



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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Description	Kenneth Gilford Haines as a private, Volunteer Defence Corps, Fremantle, Western Australia, interviewed by Susan Green for The Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939-45.

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE A.

> Identification: This is an interview with Mr Ken Haines and this is Tape 1, Side 1 of the interview. The interview is taking place on 3 March and is recorded by Susan Green. End of identification.

> Mr Haines, I wonder if you could start by telling me what were the circumstances that lead you to join the VDC?

Well, um. I can't really remember what caused me to join the VDC except that, um, my friend's father was in it and although he was the same age as myself, he was only fifteen too, he joined, we both joined in it together. For no other reason than, I suppose for a fifteen year old it was pretty exciting - having guns and things like that.

> Even you would have been too young by law to have joined the VDC then, wouldn't you?

Oh, I just told them I was eighteen. I was pretty tall.

> Right, so by the time you joined, what year was that?

Oh, it was round about, er, it would have had to have been round about July 1941.

> Now, hadn't an age limit been introduced, a lower age limit had been introduced by that time?

It was eighteen.

> It was eighteen, was it?

Eighteen, yeah.

> I see. Okay. Can you remember what your family felt about it at this time?

Oh, they didn't mind. As I told you, Dad was in France when he was eighteen and he was wounded before he was nineteen, so he understood, he knew.

> Right. So you and your friend fronted up together and enlisted for the VDC. Now, what are your early memories of that period? What did you do?

Oh, early memories of it was not having any equipment. Anything we had, we had to provide ourselves. The only thing they gave us was an armband. And the idea was that ... of course, the Japanese weren't in the war then, but if we were fighting, if we had to fight, then God knows what we were going to fight with, but if we had to fight then they wouldn't shoot us out of hand because we'd been in uniform, having the armband. That was the idea of that and that lasted right up until we got our green uniforms which was quite a fair way on.

> So the armband was essentially to demarcate you as from regular forces, is that right?

No, no, to demarcate us from civilians.

Right.

You see, if you were a civilian and you were caught fighting you get automatically shot. But if you're in the army and you get caught fighting you get, well hopefully, put in a POW camp.

I see. And what were the sort of sessions, training sessions that you had at the beginning then, if you didn't have any equipment?

Well, it was a surprise what they can make. We had chaps that used to work in the foundries and they made hand grenade cases and so we'd make, er, throw, learning to throw hand grenades and, um, it was surprising the number of firearms that were around the place that they privately owned. There was one old joker, George Benton, I think it is, he was, must have been about seventy then and he had one of those old English, what do they call them, scatter guns with the big bell mouth. He used to fill that with nails and bits of rock and stuff like that. Oh, that was pretty dangerous. The first .... Then we went up to Northam, that was at Christmas time in '41. That was after the Japs came in. Then they taught us how to use Molotov cocktails and how to use explosives and booby traps.

(5.00) Okay, well let's go back a little bit in time to again when you just joined the VDC. You were also working at this time, is that correct?

Mm.

Could you describe what you were working at?

Well, I was a dental trainee actually. The Perth Dental Hospital called for three dental trainees, dental mechanic trainees, to be trained for the army. And there was about three hundred boys applied for it, fifteen was the age that they wanted us. And there was about three hundred boys applied for it and education was such a ... in those days, you know, anyone that had their Junior was pretty well-educated. And so I got it and two other chaps, there was three of us. And so we used to work, there was a forty-four hour week then, so you'd knock off on Saturday and go home and have your lunch and then go down to the hall and ....

This is the main hall in South Perth?

It was the Swan Street Hall. And then on Sunday the same thing.

Now, what would you do when you got to the hall on Saturday?

Well, the first thing we did was to learn how to drill, how to do rifle drill. I think we used wooden things, wooden arms at that time, like, rifles made out of wood and learn rifle drill. Learn how to march and learn how to do all the things that we should learn how to do.

Not too many people of the VDC, that I've talked to, used to go along both on Saturday afternoons and Sunday, were you a particular enthusiast?

Oh yeah, well, at fifteen you're a real ratbag, you're in everything.

So that was quite an exciting thing to be involved with?

Oh, yes. Well, at my age, yeah.

Yeah.

And we used to have night stunts. We'd prowl around South Perth and frighten all the old ladies around the place, I suppose, just stalking each other and just learning the area and ....

So you .... Do you remember being put on any guard duty at all during the week?

Oh, not, not at that time, no, no.

That occurred later during the war, did it?

Mm.

Right. And what happened, you drilled on Saturday afternoon, then on Sundays, what was the routine then?

Oh, just ordinary drilling and you'd .... There was an empty block next to the drill hall and we learn to throw grenades into a kerosene bucket, and just normal training, you know, that you do.

Now, at that stage you went in as a private, what were you earmarked to join, what sort of crew were you going to become part of?

Oh, we were just, just soldiers, we weren't earmarked for anything.

Right. And then you mentioned that you went on a camp at some stage.

Oh, this was in ... this was just a few months after I joined. Well, I joined before the Japanese came in but the camp was at Christmas time, that was after the Nips got in, 'cause the war started 9th December. And we had to ... we went up to Northam and ... just in our own clothing, we weren't issued with any clothing. And I just had a pair of shoes, that's all the footwear I had, and of course that lasted about two days. That's where, I think you saw that letter from my father and he sent me up a pair of his boots, so I was able to get around in the bush a bit better.

This letter was that your father was sending the boots to you by registered mail, is what you're referring to.

Yes.

Yes.

Um, well, the army provided instructors and some equipment and ....

The army supplied you with a uniform there?

No, no.

It didn't.

No uniform.

Right, this is why I was going to question you about the boots.

No, no. My father was in the army and he sent me up a spare pair of his own because the army didn't provide us with any clothing at all.

So all you had was this armband that you ...

Yes.

... mentioned.

Yes.

Right. Sorry go on. Anyway ....

And um, then they taught us, let's say, how to use firearms. Of course, most of the fellas were ex-first war and they were, you know, they were soldiers anyhow. It was only us young fellas that didn't know anything.

(10.00) And what was the sort of attitude of these older fellows to you young chaps?

Oh, good mates, yeah. Good. They looked after us.

They were keen to teach you.

Oh, yeah.

Right.

Yeah, they were .... Well, of course, most of those fellows had been in the army in the first war and they were young themselves when they went in, most of them. And they knew what it was all about.

Right. And what sort of exercises did you do when you were at Northam?

Oh, I can't really remember. Just normal, normal training exercises, you know. We went through some long marches. That's when my shoes packed up. I had to get into a truck at Clackline, I think it was. I got about half way before my shoes packed up, and I just couldn't go any further. There was a few of the real old blokes, they couldn't go any further so they put us all onto a truck, at least the ones that couldn't go any further, and took us back to camp.

Was there a mix of people there from different battalions, or was it, and different companies, or was it just the B Company that went?

No, no. There was about, oh, there'd be about twenty of us, I suppose, from our battalion. Because, you see, the fellas had to do it in their holidays, and you only used to get two weeks a year in those days. And, you know, if a chap was a family man, it was a real sacrifice for him to do that. Of course it wasn't for me because I was a single bloke. And um, but for these married men, it must have been a real sacrifice - and for their wives especially. And later on they'd be away every Sunday when they were on the guns, they'd be away every Sunday and sometimes Saturday and Sunday. It was real sacrifice for their families as well.

You mentioned that at night, during the week you would often spend your time stalking around the streets, that's in the South Perth area, I assume you meant.

Mm.

And I notice you have a map that is a hand-drawn map of this area in quite some detail. Could you tell me about that map? Were you issued with those, or what was the procedure of, sort of, giving you information about the area?

Oh, this, I think, illustrates how well-prepared the Australian authorities were for anything at all. They never had any maps, they only had this one street, well one street map, like an ordinary street directory that you could buy anywhere and I made a copy of it because, you know, we couldn't have any. So we had to make our own copies of the street maps because the army didn't, the authorities couldn't provide us with that.

And what was the point of having such a detailed street map? I mean, what were your responsibilities in that respect?

Well, we were responsible for our area and we had to know where the prospective landing places, paratrooper's landing places, or glider landing places. Or if we had to do any street to street, house to house fighting, we had to know our area so we could get from A to B fairly quickly and we just had to know our area, know all our back streets and all the back lanes and how we could get to places unobserved.

And where was it regarded that the landing would take place if there was such a landing of troops?

In Fremantle.

No, no, I mean in terms of landing of people in your area.

Oh, mostly we considered down on the foreshore would probably be the most likely area, um, around Richland, what is now Richland Park. But at that time there was a lot of vacant land around South Perth and especially over the other side of Canning Highway because all those houses weren't there. In fact we had a rifle range over the other side of Canning Highway up near Banksia Tourists[?]. You're going across from where the fire brigade place is now, you can still see the butts, or the raised ground where they had the butts, so that's how empty the area was. You could fire a rifle and not expect to hit anyone.

And at this time you didn't have particular involvement with doing VDC work in Fremantle, in that area?

No, no.

It was absolutely localised.

Our area extended as far as Applecross because we had one big stunt in Applecross against the Melville mob, the Melville VDC battalion - company, and in the bush there where all the big houses are now.

What did it involve, that stunt?

Oh, well, we were, I think we were supposed to be attacking them and trying to capture 'em. It was cowboys and Indians, that's about all it was.

(15.00) And was there any sort of real cohesion, was there a good kind of command and confidence in the sort of orders that they ...

Oh yeah.

... at that time?

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Did people come out of such an exercise feeling that they'd operated effectively?

Oh, yeah, we had .... The only thing that ... we knew that we wouldn't last five minutes because we never had anything to use. We never had any firearms. We knew we wouldn't last unless we could get them somewhere but we were full of enthusiasm and the chain of command was good because all our officers and NCOs were all ex-army from the first war, so they knew what they were doing.

And how did you indicate if you'd, if you got a person, or managed to overpower someone, hit them ...?

No, no. It wasn't supposed to get physical. There was umpires around the place and they were supposed to tell you. Of course the umpire would go away and you'd get up and you wouldn't stay dead.

Now, you had a period, a break from the VDC, could you describe how that occurred?

Oh well, in, yes, I joined it in '41 then at fifteen, then in 1943, in December '43, they woke up that I wasn't, I still wasn't eighteen. And at that time the army had decided to take us over more officially and be more responsible for us and so they decided that I'd have to be eighteen. Well, I ... they discharged me.

You were seventeen at that time.

Yes, seventeen and a half. And they discharged me and then as soon as I was eighteen I joined officially and they gave me a new number and everything. I ... my old number .... They had given me a number in the first place but then after I was discharged I don't know what they did with the number but when I rejoined they gave me a new number.

> And had the sort of tasks and involvement that you'd had with the VDC been pretty much a similar sort of thing until that first discharge? That you'd remained in the local area?

Oh, no, we'd gone down to the guns by then. Before I was discharged we were down on the guns.

> When did that occur?

Oh, I don't know. I'd have to look at my file, I suppose.

> Was there any real change of policy at that time? Were you informed that things were growing more serious, or the approach of the VDC was changing in that you suddenly switched from a local area to ...?

Oh, yeah, well they ... we were more official. They gave us rifles and side-arms, uniforms, equipment. We were fully equipped.

> This was at the time that you ... the army took the VDC over?

Yes.

> Right, and this was the time when you in fact had to leave for a while. You were discharged.

Oh, no, it was after this period, just after this period. But, I mean, I'd had all this stuff beforehand. All the firearms, fire - and side-arms. I had to hand all those in when I was discharged. And then when I joined, rejoined, I got another lot, another lot of equipment.

> I see. What lead up to this change of moving from operating in the South Perth area to then going on to guns in Fremantle?

Oh, well, I think they could see that there was .... Well, I don't know what the authorities were thinking about but I think they could see we weren't doing much in the South Perth area. And I feel that they needed to cut down on the number of men that were on the heavy gun emplacements around Fremantle and send them off to Darwin or wherever.

> These were the regulars?

Yeah. And so they put us down ... and I suppose they worked out that there wasn't much chance of the Japs bombing Fremantle. And so they moved us in and trained us as gunners. And the chaps grabbed at it, too, because they thought it was beaut.

> Can you remember much about your commanding officers, who they were?

Yeah. I remember Richardson, he was, they were real nice fellas. They were very, very tactful people and they were quite bright, quite clever in the way they handle the men. You've gotta remember in the early days that it was all volunteer and if you didn't want to go, well you just didn't go. And if they wanted to keep their company together they had to really know how to handle the men and keep them on side.

(20.00) And how did they do that? When you say they were quite clever, what makes you say that?

Oh, well, they were able to, I mean, I feel that they were able to get the men to do what they wanted the men to do which perhaps the men mightn't have even wanted to do but they instilled a sense of *esprit de corps* into us so that, okay you didn't want to do it, but it was good for the company so you did it.

What about Richardson, can you tell me what sort of person, was he?

Oh, he was ... he wasn't very well. He'd been in the first war, but he had a pretty bad blow and his son .... He son was a pilot and he got killed up at Cunderdin, I think ... and he had a pretty bad blow there, I think and it wasn't long after that that he resigned and then Arney took over then.

And what was Richardson's background?

Oh, I've no idea of back.... He was, I would say, an office worker of some sort, I don't know. I wouldn't have a clue. You know, when you're fifteen you're not particularly interested in people's background you're only interested in roarin' around and havin' a ball.

But do you remember whether he was a sociable sort of person, or a fairly sort of military, upfront ...?

Oh, he was pretty quiet. No, he was a pretty quiet, retiring sort of chap. You wouldn't sort of pick him as a CO. He was a fairly retiring sort of chap.

Was Arney much of a contrast to him?

Yeah, he was a little bloke, he was just, he'd bustle around the place. And he was, he liked his discipline but he was never too hard, he kept us under control. But I think the worst threat, the worst threat that they could do to us was to tell us, was to make us leave. You know, if you don't do the right thing they'll turf you out and that was the worst thing they could do to us and that kept us in gear.

That was the worst thing, you would have felt that was a real ...

Oh, terrible thing, yes.

... offensive for you.

I was very upset when I was put on my discharge, I was very upset about that.

And then you went back after a six months break. Did you have any connection with the VDC during that break?

Oh, I was with them all the time. I never left them physically, I just left them, my name was taken off the roll, not on the roll.

So what did you do during that period, the same things?

Oh, yeah, and looked after canteen and stretcher bearing. I remember if any of the old fellas keeled over I used to get this sal volatile, I used to waggle under their nose. That was the extent of my medical work but ....

What was it?

Sal volatile. You ever heard of it?

No.

It's a strong astringent smelling ... when women get the, in the old days when women used to get the vapours, well that's what they used to waggle under their nose, and bring them to, very smartly.

Were there many casualties in terms of injuries and things like that that occurred?

No, no. Not really.

You weren't called upon too often?

No, you might have to bandage someone's finger up but, I mean, they knew more about it than I did.

Right. And what about in the canteen, who were the sort of people that worked in a canteen?

Oh, well, this canteen, the canteen was a suitcase and we ... tobacco was very hard to get in those days, very very hard to get and so I don't know how Arney organised it but he organised an allowance from the army canteens and the, on Wednesday nights I'd, um, you know, a chap would come to me and I'd, if they'd want cigarettes or plug tobacco or pipe tobacco, I had it there to sell 'em. And that was going, and then we'd buy more.

And there need not be any ration cards or anything like that?

Oh, no, no.

I mean, I guess ration cards probably didn't apply to that anyway.

Oh, no, it was just an ordinary army canteen, it was an army type canteen but it was all on an honour system, you know.

And what other things were sold in the canteen?

That's it.

That was it.

Yeah, yeah. As I say, it was only a suitcase that they used to get this .... He gave me this job because sort of anything to keep me going, keep me occupied, keep me interested.

Do you remember there being a great deal of propaganda, or perhaps you were too young to recognise it then? But in terms of sort of [gung ho], 'We're doing a great job, fellas'?

Um. Oh, well, they didn't have to tell us we knew we were doing a good job. But, oh, we were pretty disgusted with the army at various times but as I say, all the chaps were, well a lot of the fellas were ex-army anyhow, they knew they couldn't expect anything better. And so, you know, we were all right.

(25.00) You mean, this is after the army took over command of the VDC, there was a feeling of the army didn't ....

This was even before, when we, very early in the war, I think it might have been just after the Nips came in. We put a lot of barbed-wire down along the Leighton Beach, Port Beach, what is now Port Beach, and from the Mall right up to the other end of Leighton Beach and had double apron barbed-wire and there was truck load of barbed-wire turned up and one pair of gloves, it was a lot of flamin' help [laughter].

They weren't too concerned about people's hands.

Oh, well, they didn't know, I mean, you can't expect too much from the army.

And how did it affect your own job at that time, as a dental technician apprentice?

Oh, they were two different things. Oh, they used to rib you a bit at work, you know, being in amongst the 'Toothless and Ruthless' and but, you know, that's all. But it didn't affect my work because they were just two different compartments.

So the people in your work place, though, pooh-poohed the VDC somewhat?

No, not really. No, they never ever did. I don't remember them ever doing that.

But when you mentioned that you were among ....

Oh, well, that was the normal thing. We used to say we were the 'Toothless and Ruthless'.

Right. Yeah. And how did the war affect, though, the work of a dentist and a dental apprentice? What, were there shortages?

Oh yeah, there were very bad shortages of staples like wax. Of course, they didn't, you didn't have the equipment and materials that they have now. If we had a war now it would be the end of the world I guess, but, dentally, but we weren't so reliant on outside business. We used to save the wax. Well, now they just throw old wax out. But we used to save it all and melt it up again and make new wax sheets ....

That was a routine thing, wartime or not?

No, no, this was wartime because we couldn't get it, couldn't get the stuff.

Prior to the war would have the wax have been thrown away?

Oh, I wouldn't know.

You don't know.

I wasn't in it before the war.

So wax would have been one of the things that was in great demand?

Yeah. Well, I think wax is a petroleum product, and shellac was another thing. They used to use that for makin', taking impressions. That was in short supply. But stuff like plaster, well that was made here in the west, you see, so there was no problem with that. And teeth, they were using Egyptian teeth and I think they must have got a lot of china cups and smashed them up into little pieces and shaped them like teeth because that's all they were, they were horrible, they were terrible things. But they come from Egypt.

And was that a change, oh, well, again I guess you wouldn't know?

I don't know, wouldn't know.

Right. Yes.

I know after the war you didn't see 'em again.

Did you feel that the wartime changed the nature of what would be done dentally? Were there particular kind of dental treatments that were required that were the result of training for military service, or anything like that?

Oh, no, I don't think so. Oh, no, it was all the same, always the same.

Yeah, yeah. Was it a busy time, do you remember?

Oh, yes, we were always busy. Well, we used to, we worked a forty-four hour week anyhow, that was normal, and that was the award and .... I mean, you can only work a certain amount.

But, I mean, it was full on when you were working?

Yeah, it was working all the time, yeah, always busy.

This is the end of Tape 1, Side 1 of the interview with Mr Ken Haines, recorded on 3rd March by Susan Green.

END TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B

Identification. This is Tape 1, Side 2 of an interview with Mr Ken Haines, recorded on 3rd March 1990 by Susan Green. End of identification.

Were there a shortage of staff, also in the dental hospital at that time?

Yes. Yes, we had, there was two technicians, two dental technicians and the three apprentices, and there was about four dentists, and the supervisor, and there were about three staff. And there was one senior sister and a nurse, senior nurse and three or four nursing assistants, I suppose you would call them, dental assistants. And that was it. It wasn't a very big establishment, it's huge now, of course.

Was that a fairly stable group that stayed there for the duration of the war?

No, it was very unstable. As a matter of fact there was only, um, there was only one, well, in fact, there was only two of us really that were permanently and that was one of the dental technicians and myself. There were people coming and going all the time as they joined up the army or, mostly went into the army.

Any of the others involved with the VDC?

Yeah, one of the apprentices beside myself. There were three of us taken on as trainees and two of them left and joined up and they were both fifteen when they went into the army and, oh well, they were about sixteen by the time they finally went in the army and that left me by myself and then they took another apprentice and Tom started his apprenticeship about six months after I did.

You didn't make any attempt to try and get into the army?

Oh, I wanted to get in the navy. I applied several times to get in the navy and they kept on writing back to me, telling me I was manpowered, until the last time they wrote back to me and told me not to apply any more, they were getting sick of it. So, but I wanted to be in the navy.

And was your job manpowered then?

Oh, yes.

If the other two went and left and got into the army, what was the criteria that kept you manpowered?

I have no idea, I think they just ... the manpower hadn't started because that was early in the war, or else they just said they didn't want to be technicians any more, and didn't want to be

apprentices any more, and there was nothing they could do about it, at that time. Because they weren't apprentices, we weren't apprentices then, we were still trainee army bods. We were still being trained for the army. And it was after about six months, six to nine months that they told us we weren't going to be, the army didn't want us any more. And so the dental hospital took up our apprenticeships. Well, it could have been that period when the changeover was, when they got out, when they threw it in.

When they enlisted, in other words.

Mm.

What was the sort of influence on home life in respect to say, shortages of things? What do you remember particularly needing at home that there wasn't enough of?

Oh, we got by all right, we didn't have any problems. We had our own chooks and so that gave us our eggs and, you know, Dad would kill a chook every now and then. But we got by on our rations all right, no problems. The only problem, cigarettes were always a problem, smokes, but ....

(5.00) Did you smoke by this time?

Oh, yeah. I started when I was fifteen. But we never had any real problems, because you didn't seem to need so much in those days because you weren't used to having very much anyhow, and we were just working people, so we never had all that stuff.

Was there any feeling that being here in Western Australia, you were worse off than if you lived in the eastern states?

Oh, yes. Well, we knew that we'd be the first to go and that the eastern states would leave us for dead. And when, the fact that, this was proven when the Japanese, when they thought that the Japanese troopships were coming down the east coast, they weren't, in actual fact they were going towards India, but when they thought they were coming down the east coast the army was bugging out as quick as they could. They was going to leave us for dead.

The west coast, you mean?

Yes, the west coast, yeah.

Right.

And they were going to leave us for dead, we know that. And we were on our own.

So you can remember that the army was being shipped out at that time?

Mm, mm.

Right.

I remember Dad was in National Records and I understand that they burnt a lot of records and they put a lot of records on the trains to take them over to the east, but we were going to be left for dead, that's for sure.

> And what was the feeling then? It must have been pretty traumatic there, say in the VDC and at home?

I've no idea. I don't know how anyone else felt about it. I know I've always, ever since then, I've always been a secessionist. I'd leave Australia tomorrow if I could, like, as long as Western Australia ... West Australia would leave Australia tomorrow.

> But did it put a renewed vigour into the activities of the VDC?

Oh, yeah, yeah, oh yeah. We were very keen.

> Can you remember how that was expressed in any way? Did more people show up, more people join?

Um, well, everyone that could join was already in it, I think. You know, everyone that was available was there. I know that they never ever, ever had to call the show off because, or a weekend off, because there wasn't enough, not enough bods there to man the guns. They were always there. They were keen all right.

> Now, when you went to Fremantle where were you posted then?

Um. Well, we just used to call it the Old Ladies Home. It was next to a big open area, hill area, next to what is now the museum, the Fremantle Maritime Museum. And there used to be a graveyard there apparently. And they built the gun emplacements on this graveyard.

> This is where John Curtin's school, high school, is.

I don't know, I wouldn't have a clue. It's all changed now. I can hardly recognise the place. I know that we had our Bofor gun across the road, up on the hill and they wouldn't let us fire it off because we were breaking everyone's windows.

> So you, in a sense, you had the gun there but you weren't allowed to fire it unless a plane with a Japanese insignia went over.

Yeah. That's right, yeah. And they used to let, we used to put the wheels on it and take it down to Leighton occasionally and fire it off there. And have practice with ... the air force would lend us a drogue every now and then, and aircraft would tow this drogue along and we'd fire at it. And of course, any aircraft that was flying around the area we'd be training on it all the time, so ... we weren't allowed to fire it, that's all.

> You mentioned having to go and lay barbed-wire along the beach at some stage, what particular sort of physical jobs do you remember having to do, was it ... in the vein of building, digging trenches or laying barbed-wire?

Oh, well, that was pretty physical. The hardest work that I ever did ... because I was a ammo number on the guns, on the big ones, was humping these big shells around 'cause they were

pretty big, I think they were fifty pound each, or thereabouts. They were pretty big. And although I was very tall and I was built like a gatepost, there wasn't a great deal of me and I found that a bit hard. But everything else was all right. Oh, and I think the hardest rifle I ever fired was a Boyes anti-tank rifle. That was, God knows where they got that from, but would break your shoulder if you didn't hold it right.

And were there any accidents at all? I mean, were there, did you ...?

No, no, not that, well, I don't remember any. I don't remember any serious accidents. See, someone might get a shell drop on their foot but, or they might squeeze a finger or something like that, but that's all.

(10.00) What was the sort of feeling in the community in which you lived? Well, you were here in South Perth, but then also you were on duty quite a bit down in Fremantle. Can you remember what was a sort of general feeling in the community of, in terms of feeling about the war and attitudes one to another, say to foreigners who were living in the community? Were there any sort of suspicions or rumours that were going on about people who were perhaps of different ethnic origins?

Oh, no, not really, no not really, because there was a helluva lot of people here of different ethnic origins anyhow who were soldiers. We had the Dutch and the, of course, the Americans and ... we had quite a few bods in our own battalion who were naturalised Australians, we .... I don't remember anything, any racism or anything like that.

You felt there weren't divisions in the community at all ...

No.

... over that, because there were a number of people interned, and then, of course, there were families who were left behind.

Oh, well, in any case, at that age, the age I was, you don't notice those things, not unless you're very sensitive. I was about as sensitive as a brick.

Can you remember any particular emergencies that occurred during this time?

Oh, when this flap was on, when they thought the Japs were coming down, everyone was notified and I think I was going through the period of being turfed out at this time. But we were all notified and we .... The army had dumped a lot of arms down at the Menn[?] Street Council Chambers. They call it the Old Mill Theatre now, I think. And they'd dumped crates of rifles and explosives and guns and hand grenades and stuff down in the, in this hall, and I remember going down there and handing the stuff out, because as I say, although I was turfed out, I was still in it and I was handing this stuff out to the fellas. And as they were getting it they were going off in trucks with it, I don't know where they were going but ....

Who was picking this up?

Our fellas.

Right. The VDC people?

Yeah, the battalion. Yeah. Yeah, I remember, yes, I remember I used to do guard duty down in the hall, down in the Council Chambers quite a lot.

This was ...?

That was where I used to go to. There was, they had guard details at Canning Bridge and at the Menn Street hall, and all that sort of stuff, yeah Menn Street hall, and that's where I used to go, the Menn Street hall.

Was this after this discharge period that you had, then when you went back in you were on guard duty?

I think it might have been before I was discharged, actually, it was before I was discharged this happened.

And what did guard duty involve for you?

Oh, long hours of boredom. We'd just sit there and make tea. I can remember, I can still smell the smell of the tea and the bare boards and the palliasse and smokin' too many cigarettes, yakking to the fellas. But that's, I can't remember what we were guarding, actually. I think I would have probably popped dead if I'd have thought we were guarding.

Being in the VDC, were some goods or foods more plentiful, say for example like, tea?

No, no.

Did you have to bring your own tea, or was that supplied?

No, that was supplied. We got ordinary army rations. Yeah, ordinary army rations, yeah, yeah, remember that, yep. Yeah, the army rationed us when they had to. We never had to provide our own food.

Was there any encouragement or advice that you had to be on the look out, for security or intelligence purposes at all? Well, you were pretty young I know, but I just wondered whether in the sort of talks that you were given from the commanding officers, did that ever come out?

Nope. Not that I remember. No, I don't think so. We had to know our area I suppose, but no, there was no security like that.

(15.00) Right, so you can't recall ever feeling, oh, there was perhaps an unusual situation that should be reported?

Um. Yeah. Well, I guess they must have imbued it into us because I remember on one holiday, it must have been in probably '43, yeah, about then, one December holiday, we went down to North Beach, the family went down to North Beach and we were ... '43 or '44 ... and we were, I was just walkin' along the beach with me mate and I saw some kids playing with a

canvas bag and there was lots of papers in the bag. And they were scattering around and I had a look at one and I, they were navy papers, US Navy papers, and there was a whole bag full of them and I dug up all the other papers that were lying around and put them back in the bag and took 'em back home, back to the house and then rang up the American Navy and they were out there from Perth to North Beach. They must have gone out there in about half an hour and apparently these papers had been dropped off, er, dumped off one of the boats out there, because in those days Gage Roads was always just full of navy boats. There was a big mass of boats and they were very, very pleased that they got these things. So I suppose I must have had some training in, or they must have told me about security. I must have known about security.

> You don't remember at all being posted out on the coast or anything like that, on guard duty?

No, nope. No, no, we were never coast, there was never that type of, there was never that type of situation, that sort of, not like the British had that had their coast-watchers or ... we had our coast-watchers up on the north, but, and the British had their coast-watchers watching for the Germans coming, there's nothing like that. They could have been there but I never seen them. I never knew about it. We were just .... They certainly had our guards on Canning Bridge, I don't know what they, I suppose they were frightened that someone was going to blow it up, or God knows what they were worried about. And then we had our guard down in Menn Street because, I suppose, that was battalion headquarters. I think that was battalion headquarters because we were just a company, B Company, and Swan Street Hall was our headquarters.

> Yes, certainly the headquarters for the battalion were in South Perth, yes.

Yeah, that would be in Menn Street, the Menn Street hall, what is now the Mill Theatre, is it? Old Mill Theatre. Yeah.

> Was there much competition between battalions?

Oh, yeah, yeah. We were always competing on the guns because, I don't know why they competed because everyone knew we were best.

> Did you feel that you were well-prepared by, through your training with the VDC and then later as the VDC came under the army by army instructors? Did you feel that you were prepared if there was a war in Australia?

Oh, yeah. Well, we felt confident but we knew our limitations. The army gave us plenty of instruction with their ... on the guns and with the predictors and aircraft recognition. They gave us a lot of instruction with small arms, machine-guns, with Vickers and Lewis, and at first we only had the .310 rifles, that's the cadet rifles and then they gave us .303s and the side-arms. We knew we wouldn't last long in a dinkum battle, or fight, but most of our chaps were ex-army from the first war and they knew how to handle [inaudible]. But the thing was they were getting a bit old and they couldn't run very fast so they'd had to stay there. And so .... Oh, no, we thought we could handle ourselves all right, although I think that might be just, we were just optimistic I think really, when you think about it. I'd always wanted to be in the services and after the war when the manpower restrictions ceased I joined the air force and I knew, I never had any problems at all with the drill, I knew it all. I knew all the rifle

drill. I'd been doing it since I was fifteen. All their firearms, I knew how to handle everything. So I just never had any problems, it might have been a bit boring towards the end.

What was boring?

Oh, going over the same things in the training period. You have three months training period. And so there was no problem there. I believe it was pretty good training for me and I still know how to make a booby trap. But if you wanted anyone to have their leg blown off, I can do it for 'em.

Not this week, thanks. Mr Haines, as long as they don't touch the teeth. Thanks very much anyway for talking to me.

END OF INTERVIEW