ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

TITLE: GEORGE WARNECKE - 9TH FIELD AMBULANCE – SECOND WORLD WAR

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE WARNECKE

INTERVIEWER: RICHARD RAXWORTHY

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

Identification: I am talking to Mr George Warnecke. This is the 9th Australian Field Ambulance AIF Oral History Project. This is Tape One, and this is Mr George Warnecke, Side One.

What's your full name Mr Warnecke?

George Albert Warnecke.

You grew up around here in Paddington?

Yes. I was born at the Royal Hospital for Women at Paddington on 15th February 1921, at four o'clock in the morning I believe.

And you grew up around here?

Yep; went to Paddington School, Glenmore Road School in the primary, and the secondary school at Paddington Junior Technical School in Oxford Street.

And your father and mother?

My father was a migrant and my mother was an Australian and she was on the Tivoli Theatre. And she was one of six girls picked at the time to go to America to act with Mary Pickford. And her mother wouldn't let her go - that's my grandmother - she just wouldn't let her go because they didn't have any escort - what do they call it? - chaperon: they didn't have a chaperon and she wasn't allowed to go. She often used to say to me she may not have got picked, but it was an honour to get sixth out of the whole of Australia - that would have been about 1910 or '12, you know, when Mary Pickford was alive. It would have been a wonderful honour for her had she been picked to go.

Was she a dancer or a singer?

She was a great dancer, a great dancer - not a singer. She was in the ballet on the Tivoli. That's where I ... I was a great dancer myself. You know, I used to ... ballroom dancing and tap dancing - I used to do everything. And because of me heart trouble I can't dance any more.

When you went to school, what did you like and dislike about school?

I didn't like going to school at all. I was ... I didn't like ... I think it was ... I didn't like the formality of having to be there. But see, nobody told me that you had to study to get a career. Of course, somewhere along the line I must have picked up something to make me a pretty sensible citizen because I reckon if you look at my bank account - and that

seems to be all that matters today - you know, I must have been all right.

When you went to school did you do well at anything or not?

No, no. We give a prize every year in honour of one of our teachers; it's called the Sam Cameron Memorial Cup. He taught me the school work, and whenever I present the cup I said to the boys and girls in the auditorium, I say, 'Well, boys and girls; I never came first, but I never came last'. And that's a good saying of mine. Always strive - we all can't come first, but don't come last. And that's what stuck with me all through me life so I never have come last.

Right. So when you left school where was your first job?

Well the first ... My father was a baker. He worked for Frank Bowman at Paddington: he was a chief dough maker there for as many years as I can remember - about forty years - and he had to retire in the end because he got rheumatoid arthritis and just couldn't continue. But he used to make me go up and help him work and make hand-made doughs and consequently I learned the trade. And previous to going into the war I had about four and a half years in the bread making industry, but I never got me tradesman's papers and therefore I wasn't classified as a tradesman, although I knew the game backwards.

Did you work as a baker?

Oh yeah, I ... The bread they make today is terrible. If society would let me use the old method you'd walk a mile to get my loaf of bread because I wouldn't use drugs - they use drugs in bread.

What do you mean?

Well, it's a long story. When you are a baker you've got to have a thermometer, like a clerk has a pencil in his pocket. When you're a baker and pastry cook you have a thermometer in your pocket because the secret of good cooking is temperatures. Now when you make a dough it's got to be seventy-two degrees. In the hot weather you use ice water to bring the temperature down, and in cold weather you use ice water to bring the temperature up - well I should say vice versa, but you know what I mean. You've got to get it seventy-two degrees irrespectively of what the weather conditions are because that's the natural fermentation period for the dough to make. And today they put what they call a bread improver - at malt loaf bakeries - and they don't have to wait four hours for the bread to ferment - for the dough to ferment - they make instant dough. You go back in your old days and you remember like Paddington had five bake houses here, Redfern had six, the city had nine, Waverley had four, Rose Bay had three. But none of that today because the big companies got the monopoly and they

make instant dough, and they can make bread a million loaves in one go, see. They wont ... The combine wouldn't let me set up in business. When I came out of the army I wanted to start my own bakery shop: you got no chance because the secret of bread making is, you've got to have yeast, and I couldn't get a supply of yeast.

Yet now it's all changed.

I beg your pardon.

Yet now it's all changed - there's little bread shops everywhere?

Yeah, but they're not bread wholesale factories - they're only bread shops, they're only retailers.

But there's a lot of bakers that bake their own - have their ovens at the back now?

Yeah, but they're not retail - I mean they're not wholesale - they sell retail. You try and hunt up a bake shop and have a wholesale bakery shop where you supply, to the hospitals and to shops, ready made bread - or to the house ... you know, deliver it to the housewife. You've got no chance: people forget that. In the old days you had the baker going around with the bread and cart, going to all the houses, like the milkman, because the bakehouse used to make the bread and sell it. They'd make it at a wholesale price and sell it retail to the shops and to the ordinary housewife. I still know how to make that bread, but I wouldn't be allowed to do it because I wouldn't get a supplier of yeast. They'll tell you that's all poppycock, but I'm not going to spend 5,000 or 6,000 dollars to set up a bakehouse and then be told I can't use the place because I can't get any yeast.

So what job did you do after ... How long were you baking?

Oh well, I was baking for all the time, and I used to work night shift with my father, and I got a job at Nock and Kirbys in the day time. I've always been a bloke that wants to make a dollar because, even on a Saturday and Sunday, we used to go to the Sydney Cricket Ground and collect all the bottles - lemonade bottles, you know. And I can remember Don Bradman and Allan Kippax and Woodford and Ponsford and Wally Hammond and Sutcliffe, and all cricketers of the great days. We used to watch them as kids, and then go and collect the lemonade bottles, and drag them up Regent Street and sell them to the local fruit shop. But later on I got a job at Nock and Kirbys, and I was working at Nock and Kirbys for a few years as a storeman and packer and general rouseabout.

Why did you leave the baking?

Well, I didn't like the night shift. I used to say to my father, 'I don't like working at night time because everybody's going out and we're going to work'. I didn't like working at night - I didn't like the night shift. He used to start at ten o'clock and finish at four in the morning. I was forced ... because he was my father he made me go to work, see, and I didn't like that night work. I still don't like it.

So what did you do at Nock and Kirbys?

Oh, I was just a general storeman and used to drive a goods lift and just work in a store when anybody was short-staffed - or anything at all, anything: what you'd call casual work.

When did you first join the army, or were you in the CMF first?

Well, when I was a young boy I was in the Scouts. First of all I started in the Lower Paddington Boy Cubs and then I joined the Boy Scouts. And I've always been a man that ... I liked the military, you know. I would have joined the permanent army if I could have had health, but unfortunately I was born with bad eyes and I've always worn glasses. I nearly went blind when I was about six, and it's only for a Doctor Brooks at the South Sydney Hospital - I used to have to go, every Friday for about five years, to get ointment put in me eyes and treatment to save me eyesight. And actually, when I joined the army, that went against me because when war was ... Actually, I joined the army about 1932, in the militia. And we had a coloured uniform - I was in the First Division Army Service Corps at Victoria Barracks. We had a nice blue uniform with two white stripes down each side of the leg and a drivers cap, and I always considered myself a driver in the Army Service Corps.

And what was your service number?

I can't remember the first one.

You usually had a second number after that, did you?

Well, of course, in 1939 when war was declared, I volunteered for everything: I volunteered for the AIF, Commandos, Empire Air Scheme, Canadian Air Scheme, British Air Scheme. I volunteered for the Gas School - which I did. You know, it came out, later on, that they didn't have a Gas School - but they did, because about 2,000 blokes volunteered and 1,000 went to Queensland - they got sprayed with the gas - and the other 1,000 went to Melbourne University which ... that's where I went - I ended up in Melbourne University. We did a three months school there and I tell you what, I kicked the day that I volunteered because it's a terrible ... God, I hope they don't use gas any more. I hope they don't use gas any more in this war that's on now because the effects of that gas were sickening.

Which gas was this?

Well, the poison mustard gas - I couldn't pronounce the name. But we did this three months school at Melbourne and they told us the treatment of ... how you treat them. You've got to bathe them in oil and special treatment - it was a terrible experience. I believe, in the end, the Japanese Government said they weren't going to use gas, and then they signed an agreement at the Geneva Conference that they wouldn't use gas. So, therefore, we were on a ship ready to go to New Guinea, and we got up as far as Townsville and we turned back.

Now, you got ahead of yourself because you were talking first about 1932, when you joined the militia.

I joined the First Division Army Service Corps, and I liked the army, see. And we used to do a ten-day camp every year and we'd get a rifle range shooting - I won me cross rifles which I was entitled to wear on me uniform. Of course they don't do that now, but in me paybook it's got the crossed rifles, which I'm entitled to wear. And we did the ... used to do the ten days camp at Liverpool - that was the only place you could do the camp. And it was good fun, you know.

So you were in the militia right through till the start of the war, were you?

Yes; I volunteered 1939. I was a very good ballroom dancer, and we were teaching dancing at George Robert's Studio in George Street: and word came through that England declared war on Germany in '39 - September '39 - and we were - I think it was a Friday night - and we were teaching dancing. I went to the Victoria Barracks on the Saturday morning and tried to get in. And they said, 'Oh no, you've got no chance, wearing glasses'. You had to have ... they reckoned that you had to have eleven points of contact in your teeth - that's how perfect you had to be. And, of course, I took that for all time: I thought that once you got thrown out you would never be allowed to join. And in 1940 they had what they called three months duty, and three months in and three months out - and I got called up on me three months in. And I volunteered to stop in what they called full time duty, to go to, like, the Second War - and I reckon that was good. At least I got in the army.

So did you go in the Field Ambulance right from the start there?

No; we went through the General Transport Company, and I went into having experience in the Army Service Corps. I was in that unit for a very short period and ...

Did you get a service number then?

I can't remember me service number because I never took ... But I know me second service number.

Which is?

N213189.

When did you get that?

I got that in 19 ... end of 1940.

Was that when you joined the Field Ambulance?

Yeah; we went through GDD, and I believe all the boys in Paddington ...

What's GDD?

General Detail Depot, at the showground. And all the boys that lived in Paddington went into the Field Ambulance because all the boy mates we had around here were in the 9th Field Ambulance too. Frank Lackey and ... he lived in ... I lived in 52 - I was born in 52 Paddington Street, and I live in 44 now; and he lived at 46 - no, I'm sorry, 42. There were the two Lackey brothers, there was Gordon Fairweather, there was a whole heap of boys all lived in Paddington that went into the 9th Field Ambulance. And I think it was just a fact of being in the area, rather than your health, because they got a bit desperate in 1940 - they were taking anybody. I got classified as B2, and because of me eyesight I went in the 9th Field Ambulance up at ... I think it was at Liverpool, and then we went to Ingleburn.

So when they took you in you went straight to Liverpool did you, or were you ...

No. When they took me we went to Liverpool, and then they went to Ingleburn. Through the General Detail Depot, at the showgrounds, we went to Liverpool and then to Ingleburn; and then I got assigned to the 9th Field Ambulance. And, of course, when they read ... When you fill a form in they say, 'What trade are you?', and I put down baker and pastry cook. I end up being in the cookhouse.

You didn't like that?

I didn't mind it because it was nine shillings a day. Because we were called Classified Group One Specialists, and I was after the money. I said, 'Well, you're only getting five shillings a day to start off; I'm getting nine shillings a day as a cook; I'll take it on' - I knew a little bit about it - which I did.

So when you started out there, did you they give you any training, or had you already had that?

I did a school ... I did a cooking school at - I've got a photo here somewhere - did a cooking school at Liverpool, which is a three months school, and they taught you how to make bread in a field oven, and a fowler over, and Sawyer ovens, and how to cook a thing which was straight elementary stuff: and I passed that. I passed that and became a Group One Specialist - gazetted it.

You were already in the Field Ambulance at that time?

Yep.

And who was the officer in command at that time?

Oh, a bloke called Davies, Colonel Davies, I think his name was - a bloke from the First World War, and he was still remembering the day that they had horses. And, of course, when we went to Ingleburn - the 9th Field Ambulance - we only had horse-drawn vehicles: we didn't have any motor vehicles at all. And old Colonel Davies used to, you know, ride around on his horse, and he used to call a ... have a muster in the middle of the night as though you were in the front line. And if you weren't on duty, God help you, you know - you'd get booked for AWOL. He was a fanatic on the ... liked to call the trumpet: blow the trumpet at midnight and get you up early hours of the morning and have a muster, roll call. You know, he thought he was back in the war.

Did you have any manoeuvres training with horse-drawn vehicles?

We did manoeuvres all the time. He had us out doing manoeuvres all the time.

But did you have to set up field kitchens?

I did, yes. We had ... When we first started off we had the old Sawyer ovens, which were like a glorified copper. But being a bit inventive I used to make a stew in the morning and I'd get some milk cans - you know the ten, twenty gallon milk cans? - and I'd cook the stew in the morning, and I'd put the stew in the milk cans and cart it around with me, see. And when we set up camp I'd have a stew ready in ten minutes. Always old Davies used to say, 'How in the hell do you make stew so quick?', see. But it was only through having a little bit of brains. I said, 'Well the blokes will be hungry'. Because those manoeuvres - even though they were in Sydney, in the Liverpool area, you know, in North Sydney and Dee Why and Palm Beach, and all them areas, as far as Narellan and Maitland - they were hard work. They did route marches and everything.

What sort of transport did you have?

We had a ... oh, I suppose you'd call it just an ordinary three ton truck that belonged to the local ice man.

What about the horses?

Well, they had the horses but they used to segregate them and call them the horse transport, and they kept them separate: they liked to keep the horse transport for the patients. And we had this old truck - Trolley - an old truck, and we had to do the best we can with that. I just can't think of the bloke's name - Matt Nolan - who you might have met at the dinner, he was in the horse transport, and I can't think of the other two or three blokes, but it's a long time ago. Matt Nolan was well known in the horse transport, when we first started. He'd tell you more about the horse transport than I would.

Did they actually go anywhere with the horse transport?

Oh yeah, of course they did. They had them all mustered and ready Colonel Davies ... you had to have the horse ready and you had to see how quick you could get 'em, the bridles and the saddles on, and the straps and everything. In the horse lines ... the blokes used to ... they were ... At Ingleburn they were in a second, separate area, and old Colonel Davies, he'd get the bloke to blow the trumpet and horse transport had to be ready in five minutes. And they were ready too - they were pretty good. But they must have liked horses - you'd have to like horses. Of course, that didn't last too long 'cause then, in the end, we got the modernised Chevrolet three-ton ambulances - like a desert type ambulance with a big red cross on it.

So where did you, after you'd been cooking around there while they did the training, so when did you leave there?

What, the 9th Field Ambulance? I left the 9th Field Ambulance when they were in ...

No, no. When did the 9th Field Ambulance leave Ingleburn?

Oh, I can't remember the dates, but they went to Narellan, Wallgrove and then, I think, when war was declared they went all up the North Shore. I was ...

Now when you were there, where did they go?

I was a sergeant cook: I had to control all the five or six areas. We had a cookhouse at Dee Why, we had one at North Sydney, one at Pymble Golf Course, one at the Green Toad at Frenchs Forest, and way up as far as ... I think it was Maitland. I didn't ... never got up to Maitland very much, but I was in control of the five cookhouses in that area. And they thought we were going to get invaded. We made our headquarters camp in Frenchs Forest and we did all the detailing from there.

And I wasn't a sergeant cook then - I was only an acting ... rank, I think you'd call it - acting cook. Ernie Rice, who was well known to the crew - all the boys - he was the sergeant cook, and he was very unpopular because he didn't have the cleanest habits. They used to be very worried about poor old Ernie that he never seemed to wash himself too much. The thing that used to amuse me about Ernie was that he used to ... When the bugle went you had to get up in a hurry. He used to put his shoes, pants and coat on and no underwear - and those uniforms are woolly. I used to hate to seem him get dressed like that, you know. But poor old Ernie was ... he lasted for a while. He come from the country somewhere - I think he was a shearers cook in the country - but he did the best he could.

Where did you get your stores, and how often?

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Where did your various kitchens get their stores and how often? Was it central?

Warrant Officer ... poor old Jonesy, he was there, and Freddy Sommerfield - I can't think of the other blokes name. They were the Quartermasters' Stores and they used to get delivered every ... I suppose every ... at least once or twice a week. I'm not too sure when the stores arrived: all I was worried about was getting the stores to cook for the blokes. See, the rations the army gave you, they reckon it was a first-class menu, and this was the best menu for calories and energy that was drawn up by proper dietitians - but it was awful food. We used to get the fish on the Friday: you couldn't cook it because it was frozen stiff, and even when you put it on the fire it still had ice in it when it come out of the cooking. It was terrible fish - Murray cod I think it was - and the boys used to hate it. And we had this egg custard stuff: and you want to make powdered milk - powdered milk and powdered custard ... ugh, terrible. The ingredients they gave us were shocking. You couldn't ... I used to get abused all the time, you know. I used to say the old story, who called the cook a cow - I didn't used that word - and then who called the cow a cook? I used to get it all the time - they used to give me Hell.

They didn't say cow though, did they?

No, they said a nasty word, see. And I used to have to take that. And we used to walk around with the orderly officer - Tom Kelly was one of them. Tom Kelly was in the orderly room and his job was, I think, was to formulate the running of the unit. Anyway, when it was his turn to be orderly officer I used to walk around to the different messes and say, 'Any complaints?'. And I had to go around with him, see, and then I used to cop all the abuse, say, 'You call this food', you know. Our main course was baked beans, that's why a lot of blokes ate baked beans a day. But we did our best with what we had, and it was that idea that, when I started thinking I said, 'Well,

the officers get better food than the men, and the sergeants got a little bit better; so we'll make a mess for the men'. And I saw Padre Ridley who was our Padre, our religious man for the unit. I said, 'I want you to become the treasurer. I want you ... we're going to get four bob a week off all the troops, and we're going have our own mens mess, and we're going to try and give them better tucker.' So we used to get the money and we'd go into Liverpool, for Ingleburn, and buy food that the army wouldn't supply, you know. And that went over very well. All the blokes said that Warnecke wasn't a bad cook after all. See, you can only do what you get and the army menu was terrible. They used to give that semolina porridge - terrible stuff, you know. You couldn't do anything with it, wouldn't matter what you do with it. And the egg powder - you couldn't do anything with egg powder. It was just hopeless.

I used to like scrambled eggs made out of egg powder.

Did you? Yeah, well you must have been a dietitian or something because you'd be the only one of about two that liked it. Because it didn't matter what - every trick you used in the book - you couldn't make that egg powder good.

Well, that's all we had over in England when I was a kid, you know.

Well, what about ... did you have powdered potatoes?

Yes.

You could do some good with that because we used to use tricks to that. I used to find with the egg powder the best you could do was make a custard out of it, and that went over well. But, you know, when I was at Ingleburn we had two wards of hospital. We had a dietitian for hospital patients, which when we was full: I suppose there'd be sixty to a hundred patients in there. Then we had the officers mess, the sergeants mess, and the mens mess; and then we had the horse transport section too, which, as I said, was treated separately in Ingleburn camp.

But you don't need to cook for the horses do you?

No; well that was up to Matt Nolan. He'd tell you more about how they did it. They used to have to feed the horses with their - I don't know whether you're joking about that - but the horses had to feed, because the horses was our main stay. If we didn't have good horses you had no transport. And I'd imagine that's how the blokes in the First War felt, because we had some very antiquated ambulances to cart all our section. When you think, in 1939 - I don't know whether you've seen that photo that Tom Kelly's got of the ... Did you see the transport department? Wood and coal, ice - that's all we had. The army had one little miserable tank. They used to have a tattoo on Anzac Day and all they could show was one tank and a

couple of horse-drawn artillery guns and one or two horse-drawn ambulances. Anzac Day tattoo was ... you know, we didn't have any army at all in that twelve month period. We came from a ragtime show to a proper mechanised army - they had tanks and everything.

So when did the 9th Field Ambulance and you leave from Ingleburn?

Leave ... oh, don't ask me that. I couldn't remember.

Roughly, what year?

I wouldn't know. I was in and off for about six years, so I'd say about 1943. But see, I never left with the 9th Field Ambulance. I got ... You asked me who our colonel was. Well, in that time Colonel Davies had to retire because he was an old man, and we had a new colonel called Colonel Bretherton who was a doctor at the North Sydney Hospital - he was our new colonel. And he was a bloke that had some modern ideas, and he updated the unit very well, I thought. And he came in - I think he came in when the Japanese declared war with ... I'm not sure of me dates, I think it was '43. Do you remember what date it was? About '43 I think.

I thought it was '42?

Yeah well, it could be '42 because a lot could happen from '42 to '43. You could be December '42 and February, March '43.

So you went up, with the Field Ambulance, to the Atherton Tablelands did you - up to Queensland?

No, I went as far as Narellan, and because Colonel Bretherton seemed to like Arthur Condon - he was a corporal cook under me, and he was a tradesman that had all these fancy ideas. And I remember American Air Force come to Narellan to be entertained, and they put on quite a lavish dinner for them. And me, being a bit of a shrewdie, I put Arthur Condon in charge because I knew he could do all these fancy cooking things like decorating cakes and things, you know. And I think Colonel Bretherton said, 'Well, this is the bloke for us', so I got boarded out medically unfit on me eyesight. I ended up back on GDD, and I ended up in Lae before the 9th Field Ambulance actually left - I just can't remember the date it was. But I ended up in the DDM mess attached to the army ... some army hospital - I think it was the 2/11th ADH. I never took much particular attention to it because ...

Where was that?

That was in Lae, on the Lae airstrip. And I ended up ... See, I never told them I was a cook. When I went through GDD I was that upset about leaving the 9th 'cause every bloke in that unit come and shook hands with me, you know. When you think of

'40 when you went in and everyone was going crook about you because the 'B' wasn't a cook. Then, when they left in '43 ...

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

This is Mr George Warnecke side 2.

You were saying about they sent you back to GDD. That was at the showground was it?

Yes. See, what happened, when the 9th got their marching order they got reinforced from the 1st Field Ambulance from Newcastle. And then they made their numbers up with an amalgamation with the 9th Field Ambulance plus the 1st Field Ambulance; and that's when I got boarded out - when the 1st Field Ambulance came in from Newcastle to make up their full compliment to go to New Guinea. But, like, there's a lot of things you could talk about. Like, some of our blokes volunteered to go on the Centaur which was a hospital ship. And it was under enemy action, I think, and nearly got sunk - that was off the coast of Queensland. Some of those fellows on that Centaur were 9th Field Ambulance members. And I volunteered to go on that but I got rejected because all through me army life I volunteered for everything 'cause I wanted to get away, see. And every time I tried to get away I was knocked back on my eyesight. I volunteered for everything you could think of, but the policy of army was you never volunteer for anything, but I did, I wanted to get away. And consequently I got the ... when one xxx the other day we were talking to xxx and some high ranking officer in the Australian Army asked me about my army experience, and I told him I was in the army in 1932 or '33, '34, and he said I'm entitled to an efficiency medal. And lo and behold, about three months after, I get awarded the efficiency medal from army records. And a lot of blokes say, 'Oh Warnecke, you shouldn't be having that medal', and I said, 'Well, ring up Melbourne head office, the records department, and they'll tell you whether I'm entitled to it'. And, of course, I got the Order of Australia for my community work, and I do a lot of work for the RSL - a lot of work that you don't publicise what you do because you don't like people to know that you ... they say you're grandstanding or that, but you like to help. I've always tried to help people: that's why I think I got on so well in the army because I really tried me best to do a good job in the 9th Field Ambulance. I don't think there wouldn't be one bloke there that would have a bad word against me, and that was for six years I was in the 9th Field Ambulance.

Now, when you left, at that stage in the proceedings, where did you go then?

Well, I went through GDD, and I was up on the Lae airstrip before I knew where I was.

So you were up there before the 9th Field Ambulance?

I'm not too sure of the dates but I know, when I got boarded out of the 9th ...

What do you mean boarded out?

Medically unfit on me eyesight. Colonel Bretherton got me boarded out because of me eyesight.

Where did they send you next?

Well, I went through GDD - that was ideal. All blokes without units went through General Details Depot at the showground and you got allotted to different units.

You were sent straight to Lae were you?

Yeah, we went on a boat, practically the next, second or third day.

You must have been there ahead of the 9th Field Ambulance?

I think I was, but I can't guarantee because I can't remember what day ... I think the 9th were in Wau, which is practically in line with Lae but more inland - we were on the coast.

But they went up to Queensland first, up in the Atherton Tablelands.

Well I don't know ...

Well they did, yes.

... I'm not too sure about that.

So you could have been there ahead of them - I'll check that. Well, when you went up to Lae what was your job there? You were cooking again?

No, I didn't. See, I never told them I was a cook, I just said I was in the 9th Field Ambulance, not thinking - it was more coincidence that I didn't say it. So they said, 'Oh, this bloke's in the medical unit; we'll put him in an RAP'. And I ended up in an RAP attached to a postal unit and the 2/11th AGH.

All right, so what's an RAP and an AGH?

Well an RAP is a Regimental Aid Post and an AGH is an Australian General Hospital.

So you were Regimental Aid Post, so were you attached to another unit then?

Well, I think you serviced about five units up there. There was the 2/11th AGH, and then there was this postal unit mob, and then there was an infantry battalion, and then there was about 2,000 prisoners of war in another camp, and then ...

Were they Japanese?

Japanese, Japanese prisoners of war; but they used to have their own doctor and their own ... so I never did anything with them. My job was to be on the airstrip watching for people coming in from Finschafen - at the time that was the front-line. We got up there, I think I got up there at the end of '44 when the 9th Division had cleaned the Japs out and they were just mopping up. All that was left in Lae was a bamboo-made church and a cordial factory - all the stuff was down to the ground. Even the first day there I think there was a dog fight between a Lightning, and the Lighting got shot down and we went and had a look at the wreck.

Where were you living while you were there - in a camp were you?

No, what in the army?

At Lae yes.

We were living ... we had our own little tent ... in a hut. A hut was made especially for us.

Were they pre-fabricated, brought from Australia?

No, I'd say they were made of bamboo uprights with a tin roof from what I can remember - bamboo or fibro roof. I never paid much attention to it, to be honest with you.

You were out at the airport, so what kind of transport did you have? A jeep?

That's where I learnt to drive: I had a 4x4 truck and I couldn't drive. I never ...

Was it American?

Yes, it was a Ford. And I couldn't drive, so I learnt to drive it on the Lae beach. There was a Japanese wreck there called the [Nullahang] on Nullahang Beach. And I believe the Japanese captain got caught in the crossfire and he ran the ship full steam ahead for the land, and he took the whole ship out on the land. I don't know whether it's still there but it was there for many years and we used to go and sort of explore it on our day off, because on our day of rest we had no where to go, so we used to go back on this ship and just go through this old ... A lot of people that were up in Lae would remember the old Nullahang wreck.

And then the Lae airstrip - they couldn't get a Fortress on the Lae airstrip - they could only get a DC3 or 2. ANGAU had a Gipsy Moth which was like a flivver but the DC3s would go on there a lot, but the Fortresses used to go to Nadzab. They had a road built from Nadzab back to Lae, and from Lae back to Nadzab, in a circle. It used to go across the Markham River; and the Americans started at one end and the Australians started at the other end. The Americans had tractors - you name it, they had it. Poor old Australians had picks and shovels: consequently we only did a little bit - a little bit of work at all. And that would have to be built during the Japanese occupation, and when they got them out, when they actually declared Lae, you know, not the front line. I got in about late '44, and I'm not too sure, I think it was the beginning of '44 when that big battle ... there was a terrible big battle at Lae. But we got there when they were mopping up.

Did you see any action at all yourself?

No, no action at all.

And what about bombing?

No bombing, no. We used to see the Fortresses leave Nadzab to go out bombing, and sometimes you'd see twelve go out and eleven come back, you know, ... ten. We did see a couple of aeroplane smashes because they couldn't land the big planes on the Lae airstrip because you had the Pacific Ocean one side and they had this mountain ... The Japanese had a big mountain there and they made it into a hospital. And it was all dug out inside the hospital and the Australians just dynamited it and just blocked it all up. I suppose if you went up there today and dug in the mountain you'd still see the hospital there, if it hadn't collapsed in. But it was well known that it was a Japanese hospital and they just ... the engineers just blew it up.

Was there quite a few wounded came in at the airfield?

Oh yes, we had them in there all the time. We had to make some ... one minute I'm the cook in the cook house and the next minute I have a bloke come in with his eye hanging out or his tummy open, you know: and you had to decide what to do, and I just used common sense. I mean, a bloke came over with his tummy exposed - you wouldn't give him a dose of castor oil. You'd get him into hospital and away you'd go. Couldn't get the doctor down quick, see.

Did you have any first aid training?

No.

None at all?

None at all, no. See, what they did they ... I remember the doctors taking us into this room and they had all the pills lined up in a box, and they had one to thirty-six. That's where the famous number nine came down: they used to say, 'Well, look fellows, if you don't know what you're doing give them the number nine'. And that was a pill to make you go to the toilet, and that's why they used to say, 'Oh, give him a number nine', and that would shut him up. And I suppose the doctors do it still, today. If they're not too sure what they're talking about they say give him such and such a tablet to shut him up because, it's a funny thing, if you don't give them anything they think you're not concerned. I mean, the black fellows - the boongs - used to come in, see: and the first experience I had with the boong, he used to have a bit of fencing wire - you know that fencing wire they nail the fence up? - and they used to flick it to cut the Kunia grass, and he missed and he cut his heel. And being a poor old sympathetic bloke I put on Aquiflavine, which is a modern type of iodine; and I put a white bandage on it. And he said, 'No good', he didn't like it. And I asked one of the other blackfellows, I said, 'Why doesn't he come back?'. He said, 'Because he doesn't like you', he said, 'It didn't hurt him'. You should have put iodine on, to make it sting, and he didn't like the white bandage. So I didn't know that. I said ... I just thought by putting the Aquiflavine on that I wasn't ... I know what it's like putting iodine on ... he had a decent old gash: it had to get stitches in the end. But he wouldn't come back, and the black people - the boongs - wouldn't come back. They said, 'No good'.

> Did you have much to do with the - this is the Papua New Guineans - did you have much to do with them at all? Did any of them work ...

Oh, not a great deal: not more than anyone else. They used to come in and go, and you used to speak to them and ...

> Did you use them for any work?

No, I didn't. We had our own orderlies that were in the DDMS - I think that's where they came from.

> So who did you come under at that time? It wasn't the 9th Field Ambulance.

No, I think it was under the DDMS. Actually, I got pulled up from GDD and they just put me in this unit: and as far as I know it was either this postal unit or 2/11th AGH or the DDMS, which is the Department of Medical Services Burwood. I think all medical units come under there: I know all the doctors did.

> So you had your own hospital there, or the army had their own hospital.

The 2/11th AGH had two or three makeshift hospital wards, and we had a bit of a bamboo hut which was hurriedly built, and I used to have to administer me RAP work from there and whatever supplies we got.

So what other cases - apart from the ones that came in on planes - what other cases locally?

We got a lot of dermatitis - dermatitis was very bad. And I remember, there was a bloke up there - he was a CO of one of the units called Ned Canavan. I think he was in charge of the postal department. And he got this terrible dermatitis, and at the time there was a new ointment called penicillin out. I was lucky to get some of this penicillin because he tried Whitfield ointment, he tried [Tripledye] - he tried the other makes to try and curb his dermatitis. And I put this white liquid on and it cured him. xxx, he said - overnight he got relief, and he always used to say, 'He was the best doctor I ever knew'. Anyway, in the end he had to go back; he had to go back because it wasn't curing - it was just giving him relief - it was a penicillin ointment. Another one they had was sulphanilamide. Now, I didn't know much about medicine at all, see, but the doctor told me that if a bloke came in with an open cut just get the sulphanilamide and just pat it on him, and the blood congealed and made a scab. And there was a special, I suppose you'd call it detergent, in the sulphanilamide that saved you getting the blood bad. You know, it was pretty hard for me. You just imagine you are six years in the cookhouse, and end up one year in an RAP. I wouldn't know one thing from the doctor from the other.

You must not have got any training because they thought that you'd already known from ...

Yes. And I never had the brains ... as a matter of fact I was sick of the cookhouse: I was glad to get out of it. And I said to meself, 'Well, I won't say anything. I'll just say I was in the 9th Field Ambulance.' And whack, away I went.

So they assumed you already had training?

Yes. And I tell you what; I didn't perform badly because everyone, again, used to pat me on the back and say, 'Well, you're doing a good job', you know, from the CO down to the ... because I've always been sympathetic, even now, even in civil life. I'm always a good listener and I'm always sympathetic to people, you know. I like to hear their troubles and to try to help them.

Were you a sergeant then?

No, I was a sergeant cook in the 9th Field Ambulance, and Colonel Bretherton would never confirm the rank and I would never ... I couldn't bring it to meself to ask him. I was a sergeant cook there for three or four or five years - I can't

remember the dates. But I reckon I did a good job, and he'd never make me a ... you were an acting rank for so long and then automatically you'd become confirmed. And I could never bring meself to ask him to confirm the rank.

So you were back as a private then, when you were back at Lae?

No, in an RAP private.

So what else happened while you were in Lae then? Did you stay there over the rest of the war?

No, we ... See, what happened, we had an RAP built on the Lae airstrip and the orderly room was next door to it. And the colonel came and he said, 'I can't get anyone to go on leave,' he said, 'Because they're expecting reinforcements.' And I heard him say it and I said to him - I didn't know it was a colonel - I just said to him, 'You wouldn't have to ask me. I'd go on leave tomorrow.' And he said, 'Who said that?' And they said, 'Private Warnecke'. He said, 'Tell him to come in here'. He said, 'Why do you want to go home on leave?' And I said, 'I want to get married. I'm engaged to my girlfriend and if I go home now I'll get married.' He said, 'Righto, you can go.' But you know, I was on the boat the next day, and then two days after that the 9th ... they've got volunteers to go to BCOF - British Commonwealth Forces - in Tokyo. And I've kicked meself ever since for saying that: I wished I'd never heard the colonel say that. But oh, I got a good wife and a good family. And I was lucky to have a good wife and a good family. I would have liked to have gone to Tokyo: I missed it by twenty-four hours, by opening me big mouth.

Volunteering?

Yes.

You could probably have got the wife afterwards?

Well I came home ... I was home in September I think it was - end of '44 ... no, '45 it was. And we got married and I've been married now forty-five years. Still married to the same wife, and she's a good girl; she was a nice-looker, a good looker, a younger girl, and she's a good woman, and I've got three marvellous children. So I can't complain.

And did you come out of the army then, or did you get back in?

No, I got boarded out, I got boarded out, I got very bad feet, see. As a young man I was a very professional type dancer. I won competitions and used to teach ballroom dancing and tap dancing and everything to do with dancing - I used to love dancing, see. And I always used to wear dancing pumps and, of course, when we went in the army we had these great big boots.

I could never get over them boots - my feet would give me hell. And I got boarded out at B2, as bad feet and legs ... not varicose veins ... cramps, I got cramps in me legs and me feet ache - and they still do. And, of course, that's what the argument about the pension.

Quinine tablets?

I take Quinine but there's no result. I've taken that many Quinine tablets it's not a joke. I still take them but I still get the cramps. And when I had the operation the part that they took the veins out don't ache: it's only the parts that they didn't take the veins out that ache - that's the top of me legs and me feet. There, see where the cut is, look. You mightn't see there, that's where it was, see, there? One there and one there - and I don't get the cramps there. But I get me feet; oh, the feet kill me, you know.

So they used your veins for your by-pass operation?

Hmm.

Now, when you were in New Guinea, did you have to take atropine tablets for anti-malaria?

I took Atebrin all the time, I kept ... and we had to take salt tablets too. I kept to me ... a lot of people didn't take them. We used to ... there used to be a good two-up school up there: we used to play two-up. I used to help a bloke, in me time off, run the two-up school. And we got a few dollars there, see. A very good two-up school in Lae, very big one too.

So when you came back after you got married, they didn't take you back up there?

No. They asked for volunteers who were going: they asked for volunteers to join ANGAU, which is Australian and New Guinea Volunteers - and I volunteered for that. They wouldn't take me. And Freddy Reggison and Bill Roddy, they volunteered, they got taken. And I believe Bill Roddy went prospecting and he found a bit of gold up there on the Bulolo River. But I did volunteer to go on that ANGAU but they wouldn't take me.

So what did you end up doing for the rest of the war?

Well I was ... I think I ended back at Victoria Barracks, but we only lasted there for another six months, I think, and we got boarded out - you know, they put you out.

They didn't really want you I don't think?

Eh? Well, it's bad luck, isn't it? Whether the powers that be ... well I volunteered for everything. There wasn't one thing ... The only thing I didn't volunteer was the provosts: I

didn't like being a provost. But when I got me discharge, being a truck man, I bought me truck. And I got married with twenty dollars and I ended up with eleven trucks and a very good bank account.

Well, what did you do with the trucks? Did you go around picking up, buying?

No, well, I used to buy and sell. And we used to ... I got a contract with the New South Wales Pawn Brokers Association and we used to pick up all the Pawn Brokers pledges, which I'm still doing, even though I'm on a pension and I'm not supposed to be working. I'm not working - I put the business out on lease because if they don't give me a TPI I'm going to go back driving, because one doctor says you're unfit to drive and another doctor says you can. And that's what the argument is about. I said if the doctor said I'm fit I'll go back to driving because it's a marvellous business, you know - it's fairly well paid - breaking me heart to let it go. I've got the two boys - I've two boys and a girl - and I wanted them to take it over but they said, 'No, we don't want to work like you do', because they think of it as hard work, but it's not hard work. It's not hard work at all. But anyway, to top it all off, I came back and they amalgamated the councils and Bernard Tree had nominated me for an alderman on the Paddington Council. And I got selected out of about thirty-five people - I volunteered again for it, see. And I was an alderman for fifteen years: I did five terms of three years each time. And I was a member of the Labor Party, a very good member of the Labor Party, and because I'd wouldn't support the homosexuals I got expelled. I went one year as an independent and got in again, and the second year the Labor Party wouldn't give me the preferences and I got defeated.

What about your ...

And to top it all off I got the Order of Australia. I got that from the Governor General down at Parliament House, and that was a very proud moment for me to take the wife down and the family and get presented with the Order of Australia. And I reckon that was the best thing that happened.

That was to do with your work for the RSL, wasn't it?

No, it was to ... the award says, 'For work for the community'. That's as alderman and the RSL. But I'm still ... I've been Vice President of the RSL for many years and I'm still a member of the RSL, and I've been a member there for about forty years.

So you were a member of the RSL straight after the war?

Hm.

And were you active at the RSL at that time?

No, because I always took the blue ... because I've never been a man to drink; and I've never been a man to gamble. And I said ...

What about the two-up?

I played two-up, yeah, but that, to me, is the only game to play if you want to be a gambler. Not only that, you had the boring effort of having nothing to do, so you turned your hand to two-up because it gives you some interest. But coming back to civil life I never played the poker machines and never gambled much, although I used to be ... I had an adopted brother who used to run a book, an SP book, at Victoria Barracks - and it was taboo to go in there. And because I was a baker and pastry cook I used to make doughnuts and fancy cakes, and we used to push them in the bike - that was the reason to get into the showgrounds ... to get into the Victoria Barracks - and we'd take the bets. We had that ... I don't know whether it's illegal - I suppose after all these years you wouldn't get into trouble - but we were holding about four hundred pound, which was a lot of money in them days, in 19 ... what did I say ... oh I don't know what year it was. It was very early.

You were a bookie's runner?

No, I was a bookie meself. I used to finance ... My adopted brother was very good on mathematics: he could lay out all ... look, I can see him doing it now. He'd lay out all the bets: he'd know how much percentage to lay off. We never lost; we never lost. And we'd be millionaires today if he hadn't got tied up with some blonde and he took all the money and nicked off. I had to pay all the debts because I'm a man of principle: I couldn't bear walking around knowing that I owe people money. So I paid about six hundred pounds out in debts, out of me own pocket, to keep me name good, which I did. But we had a very good thing there going. So I was a bit of a gambler there but I always seemed to be, you know, the bookmaker rather than the punter because my experience in that time - a punter never wins. You only lend them the money.

Well, what about your work with the RSL? How long have you been ... Are you president there are you?

No. I've been vice president for about twenty years. I never want to be the president because there's too much haggling about the whys, and there's too many legal laws about what you can do and what you can't do. I never want to be the president because A, I work for meself and I didn't have the time, and to be a good president you've got to be up the club every day. And not only that, the wife wasn't too happy about me being in the RSL at all because you have to give up a lot of time. You know, we go two or three meetings every week. And anyone who got sick ... I've done a lot of social work with people that have got sick - gave them money, got them wheelchairs, walking

sticks, transported them, moved them. If I knew you were a friend you could get moved for nothing.

What about the ... do you have to be duty ...

Duty Officer every Friday night - I'm Duty Officer now every Friday night. They actually changed the roster, which I'm not too happy about, but I was Duty Officer every Friday night for, oh, at least twenty-five years.

That's quite a progressive club. I mean, you know, the auditorium - you put on good acts there and such like?

Oh yes, they're very good - it's always been good. We had ... President Russ Cook was a good president, and then we've got another new president. When Russ Cook died we got Trevor Flanagan. And they're doing a good job.

Who's idea was it to book those type of acts?

Well, it's the secretary-manager. See, he's got to run the club, but he's got to run it at a profit. A lot of the acts they put on there we don't like. Say, a typical one is Rodney Rude, see. From your heart you don't like it, but from the pocket you've got to like it because with taxes and expenses and overheads and all the things that go with running a club you've got to close your eyes or keep your fingers crossed that performances like Rodney Rude are acceptable. But I tell you what, wishing from your heart you wouldn't have it in the place because they're actually - the performances - are the worst type of English language you can get. You wouldn't take your wife there. Have you ever heard him? Terrible, terrible performance. And not only that, it's not the words he uses, its the way he uses it. If a bloke called you those names in the street you'd job him. I would.

They have some good acts there as well: they have jazz.

Oh, yeah, we've had all the top liners, you know, there from ... I didn't expect you to ask me that question but we've had top liners there, you know. I worked for Sammy Lee when I came back from the war. I bought the truck, like I told you, and I worked for Sammy Lee - I was fifteen years with Sammy Lee. And I knew all the nightclub owners and everything associated with a nightclub. And I'd often get asked to tell the story but I don't want to because it's ... I just don't want to - I'll leave it to your own discretion. In all the time I was there I was in everything and I never got booked for doing anything dishonest, and I kept me name straight. I did the carrying and handled thousands of pounds for them and never took a halfpenny. I can look you in the face and say, 'I never took a halfpenny off them' - and you could have done it easy. And there's tales you could tell about the nightclubs you wouldn't believe. But that's all I'll say about the nightclubs there.

You could write a book.

Our man that we had, the Latin quarter. I remember Jerry Colona and Johnny Ray and all the top American - he started that - he started that. And the nightclub area was very good - it's not like the young people ...

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE - SIDE ONE

You mentioned that in the 9th Field Ambulance a knife thrower.

We had a lot of characters in the 9th Field Ambulance. One particular bloke was a bloke called Pancho. He was a professional man from the circus. I don't know whether it was Worth's Circus or Coles Circus or what circus but he worked at a circus. He used to boast about working for a circus. And he always used to talk to you with a stilletto knife in his hand. He used to able to spin the knife in his hand and at a particular time he'd throw the knife and he'd hit the tent post. And he had 'Jean' tattooed on the four fingers, 'Mary', and he had dragons and crosses and 'love the mother' and different things tattooed all over him, see, and ... oh, I'd better not tell you that, he might get into trouble.

No, why?

One particular time there there was an Alsatian dog - and the bloke's alive to day and he's a member of the 9th Field Ambulance - and the dog attacked him and Pancho got a knife and, chzzzz, right through the dog's throat, and of course the dog was dead.

Whose dog was it?

Well it was just a strange dog that come into the place, into the camp. That was at the Green Toad. When the War was declared the 9th Field Ambulance went to the Green Toad as one of their service stations for ...

What's the Green Toad?

The Green Toad was a hotel at St Ives and it was an old private hotel and that was the 9th Field Ambulance head office for the Dee Why area because we were expecting the Japs to come into the war when they declared war in the early days. And we used to use that as we had a lot of bushfires up there. And we used to have the Green Toad, the same as the Pymble Golf Club, in that area for all that North Shore right up as far as Palm Beach. We used to patrol all that area for enemy action if any. But you've got to remember Bondi and Dover Heights got bombed. The Japanese bombed there. They tell me you could

have bought a house at Bondi for one hundred pounds - they all cleared out.

But Pancho was a very erratic bloke and he did some terrible things which you wouldn't like to say because you'd most like be liable you see. Take this for an example, at GGD Depot, 112th Convalescent Depot, which being a medical man we used to go around to all these different places and the reason I went down there was because it used to be where you got all your rations. And I suppose, say, take Fosters shoes - Fosters shoes was the shoe factory at the time - and they used to put a second layer of cardboard in the leather and sell it to the Army as A1 shoes. Of course they got caught and they got into trouble. Another one was Abco bread. I mean, being a baker I knew that when you roll the dough you've got to have two pounds two ounces for your loaf. Now, I'm not saying this, but I'm lead to believe that they were only putting in two pound of dough. They were robbing the Government or the Army of two ounces every loaf which is a sizeable amount. Joe Gardiner, another one, a meat factory, Sutton Forest Meat Company, they were getting people to sign for, say, twelve hundred bodies of meat a day or a week and they were only delivering eight hundred. They got caught.

There were a lot of crooks you could talk about but you don't know you stand liable. I might get me bloody head blown off, see. I'm only just telling you just as an example. That's only a few.

Have you got any more stories about the Field Ambulance?

Oh, not offhand. Well, Harry Harper. Harry Harper - what should I say - gay, he was a gay bloke, and we were on parade one time and he grabbed me by the balls and reflex was I jobbed him. And it was on the CO's parade and I got court martialled. And I said to Colonel Bretherton at that time, after the thing was over, I said, 'Sir, with all respect, it was done on impulse. Wouldn't you have done the same?'. He said, 'Yes, I would have, but I've to take me officer's word', and poor old George got court martialled and I got a shilling a day for six months. I didn't get me rank taken off me. They let me keep me rank - sergeant - but I only got fined and I got a shilling a day for six months. And I used to got down to Tommo's two-up and play two-up every time I got on leave and I used to bet on the grouter - that means to say on the third or fourth spin you have a bet and you double your money until he spins out. It takes a bit of guts to do because he might hit a [may] time. But I used to do and that's how I lived for six months on this damn shilling a day. Poor old Harry Harper died. Anyhow he was with Chamberlain, he was the unit's bookmaker.

And then we had Arthur Browning. Arthur Browning was one of the big bookmakers at Randwick and he used to give us a two-point start on race days. And he wouldn't take the uniform. He went down to David Jones and paid about a hundred pounds for

a taylor-made uniform. And he became a lance corporal - anyhow we don't know how he became a lance corporal because he never did anything - but I can only leave it to your interpretation of how he got the lance corporal. He was a big bloke - not a bad bloke.

And then there was Gordon Lapworth. He was an ambulance officer and he used to drive the ambulance, that was the motorised one, and there was a bloke called [Cokerage], and I couldn't tell you what he did because it could be libel. You see you've got to be careful today because you could get your head blown off for anything. And then there was Buffalo Bill and Captain Henderson, he was our dentist. The story about telling everyone but you've got to be careful because it may be able to be proven that they weren't true and I don't know how I stand, you see. But I used to know them all.

> Well, what about good stories that don't matter in that way?

Good stories?

> Funny stories, shall we say - tragic ones if you like. Ones you remember.

Oh well, poor old Bob Sidotti he was the first to go and then that Cokerage bloke, there's a very tragic story what happened to him but I can't prove it, I might be telling lies, see. With a tragic story you've got to be careful because, you know, there's blokes that didn't like going to the war, even though they volunteered. Different things that happened. You can turn that machine off and I'll tell you but I'm not game to tell it because you might get me into trouble. I don't know whether I'll get into trouble now.

> Well, have you got any more stories that you can tell then?

Not offhand. I'd have to sit down and think about it. I had a photo but I can't find it. It was in my uniform before thirty-nine. We used to have riding breeches and leggings and the hat with the feathers in it and a bandoleer and a navy blue and a white stripe. We looked very becoming. We only did it actually because (a) I liked the army and, second, we thought all the girls would chase us.

> Did they?

Yeah, we looked very stylish. I was a big boy. I got in the army when I was about fourteen and I looked eighteen, nineteen, twenty. And you couldn't get the blokes to join the army - no-one joined - but I used to like the army. I volunteered to join a further army but couldn't get in. I volunteered to go away with the first mob on the Queen Mary and lucky I didn't go - my mother pulled me out, I was under age - and they First

Division Army Service Corps in the desert, every man got killed. Old Sergeant [Vuwees] and Private Butterworth - they all got killed. He was at [Donnar], he used to ride a bike. They all got killed. So because me mother pulled me out, she said I was under age - I volunteered - and never even got a chance to be accepted at Victoria Barracks.

Well have you got any more stories that you can tell of the 9th Field Ambulance, otherwise we'll wind it up?

No, I think you'd better wind it up. The only thing was that I'll remember to the day I die the day the 9th Field Ambulance left Narellan to go overseas and Colonel Bretherton told me, he said, 'I'm sorry George, you can't go'. I said, 'Why?'. He said, 'Because you've got bad eyesight'. I said, 'I haven't got bad eyesight that bad. You don't have a gun in the Field Ambulance'. And he said, 'Well that's my explanation'. And a certain bloke came up to me and he said, 'George, the reason they're not taking you is that Arthur Connan's a better cook', and he was, he was a better cook. I was big enough to ... but he was a proper tradesman whereas I only had four and a half years and I specialised in bread baking and pastry cook. He could do anything; he was a good cook - him and his brother. But I always remember that last day and that was the day nearly every bloke in that unit come up and shook hands. And I thought it wasn't advertised or anything and I thought, you know, if you don't get much joy out of life, it was a nice thing to do. Everyone of them blokes come up and shook hands when they went.

Right. Thank you very much Mr George Warnecke.

END OF TAPE THREE - END OF INTERVIEW

7/92