**ORAL HISTORY RECORDING**

TITLE: MAURICE KILKEARY - 9TH FIELD AMBULANCE – SECOND WORLD WAR

INTERVIEWEE: MAURICE KILKEARY

INTERVIEWER: RICHARD RAXWORTHY

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

Identification: Mr Maurice Kilkeary of the 9th Field Ambulance and this is tape 6, side 1.

I'll ask you Mr Kilkeary, where were you born and when?

I was born in Waverly; went to school at Waverly College; and I lived in Waverly all my life.

What sort of influence did you get from your parents? What was your father?

My Dad was a ... actually he started off as cutter in a clothing factory and finished up managing director. But unfortunately, when the depression came and the clothing factory went blomp. So, we - my brother and I - both went to Waverly College and both were well educated, although with the end of the depression no one had any money, and any dreams we had of going on university. I thought I might do medicine - my brother wanted to do something else. But we had to go, and xxx we both left school. Both went into the New South Wales Public Service.

What did you like or dislike about school?

I had no troubles at all at school. Luckily I was a good athlete, and I was bright enough to pass: I got six A's in the intermediate, and I had no worries with school. I was - what's the word - rather popular with the teachers because I could - without patting me on the back - I was top athlete in the school in the end. I played football, I played tennis and I played cricket; and the teachers liked sportsmen in those days. I got on quite well at school, really well.

What subjects did you like?

Well, strangely enough my pet subjects, which my eldest son has taken after me, is Latin and things like that, and French. He's a lecturer at Darwin University now and even now, although he's doing biology, he still likes reading Latin books. I suppose it's an acquired art, although my mother was a musician: she was a pianist and quite a well known singer in those days, vocalist - not popular stuff. But in those days they used to have all these concerts - practical concerts and Sunday concerts. She was coached by a chap called [Caspis] who apparently was one of the leading local characters in Sydney, why I don't know. She was coached, but she was quite good and she used to sing at all those things, and sang in choirs. And, of course, my brother and I both were taught. I didn't take it up, unfortunately - piano - and he passed everything in the world until he got sick. He died a couple of years ago - he was in our unit too. And he was a very good pianist he was, Jack. But of course as I got older my mind drifted away from

classical music to jazz and I finished up playing, before the war and just at the start of the war, in a rather well known jazz band - not a jazz band, a dance band, in those days.

Which one was that?

Oh, I played in the [Paradown] circuit. We used to play at Bronte Surf Club - that was our headquarters - and Mosman Town Hall, Rockdale Town Hall, Bankstown, Coggera Town Hall and Hurstville Town Hall. These dances were held twice a week. You'd go up there and play - it all depends what they wanted. At the surf club we started off playing in a four piece band. Bronte - I don't know if you know Bronte very well - it was rather a dullish place in the night time. Luckily, as I say, there was no hotel in Bronte, the hotels weren't open in those days, and whereas near all your other surf clubs in Sydney were hotels and you'd go up and have a drink afterward. But Bronte you couldn't have a drink so you'd just wander home, have a milk shake and things like this. So when I started playing music - I learnt percussion for quite a while from one of the instructors in town - and went on to playing dance music. We started off playing locally in the surf clubs: we had, more or less, a contract to play in Bondi Surf Club, Bronte Surf Club, Tamarama Surf Club, Clovelly Surf Club - we used to do it alternate weeks. Then we started Sunday night dances, got permission from the police, and it finished up one of the social events. Every Sunday night we had a dance and we got a thousand people there, which in those days was a terrific crowd. And we also attracted - because of the crowd we got - we attracted good musicians. The only two big bands in Sydney were the Trocadero and the ABC: they had eighteen piece bands, and we had an eighteen piece band down Bronte; and people would come. And also musicians loved to play with big bands, so we could take our pick of what musicians we had.

Did you have any well known musicians, or musicians who played with you who later became well known?

Well, some of our ... Unfortunately, or fortunately, I had to give it away as soon as the Japs came in. I used to get leave on Sunday night and things, and some nights a week, providing the CO would let me: if I was on duty in the ward or something, well, I couldn't. Oh no, some of them, the musicians, when they played at the ... Even now some of them are still playing with Jeff Harvey's mob over at Channel 9, and some of them are in the ABC, and some of them are playing with - one of them I know is still playing with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. So jazz died; big bands died; and after the war, about 1950, the pop groups came in and no one wanted big bands - they couldn't afford them.

They want them now but they can't afford them.

Well, I don't think they want them now, actually, because the coming generation I know - I've got all my own daughters - they

think the stuff I've got is ... I've got records running out of my ears, the old stuff, 78s and LPs and that, and they don't want to listen to that. They want ...

It's coming back, 'Pardon me boys' and ...

Ah well, but by that time it'll be too late. I'll will all my stuff to the ABC because I often listen to the old stuff on the ABC.

And where did you work?

I started off at the Land Titles Office, in June 1945, and I retired from there in 1960 in the same department, in the same branch, in the same room.

What were you doing before the war?

I started off in the Land Titles Office and I retired from the Land Titles Office.

You started in what year at the Land Titles Office?

'35 I started off.

'35 right.

I retired in '80.

Did you do any CMF training, any compulsory training, before the war?

No, I wouldn't have, no, I was too busy. I was in a surf club - been a surf club MO for thirty years. I had music twice a week - well three times a week or four times a week - it all depends what was on. I played football for Eastern Suburbs, as I got on, and I was just starting, just got up to first grade and the war started: so I went in the army and then that mucked up everything.

You mentioned to me, before we started the tape, that you had been riding horses all your life. Where did you ride horses?

Well actually I've lived in Waverly all my life and where I live, at the back of our place ... Do you know Waverly at all, down where Lugar Brae Methodist Church is? Well from Lugar Brae Methodist Church, down Lugar Brae Avenue, right down that whole area, was at one stage owned by a horse trainer called Albert Woods. His place was a big place in Bronte Road which Rupert Fieldhouse bought from him. And the whole area at the back of our house - I lived in Lugar Street, or mum did and I did - the whole back of our house was a training area. There was about, he had about forty boxes there - I was about eight, seven. The girl, Cathy, who was the daughter of the house, we

went to school together, and I'd pop over the fence and help them feed the horses, wash the horses, and I didn't frighten the horse: I wasn't frightened of horses whatsoever. And then later on when he unfortunately - well not unfortunately - he moved to Warwick Farm because too many cars ... because they used to walk their horses from there down to Randwick Racecourse. Well, you can just imagine - there was one car a day used to go along Birrell Street and Carrington Road in those days. But he couldn't do it so he had to sell out, and that was sub-divided and built on. And then I found out that an aunty of mine - you know these aunties in our days, four times removed or something - they lived in Canberra, in Acton, on the river, back before, of course, Lake Burley Griffin was built. They had a nice little property down there, and they had horses. And the girls used to come up to our place for the house holidays and I used to go down there, and I used to ride horses. Strangely enough, as I said earlier - you saw that photo of Pete Davies - and when I found I was going in the army I took a week off and went down riding all the time.

Were you conscripted or did you enlist?

I got called up, yeah.

What was your number, can you remember?

57383.

That was the only number you had during the war?

When I joined the army I had AIF it was 117551, I changed that over, yes.

And so when you joined up you already thought that you were going to go into the ambulance did you, or what?

Well no. I'll tell you how that happened. I was in the surf club, as I say, and we had our MO of the surf club - you know, every surf club's got a volunteer MO - and he asked me, about 1938 - I was working in the ... we used to have a sort of an ambulance room there - and he said, 'Would you go and get a first aid certificate because you can help me if anything happens on the beach': so I went and got one. And I went for my medical, and who should be the medical officer - I didn't even know he was in the army - was Eddy, his name; John xxx Eddy his name was. He used to live out on Bronte Road there.

Where did you have your medical?

Over in Carrington Road.

Was there a special centre or was he just an ordinary doctor?

No, he was in uniform and everything. He said, 'What are you doing here Moss?' And I said, 'Well, I'm called up.' He said, 'Oh well, you're an expert at first aid.' He must have put down, you know, join the medical. Other people I know, and some of the boys from the surf club were with me, and they went to different things, but I had a first aid certificate so possibly that was the reason why ... But you do get a shock when you walk into a place like that and you see ... I was with him at the club on the Sunday, and then Monday you go xxx He'd be in shorts or a swimming costume, and there's a bloke all done up - I'd never seen an army officer before. And I said, 'What are you doing?' 'I'm just going to give you a medical.' Oh God.

So where did you go first? Where were you sent for your training?

I went to Liverpool. The first day I was there the Sergeant Major said, 'Where were you last week? I didn't see you.' He used to be a tram driver, a tram conductor, and hadn't seen us. I said, 'I've been in Canberra.' And he said, 'What have you been doing?' 'Riding horses.' And he said to Pete - that was the colonel - xxx, 'Do you want it?' And I said, 'Yeah, I love riding horses'. For three months all I did was ride horses.

They didn't give you any square basic training?

I didn't do a thing except ride horses. But, as I say, Pete, he used to ride horses all day. We had a sergeant - a bloke called Alf Manning - in the first camp, and after a month or something ... whether he got out or what happened, then I became in charge of the horse transport.

Who was your commanding officer there? You used to call him Pete. What was his correct title and name?

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Whitridge Davies. He also had a few blooming First War decorations, I wouldn't know. I tell you a funny thing about Pete. The horse I had - I had my own mount of course, since I was on orderly. I called him Pete, I didn't realise that. We were going into blooming xxx camp one day and we must have been out on something. We had two horse-drawn ambulances and a couple of GS carts et cetera, and out we went through the gate. Pete was in front of course, you know, he was sitting up like that and the guard saluted him. And when the guard snapped to attention my horse reared and I said, 'Sit down you so and so, Pete.' You never seen such a look on a bloke's face: I didn't realise. And when I went back to the line someone called me over and said, 'Don't talk like that'. And I said, 'I was only talking to the horse.' He said, 'I didn't realize that's what you were talking to.' (laughs) Trust me to put my foot in it.

Do you remember the Lieutenant Colonel Pete - old Pete* as you used to call him - do you remember his horse?

His horse name was Sally, I'll always remember Sally. xxx talking about Sally 'cause ... I got out after three months of course. We were only supposed to do three months. And later on that year I got another call up from the army, which I shouldn't have got. I wasn't remotely interested in the army 'cause, as I say, I had four nights a week music, two nights a week blooming either training for football or training down the surf club, and I just wasn't interested at all this sort of thing. And the swimming season was starting, and the surf carnivals were starting. And in November or December I got another note to report to Liverpool, and hey presto, I was in charge of horse transport again. And I couldn't work it out. I went and saw somebody - I don't know who I saw, and I said, 'What am I doing?', and he said, 'You're going to be a sergeant and get three stripes and be in charge of transport'. I said, 'I did my training'. He said, 'Oh, we called you up again, and if you want to stay in you can, otherwise we'll parade you to Colonel Davies and see what he says'. And as I say, I was not remotely interested in war. The war had just started, more or less, and I wasn't remotely interested in people fighting over in ... because I was too busy. I had some tickets on meself just having made first grade football for Eastern Suburbs, and I thought, you know, I might have a career as a footballer.

Apart from being a musician?

Oh well. The unfortunate part about football when your ... I didn't have any really tickets on meself. I played President's Cup and I got called up a grade, and then I got into second grade and I went into first grade and then, when you get into first grade - I was only twenty-one, I was only a kid actually and didn't think I was a star footballer. But when you make first grade you suddenly say to yourself, 'might be all right'. But the war intervened, and every Saturday when I wanted to play football, Pete used to let us off, but after Bretherton came - Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Bretherton came - he didn't like rugby league. A, he didn't like football, B, unless it was Australian Rules and C, he could see no reason in the world why people should get Saturday afternoons off to go and play football. So he was ... there was a few of us playing grade football, and he wiped us. But to get back to the first time, I ... to Pete, as I say - I'd better call him by his right name, Colonel Davies - and he thought it over and he let me out. I was only in for about three weeks or something. And I went out, and all we had to do after that was, once a week or something, down Victoria Barracks, you go down there and sit in a heap and go home again. And that persisted, or kept going, until the Japs came in, and then, of course, everyone knew they were in for proper.

By this time had you got motor transport or still got the horses?

No. All the time I was there we had horse transport.

Did you use horse ambulances?

Horse ambulances, yeah.

Did you go away with them?

The old ones you see in the First World War with the two bloomin' horses pulling an ambulance and with four beds inside.

Did you go on the bivouacs to ...

Oh yes, yes. You'd take ... we had three horse ambulances, we had three GS carts - that's the ones you used to take your tents and things on, and no motor transport at all: wasn't even a truck used to go with us. Of course, Pete would not let motor transport go with us.

Did you go to Bulli on that?

No ... well I wouldn't know actually because in those days you'd get up at three o'clock in the morning. I can well remember going to somewhere way past Ingleburn and we called in the Cross Roads at four o'clock in the morning one day and the bloke gave us some rum and raspberry because it was freezing sitting on a horse. And he saw us going by and he said, 'Are you thirsty?', and we said, 'No, we're freezing'. He said, 'Come and have a drink'. And whoever was with us, we pulled all the GS wagons up and the ambulances up outside and all went in. That's the only time I ever drank rum and raspberry in me life - I hate the stuff. (Laughs)

When you had the commanding officer there as Lieutenant Colonel Davies, was he the one that used to turn you out in the middle of the night, or was it somebody else?

That's him. As I say, he would not walk even if he had to go to ... from the tent at times down to the other lines you'd have to ... he'd call you up. You'd get the saddle, run down there, saddle his horse up and take it up and saddle your own horse up, drive it back, let him ride down and ride back and you'd take him back. That was Pete: he didn't even walk that far and he hated motor transport. But ...

But why did he turn you out in the middle of the night?

Oh, I don't know. Anything ... he ... was full all the time. He finished up cracking his neck. He fell down the stairs at the Automobile Club or something and broke his neck - that's what we hear anyhow. However, he used to ride that horse. He brought his own horse in: she was a great big sixteen hands mare, about that wide she was. And everywhere he went Sally went, and everywhere he went he was full. But, of course, all ... we rode from Liverpool and rode down to Holsworthy or rode down to Casula or somewhere like that. And all he used to do

was to ... they'd go in the mess. And I'd stand outside and generally hold the horses, and tied the horses up, and now and then, if they thought of you, they'd say, 'Go and get something to eat at the mess'. You might stand there for eight hours while he's in there. Then you'd come back, and he'd get on the horse, and you'd ride behind him all the way back to Liverpool, drop him at his tent, lead the horses back, unsaddle them, feed them and water them, and then you'd go to bed. And then, as I say, you might get called up four o'clock - he might want to go somewhere. He didn't like staff cars, he liked horses.

So when you were called up again, during the war, where did you go then, first?

Liverpool again ...

Where there still many horses there?

They still had horses, yeah. I think that must have been just about the end of 1940, and that was just the time when they were starting to ... But of course, at that time, that's when they were training with broomsticks for rifles, and things like that: they had nothing. Everything they had went across with the first three divs, six, seven and eight ... six, seven, nine divs. And they had other horses. Tommy Kelly's got a photo somewhere in his books there of cars: they've got ordinary cars and little cars and little MGs and Mini Minors and - what do you call them? - Morris A40's, and a fleet of army trucks. That was the transport section.

So when did you start to get the motor transport?

I've no idea. I wasn't remotely interested, ever, in motor transport and, as I said to you earlier, for some unknown reason ... You never met Bill Peters have you?

Not yet.

Not yet. Well he's very sick he is, too. He had some operations then. For some unknown reason he kept transport separate from us all, and no one was remotely interested in transport. The only time I ever got to know transport was when we got to Bulldog because we had five transport personnel, four of whom I never met in my life before, and they'd been in the unit for three years, and they were attached to me because I was the senior NCO at Bulldog. And, of course, when you're living with some people for eight or nine months you get to know everyone, and they were quite nice blokes. But Bill used to keep the transport separately from us, why I don't know.

So when you came back into the army ...

I came back into the army as soon as the Japs came in.

Right. Now where was the unit sent next?

Only we were at Ingleburn from what I remember. At that time they were busily ... they thought the Japs were going to sail up Sydney Harbour, as you realise, and they were busily digging trenches and blooming putting barbed wire all over it, Bronte and Bondi, Tamarama, as you might have heard, Vaucluse. They put it everywhere along the beaches as far as ... oh, about as far as Manly. And after Manly I can remember going in the army, when we rode up Frenchs Forest we used to go down to Dee Why to swim. The Japs could have sailed up there on a Sunday afternoon and there wasn't a soul to greet them. But Bondi was to do it, eighteen pounders and twenty five pounders and tanks and dug in holes and everything, and the whole beach was wired with barbed wire.

Do you remember going to Frenchs Forest - from Ingleburn was it?

Oh ... I think that was when the scare was on just after the Japs came in, and I rather fancy ... the experts will ...

Do you remember handing the horses in to the remount?

No. The only time I ever remember taking the horses back to remounts was after the end of the first camp I was in. We took 'em back just like the old days, you see, of the First War.

What was it like there? It was at Holsworthy wasn't it?

It was Holsworthy.

What was it like there?

There were horses everywhere. You'd think you were out the back of beyond ... man from Snowy River wasn't in it at that place. But I do remember one day, one funny day that - or two funny days - at Liverpool. A, there was a bloke called Sluggo - I don't know who he was. One of our officers later was called Sluggo - you met him, Captain Elliott. But this bloke was a remount sergeant, and one of the big black - we called her Beauty - mare, cast a shoe one day, and he came up to put a shoe on it. And I said to him, 'You can't pick her rear feet up', and he said, 'Anyone can do it ... mug, you watch me'. And he was ... the stables were here and he was about there. Well, she didn't want her back feet picked up; she just let fly. And the other only thing I can remember about Liverpool was, I was standing in the stables one day - there was a terrific thunderstorm on. And next minute I found myself standing about just where the sink is. The lightning hit the down pipe I was leaning on and I got a burn down me shoulder, on the sleeve of me coat, and I went flying. I'm still frightened of storms. (Laughs)

You should be fairly right then. Lightning, I understand, seldom strikes in the same place twice.

Well, I frankly ... Another funny thing happened in Bulldog. I was standing with our cook one day, in the cook house. As you realise, I got a bit of a line drawing of what Bulldog was like. The cook house was here, and it was built - it was only a native hut, was part of it - part of it was of tent fly, and there was a tree hanging up that we used to put the tent fly on. And Vince and I were leaning on this tree one day and she went, and we both flew, and neither of us was got hurt. So having got struck by lightning twice by that, you ask the wife; any time there's lightning I come in and shut the door.

She keeps away from you as well, I suppose.

Oh well.

Maybe it's your personal magnetism as they say.

I think the bloke up the top, he's given me two shots and I'm going to be all right from now on.

You might be a cat - nine lives.

Two lives is enough.

What do you remember of Frenchs Forest? Were you in tents there?

We must have been there for a while: we were there on the night that the Japs ... I'm sorry, the Japs submarine attacked Sydney. I don't know what happened. I don't know what night it was: I must look that up one day. I was in the orderly room, and we got a red alert and all the sirens went screaming off. I remember I ran around trying to look for an officer and I couldn't even find one, because in those days no one expected the Japs to come in the harbour. But very few ... I mean, everyone used to shoot through in the night time. Frenchs Forest was black as pitch - there wasn't a soul around. It was more or less an orchard area, Frenchs Forest was.

Were you involved in the bush fires there?

You beat me to it. We got called out a couple of times and I remember they put on the bulletin - local residents, after the bush fires - put a note on the progress hall or something, and everyone invited us down to have a drink. It was pretty bad the bush fires. The first one I got involved with, really, and there was no place for boys - bush fires.

When did you move away from ... was there any other stories about Frenchs Forest before ... where did you go next?

Non repeatable.

We'll it's those unrepeatable ones that we want.

No, no, there was nothing to Frenchs Forest.

Did you start a band down there for dances?

Well, I used to sneak home on Sunday nights, actually, and I had to give the week days away. And the Sunday nights we used to walk from our Frenchs Forest to Dee Why to get a bus to Manly and get the boat home, which was a terrific thing. Or else you'd go out the front some nights - and luckily there weren't that many cars around - you'd try and thumb a lift to Pymble Station ... I think it's Pymble ... and get a train home from there. Although I can well remember I'd come home and play, dropped me drums in at home - I lived two streets away from the beach at Bronte - and gallop on the train, and then I used to have to walk to Pymble. Quite a walk it was from Pymble, up from Roseville Bridge and up the hill. And there was never a dull ... Of course in those days there was no cars, and then no people used to be around till one or two o'clock in the morning. And I do remember one night: I walked in one side of the tent - luckily I had me coat off, and I must have had full uniform on - and just sat down on the bed, and the other end, side of the tent, came ... and I think to one of the officers plus the RSM, so somebody else came and did the search. I'd just walked in ... just made it. Got to be lucky.

Were you a sergeant then?

No, no. I was a Lance Corporal, I think, in those days.

Did you turn, when you were previously, the horses, to put you in charge of the ...

No, no. The proviso was, if you stayed in, I would have been a sergeant.

You didn't stay in?

But I didn't. I went back to being a gentleman. (Laughs)

So when did you move away from Frenchs Forest.

We went from Frenchs Forest to St Ives - Horace Street, west St Ives. Why they put us there in the Green Toad - you might hear some tales about the Green Toad - that also was a funny place. There was no transport there, but we found a way of walking from the back of the Green Toad, through the state forest, down to Gordon Station through a ... and you'd get the train at Gordon and xxx when we got playing for Sunday night at the dances down at ... then you'd get off at Gordon. It was quite a walk and a walk back. But why ... Tommy Kelly might be able to tell you why they sent them to the Green Toad at St Ives. But nothing ever happened: I don't think we ever rung the hospital there. One of our units was over at Pennant Hills

Golf Club, one of the detachments, and they were running a bit of a show over there.

Who was the cook? Did you ever have George Warnecke as a cook?

Well, frankly, I can't remember George Warnecke. I can remember George Bean, but of course ...

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

This is Mr Moss Kilkeary, side two.

When you went on next, when the unit went on from Frenchs Forest, where did it go next?

They went to St Ives.

And then from there?

We went from St Ives to Wallgrove.

Where were you at Wallgrove?

Well frankly, I think we were only just ... we were running a small hospital, from what I remember but we ... just general training. One thing that did happen at Wallgrove I remember very well was early in - this must have been early in '42, say March or April - there was a great surge of recruits getting in the army. That's just after the Japs came in and there was an influenza and - what's the other one? - pneumonia epidemics, really bad. It was freezing cold - it was one of those real cold autumns, freezing cold, rained every day, and people were going down like flies. As you've got to remember also, most of them had just had their tetanus and typhoid injections, which didn't do them any good. I think at one stage - you'd have to check with the experts about it - but I think we had about four hundred beds going. I'm pretty certain my brother, the first night he was on night duty, a bloke died on him, which makes you panic when you're only in Australia in Wallgrove, more or less - you don't expect people to die. Same thing happened, actually, the first night we opened ... When we got up to Atherton we opened a hospital at Ravenshoe. My brother Jack was on night duty the first night we opened the hospital, and a bloke died of cerebral malaria - he'd come back from the Kokoda Trail job, and the Japs decided to ... We were at Wallgrove and there we stuck. From what I can remember, possibly someone else whom you interview later will be able to tell you, but I think we were there for quite a while until that fateful day when everyone had gone off on leave - I suppose you've got the tale about this.
I wasn't in a hurry, I think I had a dance that night to play at, and I said to Ted Eccles, our orderly room sergeant, 'I'll

sit here for a while in case the phone rings.' And he went off and somebody else went off, and I was in the orderly room. And next minute we get a phone call from 2 Aust Army or something - they were down at Gowan Parade in Pennant Hills Road, just up at Pennant Hills Road - wanted to see Colonel Bretherton immediately. I remember the orderly room runner was a bloke called Jacky Rickety - he's still alive and lives up in Queensland or somewhere now - and I sent him down to get the ... And the boss come galloping up, and the next minute he started telling orders, you know, 'Get all the NCOs, get all the officers.' And I was by meself, but then Ted Eccles came back, and we sorted things out. That afternoon he went down to Gowan Parade. Whether he rang up from Gowan Parade or not I don't remember: I was running around like a blue tailed fly because there was no one else around, and Ted was getting orders from various people and giving them to me. And I was running down to the transport lines, and we got all the NCOs in the orderly room, and all the officers - anyone who was going on leave. But of course, unfortunately, I suppose about sixty percent of the unit had gone on leave, and they were on their way home from wherever they'd got ... Some had flagged lifts, some'd go down to the station, and some'd walk - a bit of this business. And they started picking them up from trains at Strathfield - the provosts did. By the time they got there - some got through - but strangely I think everyone turned up; they got them all back. We were told we were moving on Monday and the next day the mob from reos [reinforcements], Major Thomas, or now Colonel Thomas, and Captain Sands, and God knows, eighty or something from reos came in from the First Field, I think it was, from Rutherford or Newcastle or somewhere ...

What was reos?

Well reinforcements. As you said earlier, for some unknown reason the boss did get rid of quite a few people. I don't know why; I wasn't privy to any of those stories of why he got rid of someone, or why he didn't get rid of someone. But we were a bit under strength. That was the Sunday, the reos came in. On the Monday morning, early - 'cause everyone was back - the tribe came from 2 Aus Army and started giving out gear. You've never seen such a performance in all your life - it was all American gear, particularly the gaiters: and if you've ever tried to put an American gaiter on, it goes back to front to ours, and you had people walking around - upside down and everything they were. And the same night we left.

For where?

Well, we thought ... we didn't have no idea. We left the special train, hopped into Campbelltown or Narellen Station - I think they must have ran a train up Narellen or Campbelltown, one or the other. We got down to Central, they would have had a special train ... no, that's right, when they whop us on a train there we got up to South Brisbane. They ran us straight

down to Ascot Race Course. The next day we dyed all our ... They gave us khaki clothes - we dyed them - and for weeks after, every time you put them on and sweated you'd finish up all green. Talk about green people - Greenpeace would have loved it. And from what we heard, before we went away, we were put on - what's the word? - on four hours notice: we were supposed to be going to Goodenough Island as a medical ... Apparently, the tale is, what I've read in books there, that about twelve or fourteen Japanese barges were driven off course by a bit of a wind and they lobbed on Goodenough, which is in the channel behind New Guinea, round from Milne Bay. And some reccy plane went over and saw them, and they thought there was an invasion. They sent an infantry battalion over - which one I wouldn't know - and we were going to be the medical unit for them. So we were on full alert in Ascot. Jacky Woods, unfortunately, got killed. He was going to get his photo taken one day, in a tram, and he and Lester Rose and quite a few others were going in, and a truck ploughed into the side of the tram and killed him - which is a hell of a shock when you come from Sydney. And we sat at Ascot and nothing happened. Apparently they must have sent more reccy planes over and found that there was only these few Jap barges there. And the battalion got over there - I think we were going to go by destroyer - I wouldn't have a clue, actually.

And we sat for about a week, and then they sent us to a place called Grovely - where the dickens that was I don't know. Have you been to Brisbane? The train lines run round in circles up there. And there was nothing there - there was no soldiers there, there were no facilities there, and you couldn't get into the place. And we were there for a while - Tommy Kelly and the experts would be able to tell you more about it - and the next minute we know we're all on a lovely big - oh what would you call it? - air-conditioned train, and the xxx, lousiest, oldest carriages they got ... they put a train together just for our units. They had flat tops for the transport ... We had twelve new chevs*, four by four, you know, big ones, and we had new GS trucks - three tonners - and we chugged out of Grovely en route to the Atherton Tablelands.

How long did you stay up on the Tablelands?

Well, before we got there, unfortunately, as is happening now, the Burdekin River flooded and we spent, I think it was nine or ten days, sitting in these little dog boxes, like the old ... at Rockhampton station. It was really good, it was. We got to the Tablelands, and we had a big hospital running there at Ravenshoe. One of our companies - B Company, I think it was - took over the first hospital train - they staffed that. They ran between [Tolga] and Brisbane and Tolga and back, and they'd take patients down in the hospital train and then run them back and get another load, for a while. And our company - A Company - we went to a place called Rocky Creek, which was the other side of Atherton. Only got about thirty odd miles from Ravenshoe when we started a con depot, I think it was ...

What's a con depot?

Convalescent depot. Most of the patients who came back from New Guinea were riddled with malaria - that's the Kokoda Trail mob - and they put them in and gave them the normal five or six day course. And they weren't well enough to go, and they were going to given them leave but they weren't well enough. So our company took them and more or less built them up before they did go on leave. Then once we ... that died. I think another con depot actually took over from us, we being just normal garden variety soldiers. You just do what you're told - you know the army - you do what you're told and eat what you're given and go where sent sort of idea.

When did you go down to Victoria for a training session?

After that we went away up to New Guinea - that was in the middle of 1943 we went to New Guinea - and towards the end of 1944 another sergeant and I were detailed to go to form this AIF, or it was staff for this AMC training battalion. I think we went down there at the end of 1944 ...

That's when you came back from New Guinea and the 9th Ambulance had been broken up?

Well no; the Ambulance was still when I left, yeah, oh yeah. And it was so quickly done that they flew me from, and Jack McKellar - the other sergeant - from Nadzab to Townsville to Brisbane. I mean, they don't normally do things like that. And we were down there till September 1945 as instructors.

It's the next bit that I'm interested in now, is from when you went to New Guinea. When did you go from ...

Well, the unit went in June '43. I really don't know when they came back - towards the end of '44 wasn't it?

Yes, somewhere around there. Where did you leave from and what sort of ship?

Oh we went ... just the same old tub. We left from Townsville, we were run down by train. Actually, what happened, we were, I think, supposed to go on the Centaur: possibly Tommy can tell you about that.

He did tell me, yes.

And we were waiting at Oonoonba, which was just out of Townsville, and we waited and waited and waited, and the boat didn't come. Of course, no one ever heard that the Centaur got sunk until ... And we waited then, and finally transport came up and we went over to the island. Then the xxx unit was broken up then, not for intensive purposes, but one ... My brother went up in the end of the trail - he got scrub typhus -

he should have died, but he didn't. Jack McKellar, another one of the sergeants, went somewhere else - got killed. And Freddy Richardson went somewhere else. One mob went to Morobe and Nassau Bay; another mob went to Tsili Tsili; Tommy ...

When you landed you came into Moresby?

Yes, we went to Seventeen Mile, Rigo Road and stuff.

Straight away?

Yeah, hm.

Was that a tented camp?

No. Well, we stayed in MDS there, the main dressing station - we got a hospital, everything with MDS's in the army. We stayed at a hostel there and then, I say, from there all the various small sections were whopped away.

But I'm interested in your section, so what were you doing at that stage and what rank were you?

Oh, I was still a corporal; I never improved.

And what did you do in the dressing station? What was your job?

Well actually I was a ... my job was ... the only reason ... I don't mean it that way. I was a corporal because I was a company clerk for A Company, and I was supposed to more or less the expert on all the forms. I can tell you more about that later but ... Then the various sections started getting moved. The mob went to Nadzab in early September or late August, and mob went to Tsili Tsili in July.

Where did you go?

I didn't go to ... I waited until ... we stayed until August when we went to Bulldog. They took us down there. It was rather an unfortunate idea because they took us to - this is in retrospect -the section they sent was totally incapable of doing the job for which was available up there. There were two officers and me - I was a corporal - two lance corporals and about eighteen men.

And what was the job?

We ran an eighty bed hospital, and you can not do it with twenty men: and we had to. Apparently, as you've read from this stuff from Bulldog, the place was developed with the idea to put the road through from Bulldog to Wau and take all the stuff up because they could not ... they only had the one strip at Wau. All the coast was held by the Japs on the north side, and the only way they could get supplies up to Wau was either

carry them - they had a staff of 1,000 or 1600 carriers carting them up the hill; and it took ten days to walk from Bulldog to Wau. It was just like Kokoda Trail only worse, I think.

Was the road built when you first went there?

They were building it - they hadn't finished it. They finished it in ... I think it was in August, around the 23rd August. But I didn't know, until I read those things, that they had anticipated and were working on the road.

So what were you actually doing during the time with this hospital? Were you running the hospital, were you doing the paper work, or what were you doing?

That's a sore point. We got up there: there was some other mob there who had started the hospital - we didn't actually start it but we consolidated it.

Were you in tents or was it built as a proper hospital?

Everything there was native huts. Main ward was a great big native hut with grass roof. The officers quarters were there. The actual part of the cook house here was native hut with a tent fly over it, and the mess hut was a native hut. The boys were over the track or the road - they were in four native huts. Later on the dental unit came from 2/1 Dental mob - four of them. The second ward ... there was a bit of a drive in - dirt drive in - where you went over a bit of a water course and a little bridge and there was a bit of a round about there so the ambulances and people can come in. Here we had a Q Store and what we called a dispensary.

What is a Q Store?

Quartermaster ... that's where all the supplies - blankets, ambulances, tents, stretchers, anything you'd want. Well, as I said earlier, the whole point about this thing is, we did not know, first, when we got there - I'm certain that Captain Clipsham wasn't told, although there was a strip at Bulldog - no other plane could land on the strip except for Tiger Moths; and part of it was under water all the time. B, I was told that, if it was necessary, really sick patients could be ... To break in, I suppose you realise that they .. all supplies came down to the coast by steamer, then they were carried the eighty miles up the river by landing barges. There was a little village called Terapo which is more or less the staging area, and another big one, I can't remember the name, just at the back where they used to keep us ...

Did you get there by boat?

Yeah, that's the only way you'd get there. We were told you'd be able to evacuate bad patients from the strip, or send them down to the river and keep them at Terapo - I left an orderly

there, actually, to look after these patients - and then the coastal steamer was supposed to come and pick them up. After a fortnight he wired up, you know, 'I'm still here, what am I going to do.' I said, 'Come back and bring the patient' - we had only sent one down, and we never, ever - with one exception - evacuated any patient from the strip because no big enough planes could land on the rotten strip. So instead of us running ... Actually, what I thought was going to be more or less a regimental aid post, or an advance dressing station whereby you pick people up who are sick or wounded or whatever, and fix them up and then get rid of them. Every patient, with one exception, as I say, came into our hospital stayed till they were better.

And what were you doing in the hospital?

I tell you, I was in charge of the hospital. One, I did all the paper work, because you realise, with people coming in and out of hospitals, every time you come in you fill out a form, every time you go out. I did all the admission and discharge work because no one else could do it. There was no one in charge of the Q Store: we didn't have enough staff to run it, so I did that. There was no one in charge of the dispensary, so I did that. And then, later on ... What I didn't put down is what I helped to do there. Later on, when we found out that we got patients who required operations, I had to ... None of us had ever seen an operation: we where advanced dressing station staff, and all operations in the field ambulance are done in the main dressing station where they've got the staff and the surgeons and materials to do it.

Well who was the officer in charge here?

Captain Clipsham was in charge.

Any other officers there?

One, Captain Richards. He's the chap who only lasted a while: he got malaria, dysentery, and he went out. So all the time I was there, with the exception of a couple of months - the first few months - Cliffy was by himself. There was another doctor up at Center Camp which was forty-two mile up the road, and if ever we had an operation that required an anaesthetist or an anaesthetic we used to send a jeep up there, pick him up, bring him down, do the op and then take him back the next day. So in the end, since I was the senior NCO, I helped at all the operations.

What, as an anaesthetist?

No, no, no - at times. If Cliffy gave them a ...

Intravenous?

I forget all the names. If it was a general, which was ether or something like that, you had to have an anaesthetist, but at times Cliffy used to use the stuff to put them off and he'd leave it there and I might put a couple more cc's in to keep them off while he was doing the op. So things that I had never been trained at, never seen, never dreamt of doing, we were doing. And from what I remember, in the time we were there, I think we had 1847 - I think that number sticks in me mind - patients in our hospital run by, as I say, by one officer - me - and two lance corporals and twenty men.

And how long were you there do you think?

I think it was nine months - I think. Time didn't mean a thing actually.

Where were your patients all coming from?

Well, we had ... there was three field companies running the ... they were the engineers. After the road was started there was, I think, three transport companies - 2/34th, 2/106th and 2/109th. There were the water transport mob: they used to get as sick as dogs and there was no hospital down Terapo. So any company who got sick they'd come up by barge and we'd put them in. There were a motor transport workshop. These trucks used to go from the bottom of the road to the top of the road every day, and it ripped the guts out of our little jeeps - they pulled trailers. You've seen photos with them pulling the trailers up: it rose approximately 10,000 feet in twenty miles. It was like that. You wound round and round like a snake. And there was also detachments of army service corps who provided us rations, and army engineers - well not engineers - sigs. They had a signal running up the ... connecting all the things up. There was a bit of a detachment over on the air strip. The air strip was on the other side of the river. That's about all I can think of were on there.

So what were they doing up the top there? They were first building the road.

They built the road, and then they started taking all the stores up because at the time that the road was first built they were at Wau. They were just moving from Wau up to the attack over the mountain, to Salamaua. And the only way they can get stores in, right upon the strip at Wau - you've never seen the strip at Wau have you? It was like that; one in nine the rise is; it's the only one of it's kind, and it's grass. The only way you can take off is up hill. It's a beauty - I've never seen a strip like it.

Have you ever taken off it?

Oh yes, I did it a couple of times. Actually, we used to have a guy from 5th Air Reconnaissance mob who used to do our milk run. So we called him. He'd bring up foods and medical stuff

or some mail sometimes. And he's, strangely enough, from Bronte Surf Club - a mate of mine Kevin Andrews. And he took me up in this Moth one day, and I never want to go in another plane. He brought a Wirraway up one day and took me up in that too. He used to come up and see me at the end, in the hospital, and he'd ... I think he stayed there one night. The strip was too wet to take off or something.

What about the majority of the cases? What were they?

Well, I would say that eighty percent would be malaria - it was one of the most malarious areas of New Guinea. It was absolutely ... the first fifteen miles, as you can ... as I was saying in that excerpt there, was ... the road was made through with corduroy. You get long bits of wood, trees, and throw them in and throw them in and throw them in - to the swamp until it - gets a bit of a footing - they put dirt on it. And every week someone puts some more on. The first twenty miles - I might be wrong of course - but the first bit was all corduroy, then you start climbing up the mountain and ...

What about scrub typhus?

Well, Bob Sidoti died the week after we got up in Wau. So whether he got it down at us, but ... Malaria, dysentery - diarrhoea of course, that was everywhere - dengue. And other than that, accidents - we had quite a few appendixes, burns, snake bite ...

What about the New Guinean porters? Did a lot of them get sick or ...

The porters? No. They had ... obviously ANGAU looked after them, although we did do one bad job - well not a bad job, it's a shocking job. He was a barge boy. He used to stand in the top of the barge ... The back of Lakekamu River went like that all the way, and it was a ... sand banks all over it. And they used to have the barge boys who would stand in the front with a pole - they called him a pole boy. And he'd be prodding and tell the drivers where the sand banks where. Well apparently, this day, he was helping them pour petrol into the engine, and it went. The only part of him that wasn't burnt was his lap lap, from there to there. He was just like you see some of these napalm blokes - he was absolutely black. And Clippy and I worked on him, I remember that, till three o'clock in the morning. We took every bit of skin off him, put him in saline solution, put one of the boys on as ... doing half-hourly pulses: and he died at four o'clock in the morning. That was the worst ever, of course. I'd never smelt burnt skin before, and I never realised that -what do you say? - Rosie O'Grady, and so-and-so, xxx - everyone's pink under the skin: something I didn't know. But this bloke was absolutely ... a cooked mass he was, but we had to fix him ... We did get a few - quite a few - snake bites. Boongs come in and the boys would panic and bring them in; but, of course, we had four of our own boys

there - kitchen boy. One bloke, he used to wash the blankets, another bloke he used to cut the wood, and another general duties boy - they used to help us, and they could sweep the ...

Did you get on well with them?

Oh yeah. They wanted to come with us - they thought we were heaven.

No, but did you get on well with them?

Oh yes, because, I mean, these poor blokes had been dragged out of their tribes. One bloke had come from Mt Hagen, so he told us, called Barry. They reefed him out there, put him on a draft, and next minute now he was carting the bloomin' loads of ours to the Owen Stanleys. And to get into a hospital, and just be able to work around ... He could speak a little bit of English, and he learnt a bit after a while for us. Our cook and I and a few of the boys who were with them all the time learnt quite a bit of pidgin. You still use the expressions, lava lava and pata pata, and in xxx xxx and things like this you picked up after nine months of talking to them. He wanted to come with us to Wau but, of course, as soon as the road closed everyone loaded up what they want and all the tents and things ... well not tents, huts, they might be still there for all I know. You couldn't take those with you.

And you went up to Wau did you?

Well actually, the main body of the section went to Wau and we were left behind just in case anything happened. We were the last truck over the road when it closed. One engineer's jeep, one motor transport jeep and us, we stayed at Centre Camp, which was forty-two mile up, for two nights till everyone went through in case anyone got sick or something. And then we went up after them. The night we were up the top, xxx, somewhere there, we got attacked by Kukus. I suppose they were so pleased to see the last of us get out of their territory. Kukukukus were cannibals up to that stage of the war. Then, when we got on to the top, which is a ridge there ...

Was there anybody hurt or killed in that?

No, they just ... We were on a ridge here, and they were on a ridge here. At that stage there would be only fifty. That's the way the road used to go, up and down ridges. And we were ... You knew they were coming, and when ... just then the driver, saw it from movement in the xxx, sort of. I looked over the road and he got his rifle out. I said, 'What are you doing Snow?' He said, 'Some of the Kukus are there, and this can do with a tryout.' So he whopped a few rounds over and he didn't hit any.

Did they throw spears?

Arrows.

Arrows.

Big seven foot bows. Pulled a strip from the little beggars in there - four foot six about the average height. And they used to have a delightful habit of taking their deceased relatives around with them, carried them round from place to place - bit smelly. So that's when we went up to Wau.

While you were down ...

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B - END OF TAPE

START OF TAPE TWO

Identification: This the 9th Australian Field Ambulance - Maurice Kilkeary - three.

You were talking about Bulldog before and there's a number of things you didn't explain about what the layout of the whole area was as opposed to the hospital.

Firstly, to get to Bulldog you had to get a barge or a small steamer. Some came up by destroyer to a little village called Terapo which was on the coast. Due to the big bar across the river at the back of the Kuma River the boats couldn't come into a wharf so they had to get unloaded onto a barge, get transferred onto Terapo landing stage and then wait for a barge to take you up river to Bulldog.

Now when they got up to Bulldog ... I mean, from Terapo to Bulldog they are going by barge are they?

Yeah, by barge.

So what was the landing like at Bulldog from Terapo?

Just on a bit of dirt more or less. There was no barge station, no barge point and no barge wharf or anything. You just landed and the barge ran up as barges do and the front of the barge came down. Unfortunately the day we got up there, the river was down a bit, the idea of the river being down is if it rained - it used to rain all over the Owen Stanleys all of the time but sometimes, or most of the times, if you had a day or two without rain the river would drop. And unfortunately when we got there the river had dropped so instead of going right up to the landing barge station at Bulldog we got dropped about two mile or three mile down the stream which was down as far as the barges could go and we had to walk up a little native track. It was quite warm, quite sticky and quite hot and practically everyone nearly died and when we got up to the road - or the track we called it but they called it a road - we were then taken by jeeps up to our station which was the camp ADS which we called it but which happened later on to be called the camp hospital at Bulldog.

And that was, you mentioned before, on the opposite side of the river to the rest of the camp, was it?

Well actually, the idea of Bulldog was on one side of the river there was a landing strip which had been there since 1932-33 and had been originally used by goldminers who were running a gold distributing or something and they got a fair bit of gold out. I didn't know that. But with them also was the headquarters of the Bulldogs, as they called it, sub-area. On the other side of the river were the units which were running and working and [driving] on the road. That included the field companies, the transport companies and these were scattered

over a distance about five mile from the river up the road. Obviously, the idea was so they would not be xxx if there was a bombing raid. Apparently there were quite a few bombing raids early in the piece. One particular one about which I've read in Mr Sinclair's book on Bulldog and the area, they bombed Bulldog and every native bearer in the area shot through. And I think out of the two thousand or fifteen hundred about six hundred never came back to the job which didn't make them happy at all but that's beside the point.

On the other side of the river, was the road on the other side, to get from the hospital to the road, did you have to go across the river?

No. As I say, on our side of the river, away from the strip, the road itself started right back there at the river and then it was unending until it got to Wau - that was about five mile up the road from the river itself.

And across the river, to get across the river at night, how did you go about that?

See, the only way to get across the river day or night there was a native lakatoy which was run on a wire cable stretched between trees on each side of the river and propelled by the force of the river itself. The idea being that you stood on this little, I supposed you'd call it bamboo or whatever platform between two little cut-out native canoes and the water would lap over your feet more or less as you went over the river. Well, that's all right in the day time but quite often we had to go over in the night to pick up patients and it's a bit hairy because the river was one of the greatest breeding grounds for salt water crocodiles in New Guinea and the sight of little pink eyes staring at you in the night and keeping track of the lakatoy going over the river when you didn't even have a rifle ... not my idea of heaven anyhow.

How did you get across with a vehicle anyway?

You couldn't.

Not day or night?

Day or night you either went by the lakatoy or you didn't go. You couldn't swim.

So did they have any jeeps on the other side to take you across?

They had jeeps over the other side which apparently had been brought up by barges and dropped on that side of the river and then the other ones, the main ones, for the transport companies and our company and our transport were brought up and dropped on our side, but never the twain shall meet sort of idea.

Of the people that were at Bulldog you mentioned John Rainbow a few times - Snowy you used to call him. Is there anybody else you can remember?

Well Snowy, I must confess, he was my driver quite often but I didn't know at the time that he was very, very young and very, very inexperienced and very, very brave. And his idea of heaven was to drive along a bush track at whatever he could put his foot down. He could put his foot down. He was responsible for three happy events in my life: once we were going down to Bulldog and we were going down over a bit of corduroy track and we hit a bump. And I said to Snowy, 'What was that?'. So Snow reversed back and found out it was a large python, his head was on one side of the track, his tail was on the other and Snow wanted to drive up and over it and back over it to kill it. Another time we were going along back to the camp - I think there was a Red Alert going - and we popped around the corner and we came right into a dead heap with another jeep which was coming the other way. Strangely enough from what I can remember now, the wheels of the jeep hit - the front wheel of our jeep hit the front wheel of the other jeep - and I went through the windscreen. And another time Snowy, we went up - half of the road was nearly closed - we were tented at centre camp running an RAP there just in case anyone got kicked and some driver from one of the transport companies went over the top, way up the top above [Chinamans] where the road was very steep and very dangerous. He went over backwards and he was driving a three-ton truck and he wrapped his legs around the steering wheel ... or his arms around the steering wheel and hung on and luckily the truck hit the ground wheels first, scattered all over an area and all he got was a broken collar bone. We went down to see him, Rocky, McLean and I who went up with Snowy who took us up and I thought he was dead but he moved. And we found out that all he had was a broken collar bone. He must have gone down a thousand feet backwards, the truck ... the good Lord looks after his own, there's no doubt about that. But Snowy was a good driver but very, very young. And as I found out later he was one of the youngest in the unit and I don't think that I had ever met him until such time as I went to Bulldog. He just come out of the transport section, and I may have mentioned, unfortunately, for some unknown reason the transport warrant officer liked to keep the transport section separate. You may have heard about that, have you? I don't know why it was.

He didn't want it contaminated by you medical people, you see!

I have got no idea why Bill Peters didn't want his transport section with us. They didn't play football, they didn't play softball, they didn't play volley ball. I mean, some of them I know were ... one for example, Mattie Nolan was a first grade footballer with Randwick and you'd think if you played first grade football with any team, you'd want to play in a unit team.

There's something that I made a note to ask you which I didn't ask you before: where did you get your medical training? You got training as a medical orderly, didn't you?

Well actually, as I said, in the first tape luckily I was in the surf club I got a whole lot of ...

Yes, that was the first aid but didn't you get any training as a medical orderly?

Well I did some training at Ingleburn when I first went into camp - the second time. The first time I was in the motor transport and the boss was a horse fiend but the second, my other boss came in, that was the end of the horse transport and I was drafted unwillingly and unknowingly and [unceasingly] into the blooming ... we were running the camp hospital at Ingleburn there.

So you actually didn't get any formal training as a medical orderly?

Not particularly. My actual job in the unit was a company clerk. I was trained to do all the delivering work, pay work, you know, [ANB] work and all the rest of the stuff connected with the paper work to run a hospital.

Do you remember doing the war diary too?

No.

I wonder who did it at Bulldog?

No-one, we were too busy.

You're probably right because there doesn't exist a separate war diary for Bulldog.

No. At Bulldog - I'm not patting myself on the back - there were two officers, five MT blokes and about fourteen or fifteen other people and we were running an eighty-bed hospital and you cannot run an eighty-bed hospital with so few people. Out of that fifteen included the cook and an offsider, that takes it down to about twelve or thirteen people to run. And you had to have night duty and day duty and ward orderlies and everything. You cannot do it. You look around here, an eighty-bed hospital you'd want forty or fifty people running it. Staff, cook, and I did all of the paper work and poor xxx Chamberlain did all the cooking work for a hundred people and other people did this and other people did that and we just didn't have enough staff.

Now you told me in the last tape that you were the last vehicle to go back down the road.

Yes, we were the last one.

John Rainbow confirmed that.

John Rainbow drove, yes. One thing about John Rainbow, when we got - I might have mentioned this - but when we got up the top above Chinamen which was about forty miles from Wau, or thirty-five miles from Wau, night fell and there were four truck units - I think one of field engineer, two transport companies and our troop - stayed in a little native hut there which was the last one before you went over the big divide and then you get the run down to Eadie Creek which was three to five thousand feet above Wau and we stayed the night there. Of course we couldn't go any further because it was too dark. Early in the morning there was some scratching sounds during the night and we all sat up all night and early in the morning, just at daybreak, we had a visit from our friend the [Koka Kokas]. They must have chased us all the way up the road just to say goodbye to us with a shower of arrows.

They'd heard that you were going, I take it.

We had been intruding in their territory and no-one dreamed of intruding in Koka Koka territory because they were hated, feared and loathed by every other native tribe in New Guinea including the powers to be. So we wopped a few rounds over their heads - no-one wanted to kill anyone - but I think it was half past four or five o'clock in the morning and we took off like ... Jack Brathham was going slow compared with the way the four jeeps took off and we flew up the road and then the other three went ahead of us. I'll always remember, just as we got to the saddle, before you started the run down to Eadie Creek, we got bogged. So Snowy of course, being the driver, he couldn't get his feet wet, he sat in the jeep. Put it in four-wheel drive and Rocky McLean and I pushed the rotten thing for about one hundred yards through the mud up to practically our knees in parts, and then we got on to firmer ground and went down the hill to Edie Creek. That was the last we ever saw of the Bulldog Road and John invited me in gave me xxx. You'd never get me up there again, I tell you.

Weren't they blowing it up behind you?

No, just left it I think. There was no-one to blow it up. We were the last men over there.

The story was supposed be that the people with you were blowing it up.

No. That's a lot of rot. The only thing we tried to blow up were the Kukus if we could get near them. They frightened me, the Kukus. I don't know which was the most frightening thing up at Bulldog. I had the Kukus who used to come through our camp quite often and rob everything they could pinch or the

blooming crocodiles. If you got near the river they'd take a nasty big bit of you, they would.

Did they take a nasty big bit out of anybody?

From what I heard, one chap was either in a barge or had his feet in the water from a barge and he lost his legs.

Did you see him in the hospital?

No, from what I heard, that's what I say. But I wouldn't be surprised because when we were at Bulldog strangely enough one day a jeep and a trailer came down with two tins of 44-gallon drums in the back of it and they turned into the hospital and the driver said, 'Where's the cemetery?'. And I said, you know, 'Cemetery, cemetery, cemetery?'. He came up to me because I was in the orderly room and I said, 'I've never heard of a cemetery mate but I'll find out'. So I got on the SIGs and then his mate who was sitting in the jeep came in and of all the people in the world he happened to be a chap who had worked for me at the Registrar General's Department and joined the 6th Divi. Went away with 6 Div, came back to Australia and joined the [Wallgrove?]. And his job up in islands was to go from place to place with this jeep or whatever and these two tin things and dig up all the people had been buried, wherever and ever, and take them back. They were going to get transferred either to Lae Cemetery or to Bomana Cemetery at Moresby. Frank McIntyre was his name, he was a sergeant at Wallgrove in the end. We found out in the end that four people had been buried on the strip - at the end of the strip - and Frank said on the way back, 'One of the blokes didn't have any legs'. So possibly that tale about someone, whether or not it was a boong or a white man we don't know because there was just a cross up there. I didn't even know they were buried there.

Well, down at Wau, what did you do down there?

Nothing.

You said 'nothing' did you?

Nothing, that's right. No, well, actually we went back to Wau and the boss, Colonel Bretherton, decided that we'd done such a really good job that we could do with some time off. Actually it was a good idea because none of us had had a day off in all the time we had been at Bulldog - not one day. We'd been flat out for - did we ever find out how long? - eight months or nine months or something. He gave us fortnight off and then at the end of that I wandered back more or less which I'd always done and started to work in the orderly room. I helped Ted Eccles, I helped Trevor Moore, I helped Gerry Austin with the pay, I helped ... and then Tommy Kelly got this bright idea of getting a unit paper out and then of course I was once more ensconced into the blooming ... Tommy edited it and Les Franklin did the

good diagrams and I printed it and Tony Connors filled in the pretty little colours. It wasn't a bad paper.

What about the football?

Football. Oh when I first got back to Wau the cricket season was on. We had ... I suppose Noel Thomas has told you about the cricket team, has he? Noel was captain and Vic Shiner was vice-captain, the officers of course were very well represented because they'd played a lot of first grade and grade cricket. And I think that Harry Smith and Cecil News and Rocky, Eric Rochester and I and Ray Davis were in the team. We played a few teams at Wau, cricket on the oval there. And after that someone decided the football season was on and - football, cricket season made no difference - so we started playing football then.

Do you remember who the coach was?

Well strangely enough, I'll tell you a funny tale about this. Up till the time he went to New Guinea - I'm not patting myself on the back or anything - but I was always captain of the unit's football team because I'd played first grade in Sydney before we went away and then out of the blue comes Sluggo, Captain Elliott and he became captain coach. Not that I cared, I thought that Freddie Shoeburn should have been captain. But Sluggo coached us and we were undefeated up in New Guinea ... up in Wau anyhow. We had a very good team.

Do you remember the story about how you weren't allowed to give the ball away to anybody, to hang onto the ball?

I don't know. Sluggo and I didn't share the same football ...

Do you remember him ... were you there when he had somebody up before the CO for disobeying an officer?

Disobeying ... by passing it to someone when he shouldn't have been ... oh yes. Sluggo, he was - as I say - he and I did not see eye to eye as regards his football coaching. I had one idea and he had another. I'll always remember one day we were playing at Wau, on the ground there - he and I never seemed to get on really well in the football sphere, we were all right otherwise - but one day we were playing someone and he was getting very very sarcastic. I was off-side a couple of times in passing raids because, unfortunately, I think I was a bit faster than the majority, and then in the second half I scored two or three tries. And I always remember he made a point of walking over as we went back to the halfway line and whoever was kicking for a goal and he said, 'You always said you could play football and you showed me a little bit that you might have been right after all'. I thought to myself, 'You ...' you can't say anything to officers but we got on all right after that. But I think he might have been just a little bit disappointed at the fact that we weren't doing as well as we

should have been doing with the team we had although we didn't have the full unit and I do thing - this is just my idea - that if my brother had have been there in Wau and Matt Nolan had have been there and they both had have been fit, they would have made the first team of the unit. They were both highly regarded footballers in Sydney and the other two were country boys who were doing their best but they just weren't quite up to the standard. That's my idea anyhow.

Did you do any trips to other parts around there from Wau?

No. I didn't go. I wasn't remotely interested really in going anywhere. To go back ... I think the idea was that at the start of our campaign up in the island all the jobs that were set up for the unit were set up in these odd sections. One section would go here, one section would go there and one section would go somewhere else. Of all the sections that went away our section went the farthest and stayed away the longest. Some of them went away and they were only away three weeks or a month or something. And my brother went away and he got sick after a month. And somebody else went away and they might have been away for six weeks. And some of B Sections xxx section with xxx they went away, they might have been away for six weeks or something. Hulkie's mob with Les Franklin and all that mob, Vic Milburn, they went away, they were away longer. But out of all the mob that went away our mob at Bulldog was way the longest and I think that we who had been away so long didn't want to go any more. I didn't want to see any more of New Guinea.

So what happened to you then? Where did you go next?

We stayed at Wau.

But then what happened? How did you go back to Australia?

Well, it must have been somewhere in the middle of September, because as I said earlier that the 9th Bulletin the paper was printed and I was still helping to print it. So it must have been the middle of September and the 2 Aust Army sent out a note to every field ambulance in ...

END OF TAPE 3 - END OF INTERVIEW