ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

TITLE:	TOM KELLY - 9TH FIELD AMBULANCE – SECOND WORLD WAR
INTERVIEWEE:	TOM KELLY
INTERVIEWER:	RICHARD RAXWORTHY
DATE RECORDED:	1991
RECORDING LOCATION:	
ACCESSION NUMBER:	S01510
TRANSCRIBER:	SUSAN SOAMES
TRANSCRIPTION DATE:	JULY 1992

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

Identification: I am talking to Mr Tom Kelly who later was Lieutenant Tom Kelly who was originally a Private Tom Kelly of the 9th Field Ambulance.

Where were you born and when?

I was born in Leichhart, Sydney, in 1st May 1919.

And you grew up around there?

No we lived there for a short time and moved to Hurstville.

Did you go to school around there?

No; didn't go to school at all at Leichhart. The first school as I recall it was at Penshurst Sisters, and then I went to the Marist Brothers High School at Kogarah.

And what was your first job?

My first job after leaving school was as a storeman, junior storeman, at the Commonwealth Moulding Company. It was a bakelite and plastic manufacturer.

And then?

Then I got a job on the railways. I had applied for a clerical job, but you used to have to sit for an examination and I was on holidays from the Commonwealth Moulding Company for a couple weeks and the notice came while I was away. They said, 'You've missed the exam so you can't go', and they recommended that I take a job in the workshop, on the railways, as a junior labourer, and then sit for the exam through that method, which I did. I studied short hand and typing and other things from the department at the Railways Institute, and was then allowed to sit for the 'Senior Clerical' as they then called it. I was never a junior clerk because I'd missed, and I became a senior clerk at twenty-one and continued on from that for many years.

Did you do any ambulance training or first aid training?

Yes, I did. New South Wales Railways had a railway ambulance corps, and they always encouraged employees to learn first aid, which I did, with lots of others. So I did a lot of first aid practice over the years with the railways.

Did you go in any competitions?

Yes. As a matter of fact the competitions were after I came out of the army. A group of us got together and we went into competitions. We got second best in the team competition every year for several years. There was a workshop one that kept

beating us - they were getting a lot of specialised training. And I also went in the individual competition and I won the Woodward Medal in one year, and the following year I won the state individual title. You had to win the Woodward Medal to be able to go in the second one.

That was after the war?

Yes it was.

So, were you in the Citizen's Military Forces before the war?

No, I was not, no. But I was in the first - I believe it was the first - compulsory military training call up in 1940. I entered camp at Liverpool on 7th May 1940.

What was your service number then?

It was N57401.

I notice it changed there. When did that change?

Well, later on I joined the AIF with a lot of people from the unit, and we all got a new number then - an NX number. So I became NX136699.

So what training did get under compulsory military service in the first place?

Well, all the usual recruit training of learning how to march and take discipline and hygiene and a certain amount of first aid practice.

And that was at Liverpool, was it?

That was in Liverpool. So I spent three months in Liverpool, and I was a private there. At the end of the three months we weren't discharged; we were sent back home, and then we had to report to Victoria Barracks so many times a month for extra training at night or on weekends. So we still trained, with the 9th Field Ambulance, under those circumstances, until we came back for a second three month stint. And it was during that second stint that many of us decided to join the AIF; the Japs had come into the war, and all that sort of thing, and changed the original purpose of the war, which was in opposition to the German problems in Europe. The Japs were a bit nearer home and a lot of us decided to join up.

So at that point you had originally been conscripted, but for training for Australia only?

Yes, that's right.

But you hadn't ... In the first instance you weren't attached to 9th Field Ambulance were you?

Yes I was, yes. From the day I went into the army, in May 1940, I was with the 9th Field Ambulance until they broke the unit up on our return from New Guinea.

So when did you join - permanently - and where did you go then? You volunteered at that stage?

Yes. I'm just trying to see the date I ... I would have been accepted into the AIF on 17th June 1941.

Where there many of you that went in around about then?

Most of the 9th Field Ambulance - not all - but most did.

Where did you go straight from then?

Well, with the 9th Field Ambulance my first camp was Liverpool; then the second one was Ingleburn.

You weren't one of those from Liverpool or Ingleburn that created that famous riot in the city were you?

No, we weren't known for the riot. But we went to a lot of camps, and we went into Frenchs Forest for a period.

Now, where were you first?

Well, I was first in Liverpool, then in Ingleburn and, of course, I went wherever the unit went from then on.

Now, when you started in the unit what sort of transport did you have as part of the 9th Field Ambulance?

Well, there was some motor transport, but they had inherited a lot of horse-drawn transport, so there were horses that some of the officers used to ride on parade.

Who?

Well, particularly, the then commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel H. Whitridge Davies, who was popularly known as 'Old Pete'. He had been in the First War and was a very highly educated man - was a Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at the University of Sydney, and had been at South Australia. So he was quite a guy in his own way but ...

They used to ride them on all parades or just special ...

No, not all of them. But when the occasion of dress parade, when they wanted all the unit there, including the horse transport, he rode his horse. But he would ride it on other occasions as well.

As far as training is concerned there, with your transport, what training did you undertake?

With the transport there was how to use the actual trucks and horse transport themselves; how to load the ambulances, whether they were horse-drawn ambulances or the motor ones.

Were all the horse ones kept at Liverpool and then Ingleburn?

Yes, they were.

They were never taken to Frenchs Forest or any of the other ones.

No, they didn't go to Frenchs Forest. When we got moved to Frenchs Forest we'd lost the horse transport.

How did you lose it?

Well, they were returned to Remount Depot - I believe it was at Enfield. Matt Nolan would be the authority on that one because he was the sergeant with the unit at that time - with the horse transport. He specialised with the horse transport part of it, although we had a lieutenant from AASC assigned to us for transport; and we had a Warrant Officer Bill Peters. Bill would have been mainly concerned with the motor transport and Matt looked after the horse transport.

Where you at that stage - when you were at Liverpool or Ingleburn, and later on when you were at Frenchs Forest - were you responsible for the ambulance transport of any particular area - service people?

Well, we were the ambulance for the 9th Infantry Brigade which generally went into the camp the same time as we did, so the 9th Brigade was in Liverpool, and later on in Ingleburn and so on. We always ran a medical service for the troops, and if they went out on bivouac or training we went with them and set up advance dressing stations and main dressing stations. Actually, in the set camps there were always a camp hospital run by, usually, our doctors from our unit, and nurses from the Australian Nursing Service who weren't really a part of the field ambulance but part of the camp hospital. We'd always assign some of our male nursing orderlies to go over and help the nurses and also help clean up the place generally, and cooks and all that sort of thing.

Do you remember any of the nurses particularly?

No, I don't.

What about the doctors that you had?

Yeah, well, people like ... Some of the doctors used to come in and go out. And Noel Thomas was with us at one stage before he went to Newcastle and was allotted to the 1st Field Ambulance. Major Holcombe came in and went out. They used to do much the same as we did: if we went in for a camp they'd come in for either the whole three months or a part of it - until, actually, we all joined the AIF and then, of course, they went away with us too.

Some people have mentioned that he was a bit of a character?

Major Holcombe? Well, he was. Major Holcombe was an older man than most of us. He'd been in the First War: he'd been a lieutenant machine gunner, and he had a bullet in, I think it was his right knee - one of his knees anyway - which gave him a stiff leg, and he always walked swinging that leg. But he was a pretty tough character physically, and in other ways as well.

Are there any stories you can tell?

Oh well, people will tell you lots of stories I'm sure about his, you know ... he'd do anything in the field. If someone needed it, he'd say, 'Well, you don't want to be frightened of a tracheotomy, boy. You just need a razor blade and a bit of guts and you can save a man's life.' And he'd give a demonstration - not actually open an incision in the throat - he'd demonstrate what to do.

Was he expecting you to do it?

Well, he said that if you came to the emergency you would, perhaps, need to do it: if there was no doctor - and that was the impression he gave. No one that I ever knew ever had to do a trachy, no. We did lot's of training, and you'll find other people, besides myself, later on were trained at Sydney Hospital - I was trained at Sydney Hospital and at Brisbane General and at Townsville General Hospital - on how to give anaesthetics, and how to look after people injured as casualties and in car accidents and so on, to get that sort of real life practice.

At Sydney Hospital, in the first place, who took you for that course and how long was it?

Well they were the doctors and others at Sydney Hospital in the Casualty Ward or the Emergency Ward, where they brought people straight in off the street.

What methods were they using in those days that you were instructed in?

They really didn't teach us anything we weren't learning in the army as far as looking after the wounded were concerned. But

things that we particularly learned was how to give anaesthetics, which we hadn't been taught in the unit.

And what methods were you using? Were you using ether or chloroform or what?

At Sydney we would have been shown ether. When we got to Brisbane there was a doctor there who was an expert in chloroform, and he always used chloroform, so we were shown that; and also pentothal sodium and three or four specialist anaesthetics - some were given by syringe and others by the gas.

What about the nitrous oxide?

Yes, well that was laughing gas, and that was given as well. We did learn how to use that: it was used mostly, as a matter of fact.

Used for dentistry or ...

Well, we did have a dental unit attached, but I wasn't involved with anything that they did. They had their own little unit and they had a captain dental surgeon who would have used his staff sergeant to assist him, although they could come in from the field ambulance and get assistance from a doctor if needed.

Were you ever instructed in, if you didn't have any regular means of anaesthetic, what to do?

Well yes. You obviously had to do the best you could under the circumstances - you weren't given any anaesthetic. If someone comes in with his leg blown off or severe fractures we'd have to treat those things and try and treat the shock as well as the wound.

What was the treatment then?

Well, such things as making patient comfortable and reassuring him and keeping him warm and give him warm drinks, and warm sweet drinks, and tend to the wound itself.

Did you have morphine in those days?

Yes, we did have morphine, and we had that in the equipment. There were shots of morphine which we could give. Each company of the unit, as well the headquarters, had panniers, as they called it. They were made of basketry - fairly heavy panniers. And they had the equipment and those particular drugs locked into them, so when needed you just opened a pannier and you'd administer it.

Where they already cut down in ampoules?

Yes, they were in ampoules, yes.

So you didn't have to do any breaking down or anything?

No, although there were tablets, of all types, as well, which could be used to make up if need. We never had to do it that I can recall.

Did you ever hear about any misuse or abuse of morphine or any other drugs while ...

Never did - not in our unit. I think the funniest thing I ever heard of - and it was the next unit I went to - was that one of the cooks got a liking for lemon essence. It was given to flavour the food a bit, if needed - you know, a few drops at a time. But he used to use it neat and drink as much as you would whisky - that sort of thing.

That was practically pure alcohol that lemon essence.

Yes it was, yes. But that's the only one that I can recall of any of that sort of misuse, if you can call it that.

That wasn't George Warnecke was it?

No it wasn't George, no; it was a different unit. It was the 2/4th.

Was there anything different about Liverpool and Ingleburn? Have you got any stories you might tell about either of those?

Well I think ... Liverpool was the oldest camp. It had been a First World War camp and they were all old galvanised iron huts with tons of holes in them from bayonets being tossed through them and what have you - we call it air-conditioned - not appreciated in the winter when we were in there. And, of course, the river was close by - Georges River flowed through the camp - and the horse transport was at the back of the unit. I remember that we were in tents and in front of the horse transport, and there was a gate across the road to stop the horses coming in and stop others going out. And me and two mates used to go into Liverpool. One was a sergeant, a Sergeant Millner, Vic Millner. Vic had a big Harley Davidson bike and he used to say let's go into town for the night, and he put me up on the bike behind him and big Bill Tootal was six feet-four - he used to get behind me. The three of us would tear into town and through the town and come back in. It was a little bit scary at eleven o'clock at night when there was a bit of a mist coming up off the river. Vic Millner had big glasses anyway, and he'd come tearing into the camp. We were yelling out, 'Watch out for the bloody wire over the road' - otherwise it'd cut your head off. You had a few of those sort of funny things.

Did the whole unit move with their horses to Ingleburn then?

Yes, it did.

Was that a march?

Oh no. Well, we went out of camp, as I said, and the horses would have been, probably, put into the Remount Depot until three months later when we came back, and then they would have got them again. We would have come out from the city by train or truck.

So what about when you moved from one to the other - from Liverpool to Ingleburn - or didn't you move there?

No we didn't move. As I say, we completed the camp for three months in Liverpool, and then we just went home - the soldiers went home - and I said we did some part-time training for the next three months. Then we got called up for the second series, and this time we were told to report to Ingleburn. Of course, the horses were brought into Ingleburn, probably by the transport section, a day ahead: that's usually what happened. They sent an advance party to set up camp.

Do you know anything about the remount depot at Enfield?

No I don't. I knew it was there but I didn't have anything to do with it. You see, once again Matt Nolan can probably give you a better a lot of talk about that: he would have been involved.

How did the field ambulance come to be at Frenchs Forest then? When did you go there?

I haven't got a date of when we went there but ...

But you did go there?

Yes. The unit was moved out of Ingleburn and we went into Frenchs Forest, and we put up a camp there. Colonel Davies was still with us at this time and he built an underground operating theatre in the trees in Frenchs Forest - under the trees.

Was that used?

No; it was there in case. We were there because there was a bit of an alarm in Australia that the Japs might land, and we were put to what you might call 'battle stations'. That was our headquarters to cover the 9th Brigade area. And we also had a ... took over certain buildings. For instance, we shared Rose Bay Bowling Club with the bowlers: we took a section of it over for an advance dressing station, and treated people there. The same happened at Killara Golf Club: we took that

over - or we took over part of it, but the golfers still played golf, but we had most of their club house. So that sort of thing happened. Later on we were moved from Frenchs Forest to a place at St Ives called the 'Green Toad' in Stanley Street. That was a big old two storey house which became unit headquarters and, once again, an operating theatre. Everybody slept in tents outside and there was a lot of tall trees in the area, so it was rather a good place to be. A lot of the troops were putting tents in amongst the trees, obviously for camouflage and so on. Looking back it probably sounds a little humorous but the Australian population took it pretty seriously at that time because Japanese subs had come into Sydney Harbour and caused some damage, and a few shells had come into the Bondi area. Lots of people fled over the mountains to get out of the road.

We were used in Frenchs Forest too. There was a big bush fire swept through Frenchs Forest area, out to West Head, and people's homes were endangered. Our unit was put into fight the fire - help the ordinary fire brigades, you know. We did a lot of hard work there and the people appreciated it and put on a ball of some sort - an event - to thank the members of the 9th for the hard work they'd put into saving their homes. We used to run dances and so on for those who would like to go along.

So what were you actually doing during that time? What was your routine in the day?

We still needed to man all these ADSs and MBSs and run ambulances from those places back to Concord Hospital.

So did you have to transport a number of people? Were there injuries and such like, or accidents?

Well, they'd be more accidents and sickness because a medical unit is always working quite different from, as you'd appreciate, artillery and stores and infantry even. They've got a job to do when they're in action, but when they come back, well, they do nothing - perhaps a little training and recreation - whereas a field ambulance always had some patients to look after. In the normal course there is always somebody getting ill or having an accident and being injured - breaking a bone or what have you.

Were you a private at that stage?

I was a private in Liverpool and Ingleburn, and the CO at the time kept pulling me into the orderly room to relieve and do jobs, and he eventually made me orderly room sergeant. So I would have been orderly room sergeant in Frenchs Forest.

Did you have an adjutant or did you do all the paperwork?

No, I did the paper work, yes. So the orderly room sergeant did it with whatever advice he needed from the commanding officer.

You used to have to run the disciplinary parades as well?

No, not so much that. You'd prepare the paperwork for them, but the RSM handled the disciplinary parades. He'd march them into the CO and read the charge: the CO would hear the defence and then find him guilty or not guilty, and whatever sentence was imposed. So that was the way it worked.

How about you? Did you ever get put on charges?

No, I was never on a charge. I was never caught, or what it was, but anyway.

How many years of undetected crime they used to say.

(Laughs) Well, I was in the army for a long time, so it wasn't till early 1947, January, that I eventually came out.

When you were orderly room sergeant where were you stationed?

Well, as I said, I was stationed in Ingleburn first, and then in Frenchs Forest. At some stage - it was later than that - then we went to St Ives - still an orderly room sergeant, I think, there. I was eventually commissioned. I'm just trying to think of the order in which it happened.

You were commissioned in Sydney were you, or somewhere in Sydney?

In Sydney. It could well have been examined while I was at the 'Green Toad', and then actually commissioned when we were in Wallgrove, because we went on to Wallgrove camp later on and ...

Did you get any officer's training?

No, I didn't, no. I wasn't sent to any officer's training school but I had to appear before a selection committee from Victoria Barracks, 2nd Military District and so on. They had a number of people. They brought in a new job of bearer officer because they were a bit short, I would imagine, of doctors, and instead of having a major and two captains they decided to have a major, one captain as a doctor - the bearer was supposed to be a captain too, but we had to get in first as a lieutenant. But they never did fill the captaincy. None of us ever got the promotion: some said it was the doctors who raised an objection, but I don't know if that's right or not - but probably not right.

So have you got a date for your commission?

Yes, I was promoted to lieutenant on 20th May 1942.

So as acting lieutenant did you ever get your confirmation?

Well, it was confirmed, yes. I've forgotten the date of the confirmation. I don't know if it occurs in any of my papers anywhere.

And it doesn't actually say there on the paybook, I don't think.

No. Well you didn't get any more money: you still got the same rates. See, this is only a record of pay.

I notice there that you got a field allowance at some time there?

Well, it's probably when we went to New Guinea. Where does it say? Here it is, there. No, that field allowance was when I became a lieutenant. They apparently gave ...

Has HQ ...

Field allowance went to ... and obviously got three shillings field allowance, but my salary as a lieutenant was sixteen shillings a day, and then I got that field allowance which was three and six pence, by the look of it. And I made an allotment, at that stage, to my mother. I had done that all along from when I went into the army.

So that gives us the date of that. So when, at St Ives, how was that different when you moved out there?

Well, as I say, it was a different area and ...

Were you still camping out?

We were still in tents, yes. Of course the whole unit was under canvas in Frenchs Forest including the orderly room and the underground operating theatre which was just dug into the ground.

How did you go with drainage for that?

Well, they seemed to drain it, yes. I don't know whether we built that ourselves or whether the engineers came in and helped us.

Did you have standard designs for that? I mean, were you ever required to go and set up a tented operating room?

Yes, they had a marquee. We always carried a marquee with the equipment, and that was always erected as a temporary operating theatre if needed.

Were you ever responsible for erecting that?

Oh, I would be, myself, and some of the men would put those tents up: all the tents were done that way. Usually the privates, for instance, put up the ordinary twelve by fourteen tents to live in, and they helped put up the orderly room tent, and a tent for the kitchen, and also the big tent for the operating theatre.

Was that an ongoing tradition? I mean, you must have had instructions on how to do this, I suppose?

Yes, there's a manual ...

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

You were talking about the field hospitals and such like. When you went to Frenchs Forest, as I say, what was the difference there? Have you got any stories you can tell?

Yes. You were asking about the tents, and because we had to become very practised at putting tents up, and also with treating broken legs and all the rest of it, so that we would even have teams so good at putting tents up they could be blindfolded or do them in the dark. They became very fast at erecting tents and pulling them down and putting them onto trucks and unloading at a new location and doing the same sort of thing. So they were very good at that type of thing.

You were bearer officer. You had transport in your sections, naturally. What sort of transport did you have once you got motorised?

Well, obviously, we had motor ambulances to take the wounded away - they would have had a supply of four stretchers - and then there were trucks to cart supplies to take the equipment and everything else, and there was a couple of water tanks, and there was a field kitchen and all sorts of peculiar things which you needed to take but you didn't always use. If the camp was fixed, well, you made other arrangements for your kitchens and so on, but if you went out on a bivouac or away from your main camp you took these field pieces of equipment with you.

When you went to Frenchs Forest and then up to St Ives, were these actually camps in all senses of the word, or did you have some facilities that went with you, or did you have to dig your own latrines and all that sort of thing?

Well, there was some facilities there in St Ives. Obviously, in the two storey building there were certain latrine provisions, and kitchens, already there. But the troops - all of us, officers, NCOs and other ranks - were housed in tents as far as sleeping quarters are concerned. And also for eating purposes, they would have had a marquee or, of course, we would have put up a shed to enable them to eat their food under, for some protection from the weather. What was the question again?

Well, I mean, you were living in a city in actual fact.

Well, latrines would have either been dug there in the army style of deep trench latrines or slip latrines - the smaller ones - 'three by two by ones' they used to call them. They were only three feet deep, two foot long and one foot wide. But there would have been a night soil service in those sort of places, probably provided by the council if it wasn't the army. I'm not sure, looking back; probably the council.

Sorry, you didn't sort of behave ...

But certain fixed camps, like Ingleburn and so on, there would have been proper latrines built in, yes.

And incidently, there's just one thing at that time, did you use lime or not?

In the latrines? In the deep trench latrines I don't recall that we did. You wouldn't in the little ones, of course - they weren't so deep and then they'd cover them over, yes.

You didn't, right. It's just a technical matter, that's all. Thinking from the point of view, at certain times they did and certain times they didn't, I understand, particularly in hot weather and that sort of thing. The other reason that I ask you that sort of question is, you know, nowadays they generally don't, but at one stage they did. It also depends on how long you use them for and how many people?

That's what I'm getting at. The deep trench ones, they'd probably do it every so often, but not early on: and the little ones they probably do it because it's more open to flies and that sort of thing.

No. It's just really whether they use lime or earth - it's as simple as that?

Well, they always used earth, but there'd be a bit of lime put with it, so that would have been the way it worked, yes.

So when did you move out of Sydney?

Well, we went to other camps and we ... Gee, when did we leave Sydney?

We don't need an exact date.

Trying to think when we left.

You went in 1943 to Brisbane?

We went to Brisbane, as I recall it, just before Christmas 1943 [1942].

You were still a sergeant then?

No, I wasn't.

Pay sergeants receipt, sorry. Lieutenant Kelly, yes.

10-6-43. Yes, so we went, by train - troop train - to Brisbane.

What about your vehicles?

They went by train as well. We were put into a camp at Ascot Race Course and we used to go into Brisbane for recreation and leave. As I said, I did a stint of training at Brisbane General Hospital, probably with Doug Dunlop - I'm sure it was with Doug - on the giving of anaesthetics. We were both lieutenants at this time, and Ascot Race Course had a lot of big vats of green dye, and we were among the very first - I'm not saying we were the first - but one of the very first units to be issued with green uniforms, which are simply the old khaki ones dyed. They used to ...

Did you have to dye them yourself?

Yes, we did. That's why you got a variety of colours, you know - some came out very light green and some dark. I had a very dark green shirt, which I used to like for some particular reason, and had my photograph taken in that when up in Townsville.

Incidently, when you dyed these shirts did you have a mordant that you used to fix them and to cut the colour off, or was it because you didn't have a mordant to cut the colour off that you ended up with various colours? What did you wash them in afterwards - just water or was it salt water, or was it vinegar or what?

I don't recall. As far as I recollect it we simply put them in the dye and would've, perhaps later on, put them in cold water, I would think, yeah.

Was the dye hot when you put them in?

Yes, it was hot.

So you just really put them in cold water then?

Yeah.

You know, there's a dying term - it's called a mordant - it's what fixes the colour.

Makes it fast, as they say, yes. Well, it needed to otherwise it would be all green on the body as well, wouldn't we?

So where did you go after that? How long were you at ...

Roughly a week or two - something of that nature. No, they suddenly moved us out and said, 'You've got to go north'. It was over the Christmas holiday break - actually Christmas Day we were on the train - and as I recall it we got to McKay ...

What did you get for Christmas dinner?

Wouldn't have been anything special for Christmas dinner because we were on the train, and we would have gone on to a railway or refreshment room for the meals on the way up. We were all covered in soot from travelling on the old steam trains as they were, and I know that when we pulled up, in the very early hours of the morning at McKay, before breakfast, the locomotive had to be filled with water from the water column. Quite a number of us hopped out and had a cold shower under the water column, which is the quickest way, you know - a flood of water came down, and at least we were clean again till we got to the next spot along the way. I suppose the next thing that happened to us of interest was that when we got to Rockhampton, the river was flooded at Ayr and Home Hill - I think the river ran between the two - which cut the town off and the train couldn't proceed. We lived on the train for three or four days at Rockhampton; and once again, we slept on the train and ate in the refreshment rooms on the station, and did route marches and what have you out of the town. Some of them got out to a beach area - I'm trying to think of the name of it - on the coast, out of Rockhampton, for a bit of leave. We had an unusual event there. One of our unit was a knife thrower in a circus, and his name was Pancho, and I've forgotten his other name. Everyone called him Pancho, and he had his name tattooed on his forehead - 'Pancho'. Anyway, Pancho was up the town in Rockhampton and some yank soldiers seemed to pick on him in some fashion. He apparently threatened them that if they didn't shut up he'd do something about it. The yank provost came on the scene and they wanted to take him off and deal with him, and they followed him back to the station and, of course, they didn't come in but they kept demanding he be surrendered to them. Our CO, Colonel Bretherton, said that he wouldn't have any of his troops handed over to any yanks, so he strapped his revolver on and Major Holcombe strapped his on and they went up to the commanding officer of the American Forces in the

town and he let 'em know that he didn't appreciate what his provosts were trying to do to one of his men. They'd threatened to shoot Pancho, and he said if there was going to be any shooting around here he said, you'll have other people to deal with. They were both pretty formidable figures, he and Holcombe. And anyway, peace was restored and we never had any more trouble with the yanks in that town.

Pancho was told to keep his knives on the counter?

Oh yes. The CO would have dealt with Pancho anyway, and he was eventually got rid of from the unit. But, you know, the CO would never let his own men down; he always would stick to them at the time, even if he took action himself later.

So where did you end up that time?

Well, we went up then onto the Tablelands - Atherton Tablelands - and right at the top of the ...

The 9th was with you all this time I take it?

Oh yes, this is the unit.

But, I mean the whole unit, other than the ambulances.

No, no. The only part of the 9th Infantry Brigade that moved north was the 9th Field Ambulance, and the Brigade stayed back in Sydney and we were to be sent away. The story was, later on, that we were to go to Goodenough Island. But that's another story and the ship we were to go on eventually got sunk anyway. But we were sent up to Ravenshoe, which is the very top of the ranges up there - up the Innisfail Highway I think it was called - a very narrow, but main, road that went right up into the mountains. And we were simply taken out into the bush and they said, 'Well, build your camp: this is it'. So we had to clear sufficient area to put the tents up, and we had a camp there and continued our training for a period, which were mainly route marching and first-aid and so on.

Did anybody tell you why you were sent up there?

Well, it was to go away. What was happening up there was that they did further training in the jungle area around there to fit us for the New Guinea area. And they were bringing back the units that had served for a period in New Guinea, and got pretty sick with malaria and what have you, and they brought them back onto the Tablelands to rest and recuperate and reform. And so we had a job to do with them too, although they did bring actually general hospitals - army general hospitals - onto the Tablelands as well.

So what did you have to do up there, not only yourself, but also the unit?

Well, the unit was what I've just said, they did further training and they did look after the sick and so on. I was sent with some others from my company, A Company, down to a place called Rocky Creek, outside Atherton, on the Tablelands, and told to build a new camp for a convalescent depot. They'd brought a convalescent depot into there, and we put up huts and all sorts of things, cook houses and what have you - most of them prefabricated huts - but we built them and built the roads in for them. And when it was all finished ... I think we operated with one or two officers. I think Sid Clipsham might have been there part-time, but mostly it was me and a couple of NCOs, and the privates, other ranks. And when they brought the con depot in, they had a huge number of officers and NCOs, and not too many privates. There was a bit of a joke going around that there were plenty of chiefs but no indians in the other group, and we were all indians and very few chiefs. So that was just part of the story.

> Did you have a specialist groups in your ... I mean, for instance, you had a construction group did you? And, of course, you had cooks and such like, in terms of that sort of thing, and there would be an ambulance group and so on, and field dressing stations. But different people did this?

Yes, they were, yes. Well some people were bearers who carry the wounded and also trained in first aid. They were mainly in A and B Company. And we would have a small number - perhaps four - nursing orderlies who were trained particularly in that side of things; to man the advance dressing stations which we used to run. And also we had, on the headquarters company, would have been a carpenter and a couple of other useful fellows. My own company - and it wouldn't have been the same in the others - but in A Company we always seemed to have half a dozen guys who could do anything. They were mainly country fellows who could chop a tree down and could build things. We had a fellow called Geoff German who was a city man, but Geoff could do anything with concrete, and he was the guy who later on imbedded the tram tracks, in the Sydney streets, in concrete. Prior to that they hadn't been in concrete; they were in the old wooden blocks. So Geoff was a handy man.

> Did you have a sanitation unit at all?

Well, we all had those sort of duties: each company had to look after it's own hygiene. But often attached to the unit was a field hygiene section, as they called it, who had, if I remember rightly, an officer and a warrant officer - I'm not sure whether they had a warrant officer - and three or four other people.

> You mentioned your group. Well, was there a hygiene group before not xxx you were up in New Guinea on one occasion, I seem to remember you telling me?

When we were in Ingleburn there was a field hygiene section attached to us and we had a novel group, the fellows who comprised that because whilst the warrant officer was a pretty practical soldier, and trained in all that work - Mulhall, Bill Mulhall. The other guys were Arthur Browning, the bookie from Randwick Race Course - he used to bet on interstate races mainly; and a fellow called Rich from Bevarfalds, who was, hardly short of a dollar, or a pound in those days; and a professional photographer called Freeman, from Freemans Photographic Studios. So they were all, you know, pretty well lined, so ...

Where did they end up?

I don't know really where they ended up. They were with us in Ingleburn, and when we went out of camp they would have gone out and I never heard of them after that. So they spent three months with us, at least.

And what did they do during that three months?

Well, they did field training in hygiene; they probably would have had to construct grease traps and put up, perhaps, ablution areas and things of that nature, on a trial basis.

But did they do it themselves?

I don't know if they did, but they would have got a loan of some of our men as well, to do the hard work, looking back on it, yes.

I'll have to ask some of the others if they had anything to do with them. So when you were up in Queensland, up on the Tablelands, what next, so to speak?

I think, perhaps, I should go back a little bit because, you know, I suddenly became a lieutenant, but there was a bit more to it. I did some training courses. I went to an anti-gas training school at Mona Vale and I qualified there as a gas training instructor: I was a sergeant at that time.

What did that entail?

It entailed learning all about mustard gas and phosgene and the other gases that had been used, mainly in the First War, and the effects they had on people, and how to treat them - the first aid side of it.

Did they talk about nerve gas at that time?

Er ... I think we were told about it, but I don't know that they had much in the practical side, looking back, you know, whereas with the phosgene and mustard that they'd had casualties in the First War. And, of course, we had training on how to apply the anti-gas respirators, the correct method of

doing it and how they actually operated. Then you had to learn to go back and teach this to your own troops, which I did.

Did they have decontamination centres set up?

Decontamination centres, yes, as well, that's right.

Did you have to go through the whole thing of actually giving everybody, literally, a run with a gas mask on, with gas around?

Oh yes, we did training in gas masks, marching and running with them and operating in the normal sense of your duties. Everyone had to operate even, say, in an orderly room or in a kitchen.

But did they actually gas you, like they used to ...

No, they didn't gas them. They just laid out, or they would have put a dummy gas over. They didn't actually use ...

Oh, when I went through they did, they used to use tear gas.

Well tear gas yes, but not mustard gas or any of those.

No, but they used to give you just a go at ...

Enough to make you get the feel of that - it would make your eyes water and that.

Make you put the mask on to make sure it was operating?

Yeah, that was all part of the training, yes.

Did they actually have the tear gas?

Yes, they did.

So that was the same as when I was at ... later on.

Yes, I've tried to recollect whether it wasn't just done through a tent, or something like that, with the tear gas. I don't think we actually had heaps of tear gas out in the field.

When I was there they used to have a shed.

Yeah, well that's probably what we did too, looking back.

They'd make you run on the spot in this shed with the tear gas with the gas masks on ...

Yes.

... to make sure they were operating properly and you know what it was all about.

Yeah, well they did the same sort of thing, sure, yes.

They also had the blocks where you used to have to go through and decontaminate. Did they have that as well?

Yeah, there was a decontamination section to look after clothing and what have you as well, yes. So a lot of it had to be make believe, obviously, because they were dealing with what would happen if these dangerous gases were used: of course they weren't used in the training sense. They had photographs and demonstrations and so on, of what the effects of the gases were on people who'd actually been effected by them. So we had a lot of make believe sort of thing, but it drove home to you, especially, as you say, if you had a feel even of tear gas. You knew that it could effect you, and if it was going to get even worse - if you get mustard - so make sure you do the right thing. But while I was a sergeant I was also sent away to a PT School at Cowra, and I qualified as a PT instructor at that school. I'll see if I can dig out the date. Oh yes, on the 11th May 1942 I did the physical and recreational training course No. 11 at Cowra, and I was there from the 11th May to the 30th May '42.

Did you make use of these courses later? Did you train the others in gas?

Yes, I did. I had quite a bit to do with the gas training, and then, in the PT, I did do a certain amount of that. But I was in the orderly room at this stage so I didn't get a lot to do - I used to do some of it. But I did very well, strangely enough, at the PT course at Cowra. Remembering, correctly, I came second. A bloke called Ginty Lush, who was a state cricketer, came top in the class. They used to run a competition between the various courses, such as infantry, artillery and what have you, and the PT course, in drill. I was given the job, because I was a sergeant, of doing the drill. But we were all pretty well trained, anyway, in the PT course. So I did that, and we won the competition. And, of course, the CO of the PT course was tickled pink that his mob had come top. We used to march through the town, and go on leave in the town. Later on I was chosen to go to the army school of physical training at Frankston in Victoria. I went down there in August, about three months later, and given a much tougher course with a lot more unarmed combat and racing through the scrub in Frankston. They had a big wrestler bloke called Green who was one of the senior PT instructors - it was a pretty tough sort of a course.

Did you make use of that when you came back?

Well I did, because part of the training down there was to build obstacle courses, and we had to go over these obstacle

courses on a regular basis - almost every day. So when I came back the CO had my report and he said, 'Well, you'd better build an obstacle course'. So the obstacle course was erected through Frenchs Forest, behind the Green Toad. And as I said, there was a lot of trees and gullies and what have you, and we had flying fox built over the gully, and we had fences and walls erected out of timber to clamber over, and narrow logs to walk across for balance, and all this sort of thing. The CO instructed the unit to go over this 'mad mile' as it became known after a while, every day, and he went himself and we were very fit people. He always claims - this is his story anyway - that when the nobs from Victoria Barracks came out to inspect the unit one day, and he sent us all over the 'mad mile', they thought we were so fit that we were chosen to go away to New Guinea - and we then left the 9th Brigade. They thought they were going to get sent away, and we'd probably get left, but because we were so fit they sent us away to do a job and they left the 9th Brigade. Now whether they went away later I don't know, but certainly didn't go for a good while.

So when did you go, and how?

Well, as I say, we spent time at Ravenshoe, and then we were sent down to embark to Townsville. We were put into a staging camp called Oonoomba which is a pretty primitive camp: it was all dust and hot - we were living in tents - and unfortunately, or fortunately, I suppose, if you look at it the right way, the ship we were to go on was sunk by the Japanese. So we were left in Oonoomba for a longer period. I understand it happened either two or three times. One ship was the Centaur, or the hospital ship: we were to go on that but it was torpedoed off Townsville somewhere, and a lot of lives were lost. Fortunately we weren't on it so we lived for another day. But we were used for lots of jobs, as well as a lot of training, to keep us fit, still. The wharf labourers weren't very cooperative that time in the loading and unloading of ships, and our unit used to have to be taken to the wharves to do some of that sort of work - to unload ships or to load them.

So what did you do as officers?

Well, part of my job ... I went, as I said, to the general hospital and got training in giving anaesthetics. So I spent a certain amount of time in that sort of training for my side of things - for giving anaesthetics and treating the wounded.

Did you ever use it?

Yes, I did. When we were in Wau, later on, operations were done there in our ... We took over a coffee plantation, and the building that the owner of the plantation lived in was our headquarters and they had an operating theatre there. Casualties were brought to us and on occasions the doctors had to perform operations on them, or on accidents that happened to natives who had picked up Mills bombs and other such things, or

trod on mines. There was always those sort of dangerous things happening. And so I was called on to give anaesthetics on a couple of occasions there.

So how, eventually, did you get up to New Guinea?

Well, eventually we were put on a ship.

What sort of ship, do you remember?

An Australian coastal ship it was, and we went - I think it was on the Manoora, but I'd have to check that one out; I think it was the Manoora - and we went to Port Moresby and disembarked at Port Moresby. We set up camp, I think it was twelve miles out of Moresby itself, in a place called Rigo Road. Once again we built a camp there, and the unit was used for various duties such as ... they had a dressing station and stretcher bearers on the airstrips. On one occasion 7th Division were coming onto the airstrip, to Jacksons Air Field, to be moved - there was some other operation: I seem to think it was the fighting that was to take place around Lae - and they also went into Wau. And a plane came into land with a load of bombs, and it had a mishap and the bombs blew up and a lot of injuries to the 7th Division troops, who were camped around the airport, were sustained. We were on the spot, our men, to give them first aid and to get them to various hospitals. There were two general hospitals, Australian Army general hospitals, in Moresby, so the bulk of them went there. But we had our main dressing station, as I said, at Rigo Road, and a number of them were conveyed back there and our medical officers operated on them there.

At that stage what sort of transport did you have for ambulance purposes?

Well, in Moresby we had four wheel drive ambulances, fairly big sort of ambulances, but when we moved to Wau, later on, we had jeep ambulances.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

Now when you got up to New Guinea and the sort of conditions that the unit was living under at that time, was that where you split up and went into different areas?

Yes. Well the whole unit was brought into Rigo Road where we established a main dressing station and a 'mad mile', as usual.

What's a 'mad mile'?

Well, the obstacle course that I mentioned we built ...

Right, yes.

... the CO used to insist on that wherever we went. He used to put the troops over that every afternoon, and he'd do it himself too - we'd all did - officers, NCOs.

Incidently, you mentioned that was Bretherton was it?

Bretherton, yes.

When did you leave Major Holcombe behind?

Well, he came to New Guinea with us and went to Dumpu, and to ... it was in that Lae campaign, and you'll find that he's referred to in a report by Vic Milburn, and a small group of xxx went with Major Holcombe hot for that campaign. He left from Lae - I don't recall whether he went straight home or whether he came back to Wau, to the headquarters of the unit, at that time.

He couldn't possibly go over the assault course, could he - the 'mad mile'? He had one stiff leg.

Yeah, but it wouldn't have stopped him from trying, that's what I'm saying. Certain things he obviously couldn't do, such as balancing things, you know, but he could get up over the walls and all those sort of things - he had very powerful arms. The officers played - and so did the sergeants, at different times, and others too - medicine ball badminton, you know; and he was a very powerful guy to throw a seven pound ball around. So he was as fit as he could be, with the proviso that I mentioned of having a stiff knee.

So what else was there at the camp there? You set up in a normal way. Were you in tents there as well?

Yes, we were; we were in tents. And we built ourselves a little mess room and things of that nature for everybody concerned - officers, sergeants and other ranks. We did start to break up. They sent a group away from there, and I think that's probably the one that Vic Milburn has mentioned where Major Holcombe took a group of eight to Lae. But others went to Bulldog, by ship, from Port Moresby and up the Lakekamu River and to Bulldog where the army was going overland to Wau from there. There were head-hunters living in the area - I think they were called Kukukukus in the Bulldog district - that part of New Guinea. Not that they had any great trouble from them mind you, but they were still pretty wild people and they might get into the camps in the night time and steal a few things, you know. But other than that I knew of no trouble with the natives anywhere. And as a matter of fact they were very friendly to the Australians, generally speaking.

Did you use any of them for labour purposes?

They were used around the camp for various duties, yes, they were.

How were they paid?

I think they were a allotted to us, probably, from ANGAU which is the Australian-New Guinea Administrative Unit, so we wouldn't have been paying them. They would have been paid whatever they were through ANGAU. We probably fed them, and they would have been living in the same sort of conditions as us, or in huts they built themselves. I'm thinking of Wau - there were a number of them around the camp at Wau doing various duties attached to the kitchen, or hygiene duties and other such labouring type duties. But they were always a cheerful group of people. They also used them very much for cutting the grass. They used to cut the kuaai, and grass generally, with a piece of hoop iron which they'd sharpen: they'd use it like a scythe. They'd cut the grass down very quickly with that scything action that they used.

Never any damaged legs?

No, we never had any trouble there: they'd been used to doing that. There's not a lot to report about the natives, really.

Did you treat them in any way, medically?

Well, if they were sick they would have been treated, yes.

Did they accept Australian type of medicine?

Oh yes, sure. And we did an operation on one boy in Wau. His father brought him in and he'd picked up a hand grenade and it blew part of his hand off. I actually gave the anaesthetic in that particular case I'm thinking of, and Major Holcombe, as I recall, did the actual operation - patched his hand up for him, made it new again. His father standing in a loin cloth in the operating theatre to keep his eye on the boy and comfort him. But they came back for dressings later on and the boy was apparently quite pleased because he was different from many of the other boys around the place - he could skite about having his hand attended to.

Did he lose any fingers or anything?

He did lose some of his fingers, yes.

But was his hand useful?

Well, he could use it a bit, you know. It's a long time ago to recall it, but I think he was left with a couple of fingers and perhaps a part of his thumb, that's sort of thing, on one hand. I've forgotten whether it was the left - I seem to think it was the left hand, but I wouldn't bet on that.

Were there any other incidents like that that you can think of?

Well, there's humorous sort of things where we had two privates, Locky McLean and, they called him, Rocky Rochester. Rocky was a chemist in civil life: I don't think he was fully qualified as a pharmacist, but he used to work in a pharmacy. But they concocted a jungle brew; set up a still in the hills around about us and used to make this jungle brew and take a dollar or two for it, selling it. And attached to the unit in Wau too was a dental unit with Captain Henderson. He was the dental officer, and he had a staff sergeant dental mechanic and a corporal dental mechanic and a private. And they used to make gold rings. Of course Wau was a gold mining area - Wau, Bulolo, Edie Creek - and they used to get some from somewhere or other and they used to make rings out of them - gold rings. The yanks would come in and fly planes in to buy them. So there were little sidelines of that sort.

What about the still? That would be very much frowned on by authorities wouldn't it?

Well authorities did frown on it, but for some strange reason the CO seldom happened on it. I think as long as they behaved he certainly wasn't too worried. But it was properly hygienically run, you know, so I'm sure he would have had it tested but ...

Nobody got ill through it?

No one got crook through it, no.

Did you try it at all?

I probably did, looking back, yes.

What did it taste like?

Well, they used to make it sometimes in coconuts, and put raisins and other such things in the coconut and still it that way. And other times they had a proper still, where they had a kerosene tin as I recall.

Yeah, but the coconut is only wine whereas a still, you know, is a spirit?

Yes, it was a spirit. Well, I found it reasonably pleasant to drink. It had it's own flavour, as you'd appreciate. I don't know that we'd compete with Scotch or Irish whisky, but when you can't get those it was the next best thing.

At that time, in the various messes, did they have alcohol?

No, we didn't have alcohol in New Guinea.

Not even rum or a brandy for medicinal purposes?

Well, there was brandy for medicinal purposes in the panniers, so there was a couple of bottles of that in every company.

Did they go missing?

Not very much at all, as a matter of fact. Once it was opened, I suppose, it was a bit of a temptation for it to evaporate, but other than that no, we didn't have ... The army didn't encourage drinking of alcohol in New Guinea. As a matter of fact they set up a soft drink program: you can buy soft drink, if your in the right area, for twopence a bottle - I can recall that.

What did it taste like?

Oh, much the same as Marchants or any of the other soft drinks that were famous, at that time, out here - Marchants and Shelly's - they were quite pleasant. But it saved having chlorinated water and all that sort of thing on occasion, too. So it was pure in that sense - proper bottling plant.

George Warnecke mentioned the fact that they set up another ranks mess with some money in the kitty to make the rations more interesting in the way that the sergeants and the officers mess had.

Well, the army actually ... what was it ... There was an organisation in the army that used to provide so much per head for everybody, including ORs, and that was used to improve the rations: it could have been something like two shillings a head a week or a day. Now I've just forgotten, going back so long ago, how much it was.

Was there an organisation like the NAAFI in Britain?

Yeah, there was the canteens organisation, and there was always a little canteen in each unit. We set one up, particularly in Wau, as I can recall. Keith Pearson, who was Staff Sergeant Len Pearson's brother - Keith used to run the little canteen, and he got certain funds from the canteen organisation, and members would spend some of their own money. You could buy such things as toothpaste and tinned fruit - a few extra things of that nature - chocolate perhaps.

But not like the American PX?

Oh nothing like the size the ...

Did you ever manage to get into the American PX?

Ah, no. I got into American naval boat at Townsville on one occasion. Two or three of us were invited on board and we had

a meal and a few drinks on board. The hospitality was pretty good, if I can put it that way. But that's the only occasion that I was involved with the yanks in that sense.

So while you were involved as an officer up there, of the unit, what was the main work of the unit? Was there any time you got flooded with casualties?

Well, I mentioned the surprise business when the bomber went up in Port Moresby, so we were pretty busy at that stage. And in certain areas we had ... The unit's headquarters was, at first, in Port Moresby at Rigo Road. But then, up above Rouna Falls, more towards the Kokoda Trail, we had a camp up there too where we did further training. When they moved the headquarters to Wau, I was left to run the camp at - it was called 'Lux Lane' - above Rouna Falls. So I had further training to do and preparing groups of men to be sent into other areas - so that was part of my job.

Did you go up into that area yourself?

Well I was at Lux Lane, yes: we established a camp there, and we used to go swimming down ... go for marches and swim back from the bridge above the camp, back to camp, you know, about half a mile or a mile. We were kept very fit and we had further training to do, and we had to dispose of equipment. And if they wanted a group to go somewhere, such as to Milne Bay on the Kokoda Trail itself, that took two or three people - wherever they needed somebody they asked us to send a few fellows off and away they'd go.

Who went off to the Kokoda Trail, can you remember? Are there any of them left alive?

Well, Kilkeary was one, and he came back to our camp, eventually. Jack, unfortunately developed ... I think he got just about everything he could get - malaria and scrub typhus, which he overcame. He got very run down and we eventually had him sent back to Australia - but he died in the last twelve months or so. Very sick man he'd been though, even back in Australia when he came back.

The majority of the casualties you got, what was that from?

Well, as I say, once again, the people who were behind the troops, such as in the Lae district - I say it was a district - at Dumpu and Shaggy Ridge behind that area, they had a Busu medical camp and so on, all in that general area, they had a lot of casualties, battle casualties. But there was also a lot of sickness such as malaria and dysentery and those sort of things.

What was the anti-malaria treatment in those days?

Well, we were one of the early troops were put onto to Atebrin, so Atebrin was used fairly extensively as far as we were concerned, yes. It was introduced in New Guinea - earlier it had been quinine.

Were you responsible for distributing that to the other units?

No, I don't think so. I think they got it through stores branch and we had it, and of course our own troops had to have an Atebrin tablet everyday, which was issued under supervision too, to make sure they took them. Some weren't pleased with the supervision, if I can put it that way - others didn't worry about it. It was my job, sometimes, to see they took it. You handed them the Atebrin, and they'd have a drink of water and drink it down. I had to do the same thing myself anyway, so it never worried me, and I don't think it worried too many of them. But there's always one or two don't like being forced to do it.

What about the other diseases? I mean, scrub typhus - was there any defence against that?

Yes, there was an anti-mite. The disease was caused through a mite that generally came from the grass and got up through your socks and that sort of thing. So we were issued with an anti-mite lotion which you would wipe onto your socks or bottom of you trousers, that sort of thing - not all over you, but in that area because they tended to come up through your feet. So yes, there was an anti-mite thing, and we got issued with it, and you would put it on before you went out, every so often, that is - you didn't do it every day. But some still got it: if it was because they didn't have the lotion at the time, I don't recollect.

And was that a high percentage of people got sick with it?

Not in ours; we didn't have a lot of sickness either. Our CO was a pretty tough guy for discipline, you know. He insisted that you took your Atebrin tablet, and he insisted that you wear your long trousers and gaiters, and things which you didn't like doing in that climate - and keep under your mosquito nets at night and so on. Now, by doing all those things you didn't get into trouble. Some troops, with other units, either their discipline wasn't as good or else they were in such a position that they weren't able to comply with those conditions, possibly. You know, you can imagine an infantry unit that was fighting the Japanese and surrounded. They wouldn't be too concerned with putting on their mosquito nets or buttoning their sleeves down at that stage. So you had to take it with a certain amount of common sense, I suppose.

What other diseases were there, that people got and died of?

Malaria and scrub typhus would have been the main ones in the tropical end - dysentery and so on, of course, yes.

How many people in your unit did actually die of disease?

Two or three only died - of scrub typhus were the ones. After the war Jack Kilkeary died, but he'd been very ill, and we had several who'd been very ill and recovered. But once again, there weren't a lot of casualties in our own unit. I'm thinking more of the general units, the men in the battalions and so on.

Anybody get any trouble ... I mean, for instance, was there many leeches around that area?

Well, there were leeches, yes.

Any of them infected?

No, didn't seem to have any problem that way. Some felt them on them, you know, but ...

And did anybody get jungle ulcers, things like that?

There was a lot of skin complaints, of course, of varying degrees. Some was just a bit of a rash, and some was tinea, and some were ulcers or became ulcerated after a while. So you did get various skin diseases. And, of course, they had to be treated with whatever the appropriate treatment was, such as zinc cream and calamine lotion as soothing agents, but others needed other dyes and what have you, yes. If it persisted they'd get sent back to get further treatment. Some fellows back in the hospitals would have had ray treatment, that sort of thing, to dry it up. So yes, there was quite a bit of skin disease.

Now, of the different units that went into different places, where did you go next, or were you there for the rest of the time?

No. As I said, I was in Rigo Road, out of Port Moresby, and in Lux Lane, which is above there; and then I went up to Wau. And, of course, I did go into Lae, and I got to Wau through Lae. So I had to fly across the island to Lae and then find my way up the Markham Valley and through Bulolo and into Wau. I got sent back, by the CO, with a small group, back towards Bulldog, to survey the road that had been built by the army through there and had deteriorated very quickly in the bad weather of New Guinea. So I had to make a report on the road and let him know how it was. So they're the sort of things. And while I was in Port Moresby, for instance, I had to go down and load a hospital ship. All the patients from one of the general hospitals had to be transported by ambulances, which we had, to the ship, and our men would carry them on board and hand them over on board the ship. So that sort of thing.

So how many different sections did you have from the 9th Field Ambulance, and where were they up in New Guinea area?

Well, whenever the ADMS - that's the Assistant Director Medical Services - needed to send some support to anywhere, not using a full unit that is, he used to call on the 9th Field Ambulance to send one, or a group, of men to wherever he required them. As I said, our headquarters moved to Wau and we had a section that I was in charge of xxx Lux Lane above Moresby. And then we had a group at Bulldog and ...

Where was Bulldog?

Bulldog was on the Lakekamu River. The army engineers had built a road from Bulldog through to Wau, or to Edie Creek, which led to Wau where we were.

Where was the fighting at that time?

Well, it was all in that Wau area when they started, but the Japs were pushed back, and the next big battle coming up was in Lae. We had people in Lae. And there were related places, like the Busu medical post on the Markham River. We had a couple of fellows on the Kokoda Trail: I think one was at Popondetta, and they tended to move with the fighting.

Were they working in an isolated position there, not having their ambulance to back them up?

Yeah, they were working in an isolated position, yes - that's supporting some infantry people or whoever were fighting in that area.

What did they do with the wounded that they couldn't cope with?

Oh well, they'd be carried out by native bearers, or at least from the area where they were treated, until they could get them on to transport - perhaps a plane out of the district or carry them even further back to the end of the Kokoda Trail.

Where was the nearest hospital from there?

Well, the main hospitals were in Port Moresby. There were two Australian general hospitals.

Were you running hospitals or field hospitals anywhere?

Well, we had ... The hospitals are a separate unit, and there were two of them with big equipment and large staff and surgeons and everybody else and X-rays and all the rest of it - pathologists - all available to them. And then the next medical unit normally in front of them would be a casualty

clearing station. They would have a sort of a smaller hospital: they could do intermediate sort of surgery and so on. In front of them were the field ambulances, and they were the people who normally collected the wounded from the battalions. They treated them in their advance dressing stations which our companies usually ran. Then, if they were a bit more serious, we'd get them back by our ambulances, back to our main dressing station where the headquarters company was.

Was there a doctor on the Kokoda Trail from your people?

No, there was not, no. The nearest one would possibly be a medical officer attached to the battalion, but may not well have been close to where our man in charge of ... what do they call them ... a medical aid post - they just called them medical aid posts. And he'd have a bit of equipment there and he'd only be able to give a bit of elementary treatment - he'd secure a fracture, or stop bleeding, or make them comfortable and treat them the best he could under the circumstances. Then, if that was all they needed, they'd go back to their unit. If they were more serious, well he'd fix them up sufficiently for them to be taken back by the native bearers to, perhaps, our ADS or to where they could get transport and take them even further back to the hospitals.

ADS?

Advance Dressing Stations.

So when ... You were at Wau there?

Yes, I went to Wau after a while. I had been in Moresby, as I said, and then the CO called me up to Wau, and Doug Dunlop took over the post at Lux Lane.

So what were you doing at Wau?

Well, they were running a main dressing station - it would have been something like a thirty bed hospital, I suppose you could call that.

You had an operating theatre there?

And there was an operating theatre. Then, as I said, operations were performed by our doctors, and on occasions - not often - if there was a lot of casualties, or a lot of patients came in that needed surgery, I was called on on a small number of occasions to administer the anaesthetic under the doctors care. He'd keep his eye on the patient's condition, but I'd learnt what to do, so had Doug Dunlop, and we'd assist with those operations. But apart from that, well of course, there ...

Were you responsible for administration?

Well, I did get called into administration if the quartermaster went on holidays or moved out of the area. I usually got brought in to run the Q-store. The same thing if we were moving: I would help the CO and the orderly room sergeant with all the necessary documentation and embarkation orders and the whole rest of it, you know. So I used to get called in on those sort of things. But my main job was to still act on regimental duties, to see that the patients were being looked after properly, and that people were given their duties, that the kitchens were well run and well staffed - a certain amount of overlapping between, I suppose, my duties and the quartermasters, on occasions, in that sense.

What sort of food were you getting and providing there?

Well, they had the normal army rations, but then you got some special rations for patients. So the patients usually got something, or some had to go on special diets. They couldn't just eat bully beef and biscuits.

That's what I was getting. Was it all out of tins, or what?

No, it wasn't all out of tins. A certain amount, when we were in Wau particularly, was a degree of fresh food, was delivered by Army Service Corps.

What sort of fresh food?

Well, vegetables and eggs, although mostly it was egg powder, I must admit. But on occasion they'd get some eggs. And meat - a degree of meat. But it wasn't on a daily basis. You always got fresh meat every day or anything like that - they would get it on occasions. And bread was cooked, although we had very good cooks - Condon brothers. We had two Condons, the sergeant, who was the head cook, and his brother who was a corporal, and they were both tradesmen, pastry cooks by trade. They could do lots of things, even with army food, that many of the other cooks couldn't: they made it much more attractive, you know.

Was there any possibility of recreation there at Wau?

Yes. Well, wherever we were, at every possible occasion, the CO would insist on sports. And there were other activities at night time, but the films would be brought once in a while into the district. It wouldn't be brought to our camp, but there was an airstrip at Wau, for instance, and they'd put a screen up and the troops would go and take the kerosene tin and their gas cape, or an ordinary rain cape, and sit down and watch a film, one night a week or something of that nature.

What sort of films did they show?

All sorts. I remember seeing White Christmas while we were there, with Bing Crosby, you know. Some things stick in your mind like that. And there were army entertainment units that came around to various places, particularly in Moresby. They would have come into Lae - I don't recall that one came into Wau. But in addition to that we were always active and fit. As I said, we had a 'mad mile' built wherever we were and everyone went over that every day, and we had a certain amount of marching. And we developed a football team which started in Port Moresby - a rugby league team. Actually, in Port Moresby each company had a team, and we generally got beaten.

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

> You were on about the football team. You said they used to get beaten till the CO decided you should have one team?

Yes, and he appointed one of the medical officers, Captain John Elliott, captain coach. The one team trained under his control and he pretty well issued an edict that you don't give the ball to the opposition; you don't kick unless you absolutely have to, such as on the free kick. And I don't think we ever got beaten from that time on. Of course the team moved to Wau, or the unit moved to Wau, and commandos and infantry battalions and regiments and so on all came through Wau, and they all thought they were pretty good at playing rugby league and they'd arrange a match with the 9th Field Ambulance. And, of course, we had a few characters there who'd go around betting on it. We were a small unit and, of course, the big units would think it would be a push over to beat this medical mob. But they never did beat us and, you know, a lot of money got won by 9th Field Ambulance fellows, as well as an entertaining game of football.

> Who was the bookie, or was there a number of bookies?

Oh, they'd just bet with ... fellows would bet with other ...

> Were there bookies?

Not that I know of ...

> Did you have horse racing meetings or anything like that?

A fellow called Clive Sawkins, he was a very knowledgable guy on race horses and everything else, and tended to use racing language and was a popular guy. He's ...

> You know the big board game that is sometimes played on ships and various places: did you do the horse racing like that?

That sort of thing we would have, yes, I'm sure.

And what about Housie - Tombola as they call it in the army?

Yeah, well Housie was played on occasions too. And, of course, in certain camps - wasn't so much in ours - but going back to Ingleburn days there were always set games in the big YMCA and canteen huts and so on. There'd be Crown and Anchor and Two Up and whatever you could bet on.

That was allowed?

Well, I don't think it was legal but they didn't seem to worry too much about it, as long as they weren't too noisy - the authorities didn't seem to worry about it. One of the rumours was - and I'm not absolutely certain on this - but they always maintained that Arthur Browning had a pretty controlling say in what went on in all the gambling in Ingleburn anyway, so that could well be. He was an experienced bookmaker and it would be no trouble for him to organise those sort of things. Not that he would have perhaps run the individual games; he would have had others to do that.

At Wau did somebody have a still going or were they brewing their own beer or what?

Well, I did mention, I think, earlier in the tape that two of our fellows built a still - Rocky Rochester and Locky McLean. Both are since dead. Rocky was a chemist, although I don't think he was a certified chemist - he didn't go through to university - but he used to work in a chemist's shop and was very knowledgable and he used to assist our pharmacist from time to time. He was a bit of a character too - Rocky. He used to play football as a centre, and he was a reasonably slight bloke but he had a wonderful swerve and so on, you know, and was part of the winning team. As a matter of fact the team became so good that - and the CO insisted on everyone in the team playing football, that is, for training purposes, when the opportunity came - they built a second team. And the second team was almost as good as the first, you know, so ... I was given the job of getting the equipment for them. I was sent into Lae and went to the necessary stores area and ended up with two sets of guernseys and shorts and boots and socks and all the rest of it.

What colour were the guernseys?

Well, the first ones were Australia's colours, strangely - they were green with a gold 'V' and the second team had a maroon one, something like Queensland's colours. I think North Sydney might have been maroon at one stage, too.

Didn't have the rabbits on them did you?

No, they didn't have the rabbits on them, no.

What about your various COs at different times, your commanding officers? You know, your unit was referred to for a while as Reggie's Rabbits.

Yes, well we had two COs. The first one was the old gentleman from the First War, Pete Davies. H. Whitridge Davies was his proper name but he was always called Pete. And ...

To his face?

Well no. I think those who knew him well would call him Pete, you know, some of the older officers - perhaps Major Holcombe, and the brigadiers and that who came to visit would say, 'Good day Pete', and that sort of thing. But he was generally, kindly, referred to as 'Old Pete', and he had his horse Sally which he was very fond of and would go riding on, and on occasions survey the troops from Sally. He also had a little car, I think it was a little Austin sedan, and I think it had a name too, 'Topsy', if I remember rightly - he was a funny old fellow. But he was apparently a brilliant doctor, in at least a theoretical sense: he used to work at Sydney Hospital as a professor of anatomy and physiology, so he was very good at lecturing and, you know, a knowledgable man that way. But after he left us, well, Colonel Reg Bretherton took over, and because he was a pretty tough guy, in the different sense all together from Pete - very strong on the discipline and the training and never spared himself - he'd go on the marches and everything else. The people used to refer to themselves then as 'Reggies Rabbits' or 'Bretherton's Bunnies' - they were the short term.

Where did they get this name, and how did the name evolve, do you know?

I really don't know. I think it was just, we're the bunnies in the army waiting around trying to get away to somewhere and that sort of thing. Or you were silly as rabbits because you were in the army, those style of appellations. I don't know which particular person was responsible for that.

What about your mascots?

Well, the one particular mascot that we had, was on the Tablelands and in New Guinea, was a sheep dog - a black and white kelpie and she was known as Sheila. Sheila was smuggled aboard the ship that took us to New Guinea by Big Jack Smith. Jack was a great footballer, and athlete too - he was the outstanding one in the unit - good looking fellow, something like Clark Gable - everyone fell for Jack, you know, he had personality. But Jack took the dog aboard the ship: no one saw it, he just put it in his kit bag. And then when he got in his cabin he would, when he heard an inspection coming, he'd put her in a locker, or a wardrobe, behind a mattress that

happened to be in there, and she stayed quiet - 'doggo' is not a bad word for that is it? She'd stay doggo until the inspection was over. They'd get her up on deck of a night time when no one could see her. And then we got her ashore in New Guinea and she was there until just before we came home - always followed the troops everywhere.

What about the rabbit?

I don't recall having a rabbit. Some said we did: and I'm sure it wouldn't have been a live rabbit so maybe they got a furry toy one from somewhere and that was used. I dare say it was.

Well, there was a picture in one of those albums there with the two mascots, and one is referred to in inverted commas as 'the rabbit'?

Yes, well I'll have to have a look at it to refresh my memory. Probably be Les Franklin who was the lance corporal in our little 'I' section - intelligence section - and he was a bit of a character in many ways, and a commercial artist by trade and helped illustrate a few things in our little newsletter that we produced in Wau.

What was that called?

The '9th Bully Tin OBE', the OBE standing for either 'Our Blokes Efforts' or 'Omnis Bovis Excreta'.

And who was the editor of this magazine?

Well, I did it, I started the thing up, the novelty of getting the people involved in writing their own little stories and, you know, people look forward to having it come out - bit of news in it?

How did you print it?

We produced it on a little hand duplicating machine that Ray Bright, the carpenter, built. We had a roller what used to dip in printer's ink - a tube of ink we had - and then roll it over the silk screen and produce the pages one by one. And Les Franklin and a couple of others, Tony Connors, used to colour the cover. Les would draw something on a cover, such as a jeep ambulance and the MDS building in the background, something of that nature and ... or a couple of flags or something, and they'd tone them up with a bit of red, yellow and blue and water paint - it seemed to liven them up, and the mob would send them home, and read them.

How did you go for mail during your time in New Guinea?

Pretty well. The army postal service would arrange for mail to be delivered and collected, and mail went out - I forget how

often - but whenever there was a plane or some means of getting the ... In Moresby it would have gone out every day, but in Wau it was just a matter of when the planes were next due out to arrange for it to go back. So, you know, they weren't deprived more than once a week at any rate.

What about other officers with you. There were other doctors as well as Colonel Bretherton wasn't there?

Oh yes. Well there's twelve officers in all, and at headquarters company we had the CO, and a major, who was generally Major Holcombe, and a captain - so they were all medical officers. Then, attached was the dental officer and the Quartermaster, who was a captain, and the pharmacist who was a lieutenant.

What about Major Dunlop?

No. A Company had Major Thomas and Captain John Sands who were medical officers, and I was the bearer officer. And then B Company had Major Heffernon - Rick Heffernon - and they seemed to have a second officer, always a second medical officer. They changed them a fair bit: fellows came and went, moved on for various reasons. Doug Dunlop was the bearer officer in B Company. And then we had a transport officer who was attached from the Army Service Corps. So that made the total of the officers. Also attached to headquarters company would be a warrant officer class 1 who was the Regimental Sergeant Major - Harry Reid, in New Guinea, was the man there.

That was just about your compliment then?

Well, of officers and warrant officers. There were two other warrant officers. The RQMS - Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant - Fred Sommerfield; he was a WO2; and Bill Peters was the warrant officer class 2 in the transport.

You mentioned an intelligence unit there. What did they do exactly?

Well, it was mainly to have a supply of maps and to encode and decode messages and so on, and arrange for wires to be sent, as they said, telegrams to be sent. I'd actually done a school in that, and I used to be involved on occasions in that, but Les Franklin spent more time doing it. So he'd keep the CO's map up to date. We'd send messages back of where the troops were in front of us and so on, and the maps would be brought up to date so as we get an idea of where the front line was, and what line of evacuation was needed for casualties.

When you went up on a survey ... from Wau wasn't it?

Yes.

How far up did you go?

Well, the CO was asked if he'd send somebody back along the track that had been built from Bulldog to Edie Creek, so he asked me to do the job and take some troops with me. So we went up - I suppose we took roughly about four days. We would have been driven by jeep up to Edie Creek and then we had to carry our packs and so on - and we had maps. And Les Franklin came with us to draw little maps of the area. We marched as far as we could that particular first day and then we set up a - I'll call it a staging camp - and we slept the night there. And the people, everyone except Don Kennard, who was a lance corporal: Don Kennard and I went on further the next day but the others stayed at this staging post with some supplies and so on. There was the two Rose brothers, Athol and Lester; two Smith brothers, Keith and Eric; and Les Franklin ... it could have been one or two others; and Don Kennard and I. Well, we went further towards Bulldog the next day. It was climbing up over the Owen Stanleys further, and we got to the top of the rise and had to proceed through an unusual area called the Mossy Forest - a most eerie sort of a place with moss and very cold, and very unusual because there was very little bird life or anything there. It reminded you of something out of Walt Disney, you know, in the feeling of the place. So we went through that, and we could see down the track towards Bulldog; and so we had to give it away at that stage - we'd done as far as we needed to do - and made our way back to our staging camp; and then walked back from there to Edie Creek the next day and spent the night in the huts of the gold miners in Edie Creek, for that night; and then back to Wau, to our headquarters. And then had to make a report, a written report.

When did the worst of the fighting happen, when you were having to get the most casualties out?

I think, as far as we were concerned, the biggest fighting was in the area from Shaggy Ridge and Dumpu and Lae - that area. Of course the ... we'll call it the high command, determined to capture Lae. They sent the 7th Division in from the west and the north I suppose, trying to picture the map. And the 9th Division was coming up from the other side of Lae, and they captured Lae after a period. You know, it was pretty heavy fighting, and it's been well written up on, so far as Shaggy Ridge was concerned and ...

How close were your people?

Well, we had a group of - Major Holcombe - and I think he had eight other people with him. Sergeant Milburn, and Les Franklin was on that one too. They were as close as you can get behind the actual wounded themselves. And they'd be brought back to where our fellows were, and some of them would have picked some of the wounded up themselves and treated them and evacuated them further back by plane, generally, from there. But there's no road away from Lae at that time. They

couldn't even get over the Markham River to get them back to us in Wau, although after a while that did happen.

Where did you go from there?

Well, we'd been in New Guinea a fair length of time by now, and the powers that be determined to send us back. We'd been away about fourteen or sixteen months.

Did you go up to Lae?

Yes, I personally went into Lae, yes.

What was it like when you went in?

Well, it was a town that had been damaged somewhat by the fighting, obviously - by artillery and land mines and the rest of it.

Did you set up up there?

Yes. We had a group in Lae under Doctor ... I just can't think for the quick moment - I'll pick it up in a minute. Mainly, for a start, it was the people who had been up at Dumpu and so on. They'd moved down with the forces into Lae and then they were relieved by troops from Wau, and there were other little staging posts - the Busu medical post and so on, which had a native hut style operation roof with provision for stretchers, camp stretchers, and so on. And Len Pearson, who was from my Company - staff sergeant - he was in charge of that for a period. So it was a fairly mixed in ... As I said, we were pretty much a broken up unit compared with the normal job of a field ambulance. Most field ambulances are attached to a brigade and they to them, but we were called corps troops instead of brigade or division troops. So we had a wider range and we were split up to do different things. And a part of the unit was back in Australia - only an ambulance train, you know. So it was a pretty mixed bag but they had many different experiences in their own way.

Well, were you in action at all where you had to be responsible for helping in rescues of people?

Not really, no, I wasn't.

Were you bombed or shot at?

Yes, the planes came over Moresby and over Wau and Lae and these sort of areas, so there was a degree of bombing or strafing. But later on I was in a more traditional role. When I'd left the 9th Field Ambulance I was transferred to the 2/4th Field Ambulance which had been in the Lae campaign, and they looked after the 25th Brigade. I was in the landing at Balikpapan then, with the 7th Division. And, you know, I was involved there: I had to take stretcher bearers up behind each

of the battalions, and they were involved in getting the wounded and treating them and bringing them back to ... I established an advance dressing station and left a sergeant and some other ranks there to run that. And then they would do the best they could, and we would evacuate them back to our main dressing station down the track towards Balikpapan. But that was the more traditional role. So in that case I was in the landing and there was the shelling from the warships and the planes, and the Japs were replying - so, you know, it was more what you would have expected.

How did you get ashore then?

We came ashore in landing barges, yes, came over the side of the ships. We came from Australia by ship to Morotai, and that was what you might call, again, a staging camp and embarkation point. There was a lot of Americans on the island and when the Australians came they pushed us through the perimeter to where the Japs were supposed to be. And eventually we embarked in the big harbour that was at Morotai and sailed for Balikpapan.

Was this before or after the Moresby, Lae and Wau?

All after the New Guinea campaign was pretty well finished by that time. As I say, I'd come back to Australia - the unit had come back to Australia - and had been placed at Rutherford camp in the Newcastle area. And we were there for, I don't know, two or three weeks, and then different people were posted to other units. The officers were nearly all posted away to different units. Major Thomas went to ... and I think Doug Dunlop went to New Britain, and I went to Borneo and Vic Milburn, sergeant, was sent to a different part of Borneo where the 9th Division was. So we were pretty well scattered: the unit was, in effect, disbanded.

So where were you when the war ended?

I was in Borneo when the war ended. I was there when they dropped the atomic bomb on Japan - that was in August 1945 - and they surrendered ...

Wasn't that in '46?

No '45, August '45 they actually dropped the bomb, and the war was over that month. The Japanese in Borneo surrendered to the Australians. In certain other areas, of course, they surrendered to the Americans. But in Borneo they surrendered to us. But that's not with the 9th Field Ambulance - that was the 2/4th Field Ambulance.

So how did you get back to Australia that time?

Well, with the 2/4th. I was bearer officer there, as I said, and they moved us back to take over from a hospital unit which was in Balikpapan itself, and sent the hospital back to

Australia. I was given the job of evacuating all the casualties that could be taken from the hospital, from Balikpapan, by plane - they went back by plane to Australia. Some later would have been put on ships and I'd have been involved in that too. And then, when the 2/4th Field Ambulance took over the hospital site, the Quartermaster of the unit, Gerry Butler, was sent back to Australia. He had sufficient points, as they said, to be demobilised and I was made Quartermaster at that stage. I was probably the last to leave of the 2/4th, of course. They gradually reduced us, and I had to get rid of all the equipment, most of which I managed to sell to the Dutch who had been prisoners of war - and they needed some. Well, we didn't want to cart it back to Australia if we could help it. The army said, 'See if you can dispose of it there'.

What did you do with the money?

Oh, it was all given to the army, of course, yes. But we didn't have much to take back except personal belongings and a few souvenirs and so on.

What do you mean? What souvenirs did you have?

I had a Japanese sword that we took from the surrender - and I've still got that at home.

What actually happened when the Japanese surrendered to you? Did someone surrender to you personally?

No, not to me personally. They surrendered to the brigadier in charge of the brigade at the time, and whatever Australian general was in charge of the whole operation. I seem to think it was Vasey, but I'm not certain on that point now, looking back.

The 9th Field Ambulance - were they disbanded? Did they still exist?

Well, they brought us back and took all the members out of it, and as far as I know it's disbanded. I've never heard anything of them from the day I left the unit in Rutherford camp. But it had been through the First World War, and continued on between wars until the Second and then, as I said, we've told our story of their participation in the Second War.

And Rutherford camp - where was that?

Well, it's outside Maitland in New South Wales.

Have you got any more stories that you can tell about the 9th Field Ambulance during the time that you were up there with them?

I can't quickly think of anything, you know. We had an unusual role for a field ambulance by splitting us up into so many parts. But there's not much you can do about it if the army decrees it - that's what you've got to do. I think it's a tribute to the commanding officer that the morale of the unit remained so high under the circumstances when they were broken up so much. But their training was good and, as I said, they showed discipline, even in sport. They won every rugby league match from the time Captain Elliott took over. And when I was in Port Moresby we had a softball team and there were matches played in Moresby. We used to go down from Lux Lane and we won everything we went in there too. And then when I got posted to 2/4th Field Ambulance the CO of the unit turned out to have been the assistant director of medical services in New Guinea, and he knew me and I got posted to his unit - he was the new CO. And we started playing softball in the 2/4th too - more for exercise than anything, you know, for recreation. That was before we went away to Borneo.

> Well can you think of any stories that you can tell about the Papua New Guinea native bearers for instance, or didn't you have much to do with them?

Well, we used them around the camps wherever we were. They were always useful, happy, sort of people, we found. And they'd do general duties - assist in the kitchen or around the hospital on labouring duties, you know. They kept the grass cut around the camps: they used to use a sort of a scythe they made out of hoop iron, and they were very adept at using that. They might have done a certain amount of washing - they'd wash clothes for the troops or what have you. So it was general duties sort of a thing, and they were fed by us and probably they were paid by ANGAU - Australia and New Guinea Administrative Unit. We had a very good staff sergeant before Len Pearson. Len was a good man himself, but Fred Richardson was a big guy and very popular, and Fred liked New Guinea and the natives. He put in for a transfer from the unit to stay in New Guinea, and he became a patrol officer with the Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit - ANGAU as it was called. And I know of nobody that's seen Fred since that day that he left the unit, you know. Whether he's still up there or whether he came back to Australia, I don't know.

> Well we're just about to the end of this tape. Is there anything else that you'd like to say that we should cover?

I think that you've recalled a strange incident back in Oonoomba where we spent the best part of three months waiting for a ship there because of all the problems with shipping before we left for New Guinea. And we used to go out on all sorts of route marches and keep fit. Fred used to call around for me every morning and wake me up, say half past five or something, and we'd go for a run for half an hour or an hour to keep fit. Sometimes go down to the beach and have a swim and come back. That was all sort of semi-unofficial, if you know

what I mean. But on one occasion there was a Riverstone, I think it was called Meatworks - certainly a meatworks, anyway, just outside of Townsville. And we went for a march to the meatworks and they showed us over. And Fred Richardson was always immaculate in his dress - he kept his clothes very clean - and Fred was looking around the meatworks and stepped backwards and he thought he was stepping on the concrete and he stepped onto a big pit of blood and waste and fell straight in.

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE TWO - END OF INTERVIEW