ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

TITLE: BILL ARMSTRONG – 9TH FIELD AMBULANCE – SECOND WORLD WAR

INTERVIEWEE: BILL ARMSTRONG

INTERVIEWER: RICHARD RAXWORTHY

SUMMARY:

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

Identification: This is the 9th Australian Field Ambulance. Tape 11, Side A - Mr Bill Armstrong 1 - 11-3-91.

Where were you born and when?

I was born in a house next to where I live now and it's 15 Nottinghill Road, Lidcombe and I was born on the 3rd February, 1922.

And did you grow up around here?

I spent all my formative years in Lidcombe, yes.

Where did you go to school?

I went to school at Barilla Public School and at Parramatta Intermediate Commercial High School.

Did you go to school with Dermot Ryan at all?

He was a different place to me and I only knew him by going to school on the train with him. And also knew him before that when we were schoolboys together and we used to fight with blue metal in the main street of Lidcombe.

What did you father work at?

My father had a business and he was a hardware merchant.

And did he build that little house, that stone house?

My grandfather built the stone house, he rebuilt it, it was over at Regents Park and when they put the new train line through from Liverpool to Regents Park they had to knock the house down and my grandfather bought it and re-erected it at number seventeen Nottinghill Road. It's in the current 'Roofs over our Heads' the Council's book of old homes.

That's interesting. What sort of influence did your father have on you do you think?

Oh he was a very religious man and it had a lot of influence on me.

And your mother?

My mother was also religiously minded; she was an organist and a Sunday school teacher and so on.

What about political influence?

We were always told to make up our own mind and my father always wanted us to vote as per our consciences, which I've always done since then. I'm not a Labor or I'm not a Liberal, I'm a middle of the road product and what I reckon is best for Australia I vote.

What was your first job?

I went into the hardware store when I left school.

And so you worked in the hardware business, you're a locksmith now?

I went and learnt locksmithing.

And so you worked in the family business right at the beginning did you?

Yes, I did.

At school what did you like and dislike at school?

I liked all ... I liked school as a whole.

What subjects did you like?

I was best at maths.

And you liked working in the shop?

Yes, I am. I liked that too.

Did you do any technical study or did you apprentice yourself to somebody to learn locksmithing?

I leant my locksmithing through a member of the Locksmiths Guild of Australia.

And you carried on doing that alone or did you do that with the hardware?

With the hardware.

So at the start of the war were you in before the war where you in any compulsory military service?

No, I wasn't. I was called up when I was eighteen.

Where did you go, did you go straight to Ingleburn?

No I went ... I was called up to Merrylands Drill Hall and from there they sent me to the 2nd District Pay Office in Mary Street Sydney. But I didn't like that very much so I went around to the Showground where I found an old school teacher of mine, Sergeant Alan Simes who was in charge of the RAP in the

Sydney Showground and I asked him could I join the 9th Field Ambulance as a ... because I was already a St John Ambulance person.

Did you know somebody in the 9th Field Ambulance already?

Only Sergeant Alan Simes, he taught me at school at Barilla.

They arranged for you to join the ambulance, did they?

I had to apply to Ingleburn and that's where I had to go and be interviewed by a Colonel Reg Bretherton and he said yes that he'd have me and that's what happened. I then joined the 9th Field Ambulance.

What was it like when you got there, what was the transport?

When I first went to Ingleburn to see Colonel Bretherton before I actually started and they still had horse-drawn transport, Sergeant Nolan will tell you that. And they had World War I medical panniers.

What do you mean panniers, medical panniers?

Medical panniers was the supplies that you were put together so you could go into active service with them and the medical panniers were World War I medical panniers.

Were you involved with the horses at all?

No I wasn't a horse man.

The commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Bretherton at that time was it?

Yes, when I came into the ambulance it was Lieutenant Colonel Bretherton.

Oh so Colonel Smith [Davies] had gone?

I didn't know a Colonel Smith [Davies].

Was Matt Nolan still there or ...

Matt Nolan was there yes.

Did you go out at all with the horse transport at any time?

I didn't, the officer ... the NCOs that I met when I was first went there were Staff Sergeant Tiny Shaw, Jack Armitage was the Regimental Sergeant Major, Alan Simes was the sergeant in charge of A Company and Jack Oxford was the sergeant from

headquarters. I think Matt Nolan was only a corporal in the horse transport.

So what job did he give you?

I was put into the ward.

What you are in one of the wards?

No, I was to be trained for a wardsman ... nursing orderly they called it then.

And did you train for a nursing orderly?

Before the war, no.

But when the war started?

No I went from hardware to the army.

Right, so how long do you think you were at Ingleburn?

Oh ... we went from Ingleburn to Wallgrove and from Wallgrove - we were at Wallgrove for some months.

You didn't go to Frenchs Forest?

I went to Frenchs Forest but ... no, I didn't go to Frenchs Forest to stay I only went there to visit. But when headquarters was seconded to the Pennant Hills Golf Club House where we had a ward and I was a ward orderly for the Pennant Hills Golf Club House which was a pretty sweet job.

Did you go on any bivouacs anywhere with the unit?

Yeah, we went on bivouacs.

Did you go on one down at Bulli, did you?

I went to Bulli, yes and we went out to Saint Marys and we slept out at night. And I had a brother-in-law, a friend in the army who later became my brother-in-law, Lance Corporal Ron Robson - Robinson - and he ... he was in charge of the ...

And you didn't go to Frenchs ... oh yes you went to Pennant Hills Golf Club, so you weren't involved with the fighting of the bush fires down at Frenchs Forest?

We weren't bush fire fighters.

You went to Wallgrove from Pennant Hills did you?

No, we went to Wallgrove, went from Wallgrove to Pennant Hills.

And did you go back to Wallgrove afterwards or not?

After that we went up to Port Stephens way and Tomago and Tommary and Bob's Farm, but that was before I was with the 9th Field Ambulance. I was with the 2nd District Finance Office.

When your unit went to Queensland did you go to Narellan first?

We went to Narellan. We went to Queensland from Narellan. And Narellan was the worst I've ever seen for flies, they wouldn't leave us alone for one minute.

And what sort of camp was it?

At Narellan? It was a good camp but rough, you know? But then we went to Brisbane we stayed at the Ascot Race Course.

How long did you stay at Ascot?

I couldn't be sure of the time but we weren't there a long while.

Did you set up aid posts or anything there or a hospital?

No we weren't we were only doing field training.

What did that consist of?

Marching, exercises and so on.

When you went back on the train again and go north again did you?

We were going to ... we had a type of pre-embarkation leave. We were going to go on the hospital ship and we were supposed to go to Goodenough Island if the messages that came through to us were correct. But something happened and I believe that the hospital ship that we were going to go on was the Centaur and it was destroyed before it got to picking us up.

Yes, I heard that. Were you at Ravenshoe?

We then went from Brisbane up to Ravenshoe up on the Atherton Tablelands.

Were you held up at all at the river there when it flooded?

The river flooded out at Rockhampton where we stayed about five days in the train and there wasn't very much to do and there was Americans there and the boys got into a bit of trouble fighting the Americans.

How about you, were you involved in that?

I'm not a fighter.

When you went up to Ravenshoe were you at a hospital up there?

We had a headquarters, Headquarters Company had an MDS - a main dressing station - and we had quite a lot of patients there and they from 7th Div. They had come back from overseas and we were looking after them there.

How long were you there do you think?

We were there for some months.

And then?

Then we went down to a place called Oonoonba.

Who was your immediate superior at that stage?

The officer in charge of Headquarters Company was Colonel Reg Breth ... no, Major Tris Holcombe, he was a World War I digger.

What was he like?

He was a gentleman and nothing was too much trouble for him to look after his boys.

Did he have a stiff leg?

Yeah, he had a leg injury from the First World War.

But he still managed to get around all right?

Yes, he used to take us on a march, forced route marches and things and he used to lead us and he used to be right out in front with his stiff leg and all.

When you went to Oonoonba, how long were you there?

We came ...

You went from Ravenshoe down to Oonoonba you said didn't you?

Oonoonba was at Townsville.

And what did you do there?

And we waited there for a ship to go overseas and we went overseas then on the Duntroon.

Where did you land?

We landed Port Moresby, and the day that we landed there we landed there about one o'clock in the daytime and we had a

hundred bomber raid over Moresby and if anyone said they weren't scared they're only joking.

So what did you do during the raid were there trenches for you to get into or anything like that?

No, we were still on board ship.

The ship wasn't hit?

No, the ship wasn't hit.

When you got off the ship where did you go?

We went out to Seventeen Mile. This was up at a place called Rigo Road where there had been formally another field ambulance had a hospital there and we took over from them.

How long were you there?

We were there for some months.

What was that like? Were there a lot a casualties coming in?

No, the war had gone over the ranges by then and we were only doing basic troops who were sick and malaria and scrub typhus and dysentery. They had a dysentery ward up on the range where they used to send all the dysentery patients to. Most of them had amoebic dysentery and they used to have to burn the faeces. And one of our fellows got a job twenty-four hours a day burning faeces.

Were you glad it wasn't you?

I think his name was Pats Dunn, I'm pretty sure it was.

That must have been not a very pleasant job doing ward orderly in that situation?

It was quite good I met a lot of our local boys from around Lidcombe who came in as patients.

When did you move on from there?

We went from there over to Wau. We went from Wau via Terapo and Bulldog, up the Lakekamu River.

And how did you go did you walk or did you march?

We went in a boat called <u>The Able Tasman</u> from Port Moresby and we went around the opening of the Lakekamu River to a place called Terapo, which was eight miles up the river.

And you off loaded there with all your supplies did you?

That's right and we went into landing barges from there and from the landing barges we went from there to a place called Bulldog which was sixty miles up the river.

And was that a bit of a shock when you got up there?

The whole of the war was a shock to me because I wasn't used to that sort of work.

I don't think anybody was.

No. And on the way up it took us three days to from Terapo to Bulldog and they had the natives had built us staging camps there which were above the river and during the night you could hear the crocodiles underneath.

Have you got any stories you can tell about crocodiles while you were there?

No, but at Terapo the little black kids used to dive in the water and swim around there and we were going for a swim one day and the big boss of the natives said, 'Don't go in there master, too many crocodiles'. So the water boiled and we got out.

Did you start a hospital there or just an aid post at Terapo?

No Terapo was a staging camp.

So where after that?

From Terapo we went to Bulldog, where B Company had a hospital, B Company from the 9th Field Ambulance had a hospital at Bulldog. And from there we went over the Owen Stanley Ranges to a place called Edie Creek which was up 10,000-odd feet and then from there we went down to the placid valley at Wau which was about 4,000 feet above sea level.

At Bulldog did you stay there for a while did you?

Only for a couple of days till we got our transport arranged.

Was the transport sufficient to take you up into the mountains or did you have to march?

Oh no, we all went by vehicle.

And what was that Bulldog road like?

The Bulldog road was very, very rugged and was made of corduroy which is corduroy is logs that are tied together so that you could go over the mud.

You hadn't set up a post through there at all?

No, no there was no post while we were there.

Did any of your mates go to Nadzab?

From Nadzab, when we got up there they ... when we got to Wau they had many calls for volunteers to go forward with the parachuters. And Gerry Gilbert and Don Smith, Vic Milburn are three people whose names xxx and I think they went with Major Thomas [Holcombe] at the time.

I thought it was Major Holcombe in the first instance?

No, no they didn't go with Major Holcombe.

So you didn't go, you were staged back at ...

At Wau.

And at Wau, what was it like there?

Wau was a delightful spot to be.

And did you have a hospital there?

We had a hospital there that was built out of plants and leaves and it was only a roof and walls, it was all open.

Did you people build that?

No, the natives built it for us under the direction of the engineers.

So what sort of cases did you have there?

We had malaria and general sickness cases.

Did you like it there, did you get any time for sport and things like that?

There was plenty of time for sport there. They had sports meetings there.

Did you play football?

Limited edition.

What else did you do there?

Well we used to work for the solidly.

And did you catch any diseases yourself?

No, I had malaria later on.

What when you came back?

No ... yes, after I came back.

Were you taking any of the bad casualties at that stage?

No, no they were going further on.

And so the people from Nadzab, I was looking at the records of their war diary at Nadzab there and they were literally ...

Swamped.

... swamped with hundreds and thousands of casualties.

That's right we heard about that.

At one stage I think there was 900 that they couldn't get onto planes and they had 200 out a day.

Yeah.

But you didn't have any of that?

No, we didn't have any of that.

Did any of the people in the hospital when you were there die?

Yes a few of them died.

Was it mainly disease or was it injuries?

No, mainly disease.

Did you assist at any operations or did you get trained for that at all?

Yeah I was trained as a surgical orderly.

And so who did you assist which doctors?

No, I assisted the surgical assistants, surgical assistants were Vic Milburn and those blokes who were sergeants.

Was Vic Milburn at Wau with you?

I'm not sure about that.

I don't think he was actually, I think ...

He was at Nadzab too.

He went to Nadzab for sure, yes. Did you go to Wau before they went up to Nadzab?

We went Wau before they went to Nadzab.

And what about Edie Creek what was that like?

Edie Creek was only like a whistle stop on the road there. There was no aid station there.

Did you go through the mossy forest?

The mossy jungle, yes.

What was that like?

It was all the branches on the trees were covered in moss because of the humid weather and the rain that was there all the time.

Did you have any trouble from tribal natives in that area, some of them I understand did?

No, but we had a young fellow come in there had been bitten by a snake and he died and we laid him out and then his father came looking for us because he didn't want him laid out in that manner. And nothing happened, it was only a storm in a tea cup.

Did you have to treat many of the natives?

The natives were treated by ANGAU - ANGAU was the Australian New Guinea Ambulance Unit, ANGAU.

I believe that Vic Milburn was in that later on, was he?

I'm not sure.

So how long were you in Wau?

We were there for months.

And ...

They had a race meeting when we were at Wau. They discovered some race horses down that had been left there from civilian times and they had a race meeting. And I think they had four or five race horses with good looking jockeys up on them and they had race meeting down the hill.

Do you remember who the jockeys were?

Well I know that ... no I don't remember who the jockeys were.
And who was the bookie?

I'm not sure but I think it was Matt Nolan.

Can you remember any other stories of when you were at Wau?

There was a swimming pool there - we were on a coffee plantation at Wau, which was where the 9th Field Ambulance's headquarters were in this big old coffee plantation - and at the bottom of the hill there was a swimming pool which had been built by the plantation owners evidently. The boys wanted us to go swimming there of an afternoon after we'd finished our work of a day time. And we had some nurses ... there was no nurses there it was only male staff and some nurses would come in by plane - this was later on just before we came home - and they had us put hessian around the toilets and the pissaphone so that the women wouldn't see us in action.

Any other yarns?

We used to play a lot of football and we used to play a lot of cards at night.

Any grog?

Yeah, I think the beer came on after that. There was ... we had some stills there and we had a paper 'The 9th Bully Tin OBE' Moss Kilkeary has still got some copies of this. And they used to advertise their brew in the 9th Field Ambulance paper and it just had: Rocky and Lucky's hen brand wine, you lay where you drink it.

And who were Rocky and Lucky?

Rocky Rochester and Lucky McLean they're both old stalwarts from the 9th Field Ambulance, I think they've both passed on now.

And they were the main distillers were they?

They were the distillers, yes.

And that was allowed was it?

No, a blind eye was turned to it.

Did you hear about any brewing as well?

That was brewed, no, that was distilled. I never heard of any brewing, no.

Well there was some I believe, and I think that one of the officers was the one who got the makings in as well.

I don't know about that.

Well I have that story down. So where did you go from Wau?

I came home on leave from Wau. They sent various ones of us home on leave from Wau and I came back later on. I came up on the first trip on the Duntroon, I went home on the Taroona which was the Tasmanian apple boat, I came back on the Canberra and then later I went home on the Duntroon.

So when you came back where were they, were they still at Wau?

They were still at Wau and when I got back they were still there.

So where did the unit go from there?

I think we came back to a place called Jallargo which is near Townsville.

But where did you sail from?

We sailed from Port Moresby.

How did you get from Wau to ...

No. We sailed from Lae. We had to go from Wau to Lae by transport and then we got to Lae we had to join the Duntroon.

And you came back with them. Do you remember any stories of when you were on the boat was there any submarine scares?

I think there was a few there and I think they were mostly flying fish, they weren't submarines.

But you had scares anyway?

That's right.

So when you got back to Australia what happened then?

We went to a place called Jallargo which is just outside Townsville, about eleven miles out. And the various ... we had to have a kit inspection there and had to all strip off because there was some gold which had been taken ... which was reported to be taken from mines at ... can't think of the name of place, Bulolo. And I had a big rough ring, which I still have, which is made out of Wau gold.

Was somebody making them up there?

Oh yes, they were.

Who was making them up?

I don't know. How's that for a good answer?

That's a good answer. That's a real army answer that is. You were fairly competent in metal working yourself I was wondering whether it was you?

No, I'm not a competent metal worker, I'm only a locksmith.

Where were you when your unit was broken up?

We came back to Rutherford.

How did you get to Rutherford from ... where did the ship dock?

No we came down by train from Jallargo, we came down by train or truck from Jallargo to a place called Rutherford which was just out of Maitland.

And where were you sent after that?

Well, I was sent to the 15th Camp Hospital at Cowra and there was five of us from the 9th Field Ambulance sent there. There was myself, Sergeant Arthur Stewart who became a sergeant when he got there. And Nugget Gail and a couple of others, I can't remember their names now.

And were any of your mates killed or die of any disease while you were up in New Guinea?

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

You've got a few notes made I understand of things that happened or one thing or another?

The main thing I wanted to talk about was nick-names. Everybody in the 9th Field Ambulance had a nick-name and they came from their size, their physical attributes or their appendages. There was various funny names like bullock and we won't say the rest of it and hose pipe and all these sort of things and people were readily recognised by these especially when you come to reunions and they say who's that and you say it's me Jack Grotch, that was a nick-name that Geoff German gave to me. Geoff German was a chap in the Headquarters Company and they called him Sugar Pie and whenever we see him now he's still Sugar Pie.

Any of the others you can remember there?

Oh yes, I have a lot of names here there was ... Black Harry, that was Harry Reid. Most of these names were devised by a chap called ... one of the Newcastle boys. The Newcastle boys

from the 1st Field Ambulance were the best thing that ever happened to the 9th Field Ambulance. We were reinforced with a complete company, including officers who were gentlemen by the way. And they came to us to reinforce us before we went away to make our company complete.

Do you remember Len Bostick?

Yeah, Len Bostick came from Granville. He wasn't a member of the 1st Field Ambulance, he was always the 9th Field Ambulance. Stan Loon he was a Chinese cook. Maxi Mothringer who was another cook.

Do you remember George Warneke?

George Warneke is a particularly fine fellow and I won't say anything about his cooking aptitudes but he tried very hard.

There's only so many ways you can cook bully beef I suppose?

He didn't make the best of his opportunities I don't think.

He ended up in New Guinea before you?

Did he, yeah, I don't know.

Well he was a ... they got rid of him and he was boarded out and ...

He was boarded out and the Condon brothers came in, they were two good cooks, Ken Condon and Arthur Condon. And I think that it was Colonel Bretherton got them up there and they were sergeants or Arthur Condon was a sergeant straight away and he was worth his money.

What was Colonel Bretherton like?

Colonel Bretherton was a hard but fair man.

Do you ever remember something called the mad mile?

I've partaken of the mad mile. He was going to get us all fit. He was also a ... I think he came originally from Victoria and he used to try and get us to play Australian Rules and he showed us how to mark a ball one day and knocked his finger out, knocked his thumb out of joint.

What was the mad mile?

A mad mile was a prepared course that you had to go over in a certain time, it wasn't a mile but it was pretty long. And it involved going across on ropes and jumping over fences and those sort of things.

An obstacle course?

Obstacle course, yes.

Did you like it?

Not particularly, I was never fit enough to do properly.

But you had to do it anyway?

We all had to do it, yeah, one of those 'had to do' things.

I heard that Tom Kelly was responsible for the starting of the mad mile when it they sent him on a PT course, did you ever hear anything about this?

I'm not sure, but I don't think Tom would be that cruel.

I think he even claims responsibility, you know?

Oh does he? Well we won't hold that against him will we?

Can you remember anything else?

I was a ... while I was in Port Moresby we had an RAP - a Regimental Aid Post - on Fishermans Island which an island seven miles out in the harbour at Moresby and it was a wonderful spot, it was a real rest spot, I got a couple of those days over there myself at the RAP.

Did they send you there as a rest camp?

No I was over there as an aid attendant.

They were talking about having a rest camp at Edie Creek, did you know anything about that?

It didn't come to anything, they did try and get one up there though.

What was the idea of having one at Edie Creek?

It was so far up and it was so cool and fresh and clear.

Is there any other places that you really enjoyed when you went up?

I enjoyed all my army services, I enjoyed all of them.

And you never had any time as ... you were always as a hospital unit?

That's right.

So you never were responsible for aid posts?

No, but while we were at Jallargo we were sent out as troops to load and unload provisions to go north for the troops and while we were there some of those boys helped themselves to some groceries because things were pretty crook in the camp as far as ... and we were caught and Colonel Bretherton came down and went [bar] and got us off that charge. And he looked at me and he said, 'Look, ' he said, 'all these men are starving'. And I must have made about seventeen stone at the time. And he said, 'If you're starving now you must have been a big boy beforehand'. But he let us off.

> You see the state that Gerry Gilbert was in in that photograph there?

Gerry Gilbert was never a very fat man but that's only half as big as I saw him last.

> Because he seemed to be very, very ill at that stage?

Yes indeed.

> He didn't get any better either. I noticed that on the records that he was in a hospital, well locally, for malaria twice then afterwards with scrub typhus which they sent him back for and then he didn't survive.

No, he didn't make the grade.

> I know there's bloke who got scrub typhus late on his name was Bevan, I think, Private Bevan, did you know him at all?

No, I didn't know him but I did know Jack Brett, he had it too.

> Well that accounts for three because there was only three, I've got a statement of the unit while they were there and of all the things they had what they were in hospital for and there was only three of them - well it's also got the fatalities, and there was only three of them that got scrub typhus and Gerry was one of them and Bevan was the other one ...

Jack Kilkeary had scrub typhus too.

> Yeah but he survived.

Oh yes, so did Jack Brett survived too.

> Well three didn't and one of them was Gerry Gilbert and the other one was Private Bevan and I don't who the third one was?

No, I don't know either.

He would be comparatively earlier on but Colonel Bretherton wrote a statement of all the people that had been in hospital out of the unit during their time in New Guinea and all the people and the numbers had died and what they died of and there was two at that point and then right after that there was Bevan.

And I think that one of them was Toranto [Sidoti?], was one of them? I think Toranto [Sidoti?] was one that had scrub typhus too.

And we've sorted him out one died of a melanoma [Laurie Foggarty]. He's been mentioned by somebody who they tried to operate on him and it was too late he died, you know, the cancer melanoma?

Yeah I know. We had a chap die there in the night with - who was a patient in the hospital - with an acute ulcer that burst.

And was there many operations done while you were there?

They used to operate when it was necessary. Major Thomas, he wasn't back there then, Captain Clipsham he was an eye specialist, Colonel Bretherton. I know one of the other chaps that went to ... We had Captain Jack Elliott, he was with the 1st Field Ambulance and he was in charge of A Company.

And is there much more that you can think of?

I mentioned that we went up to Wau via Terapo and Bulldog on The Able Tasman.

Right well if there's nothing more that you can think of I'll say thank you very much Mr Bill Armstrong.

Thank you very much.

.....

I didn't mention the fact that Arthur Stewart went to hospital from Port Moresby and had his kidney removed. Arthur came back to us later on and he was pretty fit and well and played football in the 9th Field Ambulance team which was a pretty hard job in those days because it was a very hot place. And he also went to Cowra as a NCO in charge of the command at ... went from 9th Field Ambulance to Cowra Prison Camp.

Had the breakout happened at that time, at Cowra Prison Camp?

No ... The Cowra breakout had happened. I was involved in an affair with a Korean prisoner who tried to slash my face with a razor blade knife that he'd made but I was lucky enough to get rid of him.

That was after the breakout as well was it?

That was after the breakout, yeah. All the Japanese had been taken away there but they'd left the Formosans and Koreans behind.

Right. Were they prisoners?

They were prisoners, yes.

I didn't realise that they were fighting by that time.

They'd been impressed labour.

Oh, I see. They'd been rounded up by the Japanese and ...

That's right, and been made to fight for them.

Yet some of them must have been pretty annoyed about being prisoners.

They were indeed, yes.

Did they find out what the strength behind the one that slashed at you?

He was a Formosan and the other fellows, the other cooks were Koreans and he used to come - he had tuberculosis - and he used to come and spit his tubercular phlegm at them. And I grabbed hold of him - they'd told me about him - and I rigged up a little warning and it rang a bell that he was down there spitting his tubercular phlegm around and when I grabbed hold of him to take him up to his bed he whipped this knife out from under his blanket and went for my face. But I put my arm up and I got eleven stitches in my left arm.

Did anything else happen while you were there at Cowra?

Oh, there were quite a few things like that happened at Cowra.

Had they been impressed into the Japanese army these people and then when they got rounded up I suppose they were very angry.

They weren't very cooperative.

Did you manage to talk to any of them?

We had a leper there and his name ... and then there were other fellahs like [Gorang Ho]. I can remember that name well because there was the chap that went for my face and got me in the arm - Gorang Ho. But quite a few of them had TB in the kidneys and bladder and various other TB diseases.

Did they manage to fix them up?

I think they all died.

In those days with sulphur drugs wasn't it possible to cure those sorts of things?

Mmm, I suppose there was but they weren't very fit and well.

Right. Is there anything else about that camp that you can talk about while we are at it?

No, I don't think so.

Well, shall we finish at that point then?

Yes.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B - END OF INTERVIEW