crocodiles.

Mmm. Was your brother up there at this stage?

Well, my eldest brother, he left with me when we went to Darwin and, as I says, he was A1 when he left here but he couldn't have been to be quite honest because when we had a medical up there some time later they made him B2. So therefore being an A1 battery he had to eventually leave. So he got sent down to Adelaide River and he got sent to a place called Rear Headquarters and he remained up there ... he must have done at least three years in Darwin, at least. In fact, when he came home - he came home by boat part of the way - but they went to Rabaul on the way back but I just can't remember whether he went to the eastern states from there or whatever. But ...

You don't think they did the checks ... the original, what, checks when you went into the army as thoroughly as they might have? Were they ...

Well, something must have gone wrong because to tell you the truth he was in a different crowd and I ended up ... sometimes you can get a brother to come into your battery or unit but I believe sometimes it's the eldest brother that does it. But this was vice versa because I got him to ... I put in for him to come to our battery and I don't know whether they got mixed up or I mightn't have given the truth, et cetera, but I just can't remember exactly. But anyhow, he ended up in our battery for a short time and then he ended up at Rear Headquarters in Darwin. And then some period of time later he ended up right in Darwin.

Now when you were up there at Hughes and so on what do you understand that you were attached to? Were you no longer the 5th by that stage?

Well ... I don't know. I hear so many ... I always remember only 135 Heavy Ack-Ack Battery, that's what I always remember but then again it's a long time ago.

And yet there were people from the 22nd down in that area too.

Oh no.

At some stage.

Oh, well, that crowd we relieved I think they could have been the 22nd or whatever. As far as I can remember way back, I'm certain from the 5th Ack-Ack we could have become the 135 Heavy Ack-Ack Battery.

Now in that were there mainly West Australians or were there people from other states as well with you?

Well, when we kicked off we were all West Australians I'd say but then through the period of time of the not quite two years we had people from Adelaide, there was a couple from Melbourne and I've got an idea there was some from Sydney. Let me think. But anyhow there was ... there were people from other areas.

But predominantly Western Australian; there were more Western Australians?

Oh yes. Even one of our officers, Captain Stewart, I'm pretty certain he came from either Melbourne or Sydney.

(25.00) What were your officers like up there?

They were quite good. I wouldn't say I'd have any complaint. If you were by chance, something may have occurred, I think it was only minor. I don't think there was ever anything serious. I can't ever remember anything serious. As I say, I had ... I always seen the humorous sides of things, you know. I think he was asking one time there, you know, considering we didn't have a lot to do, how we filled in time. We had quite a few blokes on both sites that were either A-grade football players; some could run a bit; some played basketball or netball. In fact, I've got an idea by memory they could end up top of the Northern Territory for netball, or in the Darwin area. In fact they had some sports up there at a period of time like athletics and I went into it meself even though I was never a coached or trained runner and I ended up winning from a 100 yards to three miles. Not bad for a bloke that ... when I was a kid at South Terrace in the centenary year, I was the best under eleven but I never trained.

But running both the short distance and the long distance races?

Yes. In fact the bloke that run the final of the 100 yards, he was a Kalgoorlie bloke, Billy Smith, and we used to run around together and he said to me one day, he said, 'Look', he said, 'What about letting me do the 100 yards and you stick to the mile?'. I said, 'Well, to tell you the truth, it makes no difference to me', which it didn't. And I'd say this, he was very, very good but there was only a very short margin between us. But he ended up winning the final of the 100 yards throughout the Northern Territory I'd say. In fact, one of his brothers I believe run third, or a place, in the Stawell Gift years ago. But anyhow, to cut a long story short, one day there I didn't have a race to run in so he let me take me place in a 100 yards relay and believe it or not we won that. So I couldn't have been too bad.

How much - when you first got up there - how much actual action was there because this is a bit later on when things were quieter and so on but did you actually see ...

Well, I can't be ridiculous and say I seen a lot. I'd say I seen little and when I say little I mean little. There were planes that went over. I can remember one day, I'm not sure if there were three Zeros come over, they flew over our gun site but, once again, you can't fire unless you get an order to fire from the air force. So, if you understand what I mean, they were there and they were gone in no time. I can remember within a few days that we got up there there was quite a big concentration of Japanese planes and once again, I can remember seeing the flak up in the air when they were firing. But, with us, I suppose you could say we were fortunate in a way, they were out of range. Some come close by but not close enough. There were times where a reconnaissance plane would come over. Once again, they could be out of range or whether it was height or distance, one way or the other, and you couldn't do ... you couldn't do much justice. There was a night, I can remember, where they went over so I don't know what occurred but they allowed us to fire. So for a period of time we were firing away there enjoying it - well, I think most blokes enjoying it - and ... but to say what occurred, once again, I'd be lying. There was some talk about we were ... what did they credit us with either one and a half planes or two and a half planes, but whether this is correct or wrong I wouldn't like to say.

There were times when planes did pass us and they kept on going down to Coomalie Creek or Adelaide River. In fact, me eldest brother told me one night they got down there and they had to make for Adelaide River, you know ...

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

Well, the only thing I can remember me eldest brother telling me that at one time the Jap planes got down that way and they must have dropped a couple of bombs, et cetera, and they all rushed down to the Adelaide River for protection. So, what occurred or not, that's about it. But I can't tell you a great deal because, as I says, it was ... in a way it was boring, you know, for the period of time we were down there.

> Was it a bit frustrating that there'd been a lot happening before and that you'd got up there in a way too late?

I was too late. Yeah. See, up to that time it was still operational area. I think the operational area ended in sometime November '43. So we had, what, about ... about nine months of that operational area which, you know, in a sense ... well, see, really speaking unfortunately for us we had nothing to say that we'd been away even though you'd been away for a couple of years. In fact, the ANZAC House - is that flicked off is it?

> No, it's right; it's on.

And anyhow, the only thing that was left, I went and joined ANZAC House, become a member of the RSL. I had nothing to relate to. I couldn't turn around and say, 'Oh, I've been away' even though you'd been away nearly twenty months you know. So I joined the RSL. And ...

> When did people become members of the AIF up there?

Well, see, it'd have to be, I'd say, in that period of time. If we got up there in February '43 so I'd take it it'd have to be that year but I wouldn't be able to give you the month or details because it was ... oh, I forget.

You'd wanted to join prior to that though?

Oh, I tried to join when I was in Narrogin. In fact, something else I tried to join, when I went to Rooty Hill, you know they've got information up on the posters about certain things, well they were calling for chaps if they were interested in the navy that had a bit of gunnery knowledge. Well God, I felt I had it - gunnery knowledge - plus instruments so I thought I'd put in but I never heard any more about it. And then, you know the answer I got? They couldn't accept me because I was a member of the AIF. It makes you wonder.

It must have made a few people a bit annoyed.

Oh it does because as I says, when I was in Narrogin, some of me mates and meself we were really keen to join the AIF and, as you say, when we got knocked back I suppose it made us a little bit bitter.

Now in those first months that you were up there you were still having to man the guns all the time and keep them all in first rate conditions and things so ...

Oh yes. Oh, for sure. Oh, maintenance is on all the time for sure and they done a good job too. And of course we had artificers that looked after parts that we probably wouldn't be able to ... well, we weren't trained to do what they could do. Like they were people with two or three stripes or there may even have been an officer amongst them which were artificers.

(5.00) Did you duties change when you position changed while you were up there from when you first went up?

Well, not really, you know, because as I says, I mean, I was pretty interested in gunnery. I learnt as much as possible. Then I got trade group as a gun layer and then at a period of time later I got trade group as instrument operator. So I was pretty fortunate I suppose.

Did that make a difference to your pay when you got your trade grouping?

Oh for sure. Well, see, I was getting a shilling a day as a gun layer and two shillings a day as an instrument operator and this money was paid to me even when I was in the infantry. They continued payment till the day I was discharged, oh yeah.

And at this stage you were supporting your family?

Oh yes. Well I was given ... well, I think it was five shillings a day when I started and I was giving twenty-eight bob a week to my mother. That'd be right ... or am I wrong - wait a minute five shillings a week, that's thirty-five - I was keeping two bob a day. That's right, every pay I was getting twenty-eight shillings, something of that nature.

What was there to do with the bit that you kept? What could you spend it on up there?

Well, you'd only have a drink or two. Sometimes somebody might be having a game of cards or a game of dice or a game of two-up. Well, let's face it, it's not an easy thing to just sit there and do nothing. We were always occupied. What else was there I was going to say.

> Was it harder after the, you know, things had really slowed right down where you were no longer having to do as much preparation in case you were raided, you know, when you went off being inactive?

Well see, the training still kept up, it's just that it got monotonous and I'm certain most people felt the same way but you still had to keep your guns up to standard. I think that was an in thing really, do you know what I mean, even though we weren't using them to the degree that we may have had to use them. But, as I say, there was an occasion where they might have a hoot at a drogue or a target, whatever you wish to call it, but even that sort of died out. Do you know what I mean?

> How good was the mail supply coming in?

Oh it wasn't too bad. I don't think a person could complain. I suppose there might have been the odd time you say, 'Gee, I'm not getting any mail' but, then, if nobody's writing you yah you can't expect to get mail. But the mail I used to get was pretty continuous. I had, you know, quite a few penfriends to tell you the truth. You know, going through different states you meet different young women and they give you an address and you keep in contact with them. In fact, to tell you the truth, I ... I think I was writing to different girls almost after ... even after the war ended. Mmm.

> How much was the censorship kept up in the later stages up there? Did they ease that back a bit?

Well, I think there was always censor. Of course, I used to hear different blokes say, 'Oh, some of my letter got cut out' but to tell you the truth I never used to worry about it because if you said something that was, you know, not fair to circumstances, well, by all means cut it out. But I don't think anybody intentionally would be writing anything that would give anybody a chance of having a shot back, do you know what I mean?

> Mmm. How difficult was it without any women actually up there, you know, for such a long period for all those on their own?

Well, I suppose it would be a terrible thing. See, I remember on the way up there there was still people, civilians, leaving there even at the time we went up there. I can remember one ... of course, there was entertainment for troops from time to time. I can remember one particular time the Tivoli come up there and you wouldn't read about it - I just can't remember whether it was at the airstrip when we seen 'em - and of course eventually we went back to camp. Blow me down, through the early hours of the morning they must have got bushed because one of the cars come down to our gun site and of course, you know, you hear voices and you get up and have a look out, and especially when you hear a woman's voice, God, it was something out of the blue. But all that happened they eventually found out they were at the wrong place so they turned around and away they went.

See, there was air force personnel camped nearby us too. Because, as I told you previously, it became ... the Spitfires were there on those strips and then there was I think the Mitchell

bombers but there was another bomber there also and I can't think of it. But, anyhow, the Mitchell bomber they were on the other side of the road because, see, there was Harry 1 and Harry 2 - we were Harry 2. But there was another crowd on the other side which was Harry 1.

I also remember one particular day or morning there was a terrible explosion and one of the ... one of the bombers exploded as it was taking off. I don't know, did you ever hear anything about that?

I read something like that.

But I just can't remember. There was a Mitchell bomber ... I've got an idea there was two lots of bombers on that strip but I get ... Then there was another strip further down, Batchelor. Did you hear of Batchelor? And, as I say, it's hard to remember. See, there was planes that come to mind such as the Lightning, I think that was a B-20 ... no it wasn't. There was a Lightning which was more of a reconnaissance plane. Then there was the, I think, Beaufighter which was a bomber fighter plane down at Coomalie Creek.

How much did you actually have to do with the air force personnel?

Well, from time to time, they used to come and lecture us, the people from the air force. Two of the blokes I can still remember well was Bluey Truscott and Killer Caldwell. Bluey Truscott, I believe, sometime later, he got killed. In fact they ended up building an airstrip, Truscott Strip, but to my knowledge I don't think it was ever used. Am I right or wrong?

I don't know.

Did you hear about it?

I know the name but I don't know what the situation is.

Oh ... To my knowledge I can't remember the Truscott Strip being used.

Did you have anything to do with the Americans?

Just on odd occasion. As I say they used to pick us up if we were going to ... say you might have got a day's leave so you'd go down to Adelaide River or you'd go into Darwin. See, there was blokes I knew that were in the navy that were camped right in Darwin so I had occasion to go and see them from time to time. Then there was some of the ack-ack blokes come up later than what we went up and they were at Berrimah by memory. Whether I'm right or wrong once again, and they used to go and see them from time to time. There was blokes I knew at Adelaide River. There was another crowd I knew, they were in the transport AASC - I think it was Army Transport Corps, something like that - I used to go and see them. Then there was another crowd, 6th Battalion, I knew ... mates of mine were in that and I'd go and see them. So ...

And you got lifts; you sort of hitched rides.

O yeah, you hitch hiked, yeah. In fact one of my young friends got killed up there one night up near Berrimah. He'd been to a picture show and, of course, he was only ... the only place

you could walk is the side of the road and unfortunately he got killed. But ... what can you say.

> You mentioned, when we were talking about the trip over, that there were group of Aboriginal people came up to the train and so on and that you saw quite reasonable size numbers of people but how many Aboriginal people were up around the area that you were? Were they still there or had they moved away?

(15.00) Oh, no matter where you went you'd run into quite a few. When I say 'a few', see going across the Nullarbor well there'd be quite a good number of 'em. As I got closer to Adelaide ... not Adelaide River ... Alice Springs, by memory, I remember we run into a few that were stockmen.

> Mmm. But up in the area where you were, you know, at Hughes and so on, were there Aboriginal people living around that way?

No I can't ... I don't say there weren't any living there but we didn't see a great deal of them. It's quite possible I feel that there were some Aborigine people working for the army probably on cleaning up or unloading and things of that nature.

> And what about down around Adelaide River where you brother was, were you conscious of ...

No, I didn't take much notice up there. Well, once again, it's a long time ago and it's hard to ... but I'd imagine there're definitely Aborigine blokes around. There's me eldest brother, he's got a pair of gloves on up at Darwin. Now by memory I can't remember whether that's Adelaide River or right in Darwin. But, as I said, you'd run into them from time to time but to turn around and say, 'Oh, there was a big number; fifty or 100' well I could never ...

> Who's this other ...

That's my brother ...

> Yes.

That's what me brother used to say, 'I hope you know which one's the Aborigine', because he was quite dark himself. He used to say, 'The bloke in the shorts is ...

> And you don't whether this was taken at ...

Oh, it's taken in Darwin.

> And this was in Darwin, this Aboriginal man was in Darwin?

Oh definitely but I just can't remember exactly whether it was Adelaide River or right in Darwin.

> Mmm.

But, oh yeah, never a dull moment. Have I run out of tape?

> You've got a lot of photos from up round the gun site and so on and various people that were up there with you. Were there ever restrictions on what you could photograph up there?

Well, to tell you the honest truth, I never ever remember hearing of any restrictions because, let's face it, I can't see where there'd be much damage done because whoever took photos, they'd only be sending them to their close families, nobody else, you know. That's about all I can tell you as regards to that.

> When did you hear that you were actually going to be leaving Darwin?

Well, we'd come home on leave on the ... just before Christmas and they sent us home, see, because the unit up in Darwin was breaking up, which it did do, so we had our leave and eventually I went to Rooty Hill and then eventually I went to places such as Bathurst, Greta, Canungra, then to Logan Village and then I got a ship which was a Liberty ship called the *Sea Ray* and I went to Morotai where we were waiting to get reallocated as reinforcements. But in the meantime there wasn't a great ... the only thing I can say is they were getting ready for the Borneo landing. There was a lot of shipping in the area at this particular time so a lot of the troops that were on standby got one of the jobs to load - what do they call 'em. Gee whiz, I've forgotten the name - anyhow we had to load these barges with ammunition and it was an around the clock job loading ammunition. And some time later some of us got sent on a bit of patrol duty on Morotai where there's supposedly had been Japanese. In fact, I can remember on occasion there'd be the odd Japanese worker walking back to our camp, you know. They probably got lost or whatever. Did you see that bit in the paper the other day about Japanese?

> They found a lone survivor?

Something like that, yes.

> That turns up from time to time.

By anyhow, cut a long story short, what we used to do - I just can't remember exactly whether it was a week or two weeks - we'd go out on this perimeter and then we'd get relieve and another crowd would go on and so on. Anyhow, eventually, as you well know, the war ended and I suppose they needed troops to go to various islands, of course there's any amount of 'em, and the crowd I was with got sent to Ambon Island. We were known as the 63rd Infantry Battalion, or whatever, and went to Ambon Island and of course there was different duties. There was either guard duty or looking over the island, looking for graves or any allied people that may have been shot or whatever.

I did hear by - this is only hearsay - there were two mass graves on a place called Laha was an airstrip and I believe they were to be redug up and reburied near the town sight. Now whether this was done or not I wouldn't like to say. But and that was it.

And then we had Japanese officers that were being interrogated, and from time to time we had to act as escorts or whatever. We also had a prison camp where we had a tower with a mounted machine gun that we had to act as guards up this tower. And that was about it, I'd

say. And, as I say, most of us covered most of the island. I was in a ... I was camped at a place called Latuhalet and then I left there and I went to a place called Eri. I was out there for a while and then I come back to Latuhalet where there was a Dutch camp originally there. And, as I say, even though the war had ended it seemed to be more interesting at that stage. Do you know what I mean?

> Was there any anxiety that there were still people about and there could be a certain amount of danger?

Well, there's always danger because even though the war had ended, irrespective of what island you'd be on, it's quite possible you could lose your life through booby traps because, let's face it, there were occasions where you heard people had been killed by these traps. So, there's never ending because, let's face it, if you went to an island and you hadn't been there long you wouldn't know where the enemy had have been or would have been, et cetera. You only more or less acting on what advice you could get. But, oh no ...

> What was the sort of feeling among the Australian troops towards the Japanese? You know, as you had Japanese prisoners of war there and so on.

Well, to tell you the honest truth, to be quite honest, there was bitterness. You couldn't help noticing it, do you know what I mean, because let's face it I suppose there was troops that had lost a brother or may even been a sister or whatever and they were very, very bitter. Of course, you know quite well the things that occurred, from time to time where we heard nurses being shot at or just butchered really by Japanese. To tell you the honest truth I just finished reading a book a friend of mine gave me about when they went to Singapore - what was the name of the ... - 'Operation J Wick', well, when they caught the remain ... they beheaded them all. You can understand people being bitter at that stage. Do you know what I mean?

> How much have you read about what happened in Darwin? You know there've been books written.

I've never read too much to tell you quite honestly because, as I says, I didn't see a great deal up there. It was a good experience in a way but it was a bit monotonous.

> Do you feel ... you know, you indicated earlier you felt it was a great waste in some ways of people that were well trained and eager to do something.

Well, the only thing you can say, well, I was lucky nothing happened to me. But, it was wasted. You were sent up there; you were trained; and it cost money to send troops here and there and everywhere. You do hear from time to time rumours and that's all they end up being, rumours. I heard at one stage we were going to India. Now, let's face it, bloody India. I don't know who put it around but it's surprising, you know, the tales. Then when I got to Morotai we got - what would you say - these high ranking officers would come around. We were on parade and they went up and down with jeeps and there was some talk that we were going to go to Singapore and we were going to be under Louis Mountbatten. So, if you understand what I mean, maybe the rumours kept us alive; what else can I say.

> When it was time to come home, did you get home fairly quickly?

(25.00) Well, when I left the island ... when I left Morotai I was lucky I flew back from Ambon by DC3 and I landed back in Morotai and, of course, there's a lot of troops ready to come home but fortunately I had quite a few points on account I was sort of - what would you say - I had ... we had no father and I was more or less supporting the family. Not that me brothers weren't contributing at all so ... but I'd gone in early and I more or less put myself in that position.

At what age were you when you father actually died?

I was nineteen when Dad died and ... that was in 1937, two years before the war started and - what was I going to say ...

So you took on the role of supporting your family.

Well, see, me brothers were fishermen. The youngest brother he's still going to school and I know there was more chance of me earning a shilling than me brothers going fishing. Not they didn't earn a shilling but it was very, very poor, you know. So, more or less, I took the position of doing that and ...

So when you came back how easy was it to sort of settle back into civilian life and what did you do?

Well, to tell you the honest truth, when I ... prior to the war I was working at this fish shop but eventually, as I said, you have to forget about work once you go away but once I came back I didn't go looking in the same avenue. In fact, you wouldn't read about it, I was walking through ... I was working at Elder Smiths in Fremantle and while I was pushing the barrow around, lo and behold, one of the officers was our platoon officer in the wool store. He said, 'I know you don't I?'. I said, 'You ought to', I said, 'I was in your bloody platoon'. So anyhow the next thing I know I'm working on a barrow. Of course, once you got on a barrow, well, there's a chance of you being employed longer because most of these jobs are seasonal. Anyhow I was there until they were having problems with power. So once the power problem come off ... come on, they put a few of us off.

So I left there and I made me ... that's right, a friend of mine, his father had this fish shop. He said, 'What about doing me a favour?'. He said, 'I'm going to Sydney to get married', he said, 'What about helping out till I go over and get married?'. So, like a good guy, I did that and I think I stopped there about ten months. But after that I went down to the wharf and I worked as a casual worker and eventually I became a member of the union where I stayed, I'd say, for about thirty, thirty-one years, or thereabouts. And that's about it. And of course we used to, you know, do work on ships, et cetera, et cetera.

Interview continues on tape three.

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

START OF TAPE THREE - SIDE A

Identification: This is the third and final tape of the interview by Jane Fleming Panegyres with Fred Marchese who served in Darwin as an anti aircraft gunner and then later overseas. End of identification.

How soon after you came back did you marry?

Oh well, I'd say within a little over twelve months when we got married. We had known each other prior to the war when we were only, you know, in our early teens I suppose. And one of those quick things and we got married in no time and we're lucky.

Your wife's people were Fremantle people, were they?

Yes. Unfortunately the wife, she was telling me that she was only a baby when her father passed away. (phone rings)

When we were interrupted you were saying your wife's father died when she was really young.

That's right, she was only infant, but he was a seaman on a ship, and he was a Russian seaman and the mother, she was from a place called Warrington, England. And, of course, they all settled out here, there was quite a few families of 'em, you know, all related to one another. But the wife and her sisters and brother they had quite a hard time because her mother had to keep the four children and of course there was no assistance in that particular time, you know, going back to 1919 - that's when the wife was born - so you can imagine what help they'd have, you know.

How did you manage to get married in view of the fact that you were - up to this point - you'd been supporting your mother and ...

Well, to tell you the honest truth I suppose I was starting to get on a bit. I think I was getting ... I'd turned twenty-eight by memory and I suppose I'd ... and of course we'd had a tragedy in the family and that upset me a lot. In fact I think was going a little bit, could even have said I had gone a bit mental. But my brother got drowned down at Cerventes and he was the one who served in Borneo or Labuan during wartime and he was I think the last one to get discharged. And a boat had got washed up at Serventes and they asked him if he'd go along and give 'em a hand to help to get it off the beach - it was a lugger. So he went down and eventually six people lost their lives. And, of course, that didn't help me any because we were always very, very close, us brothers, and I think that helped me more than anything to get married. In fact, sometimes when I think back, perhaps I didn't leave enough time in between losing me brother and getting married. I think, by memory, I think by four or five months after we'd got married and I think it was the only relief; it was sort of a relief to tell you the truth.

(5.00) An emotional relief to have the support of your wife?

Yeah, yeah.

How difficult though was it financially?

Pardon?

How difficult though was it financially for you to ...

Well, to tell you the truth, we had nothing. It's no good saying that we had too much. I couldn't expect anything from my family. But the wife being a real good goer, well, we survived, you know. I think at the time money was very hard. In fact, from time to time, she generally said she used to allow six shillings a night for meat, you know, for ourselves and the four children and ... But, as I say, she had to be very careful like most people were at that particular era.

What did you do about accommodation? Where did you live?

Well, see, at the time I had a place in Hampton Road. A friend of mine had given me a loan and she was a beautiful old place. Not far from the gaol in Fremantle. We used to be able ... there used to be a shop on the corner and we were right next door in just off Folicle Street and Hampton Road. But, once again, I was working down as a casual. In those days things were pretty hard. They had ... there was no such thing as ... the work was sort of ... what they called 'free selection'. What meant free selection: all right if I like you I'll pick you up and so on. So therefore if you wasn't liked, you know, you didn't get a job. And of course it was a very, very hard period. And of course I was finding it hard to keep my payments up and stuff. The house was beautiful: the hall was five foot two wide; the rooms were fourteen by fourteen; beautiful fireplaces; and the doors, whoever built them, they were tradesmen. You had to see it to believe it. But anyhow, to cut a long story short, so I decided I'd get rid of the place, pay me friend back his money and get a war service home because ... and you wouldn't read about it, I guarantee, it was in no time war service was lending people money to renovate their old houses. So I missed the opportunity of a lifetime and, God ... well, first of all I wouldn't have had that house today because today it's part of the Fremantle Hospital parking area.

Oh ... it's been demolished.

Yeah. Oh, it was beautiful; all those houses.

It was just a matter of timing, and you were just too early. And so you took out a war service loan and built this house.

Mmm. Well I come out ... I went to war service and seen 'em. In fact, my eldest brother, he was in a bad position also, he had five kids and we both went up together to see war service and we built alongside one another but he's also deceased and his son lives next door now. But, oh no, I can't complain about war service. I think they've been very good.

What about any sort of health benefits and so on, have you ever claimed anything there?

Well, to tell you the honest truth, only for a friend of mine, you know, telling me I was a bit weak, which I was, I did nothing till about four or five years ago and he suggested that I do something about it because when I was loading ammunition at Morotai I can remember I had to get sent back to the tank lines because I'd injured me back. And, of course, since coming back from after the war, from time to time I used to have a problem with me back but in no way would I do anything about it because I felt the responsibility lay when I first did it, see. So, anyhow, to cut a long story short, a friend of mine, he was in the RSL, on the committee, and he more or less put me wise to what I should do, et cetera, et cetera and between you and

I, one thing I never ever mentioned to you earlier, when we were putting in guns at ... near the hospital - they used to call it Scotsman Hill - I was lucky I never got killed.

(10.00)I got jammed when we were putting the guns together. We were putting the breach or the barrel through the jacket, you know, putting it in position, and being a little short guy I got caught between some timber and the back of the counterweights of the gun and I ... it broke or fractured me jaw, shifted all me teeth and the humorous thing about it, this which I did expect to get something for, never seemed to make any ... do any good. And yet from my back, and I've also got a hiatus hernia, and they stressed that probably through heavy lifting - that was done by heavy lifting, see - so I ended up getting fifty per cent. I could appeal but I've never been a pusher, you know what I mean, I never go too far. In fact I've been told why don't you appeal that .... No I don't think so.

But, as I say, even healthwise since I finished work I've had all me teeth done - as you can see there false teeth - and I'm seventy-one and they still me teeth. But anyway, to cut a long story short, they've been very good. They put a crown on the back tooth and they've ... different gold fittings somewhere else and at one time I had ... well, I had a space at the back here and the dentist wanted to put a tooth on a plate and I said, 'No, I couldn't stomach teeth on a plate'. He said, 'There's another way but it's very expensive', he said, 'I'd have to write in first'. So that's bridging. So, anyhow, I got sent to this specialist at Nedlands, a chap by the name of Feathers, and I sat in the chair and as soon as I sat down, 'Oh', he said, 'God', he said, 'I can't knock you back', he said, 'Your teeth are too good'. So touch wood, they done the bridging for me and I only went for a check up the other day ... when I say the other day, a month ago and he just looked at 'em and said, 'You'd better go'. In fact, he always tells me I've got good teeth.

> The RSL helped ... or someone you knew in the RSL helped with getting you on the track of doing that about your pension. How have you found the RSL as an organisation generally and are you, you know, very involved in RSL activities?

I wouldn't say I'm very involved. The only thing I go to ANZAC House from time to time when the ack-ack unit meets up there. I don't go a terrible lot but we do meet on occasions. There was a time where I used to go ... although that's different, to the Whyalla Club in Fremantle which is sort of with the RSL in a way - semi sort of a way - but I wouldn't say I've been involved greatly with them but I do have occasions where I go up to ANZAC House.

> Have you marched in the ANZAC Day marches?

I've been asked to go, but once again I'm a bit weak and I haven't been. I suppose one day in me late age I'll probably go along.

> And what about the Anti-Aircraft Association?

Well see, they march. In fact, they've been marching for a few years now.

> And have you been involved with them fairly closely otherwise? Do you have much to do with them?

Apart from going to ANZAC House and having our turnouts, I've been asked to go to the march, but perhaps I might go to the next one perhaps.

That completes the interview.

END OF TAPE THREE - SIDE A