



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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Identification: This is side one, tape one, of the interview with Mr John Godwin. And I'm Daniel Connell, and this is 2nd May 1990. End of identification.

Okay. Perhaps, Mr Godwin, if we could just start back at ....

Could we make it John?

Okay, John, right. If you could just start back before the war, if you could just give me a brief description of where you grew up, you know, what state, what home?

Yes. I was brought up in New South Wales. I'm a descendant of the pioneer family who settled on the Monaro here in 1830, and we took up Bildingil station. And 300,000 or 400,000 acres after that. I was educated at St Aloysius College in Sydney, where we had a home. I then went and did wool classing, and subsequently went into the wool business, in partnership with a friend. I played football, I played first grade cricket, up until the war, oh, the last season, 1939 season.

And within your family, had people been involved in the First World War?

Yes, my father was involved in the First World War, and I had two uncles, one killed, and one who died subsequently in our home, of mustard gas poisoning and so on. They were both infantry soldiers. My father ...

Officers?

Mmm?

Officers, or ...?

No, they were private soldiers. My father was a warrant officer, who subsequently became a - and retired from the services as a colonel. S. B. Godwin - we were the only two actually in the old blue studbook. (Laughs).

So what, he was - he became a colonel in peacetime?

In the regular army, yes. He was in A - AIC, Australian Instructional Corps, and became a lieutenant-colonel actually, and he retired as a lieutenant-colonel.

In the period leading up to the war had you been involved in the Militia at all?

No, I had not - I don't - really didn't have time. What with my cricket, football, my pursuit of building up our business, and doing wool classing, from when I left school I didn't have very much time, and in fact I would have had no time.

Right. So in 1939 where were you?

I was in Sydney. And in 1939 I went to join up, with my brother, and they told me I couldn't see. And I made several attempts to join up after that, five or six, till eventually I was told not to come back again. And they gave me one of those, you know, badges, and said because I had glasses that I was unsuitable for army service.

I was not prepared to stay in Australia then, so I had a friend in Burns Philp, and I pointed out my predicament, and he said, `Just the chap we're looking for, we're looking for blokes the army doesn't want, to go on our plantations in New Guinea' - without specifying where.

I said, `Righto, I'll give that a go', but I could not have possibly sat on my bottom in Australia while all my friends had sort of gone abroad. They were - most of them did, you know, almost immediately. In fact the cricket side I played in, the first grade side for Gordon, when the dust settled there were only two fellows that didn't join up, actually, or weren't involved during the war. And there were some jolly good players. Even old Bertie Oldfield came back with the colours. (Laughs). He was my captain.

But where did I go to? Oh yes, I went - so I went off to .... Then I went to Burns Philp, they sent me to Robinson River Plantation, which is halfway between Port Moresby and Salamaua.

What ...?

Salamaua.

(5.00) Yes, Salamaua, yes. As an assistant ...?

As an assistant - yes, an assistant manager, a grand old title for somebody who knew absolutely nothing. (Laughs).

Right.

It was a very big plantation, and it was managed by one of the big five, a man named De Mara Clark. Or De Mara Clark was his son actually - Nobby Clark.

When you say `the big five', is that in reference to the gold ...?

There were five men which really controlled the plantation interests in Papua and New Guinea, and he was one of the big five. But it was a very large plantation. [Inaudible]

horses[?], it was originally owned by a man called Major Horne, a British millionaire, and Burns Philp bought it from him. He came down from Malaya.

So I went there, and I - you know, I carried out the duties for this - normally. But I had - because there was very little to do in your spare time, so I decided I'd start learning languages. So I learnt Motu, and then I learnt Police Motu (laughs), and I learned some dialects in Papua, which in the event wasn't of very much use. Certainly the Police Motu was priceless, and Motu, as you know, is only used in Moresby.

[Break in recording].

Are we right?

Yes. Well we were just talking about your duties on the plantation, and you were learning languages.

Yes. Learning languages. Well I devoted most of my, or nearly all my time to learning Police Motu, which was of great use to me subsequently.

Now, in that period, say 1940, early 1941, what was your perception of the situation in the Pacific? Did you think yourself in a backwater, or did you think yourself in a place that was going to explode?

I considered myself (laughs), to be in a position that .... I was quite certain that the Japanese were going to come into the war. And in consequence I went down and spoke to Captain Bill Lambden, who was the resident magistrate at Abau.

Why did you think the Japanese were going to come into the war, from what you knew?

It was obvious from listening to the news. And I also suspected that the authorities knew something of it, because we all had two-way radios at any rate - but these fellows subsequently a lot of them became coastwatchers, if you recall. But there was certainly no - well there was in the early stages wasn't there, in '42, there was a possibility when the Japanese attacked Milne Bay. This wasn't far away from Milne Bay as the crow flies, but (laughs) it was a longish walk.

A hard one?

Yes.

You went down to - you were saying you went down to the local ...?

Oh yes, I went down and saw Bill Lambden, and I asked for a rifle, and some ammunition, which horrified the manager who said, `My God, Godwin, if the Japanese

come here, and they've got that bloody weapon, we'll all be killed'. (Laughs). And I pointed out to him at the time that I was of the opinion that we'd all be killed at any rate, so we might as well do something about it on the way.

I learned a lot from Bill Lambden, who was an MC from the first Great War, a tremendous chap. And I learned a lot from Clark, and I learnt a lot about natives, and how to handle natives, which - it sounds patronising, but, I suppose man-management was a thing one learned.

I did that for - well until '42. And then it became obvious that they were - the need - there was a better chance of joining up. (Laughs). And as a boat was going by I - we used to get a boat every six weeks.

> Just before you get to that, the .... You expected the Japanese to come into the war, but when they did come in no one - you couldn't have expected that they would have the successes that they did have. I mean the - it's extraordinary those successes in late December, early January, and that's the way it looks now, how did it look to you then?

When they .... After those events occurred, the ...?

> At the time, I mean what was it like with - I mean

Rabaul was ...

Gone.

> ... gone, January 21st, 22nd?

Yes. Well my own opinion at the time was that I thought we'd hold out. But I was of the opinion after talking to Lambden that the best way of doing that was to do it as guerillas. That we'd - we would eventually be forced back, you know, that could happen, and that we - our hope of survival until other people came to help us was to involve ourselves as guerilla fighters, and guerilla fighting.

> Did you prepare for that, did you put, for example, stores ...?

(10.00) No, no, we did not. No, no, there was no preparation made. They - not certainly where I was. There may have been in other places, but I suspect not. Because people hadn't thought that everything would collapse so quickly. No, there was no preparations that I know of. The only ones really were the old New Guinea Volunteer Rifles who .... They were certainly preparing themselves prior to the Japanese coming into the war, weren't they? And they were a conglomeration of chaps of all status - walks of life. Marvellous fellows, really.

> Jim Leahy described them to me as a - what did he? - `good-time-Charlies' Army', is how he ....

Yes (laughs), yes, they were really. I'd certainly have to agree with my friend Jim. But when it came to the - to when the whips cracked they were very good. And the 2/5th Commando Company owes them a great debt which they're very happy to admit, yes.

> You were talking about a boat coming past. Was this - had you been expecting - could you talk about that in a bit more detail?

I was in a - well about every six weeks we got a ship, travelled in - came in, picked up our copra, rubber, or whatever, and went on into Port Moresby, and it travelled round the coast. From most places from Salamaua to Moresby, and back I suspect. But I knew this vessel was coming (laughs). I told the manager that I had a bad tooth (laughs) and I thought it should be looked at by a dentist in the event of anything getting any worse, and I didn't want to be stuck with this bad tooth in the event of that. And while I went there I was, I went and saw the military authorities, and offered my services. And they said they were very pleased to have me. So I just sent a signal to Nobby Clark that I'd joined the army. (Laughs). And he took care of all my personal effects, which I'd left behind. Actually I've never seen them from that day to this, but he told me they were there, so I never bothered to go back and get them or anything. (Laughs).

> So what did the army think they were going to do with you?

Well they put - yes, well they put me into the 49th Battalion, which was the Militia battalion that was stationed in Port Moresby.

> What role? What were you ...?

Rifleman.

> Right.

And then a man came along, and said - asked me if it - who I was, and is it true that I was - and had some experience, and I said, yes, I said, it was true, and that I had some experience with languages, and I said, yes. He said, `Well we've got a better use for you somewhere else'. And I was then whisked off.

And they had some form of intelligence organisations. I then had to deal with a man called Bols, of Bols Gin, he was a - I was on duty with him several times. And I believe that's when they started to form ANGAU. And they were getting up people that had knowledge of the country, who could use language, and certainly a knowledge of the natives.

I became a sergeant almost overnight. (Laughs). And then I was employed in intelligence duties in liaison with the natives, and the military authorities. Recruiting natives for - which subsequently became the `fuzzy-wuzzy angels'. But only in a ....

This is about what time in 1942?

Would it be March? I suppose, yes. I - you know, I went through - I did a lot of things then, it's all sort of jumbled together now, there's nothing that really stands out in my mind until I became ill in June. I don't ....

What about the Battle of the Coral Sea, that occurred in May?

May, did it? Yes, yes, '42, May, '42, that's right. Yes. Are you sure the Battle of the Coral Sea occurred in '42?

I think it occurred May 5 to 8, 1942.

Yes. That's probably right, yes. Where was I then? I was [a pause] out on the outskirts of Port Moresby. Yes, that's where I was then.

What did they have you doing? Manning defences, or ...?

Well no, not really, because I was then - left the - mainly recruiting native carriers, and of course there were other people doing this with a much greater level of endeavour.

Well what were you recruiting - I mean at the time - we all know what they were used for subsequently, but at the time what were you told about the potential use of native carriers?

Well we - I don't think we were told anything. But what we did - all realised that the army couldn't possibly exist without native labour. Either - whether from patrolling or - and any advance, we realised things had to be carried. Stores had to be carried, ammunition had to be carried, even mortar on occasion. Seems strange in New Guinea, doesn't it? (laughs).

(15.00) No, that's - and eventually I got - I became very ill.

What from - malaria?

I had malaria, and I had dysentery. But I was certainly rotten with malaria, and the dysentery was the thing that kyboshed me. And I was sent to hospital after I - you know, it's halfway up the bloody Kokoda Track that. (Laughs). And I ....

And you were working - at the time you got sick you were working on the ...?

Yes, working up - we didn't know it was going to become the Kokoda Track. (Laughs). I was looking for other things.

About how far along?

Well, I suppose a couple of days out from Ower's Corner.

Right.

Which would take you up to where, Efogi or somewhere. I really forget. We didn't give them names.

Efogi, that's E-F-O-G-I?

Yes.

And you were basically, what, taking supplies forward, or recruiting?

Recruiting mostly, yes. Finding out what was there. Which is - which was really the story of my life in the army in New Guinea, finding out what was there.

Eventually though I became so ill that I became debilitated; I was sent back to Australia, on a hospital ship, and remained in hospital for a couple of months. And then I went back into the system, and eventually returned to Port Moresby, where I was sent over the Kokoda Track, and joined ....

This must be about, what, September, October?

Yes, about - it would be about that time, yes.

Because there was the crisis in - on Kokoda is, what, August to early September.

August, September, yes, Eora Creek, was it? Mmm.

Mmm.

The turning point - well Imita, they got to Imita Ridge, I don't know, I can't remember dates.

You were in Australia then?

I was in Australia then, yes.

Right.

That's when they hauled the guns up.

So it'd be down there getting - well we were past Eora Creek, down towards Kokoda, and so on. At any rate when I joined - rejoined - back, I took a line of natives up as well. And having got there I was assigned to the - I've forgotten what you call it. (Laughs). I'm trying to think of this man's name, he was - at any rate he was the resident magistrate, but he was then a major, and he - I was assigned to him for - to be allotted duties. And he gave me odd jobs to do, a bit of patrolling. And eventually, when the Americans arrived, I was sent to help the Americans, which was an - well, which was quite an experience. (Laughs).

You nearly said, `An appalling experience'.

(Laughs).

Could you tell me why you felt that?

Well I didn't really - I must say - I must preface my remarks by pointing out to you that those fellows had been out of their homes six weeks or so. (Laughs). Two months. And they were put into New Guinea. One, they had false ideas about jungles, because, they had - there were some officers that had some experience in Mexico, I don't know what jungles there are in Mexico, but it certainly didn't have any relationship to what the problems we had in New Guinea. And the biggest problem was our lack of leadership.

Which unit was this?

32nd Division. I - you know, I couldn't remember the - but it certainly was the 32nd Division.

And then what were your duties?

Patrolling.

So just going back on their qualities, no leadership?

No leadership. A lack of discipline. I'm not speaking of iron discipline, I'm speaking of the discipline of living together, and so on.

When you say `lack of discipline', what sort of things would happen? To illustrate that?

They had a very soft attitude towards living in general, and soldiering in particular. And the officers didn't seem to have any rapport with the enlisted men. At this stage, I'm not saying that prevailed all the time. But certainly they didn't inspire me with any confidence.

When you say a soft attitude, I mean, what, smoking at night, or ...?

Oh yes. They were careless. They'd smoke at night, yes. They would certainly - and they were great eaters, whatever - and they were well-supplied, because there's - the Americans were able to get vessels round from round the point, and they came up from - round from Samarai I suppose, from Milne Bay.

(20.00) Where were you again, what was the place?

Buna-Gona.

Right. And this is, what, before the Buna-Gona campaign?

It was during it really. Subsequently I left them, and was sent to ....

Were you involved in combat with them at all?

Oh yes.

Well could you tell ....

Only patrolling.

Oh right.

Oh well nothing more than patrol skirmishes, that happened all the time. You - every time you went out you were liable to have a contact, and certainly then you were going to have contacts all the time. And it would be just a firefight and back. We'd probe, to see whether we could, how far we could go, and they were - they'd probe too. Never the twain shall meet.

Right.

But I ...

You never got cut off, or wounded yourself, or ...?

Oh, yes, later on I was, yes. Not then, at that time, no.

After Buna-Gona was over, and the area secured, and airfields were then put in, and we were - then I was assigned to the 42nd Division. And I was told to lead ...

The American division?

Yes. Commanded by General Fuller, who'd been their military attaché in Paris, that was his last posting. (Laughs). He found this was a little different. I thought that he was out of touch with soldiering myself, but anyway he was a very - he was very kind to me.

And I saw him over at - and this is the other thing that surprised me - and the distance from where he was, and where I had to depart from or join up with the patrol I was to lead was about twenty miles, or so. (Laughs). And he put me in a light aircraft, and flew me. And I - I'd never - actually it was an absolutely astounding experience - his own aircraft. When they started to hit their straps, they did it well.

At least ...

How were you relating with them, I mean you've made it clear that you didn't have much respect for them as soldiers, but you must have been mixing in their mess, and things like that?

Well I must - you know, we - you just had tins or - you know, no messes. I - no, I related with them pretty well. Oh yes, I found that they were quite good blokes, it's just that I don't admire their soldiering. Or then - you know, I've served with them subsequently many times, in different places.

Yes. I mean, did the question - did comparisons about soldiering weren't discussed, or ...?

No.

You weren't that undiplomatic?

No, no. (Laughs). I've one - and that wasn't the name of the game either, really. You know, we had to create a confidence between us, me and they. But also our country, we were pretty well aware of what sort of a problem Australia had, if the Americans hadn't of come we'd have had a terrible ruddy problem. We wouldn't be sitting here, I suspect.

[Break in recording].

Where were we up to?

Yes, you - you were still with the 32nd, and ....

Yes, gone from the 32nd, now to the 42nd Division.

And, what, same duties?

Yes, patrolling. This time it was long range patrolling, and to the north of the - or, it would have been to the mouth of the Kumusi we were looking for. There were a lot of swamps between Buna-Gona and the Kumusi River - the mouth of the Kumusi River. And we had to patrol through those, and clear the Japanese out of these swamps. Because otherwise they would have formed up, and would have remained a menace by attacking our lines of communication, or - and so on.

So we were ordered to get rid of them, and I was ordered to lead the patrol. Well, the American officers led their own, so - but I had about half a dozen police boys, and I suppose twenty carriers. And ....

How were you dealing with the Papua New Guineans in that area? I mean it - this is the northern province we're talking about, and before - in that early '42 period there were some quite notorious incidents took place in the northern province. I'm thinking of the execution of those nuns. Anglican nuns.

Yes. The Anglican nuns, yes, I knew of that. [A pause]. Well I don't know that I want to talk too much about that.

I mean, you can specify that this could be a confidential section, and not to be available for general ....

Mmm. I'm not sure where to go from here, but you're - we're talking of the natives' attitudes towards us at that time?

(25.00) Yes. In the northern province, which was a very difficult province to work in ...

Mmm.

... where there'd been notorious incidents. And you were having to go through ...

Well my personal view was that the natives were completely and utterly untrustworthy. And the problem lay in the fact that they were mission natives. And whether that made them dissatisfied with their lot, and made them worse, it's - you know, I don't really know, but I recall well the bishop - Strong, I think his name was - when those nuns, when we asked them to go, and he wouldn't do anything about it - in fact he said it was up to their own conscience, while he sat on his behind in Port Moresby. And indeed further than that within a very short time - he went back to Australia. But it left the army with a

problem, in that the army had to use soldiers to try and extract them before they were killed.

You were involved in this particular thing?

Yes, to a minor way. That's why I'm .... There are things that I don't think about very much. And eventually .... Of course obviously by the time we got in - we lost people doing that - but they had been violated and murdered. We managed to capture some of these people, who were subsequently tried, as you know, and subsequently hung.

I guess that was Claude Champion, and ....

Champion - yes - and I think Ernie Hitchcock was the chap that hung them. But Champion would have tried them, or he would have been involved in the trial, yes, because he was a civil authority, wasn't he - yes.

And you were dealing - when you were with the Americans, working in that area - that was not much later than that, was it?

No. Well, yes. I certainly didn't take people from that area, and - I just took the carriers that were allotted to me. And they were probably ....

They were Orokaivas, weren't they?

They were. Orokaivas were the ones that caused us the most trouble, yes, certainly. And that was a missionary base. But they always had the reputation of being treacherous. When I first went to the Territory I recall well being warned that Orokaivas were a treacherous group of people, and to be careful of them. Very few people wanted to employ them, but if they did they were split up into small groups, and so they didn't ever become the majority within any labour line - you had to be very careful how you used them.

And the .... You mentioned you had half a dozen police - Papuan police - and about twenty carriers, you ....

Mmm. Well the carriers would be carrying some rations - they had to carry their own rations - and the Americans carried theirs, so they carried .... And they were there in case we wanted to - medically - had casualties, and evacuate people. However I started off. And then I went back to the 42nd Division. This patrols commander I met, a very nice man called Ireland, and they ....

END TAPE ONE, SIDE A

START TAPE ONE, SIDE B

Identification: this is side two of tape one of the interview with John Godwin.

Yes, we were just talking about relations with Papua New Guineans.

The normal relationship between the Australian soldier and the New Guinean - or New Guinea native - was a very close one. And indeed the soldiers much appreciated the gentility and courage of the carriers - the normal carriers - who you must remember were brought up, the Goaribaris, from the south coast - west - who were used to living in swamps, and you take them into the Highlands, and obviously they died of - they had no resistance to the cold.

Who were these?

The Goaribaris, who came from the delta.

How do you spell them?

G-O-A-R-I-B-A-R-I-S - something of that nature, but I can ....

No - it's alright.

Or G-W-A-R [sic] I think it is, on reflection. At any rate they were basically swamp people, and we took them and put them into the hills - and we did the same thing later on of course in the Ramu, didn't we? Where you took people from the Highlands down to the valley - and they didn't call it 'Ramu', which is, you know, the 'valley of death', because they got malaria - whereas the people from the Highlands didn't really have a problem with malaria as such, did they?

They took it back with them.

After, yes, unfortunately. But from the point of view of their loyalties to us - and to me in particular - I did an awful lot of patrolling behind the lines, and on occasions I'd go out with one police boy, and two or three native sentries, we called them. I don't know how they got that name - sentry - they were more scouts. But they were people that I recruited as I went, because, as you know, it's divided into many areas, isn't it, small areas. You couldn't take one chap from one area into another, because of the .... He'd be infringing and the .... He was frightened of the other people. Plus the magic, the *tambu*.

Bu they were .... You know, I never once had a sleepless night thinking that they'd turn me in. At one time the Japanese - who used to call me Master Glasseye - had (laughs) a price on my head, of some 10,000 Marks. I don't quite know how that works out, how much money that is, but it was a lot of money. A Mark - it was the German Mark, yes, you know, with a hole in it - they used to hang 'em round their necks. But I never - they never attempted to - there were people, there were natives working for the Japanese,

there's no question about that, and I don't blame them either. If you've got a bayonet pointed at your back you've got few options, have you.

But on the whole they were monstrously loyal - and indeed very great natural soldiers. Now I'm not talking about regimenting them, and putting them in PIR or NGIB. I personally have .... You know, I do not think they make front line infantrymen. But what they are good at and should is guerilla warfare. They are - make absolutely superb guerillas. I would not like to be chasing that chap around Bougainville for instance - it's a very dangerous occupation and you'll always lose.

(5.00) I found they have a monstrous sense of humour. May I tell a little story? As you know we had troubles with the communications. Carrying wireless sets, you'd carry one and you'd relay back to that and you seldom .... I used to become so infuriated that you'd feel like shooting the damned wireless set. I complained bitterly about this to my general, and he said, 'Well, what about carrier pigeons?'. And I said, 'Sir, you must be joking' (laughs). He said, 'No, it works, we've got a carrier pigeon unit'. And he did have too.

So I said, 'Alright, I'll give them a go', and I went off with his pigeons. It was a longish, you know, it was (laughs), climbing up a damned hill. And I was sitting down, and I had one chap I kept having to chase up, you see. And he was carrying the pigeons. And they were billing and cooing and he said to me, 'What are they saying?' or 'How do they pass messages?'. And I said, 'Well, they go back and tell the general on [Alambis ?] just what - messages from me'. He said, 'What are they saying now?', and I said 'They're saying that you are a very lazy chap' - or words to that effect (laughs). 'That you can't keep up with the rest of us.' And he looked at me.

And then a couple of days later I did want to send a message. So I sent for this chap, and I said, 'Where are my pigeons, I want to send a message?'. And he told me he'd eaten them (laughs). I said, 'Why did you eat them?', and he said, 'Well, if they were that clever, I thought if I ate them I could take your message back to the general on the [Alambis?]'. (Laughs.)

And I couldn't do very much about that, because he'd outfoxed me actually. He'd .... And he'd eaten them (laughs). Though I did use them afterwards on another occasion - and I didn't use him to carry them (laughs).

But they do have a, they really do have a wonderful sense of humour. A bit like the Australian soldier under .... I always think the Australian soldier - when he's under pressure, he's at his very best. He's a great man for laughing in hard times.

And going back to the 42nd Division - how long were you with them?

Well I only did the one patrol (laughs), up in the Kumusi, which was in - I led the scouts. I moved in front of them with my natives, and I had a couple of chaps dressed up as -

with just native gentlemen walking through the bush, or jungle. And then they were pretty adept at moving in the bush, and they were very good indeed.

But they came back and told me that there was a large group of Japanese in a village just ahead of us. So I deployed - I had a conference with the American commander, and said, 'Righto, you go round that way and I'll go round that way, and when I open fire, everybody opens fire'.

And you had your policemen with you?

Yes.

Anyone else?

No, just my policemen, and .... Yes, just the few police I had with me. So I kept my police with me, and I put the carriers well back, out of the fight. Told them to stop where they were. And we attacked this place at about four o'clock. And ....

Afternoon?

Yes. When the rain came. I didn't let the Americans move until the rain came, because the rain covered the, you know - them getting into position. They were clumsy at moving in the bush. We were pretty good at that really. Well the natives make you very good, because they would tell you in words of one syllable (laughs) if you were making one noise - too much noise.

At any rate it was a very successful attack, we didn't lose a - we killed about sixty. Or more. Some may have got away but I .... If they did they wouldn't have gone far, because there were all swamps around this. And they went from there to there, you know, and then continued this operation - or we had skirmishes - till we got to the Kumusi. It was a very large river at that stage.

But on the other side of the Kumusi [the Japanese] were in force. And this is again the - a complete lack of discipline by the Americans. Instead of .... I made my chaps dig in, and I put the carriers back, and I had them dig holes. And we cleaned our weapons, you know, in sequence, so that we always had weapons ready to use. The Americans went swimming, would you believe! (Laughs). And the Japanese waited till they'd got themselves - I told this chap, the commander, that this was foolhardy, to say the least.

In front of the Japanese?

Yes, well they were .... They couldn't see the Japanese, but they were obviously on the other side of the river. And the Japanese opened fire at 'em.

(10.00) And we'd been about eight days in the swamps then. And what I'd decided to do was - I'd take off my clothes and have a, you know, a little bucket of water. And as soon as I took my clothes off I realised that I had a problem - because I had 'mokka' bites all over me. Every bit of my body was filled with mokka bites.

What's mokka bites?

They're a tiny little mite which carry scrub typhus. And they .... You can get them from the scrub, or you can get them in swamps - they come off the rats - we were, you know, the place was full of rats.

So eventually I opened fire with the, you know, my own chaps, and the Americans then got themselves organised, and the firefight ceased. But then we had about, I think we would have had about ten wounded, and several dead, it was ....

And then the problem arose about getting rid of them. We still had other duties, other jobs to perform and .... Actually what I should have insisted on at the time was that the whole patrol be aborted, and we return. You know, that's .... I just didn't do it - and I should have.

But he decided to send his other officer back in charge of the .... And this fellow was, he was a very brash American. So I told - I gave him strict instructions, and guides. I said, 'Now you're not to under any circumstances engage the enemy. It doesn't matter if - whether you think it's one or two. Don't take any notice - all that you do is follow my native guides, and get the wounded back. And that's what your job is.' And his commander insisted on that.

Instead of that, round about half past - you know, getting on towards dusk - there was a burst of fire, more fire (laughs). Then ....

That wasn't - he hadn't left you for very long at this stage?

No. I was then .... We had a predicament, we didn't know what had happened. And the American commander - Ireland - he said would I mind going down the track and finding out, you know - in the dark by this stage (laughs). And I was feeling pretty ghastly, and I said, 'Alright, but if (laughs) I see your bloody second lieutenant he won't be coming back' (laughs).

I went down and I .... Patrolling at night in jungles is a very tricky business, and not something which one did without a great deal of caution. Furthermore I knew that the Japanese - if they followed their form - they would do that and would then set an ambush waiting for us to come to see what was happening. And I was determined that that wasn't going to happen to me. So it took me some time to get there. And indeed I didn't move - I got into position, but I didn't do anything until it was first light - till when I could see. And then I found that, found the wounded - they'd all been bayonetted - and I found these

other fellows who were in the scrub somewhere. I forget just where by now, but they turned up. So I ....

> In other words, the fit soldiers had abandoned the wounded, and allowed the Japanese to bayonet them?

Yes. I really don't know, as I didn't see it, I don't know what happened. But the facts were as I described.

He's - you got him - he opened fire on them, of course they outfoxed him, and came round him. Those - the fellows that were on their feet and armed, the escort - but I don't think we sent too many away, there would have been about half a dozen I suppose - but that would, should have been enough, plus some native carriers. And my native guides.

> Was the second lietenant still ...?

The second lieutenant was alive unfortunately. And then I got the whole party and took them back and said - that's when I recommended to the commander that we abort the patrol - that we were now in a very difficult position. And we did, and we withdrew, and we carried the others out.

But as we were - I was carrying a Thompson gun, which is heavy, and I didn't know, but I was very ill indeed. And I was in - you, there was this - the scouts were up forward, and there was a longish stretch, and I saw that, and I thought - and I had this Thompson gun slung over my shoulder and I was talking to the American commander, and the Japanese came round that corner and opened fire and they shot me - not badly. And the patrol commander then said' 'Cover me Johnnie, I'll go forward', and he went forward and took some chaps, and they sorted these fellows out. And they cleared the track. And we got in about a day and a half after this.

> Were you wounded?

In the leg. Only, you know, in and out. No problem really, you wouldn't - you'd never - not the sort of thing you had to go make a fuss about, go to hospital for (laughs).

> Mmm. So it could turn gangrenous later on?

Oh yes, that's right (laughs). I went to the ANGAU camp, and I was lying on a stretcher, and an old-timer came along and had a look at me, and he said .... He told me thought I had Japanese river fever.

(15.00) And I said, 'What is Japanese river fever?', and he said, 'Oh, it's not too good' (laughs). And the next thing I remember is that I was in an American hospital. And, you know those, we had - the hospital consisted of sacking, and sticks or whatever ....

Dirt floor?

Dirt floor. And I started to get the shakes. And there was a lot of blokes there with head wounds, and belly wounds. So they took me off there, and put me on the floor (laughs). And I remember an American colonel - because I could see his eagle - and he was looking at me, and he was obviously a doctor. And I had typhus, I had MT malaria, and I had BT malaria (laughs). Dysentery. Gunshot wound. (Laughs.) And altogether I wasn't a happy soldier.

And I was evacuated to Australia, again on a hospital ship. It's .... I never came home to Australia once, fair dinkum. I recall coming in through the Heads and the sisters got me up on my feet and said, 'You must come out and see this'. Sydney Harbour looked very good indeed. Then they put me back to bed, because a doctor came along and caught them and said (laughs) that I'd die or something - 'Get him back to bed'. And I remained in hospital and I stayed there, and I just forget how long I was out then. Eventually I used to go in each fortnight and report, and they'd have a look at me, and say, 'Go away again'.

Where were you staying - were you staying at home, or were you staying with friends, or ...?

I was staying with friends actually - in Sydney. But I'd had leave, and I'd been up country to see my mother, and that sort of thing. And then I'd come back, and I was just waiting to see what was going to happen to me. And nothing much was happening, and I got fed up with this. And I met a friend (laughs) who was a lieutenant - an MM - he'd escaped from Greece. And I said to Brownie, 'I've had this, Brownie, I've got to get out of here, and I've got to get back to my own unit'. And he said, 'What's your rating?, and I said 'I've got a D with a question mark after it' (laughter).

That's the lowest rating I've ever heard.

Yes. He said, 'Well, give us your papers', and I gave him the papers (laughs), and he said, 'Well, I've just got your file here and I've marked you - what was the best you ever were?', and I said, 'A2 with glasses' (laughs), and he said, 'You're now A1. With or without bloody glasses' (laughs). And I was out of there, and back to my unit in a matter of a fortnight. Almost immediately. I was out of there immediately, you know, two days - out. Just went home and got my gear and off.

How did you organise getting back? I mean, just the sheer business of getting a ticket. I mean getting someone to authorise a ticket.

Oh well, he'd done all that, you know, he was .... I just went on a troop train. And by then I'd - I was a warrant officer. So I (laughs) - in fact I got first class, from here to - a pass for first class - from there to Townsville. By train it was. To Brisbane and then onto

another train and it was a ghastly bloody journey - I did that twice (laughs). And from there back to ....

Milne Bay?

No, I went back - no, I'd - by then we'd - we were coming up the coast. I was assigned to the American task force that was to attack Nassau Bay.

Attack ...?

Nassau. Nassau Bay. And that was ....

How do you spell that?

N-A-S-S-A-U. And it's a native New Guinea .... And I think that was again the 42nd Division. But I had natives and I landed in the assault group (laughs). My natives, they .... We landed, and I pushed on inland, to see, you know, carrying out orders, seeing what I could do. And I told these other fellows to dig holes, that the dive-bombers would arrive in the evening (laughs). They didn't take too much notice of that. But the dive-bombers did arrive, and there wasn't any rust left on any entrenching tool. They dug holes so quickly that it was unbelievable (laughs). I told them, this *balus im* would come, and [inaudible]. '*Sumtin no gud tru, masta*' (laughs).

(20.00) And we .... So I persisted then, and I stayed with them until we came in on the flank of Salamaua. We took Salamaua and, as you know, we then had to take Lae. And the 9th Division had landed to the north, and 17th Brigade, which was .... They'd come down from Wau/Salamaua. Plus the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, plus the Americans coming in on that flank, and there were, the 2/3rd Commandoes were also there then.

I really forget the order of battle when that was taken, but from there I went to Nadzab. When the 7th Division, the whole of the 7th Division came in, and I was then assigned to the 7th Division, and I was again doing the same sort of thing.

Right, so your role is still liaisoning, scouting?

Yes. And organisation of the carriers. I had a sort of dual job. They didn't have another ANGAU chap, and I dealt with those matters as well.

How were you getting on: did the Americans give you orders, or did they give you requests? I mean, what was the actual protocol - were you actually under their command, or what was it?

Whilst they were serving, yes. I found them very reasonable, they were never anything else but generous and understanding. I think this .... They were still bemused by the

circumstances in which they found themselves, and accustoming themselves to New Guinea. I found them - well, I certainly got along with them splendidly really at that stage.

You were mentioning those problems at the beginning - lack of discipline, being very sloppy ....

But by now they'd learned. They'd learned how to dig in, they'd learned how to set up perimeters, they'd learned how to - the necessity of patrolling, aggressive patrolling. They'd done all those things, they were doing those things.

But they were quite tough by this stage?

Yes, well toughened up. Looking back on them, and comparing them to the troops I served with - the American troops I served with in Korea - the Korean chaps of course were much more (laughs) - I daresay, I doubt if there's a better fighting force in the world than the American marines. And they were superb really. But these chaps were getting there. Now I left them at any rate, that's - and I didn't serve with them again, except we took over from them again in the Ioribaiwa campaign, and they went to the Philippines.

I then went up - you know, after that episode, when I went up to join the 7th Division - I moved up to the valley as a portion of the forward screen of the division. Until we got to Gusap, and from Gusap of course we had a little problem with Shaggy Ridge. I was then sent to the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, which is on the flank of Shaggy Ridge, inland. Patrolled from there, with the 2/2nd, to find the Japanese jeephead which was supplying Shaggy Ridge.

The 2/2nd was an Australian unit?

Yes, 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion. Commanded by an elderly lieutenant-colonel, who'd seen (laughs) service in the first war and was an engineer by trade and profession. But he was not really an infantry soldier, so he gave impossible bloody orders. We did - I led a patrol comprised of thirty of our platoon of the Pioneers and - plus five native chaps in - and we got in, and I had a skirmish with the Japanese ahead of the column. And from that moment on the patrol should have been aborted, but the lieutenant in command of the patrol had been in trouble with the colonel for not having his boots on at stand-to or some damn fool thing, and he became overly conscientious, and I could not talk him out of it. At any rate he was killed subsequently, and I brought the rest of the patrol back.

(25.00) Then I was sent into - down into the Ramu for a rest (laughs). Where I met a man called Healey, who was a very famous ANGAU chap. And also he'd been in GER, but he'd been operating the same way as I had. And he was incensed, because he reckoned he'd been shot through the ear (laughs). I don't know if he had dysentery (laughs). And we had this big hut, and it was one of these enormous things - like our divisional

headquarters it was - and I said to Healey, you know, 'We've go to .... ' - it was so long we had a telephone to communicate.

And we had - when we arrived there some of our friends who'd known that we'd been in the bush for a long while, they kindly arrived with some jungle juice for us. So we had a bit of this, and we'd told the natives - I'd told the natives they had to dig a hole, see (laughs). A large hole for the *mastas*, see. Because the dive-bombers always came in the afternoon (laughs).

Well I forgot to tell them to stop digging, and like good chaps they kept on digging till it was a very deep bloody hole. And I (laughs) - when the dive-bombers hit, old Healey dashed across it, jumped into the pit and broke his leg (laughs). And a lot of big Sepiks jumped in on the top of him, and they shat all over him (laughs). By this stage I was in hysterics, I .... (Laughs).

You were both fairly drunk?

Yes (laughs). And the - and he was complaining to me bitterly about the way I was treating him. I sent off and got a lot of water and got these Sepik fellows out, and I threw this water all over him, and I eventually got him out of this hole and ....

What - it had been fear that caused the action on the Sepik bowels, had it?

Yes, oh it had a fearful effect on the Sepik bowels (laughs). And of course Healey had copped the lot. I can't repeat his language, because it was half-Pidgin, half-English - but none of it repeatable. He - we got him out of there and I sent him off to hospital, and they took me out then, and I know, I was sent up into the Highlands. To see how many Japanese - they sent four of us up there, with [inaudible], and the chap in command was - he had a DO with him - Taylor.

Jim Taylor?

Most interesting - Jim Taylor, yes. And John Black. John Black was his offsider, a DO. And I was sent to a place called Finintegu.

How do you spell that?

Finintegu. F-I-N-I-N-T-E-G-U. It was a difficult place. There had been a patrol officer there before me, but some time before me - earlier on. And he'd gone bush-happy, and it was an odd area that, because they weren't very used to white people at all. In fact the only white men I think were the Leahys and several other people, like Patters and Black and so on. And it took me a long while to get them to come in, and I wondered why this took so long, and then I .... And nobody had warned me about what had happened before - about this chap being killed by the local people. And what had happened, he'd - they used to come up and look at you, and then do this. You know, you've been through this

nonsense, they'd have a look at the forks and they - but they always carried their (laughs) weapons and so on. He evidently looked up, got frightened, and shot one and of course they killed him. And the Leahys then moved in, and the matter was sorted out. Now I was the next Australian to arrive there (laughs).

You didn't know any of this?

I didn't know any of this at all (laughs). My job was to find if there had been any penetration of the Japanese there and so on. I also set up a station - as a patrol officer - and I was involved in local administration of the locals and so on. As much as you could, but they wouldn't come near me. So it was very difficult to gain any form of information, so I had to do a lot of patrolling. We didn't find any Japanese there. I was eventually relieved from there, and ....

How long were you there?

I suppose six, seven, eight, nine months. Something like that.

Where was it in relation to some of the main centres we'd know today? I mean, is it Eastern Highlands?

Goroka was the - Goroka would be the nearest thing. Now there was no other - that was where the District Office was, and there was nothing there really, except the District Officer's ....

West or east or south of Goroka?

It would be west, wouldn't it? Well, I really ....

Over towards the Chimbu?

Yes, and then going back towards the Ramu. If I'd - the Finintegu valley would run into the ....

Near Kainantu?

Oh yes, south - south of it? Near it anyway.

Right.

END TAPE ONE, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE A.

Identification: This is side one, tape two, John Godwin. End of identification.

Right. So you were there for about nine months. How were you getting your supplies?

The supplies would be flown into Goroka, and carriers would come out, and I lived a bit on the country, you know, I got used to doing that.

Right. And - I mean in terms of other European soldiers around - were there any other European soldiers around, or just by yourself?

Yes, I had twenty-odd police. And myself.

And what were your daily duties?

Trying to go to villages (laughs), making friends with the people. There was no point in being in those areas unless you made friends with the people, let me tell you.

I - also they had an outbreak of illness, which could have been - yes, dysentery, I think it was. A gastric sort of thing. And I pointed this out, and I sent a runner in, and they sent me out some sulphur pills.
And it's one thing having the cure, and it's another thing getting the native to take it. So I used to tell them stories about these old wise men with long beards who'd spent all their lives making this pill, to help you who are sick, and your children who are sick, which is more important. And then I'd chew them up in front of them, and take it myself, and as I didn't die, it was white man's medicine (laughs).

Then I eventually - one or two people gave me babies which I held, and I chewed this up and spat it into their mouths, and gave them some sweet condensed milk, and let them - it was probably the very wrong thing to do, from the point of view of the gastric problem, with the wretched condensed milk, but I had some success, and from that moment on I gained their confidence, and they were very good.

And I got them to build a road. I told them that their future lay as, with the people on the coast, and they must learn to trade between there and the coast, and this is why you build roads, and this is why you get vehicles. They'd seen - some of them had seen a jeep. And that's - we must have roads to put the jeep on. And it was so good - and we built bridges even - that when I had to leave they sent a jeep in to pick me up, instead of walking out. (Laughs).

Anyway I .... Years later they were having .... I met a cadet at Duntroon, a New Guinea cadet, and I invited him to come here for dinner. He'd been in trouble for drinking too much (laughs), and been put on the dry by the DMO. (Laughs). But I spoke with the

DMO when I picked him up (laughs), and he said, `You please yourself, John, but he is on the dry'. He only did it for his own protection really, I mean he just can't handle grog.

But his father had been a police corporal with me on Finintegu. Now isn't that extraordinary? And it was only through talking to him here, and he asked me where I was, and I asked him where he'd gone to school and so on, and we worked out - worked it all out. That was a very happy gathering.

It didn't look like he was ever going to pass at Duntroon. (Laughs). If he'd been an Australian he would not have passed. But we don't look for such high standards. So he - he was - he graduated very proudly. And went off back to New Guinea. I don't know where he is now. But that's just only because of his relationship with Finintegu that I mention the matter.

(5.00) Going back to ANGAU, now you - when you were attached to all these different units, I mean the - you know, the nitty-gritty of - how did you get paid, you know, your personnel files, all of those sorts of things that are normally part of a person's relationship with an organisation, how did they get handled in your case?

By the division. My citation was written by the 6th Australian Division, or by somebody in the 6th Australian Division. It was a conglomeration. I was commissioned by the 6th Australian Division. They were - I don't doubt the formalities were seen to that I was commissioned in at the direction, I assume, of the divisional commander.

Right.

And that would have - those papers would have been sent on through to ANGAU. But really they .... I saw very little of them outside of these mysterious gentlemen that used to appear, and I'd always report to. And they always - of course that's where I got, drew my police boys and so on. But I belonged to ANGAU, yes.

But things like - for example, say you wanted to go on leave, I mean, all of those sorts of things. Say you wanted to do something in relation to your pay, or ...?

If you were serving with a division, and it was a serious matter, a matter of emergency leave or something, that would be granted by the division. See the - the normal - but recreational leave was not something that we ...

Took.

Took. (Laughs).

Officially.

No. No. We - I never recall ever coming back from New Guinea on leave. I was sent home, you know, twice, on hospital ships, but no. I mean of course you had your break in Australia while you were there, but, no, under normal circumstances you didn't go on leave. Some people may have, but certainly I didn't.

> I mean I'm just thinking of, you know, organisations that I've been part of, how, when people get moved around, and they start acting in this section or that section, what chaos tends to happen over in the administrative area; it really gets very messy after a while. And I can see this sort of wartime situation as being far worse.

Yes, well it was such an enormous unit, ANGAU, wasn't it really, when you think of it. There were people like myself, who for all purposes of the exercise belonged to whoever they were serving at the time. And these people probably held your records, undoubtedly they did. But I understand from Archives there's no record of me, you know, being involved with ANGAU, and - other than that I was there, that's all. But all the rest of my records, I understand from the Archives people, are all from - they've got all my postings to the different units I was at, and that's all. So I - I don't know really. And I never .... When I - eventually when I left Aitape/Wewak, I was evacuated medically then. And I never saw ANGAU again. (Laughs). So I was just evacuated to Australia. And I was AIF, and I was then reallocated, to - you know, to - then to the British occupation force. So I don't know.

> Well, right. So, well it gives you a bit of freedom though, doesn't it?

Oh yes, I had magnificent freedom in the - and then subsequently when I .... I had for some time had the, been of the opinion, after viewing at very close quarters infantry attacks up hills and into defended positions, that there must have been an easier way of doing it than that. And this preyed on my mind. And when I was sent to 6th Division I was - I had a marvellous opportunity to exploit my own thought, I had this - one should go about this.

> This is about what date?

'44? The end of '44. I was allocated to 6th Division. And Milligan, who was in - he - was he ....

> He was with the division?

Yes, he was with the division; see he'd be portion of the division also.

> And you reported directly to Milligan?

(10.00) Mmm. And he - he gave me my original orders, he - there was a .... And they were to - I almost had a free hand really (laughs), and I developed this as I went. I used to go into areas, take the native people away, out of the areas where the Japanese were. Some of them I kept as guides, some of them I armed. Some of them I used as guerillas, I also armed them.

And the rest of the people we'd put into ANGAU camps. I sent them back, and there was a - you know, ANGAU handled and looked after the welfare of the women and the children and so on. I, having done that, would then penetrate long-range patrols. A long way in. I'd go well in behind the lines, to find where the Japanese, where their lines of communication were, and so on.

And I sent the 2/3rd Machine-Gun Battalion originally, and they had a problem, in that they were machine-gunners, not infantrymen, and they were finding their feet. And sadly missing their machine-guns. (Laughs). I was allocated to help them with - with those - you know, I'd find the enemy, and then tell them where they were, and then withdraw the people, and say, `Now you can have a go at them', or lead them in, or - and that'd be the end of that.

Well I worked with them, and from there I was sent to - from there to the 2/7th Commando Company, which was in the Sauri villages. Which is further in.

Which villages?

Sauri. A group of villages, right on ...

How do you spell that?

... right on the - you know, the Torricellis divide going down there, and the 17th Brigade was over the other side of the Torricellis, they were in the Maprik area, roughly, weren't they? And there were a group of ANGAU blokes there. Famous chaps like Cole, for instance. Other chaps. They're all - I can get their names through the book for you, but I - Cole comes to mind, King Cole. He was a tremendous soldier. But he was an ADO. He'd been there a long time before. And was indeed a patrol officer a long time before.

I sent them to the commandoes, and then I used to operate from the commandoes to go forward again. And I was really based on the - and it allowed me to patrol forward. Which I did. I was under the direction there of the 16th Brigade IO. Or the brigade commander, and through the IO. And the brigade commander was a man by the name of King. Marvellous soldier, magnificent man.

And all this time I was developing my own themes, of take the people away from them, deny them the carriers, deny them gardens ....

Deny the Japanese gardens?

Yes. And I would arm these people that volunteered - it was no good having [inaudible] - and I'd arm them with Japanese weapons and ammunition, so - but they were not aware. They would just take - if they hear shots, you know, any professional soldier knows what - knows a, one weapon from the other, don't you, very quickly. So I used Japanese weapons. And we'd ...

Right. So the Japanese wouldn't be alarmed by the sound of the shot?

Sound of the thing, that's right. And they just thought they were their own soldiers taking a potshot at a pig, or a bird, or whatever. Or they'd become involved in a fight.

But the .... And then I was brought back, and I was assigned - well I then, after doing these two things, I .... Brigadier King, whom I'd not ever met then, sent for me. (Laughs). And he said, `I've heard about your exploits out there. Now why - tell me why, Godwin, I should ever trust my soldiers to you?'. And I said, `I can't tell you. But I do point out that I've had some success at doing this with machine-gunners and the commandoes.' And we became firm friends from then on, from that point. And I went where he thought the need was. But in the meanwhile I was building up ...

You were still a warrant officer at this stage?

Yes, that's right, mmm.

I mean these sound like fairly major responsibilities for a non-commissioned officer, don't they?

Yes, that's so, mmm. But it's basically you had to do it yourself. You know, I had - I only had the natives, by then I had a large group of police boys, and I had gathered in ex-policemen that had been, you know, retired to villages. I had one chap with a Police Cross for Valour, he had won it years before in some uprising in the Solomons of all places.

It was whilst I was with the 2/3rd Battalion that - this is how funny things happen in war - I was patrolling along the L of C, which was the line of communication between us and the beach. And I was really patrolling along it for the purposes - I had to go down to the beach, and I'd picked up a reinforcement officer, a 9th Division, ex-9th Division chap, who was coming up to the 2/3rd Battalion. So he came along with me.

(15.00) And then as I was going along, I - you know, I was patrolling with the normal sort of thing, my natives that I had on the flank side of me were aware of a lot of people on my right flank. So I took up a position, till we found out who they were. And it turned out that there was a - they were Gurkhas, who'd been captured in Singapore, and then brought down as slave labour. Tremendous fellows, these chaps. There were a lot of natives, and then one *luluai*. He came from a place called Wonginara Mission.

There were Japanese guards, were there?

No, they'd got away from the Japanese. And this *luluai* drew them down towards the .... They'd all met in the bush, how they'd gotten together, it really escapes me, I did know at one time.

I questioned those people all night. Well not so much the Gurkha soldiers, I'd - they were questioned differently, but I'd what I was interested in it for was, I wanted instant information as to what - where this *luluai* came from, and who was in his village.

Were you suspicious of him?

Yes, indeed. I'm always suspicious. (Laughs).

And he told me that what had happened, the Japanese had come in, and taken him prisoner, and had put his wife and his daughter into, you know, brothels and so on, which was not uncommon. The thing that upset him most was that he had a pet `cock-a-lock'.

A pet ...?

`Cock-a-lock', a rooster. And this Japanese general had seized this `cock-a-lock', killed it and eaten it. And that was fatal. It incensed this man, and he decided that he would do something about it. (Laughs).

What - that incensed him more than his wife and daughter?

Yes. It did. And it had a great impact on the rest of the war. Because Wonginara Mission was the Japanese corps headquarters, commanded by General Nakai.

I, having found out all this information I then went to Colonel Hutchison, who commanded the 2/3rd Battalion, and I'd brought back all these people into the thing. And [inaudible] Ridge was over just in front of the British, and I was actually holding in the 2/3rd Battalion perimeter. That's where Chowne got his VC two days afterwards.

But we .... At around about three to four o'clock in the morning I reckoned that this bloke was telling the truth. So that's when I told Ian Hutchison, who then communicated with the brigadier, and told him. And King gave permission for the attack to take place.

So we attacked with two companies. You know, I led them in. Then [inaudible], otherwise you get in - you just get in the road, if you .... But what myself and another man wanted, I wanted to go round to the back of this, with my natives, and cut off anybody that got out. Well we walloped the - the corps headquarters, we destroyed it, utterly.

But prior to us going in there I received a message from Brigadier King, that I was to (laughs) 'Bring him General Nakai's balls on a plate'. (Laughs). `Tell Godwin.' (Laughs). Unfortunately all we got was his tunic. Plus his decorations, which his orderly had. For a moment we thought we'd killed Nakai, but it obviously wasn't. He and a man called Colonel Sato, they escaped, and I - we chased them for a while, but it was hopeless. They had too big a start, we were never going to catch them. And they went over the Torricellis.

And I then ambushed all the tracks leading into their corps headquarters. And I just left chaps there to kill Japanese whilst they kept on coming in. And withdrew, because I had other patrols in other places, and so I could never be away from a central point very long. You know, on some occasions there'd be wounded, and they'd call out to me to come and pick them up, and I'd go out at night and pick them up. But my technique of moving at night was used at Canungra later, as a technique.

Having destroyed the corps headquarters, from then on we had an easy - easier push through. I think ....

What, this really did produce disorganisation in the field for the Japanese?

Yes. Well they didn't - they didn't have their corps headquarters, and of course it became - until they found out what had happened, and reorganised. They still offered stern resistance, as you recall later on, as we went down, when we took Shiburangu and so on.

(20.00) We - my records show that - I only know this from the people in Archives who've told me about it - but also that General King, Major-General King, he may have quite publicly considered it, my activities, it saved, you know, 500 of our soldiers' lives. And that's the greatest accolade I ever received in my life. It was really tremendous.

I attended a reunion of the 16th Brigade officers in Sydney just recently, which is where all these men were, except those that are dead; King's dead, and Hutchison's dead, and so on. But the IO of the brigade wasn't. And he's a grazier from - he'd come in, he's retired now. And he looked at me for a long while, and I was introduced to him, and he said, `You had me foxed, sir'. I was wearing dark glasses, and I've put on a bit of weight, you know. (Laughs). There's a big difference between me now and when I was three stone lighter, or four stone lighter. And I had hair.

And he said, `Jack Godwin. Are you Jack Godwin? Are you any relation to Jack Godwin?', and I said, `I am Jack Godwin, I wondered when you'd wake up, Basil'. (Laughs). Because we'd been having a drink, he went away to one table and had lunch, and then I went to another table. And then when he was sitting with people, and he asked who I was, and eventually it dawned on him who I was. `Yes', he said, `I owe my bloody decoration to you'. (Laughs). `And so do a lot of other people.' (Laughs).

However - anyway - then after this I was then ....

When did you get a commission in the field?

It wasn't until - round about when the war ended, actually, August, or just before ...

Oh right, well we'll come to that then.

We - when I - I was then leapfrogged, you know, 6th - 19th Brigade went through 16. So I went with 19th Brigade. And that's where I met my friend O'Dowd, because he was to do an attack on - with his battalion; with Colonel Green, who was killed with us in Korea later, who was then a very young colonel, but a bloody good one. He commanded the 2/11th, and we had to take Mount Shiburangu. Round to get over Shiburangu, get down the other side where we were to join up - we were due in advance, and to join up with 17th Brigade who were coming down from Maprik.

Shiburangu was quite ....

Shiburangu.

How do you spell that?

(Laughs). We'll have to look it up in the book. Mount Shiburangu, it was quite a famous ...

Well we can find that. If it was mentioned in the campaign - the final campaigns - Gavin Long?

Mmm. That's right, it's in the ....

And I did the patrolling on the Shiburangu. And I was then introduced to O'Dowd, who was to do - who was like me a Warrant Officer Class Two, but he was commanding a platoon. And he was to do this particular attack, and I did the personal reconnaissance on that. So I told him where to go and he did it. He'd had a few chaps wounded, but [inaudible] .... That day we lost five officers alone, in the first hour. Before we took Shiburangu. And we were over Shiburangu, and down the other side.

And when the war ended I'd gone back to 16th Brigade, and I was with the 2/2nd Battalion, and a bloke called Max Derbyshire, who was a double MC. We were close to the enemy, we were to attack in the morning. And we used to take it in turn hanging on the telephone, because you couldn't ring a bell. So you had to - somebody had to listen to this all the time. (Laughs). And the colonel blew down the telephone - Colonel Cameron.

Saw his son the other day, on ANZAC Day. Quite extraordinary. His son's now commanding the Corps of Staff Cadets at Duntroon.

He said that the war was over; we were to maintain security; there'd be no attack in the morning; and we were to be quiet. Behind us within half an hour were our sister battalions. And there was Dennis Williams singing, `Where the Mountains of Morne come down to the sea'. (Laughs). He was - he was a famous singer, he'd been at the school of music or something, he was a - you know, a professional singer. Tremendous. And fires, magnificent.

And we maintained security, and eventually - of course the Japanese didn't know the bloody war was over. You know, therein lies the tragedy of war, the men that were killed after the war was over, because we couldn't - they couldn't, you know, get to the Japanese to tell them. Their commanders wouldn't. So it took a long while.

So the Japanese continued to attack the Australian troops for a while.

Yes. But we didn't carry out any offensive action, we just did what we had to do to secure ourselves.

(25.00) What about getting your commission, what's the story there?

Well I should have been commissioned a long while before, but I had a falling out with an ANGAU officer. (Laughs). And that was outside of Salamaua. It was when I brought these chaps in from Nassau. You know, joined up the - back to the central ANGAU ....

What was the falling out?

I objected very strongly to the way the Papuans were being used in New Guinea. And I didn't think they were receiving either sympathetic or knowledgeable treatment. So I walked - I got sent for by this chap, who actually had sent for me to interview me about my commission, he was an ANGAU major of some sort. But he obviously had been - he'd been sent over to interview me and two or three others. And I was so infuriated with this chap, but then he - I think I was more infuriated by the way he was dressed, you know, for - from the - you'd think he was going to a garden party. (Laughs).

What, dressed in uniform, or what?

Yes, he was - yes, he was dressed in uniform alright.

Overdressed?

Overdressed. And he was a sort of an arrogant sort of chap. And then he and I had a falling out over this. And I said, `Well I'll ...', you know, I'd - I was perfectly polite, but I said, `I personally disagree with what you are doing, or what is being done, and some other arrangement should be made'. And he said, `In war ...', and he gave me some spiel about war, and I said, `I don't think you'd know very much about war, you spent the first

world war as a bloody provo officer'. (Laughs). He said, `That's enough. And you do not know what this will cost you.' So - but it didn't cost me very much at all. (Laughs). About a year, or two years, eighteen months' seniority. And that didn't matter a damn in the long run at any rate.

Anyway I had my say. And the Papuans were withdrawn and sent back where they should have been in the first place. They were quite - you know, what's the point of upsetting people for no - and they can't operate there anyhow.

So second time round, what were the circumstances the second time round, that you - when you did eventually get your commission?

There were three of us; we were just sent for to report to Brigadier King, who was administering commander of the division. This was after General Vasey was killed, you'll recall, coming up to take over 6th Division, when General Stevens became ill and went out. And I didn't know what I'd been sent for about, so in the end I went up, and then I saw O'Dowd there, and I saw a fellow called D'arcy Lachlan from the 2/3rd Battalion.

And the brigadier, and the brigade major marched us into the brigadier's tent. He had a lot of pips on the table in front of him, and a bottle of whisky. He told us to pin our - told us we were commissioned. He said, `Pin your own pips on. When I got commissioned my mother kissed me, and my girlfriend kissed me. But I'm not going to kiss you fellows. Pin your own pips on.' (Laughs). `And make sure you pin them on the right way, or you'll get fined drinks when you go back.' Drinks .... (Laughs). And then he went ....

But as we left, you know, he made a profound remark, which I've never forgotten. And he looked at us, and he said, `You're all experienced soldiers. However, I cannot teach you to be officers in ten minutes. But always remember one thing. Officers serve soldiers. Soldiers never serve officers. Don't forget it. Good morning, gentlemen.' (Laughs). Roy King - tremendous fellow. So off we went.

He kept on giving the - we formed an immense attachment for one another. (Laughs). And the next time I saw him I was in hospital in Brisbane.

Just turn it over.

END TAPE 2, SIDE A.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B.

Side two, tape two, John Godwin. End of identification.

He came and saw me in hospital at Greenslopes, in Brisbane, where I'd been evacuated to from Wewak. And said, `I've brought a few fellows to see you'. And I looked up, I was

half asleep, you know, (laughs), and there were all these `red-hatted' chaps, and he had my father there, whom I hadn't seen, or spoken to for some considerable time. And ....

Red-hatted means senior officers, does it?

Senior officers, yes. One was Brigadier [Molligan?], who was running Canungra, and whom I'd - had met in Canungra when I'd - had once been there to see my father. Because my father was serving there, this is the - as his second in command. And other senior officers.

And he said, `They tell me you played a bit of cricket?', and I said, `Yes, I did play a bit of cricket'. He said, `Well would you like to go to the cricket?', and I said, `Yes, I'd like to go to the cricket', and he said, `Well a staff car will come in', there was a Shield match on that had just started in at the - you know the Wag ... there

The WACA [sic]?

The WACA [sic]. A staff car will come and get you every morning (laughs), and any of your mates that can get up and go. I've spoken to the commander of the hospital' - Colonel Nye I think it was - and he said, `Go to the cricket match. And if you must have a drink in the officers' club on the way home (laughs) don't leave the staff car out in the street where everybody can see it, and don't get the driver drunk.' (Laughs). So we did that. And we were very careful about the driver.

I was on leave then and I met him in the long bar of the Old Hotel Australia. And he and the other officers, we used to drink on the right hand side of the bar, the AIF (laughs), the navy was up the end, and the air force was down the - at the other bar on the other side of the old Hotel Australia. So we had a party there. (Laughs).

He was a - he subsequently became a brigadier general staff, in Japan. And I was involved in the evacuation of the Turks out of Tokyo. In fact I was the only officer there. Early on you know that - early on in the Korean war the Turkish had a brigade there, and the casualties were absolutely frightening; 3,000 of them, and they'd swamped the whole hospital.

But the Turks didn't want them back, because the cabinet had made a decision without consulting parliament, and it was a ticklish problem. And eventually President Truman made the decision, and off they - we got rid of them. I had an air vice marshal from the British evacuation system, he was running their evacuation, and the Brits were laying on their - they had special hospital aircraft.

And General Robertson retired, he was - he'd gone down to a place called Kowana. And this problem arose while I was there, and I had to get on with organising it, and I did, with the help of other officers of course. And when I'd finished the job it was then 31st

December, and I got a message to come down and join General Robertson for lunch. It's my birthday on 31st December. (Laughs)

(5.00) So I went down to `Red Robbie', where he gave us lunch, and - gave me lunch, and he said, `You'd better stay the night, and enjoy yourself here on New Year's Eve'. Which I did.

But when I got back I got a phone call from Brigadier King, who'd become aware of all these things (laughs). He rang me up and said (laughs), `Haven't they taught you to use a bloody telephone yet?', and I said, `What sir, what ...?'. And he said, `You conducted the whole of that operation. When the C in C's not there, I'm in command, I should have been informed.' And honestly it never entered my head, you know. Now my only answer to that was, `Well, sir, you taught me, earlier on in my career, to always use my own initiative and get on with it'. (Laughs) `And that's what I did, sir.' And he said, `When you come to Kure next we will have a drink and discuss it further'. We did. (Laughs). He then explained many things to me which I don't think should be recorded here.

> Right. Just to round off, because effectively this interview is about your experiences during the second world war, but your military career covered a much longer span than that, if you could just give us almost a telegram description of what happened to you after the end of the second world war, just to round off the interview?

At the end of the second world war I was then posted to the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces. And I was posted as a subaltern to the 65th Battalion, which later became the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment. They were returned to Australia in '48. I was then sent to American military government on Shikoku where I operated under the directorate of the - of the - the Americans, the American Eighth Army. General Eichelberger was in charge there. Whom I'd met earlier at ...

> Buna.

... Buna. He never forgot that. I attended a course once and he invited me to come and take a drink with him after; there was myself, and another Australian officer. He picked out our slouch hats, and when I got there he realised who I was.

And from there I was posted to Korea eventually as a staff captain on fort maintenance area, we were there in Seoul. I was then - when the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment arrived, I was sent to them, where I became the assistant adjutant, and second in command of the machine-gun platoon.

I was then reposted. When the 1st Battalion went home I stayed with the 2nd Battalion as their mortar officer; and I fought in Korea until the last battle of the Hook. And I came out then. And I was then sent to the Australian Staff College. From the Australian Staff College I was sent to Malaya, with the 2nd Battalion, where I was a company

commander, and I led the first troops back onto the mainland, in action; it was the first time since the second world war - on my birthday, 31st December. There are a lot of things happen to me on 31st December. (Laughs) And I ....

What year was that?

'55. I remained there till '57, then I was sent back to Australia, and I had various appointments with - on the staff - second in command of 4AR; with the Mounted Rifles in Orange. Then to the Royal Military College, where I spent the last twelve years of my life, I commanded the headquarter company.

And you retired - with what rank?

I retired with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, yes.

The army, you .... At the beginning of the second world war your military career wasn't flourishing, what - the army, what's the army mean to you now? Looking back on your career?

It seems silly to say that I enjoyed every bloody moment of it, because there were moments that I did not enjoy. But I think it altered my whole life. I'm sure it altered my whole life. I've had a satisfying career. I always knew that I wasn't when I did the - became a regular officer, and we all had to do courses - RMC wings they used to call them. We called them knife and fork courses. (Laughs).

(10.00) Gives you an idea of the content?

Yes, and I didn't have any difficulty in passing the course. I was then a pretty experienced soldier, so it was really just a piece of cake. But I was told then, as all the chaps of my age were, that we didn't have a - you know, we were not likely to get past the rank of major. Some of us should make lieutenant-colonel, if it was necessary. But that's it. So I have no regrets about it, the army was perfectly honest with us, all of us, so it's no - no good whining at the wall about it, that was it. But I enjoyed it. I had - I think I had thirty-three years, or thirty-four years, or something, when it was all finished, and over and done with.

END TAPE 2, SIDE B.

END OF INTERVIEW.