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SUBJECT: MEDICAL SERVICES FOR AUSTRALIAN
TROOPS IN MALAYA, SINGAPORE AND
POW'S ON SINGAPORE AND THE THAILAND
- BURMA RAILWAY

INTERVIEWEE: DR COLIN JUTTNER

INTERVIEWER: MAJOR-GENERAL ALAN MORRISON

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I'm Allan Morrison, and I'm interviewing Dr Colin Juttner about his life and times, particularly about his experiences as a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese on the Thai-Burma railway. In order to approach this topic I think it's best if Dr Juttner starts off in the first segment of telling about his early life, up to the stage when he decided on a career in medicine. Colin?

Yes Allan. I was born in 1910 and had a very happy childhood in the Barossa Valley, and went to St Peter's College at the age of ten, and stayed there and left college in 1928.

St Peter's College was in Adelaide wasn't it?

It was in Adelaide.

Thank you.

Two of the premier colleges in Adelaide - Prince Alfred and St Peter's.

What made you decide on a medical career?

Difficult to answer that question. I had a father who was a doctor and my brother had preceded me in taking up medicine, and by the time that he'd finished I was ready to make up my mind about doing something at university, or going on the land which I rather had a hankering after, particularly as a jackaroo with my desire to be able to shoot and hunt and ride, which were ...

Where did you learn those skills?

I guess I inherited a lot of them because the whole family always loved those particular things - horses, dogs, guns.

Where did you live?

I lived at Tanunda in the Barossa Valley, forty-two miles from Adelaide.

Was there wine there, or was there fishing, shooting and hunting?

There was everything there, particularly the wine of course, 'cause it's the premier district for wine in South Australia, if not the whole of the country. But my desires and aspirations in those days were not to be a wine judge or even a wine sampler, my thoughts were those of the views appropriate to my age at the time.

Yes. What - therefore, you decided to follow your father's and your elder brother's career and go into medicine?

Well I think it all happened very suddenly in my last year at St Peter's College, when my father said to me, 'Colin, it's about time you made up your mind what you're gonna do in life'. And I had, I suppose, subconsciously given it a certain amount of thought, but being confronted with this question, made the rather banal statement that 'I suppose I'll do medicine' (laughing).

And what was his reaction?

I think he was rather pleased.

Did he live to see you through medicine?

He did indeed. He retired from medicine in the Tanunda area in 1933 - the end of 1933 - and my brother who had graduated and done his hospital chores, and got his hospital experience, took over the practice. And because we were in the middle of the Great Depression, which I didn't fully realise at the time, he decided with Mother to come to Melbourne and make a home for me in Melbourne to do the last two years of my course, rather than go on paying the somewhat oppressive fees of University College. (Trinity College)

Yes, yes. All right, when did he die?

He died in 1937 - I'm sorry, I made a mistake. He died in 1938. I had gone to England in 1937, as ship's surgeon on the *Ormonde*, to do the fellowship in surgery, and when I got back my father wasn't at all well. I came back to help my brother with his practice in '37 and '38, 'cause he had unhappily acquired TB. So I stayed with him for two years - '37 and '38 - got married at the end of '38, and went to England again to try for the fellowship with my wife, Pat.

Colin, because you met Pat and took her to England, let's talk about meeting Pat. Tell me more about how you met your wife and that sort of thing please.

Well, I suppose we've really, as long as we've been able to realise the light of day, known each other because we were living only seven miles apart in the Barossa Valley - Pat at Seppeltsfield and myself at Tanunda - and our families knew each other so well, and my father was family doctor to the whole of the Seppelt family. And I guess that answers your question.

When did you get married?

We were married on the twenty-fourth of November 1938. I was twenty-eight and Pat was twenty-five.

Right, and was your mother at the wedding?

My mother was at the wedding. I had managed to tell my father on his deathbed in May that I was going to marry Pat.

Grand. When did your mother die?

She died in 1966 shortly before my son Michael was married in Sydney.

Good, and where are they buried?

They are both buried in the North Road Cemetery, Medindie, in Adelaide.

Good, thank you. So now you and your new wife went off to England. Tell me something about that.

Yes, strangely enough we travelled in the same ship - the *Ormonde* - on which I'd previously visited England, again with the intention of my becoming a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in England, very much with our tongues in our cheeks after what had happened in Munich in 1938 and the oppressive thought that war might once again start up in Europe. We arrived in London and got ourselves a very nice flat in Haverstock Hill near Belsize Park, which is not very far from Hamstead Heath, settled in. I met my professors, bought my books and we started housekeeping. When war broke out on 3rd September ...

1939?

... 1939, they after a short time, unfortunately, decided in all the flak of the moment with barrage balloons up all over London, to close the courses. And here was I in London with my young wife with nothing to do and nowhere to go. I tried to enlist in the RAMC in London, but was informed that they could not take me as an army medical officer, that I would have to go back to my country of origin and enlist there.

And what did you do? How did you get back?

Some very great friends of ours - John McCoy, who was a radiologist and his wife Moya - were in London at the time and we had been seeing a lot of them, and because they were leaving for Australia shortly, they asked us to have lunch with them at the Cumberland Hotel, which we did. Feeling rather saddened saying Goodbye to them, we were amazed when John, shortly after we'd had the first drink, said, 'We're leaving tomorrow from Victoria Station at 12 noon. We can get berths for you on the *Strathmore* two decks apart, in four berth cabins', and then proceeded to tell us how he was able to do this, the reason being that his cousin was very high up in the P & O Company in London and John had been pulling a few strings. So there we were faced with the thought of catching that boat train at 12 noon the next day - and it was already then 1 o'clock - at the Cumberland in London.

Okay, and how did you meet that task?

We asked for the second drink, then went into a huddle and decided in a very short space of time that we'd give it a go - which we did. The first thing we did after lunch was to go to Selfridges and buy another trunk. We then went out to see a solicitor out at Belsize Park because we had to get out of this involvement in taking the flat for such a short period of time. Fortunately the woman from whom we'd rented the flat panicked in the south of France, came back, and while we were temporarily visiting Pat's uncle and aunt in Bedford, about a week before war broke out - because we were

actually there when war broke out, in Bedford - she'd come back, got the spare key from the caretaker and was living in our flat! So this gave us the necessary edge to be able to put the pressure on her to cancel the agreement.

Yes. Okay, and what date did you sail from England then?

I can't recall the actual date, but it was about two to three weeks, somewhere between two and three weeks after war was declared. And when we got on the *Strathmore*, we stayed in dock for the next twenty-four to thirty hours, then we moved out into the harbour in broad daylight. We proceeded down the Thames under air cover, to join a convoy out in the channel which was being shepherded by two destroyers.

And tell me about your trip on the way back. Were you in the separate cabins as ...?

We were in two separate cabins, each of four berths, and we were two decks apart. And of course the first thing, all our drill took place in the Thames, while we were laying up in the Thames. We were given gas masks, respirators, our life jackets which we had to carry with us everywhere. There was no smoking on deck, we were a blacked out ship, and we proceeded down the channel. We had a six-inch gun on the poop deck as protection, and we had an ack-ack gun up forehead. And when we were well out in the channel, we headed straight west and after about four or five hours we were left on our own by the destroyers and the convoy proceeded on presumably towards America. We had a paravane on each side, which was, hopefully, to cut any mines chains which we might intercept, and that night as we went to bed we were given final instructions about boat drill, and assembled, and without further ado and without a lapse of very much time, we had our first alarm. Just after we came up from dinner to have coffee in the lounge, the gun crew's alarm went off and everybody rushed to action stations, and some of the poor old dears who were going back to India to a safe place, to get away from this unpleasant atmosphere in Europe, the UK, were in a great panic spilling coffee all over the place. And we, being younger and more adventurous I suppose, thought the whole thing was a bit of a joke. We didn't fully realise what had happened until many weeks, several weeks, afterwards in the Indian Ocean when we passed through the Med, and were no longer in danger of passing on any secrets, and the captain asked us up for a drink in his cabin and told us exactly what had happened.

And what had happened?

What had happened was we'd run, quite unwittingly, into a U-boat which was up on the surface charging its batteries, and because it was between us and the rising moon in the east, we could see it but it couldn't see us, being a blacked out ship. And the gun crew wanted to open up with a six-inch gun, but the skipper wouldn't permit them to, because he immediately turned tail, put the ship full speed ahead and he told us that he worked on this judgement by reason of the fact that we were far enough away from it, and in the event of the surprise in circumstances of attacking, they wouldn't be ready to send their torpedoes after us, and so he felt that movement away from the site gave us a very good chance of not being hit by a torpedo.

Good Lord. You went back to the Suez Canal that day, you didn't go around the Cape?

No. We were in the Bay of Biscay when this episode occurred, and we were still heading south, away from the convoy of course, on our own, till we entered the Straits of Gibralta. And as we got further south, and just before we came opposite the Straits of Gibralta, we moved right out into the Atlantic again for about two hours before we got the okay to attempt to run into the Straits.

Into the Mediterranean?

Into the Med, and of course we went straight to Gibralta, and surprisingly, in spite of the war alert and the situation in which we found ourselves just previously, we were allowed ashore. And there we heard that one of the ships in the convoy that we'd just left had been sunk, and another one crippled.

Goodness. Was that the only incident on the way home?

Yes, that was the only incident we had. All passengers were rostered to take up certain positions in the rigging, and around vantage points on the boat - who had binoculars of course ...

Yes.

... to keep a lookout for any suspicious signs of periscopes and what not. We then proceeded on from Gibralta to Malta. Here again we thought no hope of going ashore at Malta, but sure enough we came into the inner harbour, passing one or two ships that had been blasted and had their hulls torn open, and we thought, 'Well now, this is it. We're going to sit about here'. But we were then told that lighters would be coming along to take us to shore.

Good Lord.

And when I asked the Customs man who had come up on board whether I could take my cinecamera, sixteen millimetre, ashore to take some pictures, again I was surprised by him telling me, 'Yes, providing you don't take anything of naval or military significance'.

Good Lord. How long did you stay in Malta at that time? Just a twelve hour stop ...?

We stayed, yes, we stayed the whole day and we had to get back on the ship, I think, by about 8 o'clock at night, and we sailed somewhere about 1 a.m., or somewhere there ...

Down the Mediterranean and through the Suez Canal?

Through the Suez Canal.

And no further incidents on the way back then?

No, no further incidents and we were able to Of course, we'd passed a tremendous amount of naval activity ...

Of course.

... small fry and large stuff, cruisers and things like that. But we were allowed ashore at Port Said ...

Yes.

... came down through the Canal, and once we got into the Red Sea after that episode, everybody felt that they could breathe more easily.

And did you keep the ship blacked out all the way home?

The whole way, yes, the whole way.

And you got to Adelaide? You went Obviously, you came You didn't stop in Aden did you, or ...?

We did. We stopped in Aden. We stopped everywhere; that was what was so surprising. We stopped in Aden and saw all the Persian carpets, fed the goats with paper bags and finally went on to Bombay. We were allowed ashore again at Bombay. Then we proceeded to Fremantle, across the Bight to Adelaide where we disembarked.

And were you glad to be home?

Most certainly were. There was mother on the dock waiting to greet us, and all we could think about was how atrociously Australian her voice sounded (laughing).

(Laughing). Well, were you disappointed at not being able to do your specialisation?

Naturally, having tried twice and been defeated, or obstructed on each occasion, I did have the feeling that everything that I had planned for myself was in dissolution, and I didn't know where to start to recommence it all.

So, then what did you do? We're now talking of about a period in, what is it, November 1939 I would think. We are home, six weeks home - early November 1939?

Yes, that's correct. We stayed with Pat's mother and we stayed with my mother and after spending the festive season in both households, we then started to look around for a practice, because I had some money to spend which my father had given me because he'd passed on his own practice to my brother. And so I felt that the appropriate thing to do was, seeing that I was intending to try to get into the overseas service, I would find a home for my wife and work in civil practice for as long as I was able to.

You wanted to go to the war?

I wanted to go to the war, yes.

Well where did you find the practice and how long did it take you?

I searched around South Australia, I took a trip to Perth, and looked around over there - could find nothing suitable - and finally settled for a practice at Woodside in the Adelaide hills.

And when did you occupy that?

April Fool's Day, 1940.

Did it turn out that way?

Not really. It was really quite successful and we've lived there ever since, so I guess our first impression was the correct one.

Well, I can remember being in camp at Woodside. Did you have any connection with Woodside in those early days at all?

Yes. I was helping with the RAP primarily, and then I started to do longer sessions in camp, in residence, and this became more and more progressive until finally I was doing more work in Woodside camp than I was in private practice.

But you weren't in the army at that stage were you?

I had my uniform, I'd got my uniforms and all, but no, I wasn't I didn't have an SX number.

Well how did you get that?

I got it, I suppose, by persisting to see Colonel Wall who was DDMS Adelaide, whom I knew quite well, telling him that I wanted to go overseas, and he was very understanding that I could further my chances by doing a job - it was Darwin Overland Maintenance Force (DOMF)- for ninety days up in the Territory.

Whereabouts?

Well I was stationed at Tennant Creek. I went up on the *Ghan*, had three lovely days. I was given my rations at Adelaide Station in a half kerosene case, and it took us three days to get to Alice, and after a few days there I then moved on by motor transport up to Tennant Creek, and then on to Banka Banka Station which was sixty miles north of Tennant Creek where we were living in canvas in our particular camp, servicing the convoys which were being passed through from Alice to Darwin.

Were you busy?

Yes I was busy in a way, because every time a convoy came in I had to do a lot of work. There were sick parades and so on, and there was quite a bit of 'flu a lot of the time. But I was also busy because I had to tend to all the civilian population, right up and down the line, and some of the stations out from Tennant Creek and out from Banka Station, because there were no civilian doctors in the Territory between Alice Springs and Darwin.

Good Lord. How long did you stay up there doing this sort of work?

I was there for ninety days altogether.

And then what happened?

I then returned to Alice Springs and awaited an opportunity to come down by road transport again with a few of the engineers who were still building the road through between Alice and Birdum, the railhead - 300 miles south of Darwin. And then I got back to Adelaide and shortly after that I was requested to go off to Sydney to do a school in tropical medicine.

Who asked you to do that? How did that come about?

That came about again by Colonel Wall ringing me up and saying I was almost certainly going to be posted to the 8th Div, but I had to do this school in tropical medicine as a prerequisite to the final announcement.

Was that a good course? That was in Sydney, wasn't it?

Yes, it was a very good course. We did a lot of work on all tropical conditions, including quite a bit of information concerning the types of insectivora we'd find in Malaya, because it wasn't just treating patients - we had to identify the various mosquitoes that could be the vectors of malaria - and this was part of the scheme to enable us to become malariologists, in a sense, knowing that we were going to be in that area for quite some time.

Well, you were assured then, of enlistment. Had you been enlisted in the army at this stage? Had Colonel Wall accepted you as a regimental medical officer of the Australian Army?

It was at about that time that I got my SX number.

What was that number?

SX14044.

It's richly engraved on your mind?

It sure is.

All right. Now, you've done the school of tropical medicine, and you're back from Sydney and you're back in Adelaide I assume. Then what happened?

We had some pre-embarkation leave, which I spent, naturally, with both my mother and my mother in law and my wife and my son, who had been born on 29th July ...

That was Michael?

Michael. And then we went to Melbourne with Pat accompanying me, and we were there for a few days before embarking at Port Melbourne.

And what did you embark onto?

The *Wanganella*.

Where did you go? Left for ... Singapore?

We left for Singapore, and it took us thirteen days to get there. We struck a tremendous storm in the Bight, and we had all our great steel officers' cabin trunks floating all over the cabins, and had to lash them down, but we managed it quite well once we turned the corner at Fremantle and headed north.

Now, from what you've told me, you left Melbourne on the 3rd September in 1941 and therefore you would have arrived in Singapore about the 16th of September from the thirteen day trip. But we're talking now before Japan entered the war on the 7th December 1941, so you had three months or so before the Japanese entered the war. What unit did you belong to at that time?

I went away with the 13th Australian General Hospital, and when we got to Singapore we were moved out along the south coast to a very delightful spot, right over the water, at an old school which had been allotted to us, and then commenced to develop our unit facilities, our messing facilities, and meet people. We were made members of the Singapore swimming club, we bought sporting equipment, played cricket and badminton and we swam and generally had a jolly good time.

It must have been an idyllic sort of circumstance for you?

Well it was. It was quite surprising because we saw all the activities of war, plus the air force putting on a turn for us every day of the week and all day, and we felt that we were really in an inner fortress. But we were living a rather pleasurable type of life, playing tennis on private surgeon's courts and meeting the population and going to nightclubs, going to Raffles and drinking stengahs just about every afternoon.

What's a stengah?

A stengah is ...

Oh, 'stengah' (pronouncing it S-T-I-N-G-E-R).

Stengah.

Yeah, okay, what's a stengah?

Stinger. It's spelt stengah - S-T-E-N-G-A-H, but pronounced 'stinger'. It's a half-whiskey and double soda, which is supposed to keep you sober in the tropics. (Comes from Stengah in Malay meaning halfcast)

Oh I see. Well, when did these idyllic days begin to change? When did you get fear of Japan, and when did you start changing attitudes towards what you were supposed to do?

Well I guess the whole thing was gradual. We took rest, we became more motivated towards what we were going to do when war broke out, and as the pressure increased we realised that something was happening in the Pacific. Although we were not prepared for the suddenness of it, we became more and more complete soldiers as far as the job ahead of us was concerned. We were ready and we really wanted a bit of activity, I suppose. It was at about this stage that I was transferred from the 13th AGH to the 2/9th Field Ambulance, which was stationed at Kota Tingi, some sixty to ninety miles north of Singapore.

And what was the unit like? You changed then from an AGH into a Field Ambulance which is a much more combative style of medical unit than an AGH which is purely concentrating on the medical aspects in the main.

Yes it was, although we were not in jungle positions or in battle positions. It was like a sort of parade ground affair. We had to do our own sick parade and we had to take the parades and all this sort of thing each day, and try to learn a little bit about parade ground stuff. And we did do a few exercises with our ambulances, and we had a number of lectures with our company commanders. And it wasn't until we moved later on up to Mersing that we really began to do much more exploratory work in the sense that we tried to find out routes of evacuation through some of the various rivers in case of an assault on the coast at Mersing, which was quite interesting work because we got right out into the jungle and we were able to investigate the possibility of evacuation of wounded by canoe and various inland routes, in case the whole area of the beach front was occupied and we were pushed back into the interior. Very interesting.

Hm. When did you move up? You were there, in Mersing, before the Japanese landed in Malaya?

No we weren't actually. We were in Kota Tingi when Pearl Harbour occurred, and that night, too, Singapore was bombed, and it was shortly after that that we moved up to Mersing.

Right, that makes it in mid- Pearl Harbour was the 7th December 1941, and so it was shortly after that that you moved to Mersing into your battle stations?

That's right, yeah.

Who were you supporting? Field Ambulances normally support a brigade. Were you supporting a brigade at that stage?

Yes, we were supporting the 22nd Brigade.

The Australian 22nd Brigade?

Yes.

Good. Okay, now tell me what happened then. Can you go on in your narrative from that time about the events that occurred and your feelings about those events in that area?

Well we were camped in a very delightful spot on the foreshore, and again this idyllic type of situation was still in existence because we were waiting what was going to happen quite some time afterwards when the Japanese finally landed high up at Kota Bharu on the east coast. So, here again, although we didn't have all the emoluments and the blessings of Singapore, we did have wonderful little trips. I remember on one occasion Brigadier Taylor taking us all out in a launch that he'd requisitioned to a little island and we spent a whole day out at a little off-shore island which was absolutely virginal and pristine. On other occasions we were doing exercises in the jungle. We weren't playing any organised sport because there were no facilities for doing that, but generally we were having a very happy time until the pressure started to come on. And finally, with the onset, the imminence of this Japanese landing which our intelligence knew about, and decided should be acted upon, we were moved to battle stations in various parts from Mersing down towards Kota Tinggi.

Brigadier Taylor that you refer to was the Brigade Commander of the 22nd Brigade I imagine?

Yes he was.

Did you have much to do with him?

I did. I saw a lot of him. I thought he was a very nice man.

Competent and all the rest of it?

I thought so yes, yes.

Tell me more about the other commanders that were existing there. I mean, did you ever meet General Gordon Bennett?

I did. Right at the termination of the fighting on the island I met him almost quite by accident at Tanglin where the AIF were holding a perimeter, and I had to go along to see him because we were running out of sulphanilamide and plaster of Paris, and I went along to see Colonel Derham to see if I could get some more. We were ...

Who's Colonel Derham?

Colonel Derham was DDMS.

Of the Australian 8th Division?

Of the 8th Div, yes, and we were operating - Frank Mills and I were operating in a sandbagged house. We were doing a lot of surgery removing shrapnel and doing one or two amputations, and abdominal surgery inside the perimeter and we were very busy, and we were having a pretty hectic time. And I just quite accidentally ran into General Gordon Bennett because I couldn't find the DDMS.

Tell me more about the encounter then with General Gordon Bennett?

Well, he was pointed out to me from the building where I'd gone to find the DDMS. He was pointed out to me and he was sitting at a table drumming a pencil on a table, sitting in a chair underneath some Poinciana trees about sixty metres away from the hutments, and right on the edge of the padang. So I walked across - there was nobody with him; he was unaccompanied. I walked across and stood to attention, saluted him and was about to tell him what I wanted as far as the medical requirements were concerned, and that I couldn't find the DDMS, when all of a sudden he jumped to his feet, put his left hand to my shoulder and just pushed me over. I dropped into a slit trench as he did because, with my back to what was happening, he'd seen over my shoulder a couple of Zeros coming through the trees.

Zeros - the Japanese aircraft?

They are.

Fighter aircraft?

Yes. They were very low too, and at that particular moment they opened up and we saw the "fairy" lights ...

Of the tracer bullets?

Yes.

And you were saved?

Yes, absolutely. We were covered in dust and a couple of chairs were wrecked, and that was it, but we were on our feet straight away. Then we immediately quietened down and I was able to go on talking to him, just as though nothing had happened at all (laughing).

So you owe your life, you think, to General Gordon Bennett?

Well, I wasn't facing the direction he was. I certainly, it's quite ...

DR COLIN JUTTNER

The bullets landed near you though.

It's quite possible.

The bullets from the aircraft landed near you?

They did, they did indeed.

So it's quite possible that he did?

And they dropped a couple of sticks, too, on the hutments at the same time.

Sticks of bombs?

Yes.

Tell me, did you like ...? What - did you still carry a great respect for General Gordon Bennett?

I did, I did indeed, yes. I thought he was a brave man.

He's a controversial figure in the military history of Australia as you're aware.

Yes, that's right.

The affection for General Gordon Bennett is still with you?

Oh absolutely. I've seen many officers under stress and I've got the greatest admiration for him.

That's nice to hear. I understand you carried a message to General Gordon Bennett from Australia? What was that about?

Yes, that's right. I was particularly pleased that I had managed to run into him because Colonel Wall, who was DDMS, Adelaide Central District, had asked me - as he knew I was going into the 8th Div, if I ever ran into Gordon Bennett, that I would give him a message because, as Colonel Wall said to me, 'I was his RMO in World War I'. So I gave him his kind regards, and that more or less finished that conversation and the episode with General Bennett.

Did the General make any comment? Did he say, 'I remember Colonel Wall very clearly'?

He did say something, but I can't recall his words.

No, of course not, no. In the course of your conversations with me, you've mentioned a man called Frank Mills. Tell me more about Frank Mills.

Well, Frank Mills was a doctor from Sydney who had been doing and got his FRCS. He was only a Captain when I knew him, and remained so throughout the war in Malaya, but he had the ability to do good surgical work and he and I were both seconded together to the 2/9th Field Ambulance. He came from one of the AGH's. I think he came from the other hospital, but I'm not sure where he came from. But we were great friends.

I suppose we'll hear a lot more about Frank Mills in the narratives as we go down through this tape.

Yes we will.

Well, the war's on. When did you first experience war?

Well I suppose in a silent way - if it's possible to experience war in a silent way - it was an occasion when we were being withdrawn down the east coast and getting on down towards Singapore Island, and the strangest things had been going on at night, and some of the Japanese forces had certainly crossed across the lower part of the peninsular. And on that night I was last of our unit, with three ambulances and a number of men, and that night when we went to sleep we had already evacuated a few casualties that had come in and sent them down to the island. And I'd taken some hand grenades from one patient, 'cause we had to disarm them all when we put them in the ambulance, and put one in each breast pocket and they stayed there for quite some time. And that night I got all my men with their backs up against a rubber tree, because we had heard that the Nip 256 bullets wouldn't go through a rubber tree, whereas our fellas were shooting the Nips straight through the rubber tree with a .303. So we did that, and spent the whole night with our backs up against these rubber trees. I didn't sleep a wink, and I had the ambulances disposed in a circle around us, and there were strange noises. Somehow [inaudible] in the spot didn't sound the same, nothing sounded the same. But in the morning we woke - we were unharmed. That was my first taste, I should think.

Good for you. Funny feeling isn't it, that eerie feeling of expectation that comes in. You got away with it that night. What did you do then? Did you retreat the next day?

Yes, we were pulled back the next day, and then daylight there was nothing about at all, and we got no more casualties either, and we weren't near any combatant troops. It was just an incident which occurred.

Than did you come all the way back down into the Singapore Island?

Yes.

By successive stages?

By successive stages is right, yes.

Did you have any action or meet the enemy on the way of that withdrawal short of Singapore Island?

No, but what we did do, coming down we found that we were the last of the troops and formations being brought down there and on one afternoon I discovered that there was a huge dump of four gallon cans of aviation fuel just off the road. It was in a sort of hutted area which was at least eighty yards long and so we contacted the engineers to blow it up.

Good Lord. And whose aviation fuel was it?

Well it was our own aviation fuel. It had been depoted there, but somebody seemed to have forgotten all about it.

When did you first meet the enemy yourself?

I first met the enemy the day after they landed on the island.

Singapore Island?

On Singapore Island, yes.

Tell me more, tell me about that.

We were in the forward position, the 'B' Company, near the village of Amakeng, and the Japanese had landed in heavy concentration during the night with infiltrating and various probing movements, and our combatant troops were gradually being withdrawn until we found ourselves almost mixed up with 'em. And although I didn't see any Japanese, there was stuff flying around and small arms fire and people taking cover, and that was the first time I was really in contact.

Did you have to deal with casualties that night, that day or night?

Yes, we were sending back casualties all the time. We were always retaining two ambulances and sending back one.

You were like a casualty clearing point, were you, evacuating them back to the AGH's or to a Field Ambulance ...?

Yes, it was almost really more like a battalion aid post, an RAP - Regimental Aid Post - rather than a Field Ambulance.

Yes, but you evacuated to the Field Ambulance - no, the 2/9th Field Ambulance ...?

We evacuated them back, and the tragedy was, too, that we were obligated to evacuate one or two civilians as well, which I just didn't have the heart to resist sticking in the ambulance. One father came along with his dead child drooping in his arms, so I put them in the ambulance.

Were they Malays or were they European that you're talking about?

Oh no, they were Malays.

Malays, all right, I can understand that.

Malays.

And that was the build-up, that was the start of the build-up to the crescendo of the drama of Singapore?

Yes, that was. We were fairly heavily bombed with mortar bombs that night, and we had to take cover, with what we had, we had a few slit trenches. We got behind our ambulances and just did the best we could until dawn. And then fortunately - we didn't know what to do - but fortunately we did get an order to withdraw, and that was later recorded in the war diaries. It was just as well that we had been withdrawn because about an hour later the whole area was overrun. It was at about that time on the way back, during this withdrawal, that we got mixed up with a lot of the troops who were also withdrawn, being withdrawn, and the whole area was just a shemozzle. Nobody seemed to know what to do, but we'd got away from that too, although we were under fairly heavy small arms fire.

Yes. Right. Now, the battle for Singapore took some time didn't it? You must have been withdrawn, when, towards Singapore, towards the end of January? When did you get back onto the island from Malaya? Can you remember?

Well, I can't remember the exact date, but when we came across the causeway ...

Yes.

... and the causeway was blown up. There was quite an interim period of possibly four/five days - I'm not sure of the time - before the Japanese started to lay down a barrage, before they crossed the straits.

Tell me some of your exploits, some of the notable things that happened to you during the battle for Singapore?

One interesting thing happened shortly after dawn.

On what day is this?

This would be the morning after the ...

The withdrawing off Singapore?

The morning after the Nips crossed the straits.

Okay, yeah.

[Inaudible]. We'd had a bad night all night, and at lunchtime we experienced a strange thing which we could only attribute to a destroyer off the coast firing salvos, as it moved away, because we heard these salvos, and in each case they seemed to be 4-inch guns or something like this, and they were some way from us, and they were closer, and then they came right almost in to us, and then moved away again - about four separate salvos. We thought this was probably a Japanese destroyer adding to the bombardment.

Yes.

But the second occasion was when we were having lunch, and one of my ambulance drivers was right next to me. We had a trestle table and I was tryin' to grab the last of my corned beef - bully beef - when I could hear this stuff whistling in, and dropped down, and he unfortunately was my protector because he got a bit of shrapnel in the buttock which went right up to his abdominal cavity and got his liver, and he died before we could even get him on the ambulance. That was my - until then - closest escape.

What confusion reigned?

Much confusion. There seemed to be nobody in control anywhere. If there was, they weren't evident to us in the ambulance. We were getting countermanded orders. One minute we'd be told to do something, and the next minute we'd be told to go to some other map reference, only to be told by troops there we were withdrawing, that it was already in the hands of the enemy. And in the early hours of the morning when we were given the order to withdraw from the vicinity of Ameking and back through it, we met up with a conglomeration of all sort of competent troops - members of both our ambulances - and there was a general mess-up. The weather was beautiful but the casualties and the walking wounded were absolutely shocking.

Give me an example.

Well, there was one particular case that I'll never forget and that was a man who was grossly wounded. The whole of his bottom jaw was shot off, and yet he was standing and walking about and he tried to write a message for me in the sand. He didn't succeed but I knew what he meant - that we wanted me to give him an overdose of a sedative which I did. And without any hesitation I opened up three one-third grain morphia ampoules and shot the whole lot into him.

He was marked for the grave anyway wasn't he.

Absolutely, absolutely. He was so shocked that even his blood vessels didn't have enough pressure to bleed and squirt blood all over the place, and yet he was standing. It was one of the most awful sights I've ever looked at.

Yes, I can imagine. And he would never have been any good. Tell me, did you You were under pressure moving around. Did you really ever know what was going on, where the Japanese were?

Only by the sound of fire, and by getting information from troops around us, and in the general melee, trying to piece things together.

Did the casualties grow a lot? Did you deal with more and more casualties during this phase or were you too busy moving your ambulance or your 2/9th Field Ambulance?

We tried to stagger our movements a bit by having two ambulances in reserve when one moved back with casualties, but it was all very haphazard and we were always moving in the same direction which was unfortunate. But certainly it was a shambles.

From my knowledge of war, retreats or withdrawals always bring about a lowering of morale. Was there a loss of morale in the 2/9th Field Ambulance unit?

Yes, I think there was. I think there was, yes, I'm sure there was. It's hard to discriminate between people. At some moments some people acted in a noble way and did their job; at others, people even in high places in the Ambulance didn't really set an example which could be regarded as appropriate for the time being.

What do you recall vividly in these instances?

I can remember amongst all the melee in the air, I suppose the effects of the Japanese artillery. The low flying of the aircraft was the thing which got into people's hearts and minds more than anything else. I mean, it was just such a great relief when a flight of planes had dropped their load of bombs and you knew you had that little bit of respite, even if only for a short time. But, as I said, it was just so mixed up that it's difficult to be analytical about any one part of it except individual incidents.

Can you give me ...? Were there any incidents that stand out in your mind during this time that you'd like to tell me about?

On one occasion when we were retreating down along the Bukatima road, or the vicinity thereof, we met up with the AGH and we, for a time, spent quite a bit of time giving anaesthetic to their casualties while some of the surgeons, like Bertie Coates, who was a well-known Australian surgeon - did a good job - was doing surgery, because for the time being we were told to hold our ambulances in position and await further orders and instructions. That was interesting, an interlude, it gave us something different. I mean, we were after all in civilised conditions and we were in a good building. Previous to that, the position that we found ourselves in through one change of venue or change of position to hold our ambulances in, we found ourselves out near the reservoir and that night going quietly and peacefully to sleep, and chatting around on the lawn, we were suddenly fired on, tracer bullets everywhere. We got up on the balcony and hurled a Red Cross in front of a kerosene lamp, and miraculously stopped the firing, and we then decided that as it was almost dawn, it was time to prepare to evacuate the place, which we did. We weren't fired on anymore, but we did fill all the three ambulances with - four ambulances, I think we had there at the time - and we filled those with all available bodies and everything we could take, our stores and all, and huddled ourselves into them. And then we moved

off at the crack of dawn. The sun came up pretty quickly in the tropics, and we spent a long time seeing absolutely nothing - no Japanese, no troops of our own, until I suppose a matter of about two or three miles before we hit Bukatima Road, and then moved down that a bit, and there were all our troops behind Bren carriers and in battle positions, squatting down behind all sorts of cover. And they looked at us as much as to say, 'Where the hell did you come from?' (Laughing).

(Laughing) And were you ever sent back out there on those missions again? Did you have any problems ...?

Yes.

... with the command in control within the unit?

Yes. The command was pretty indeterminate, and on one occasion Frank Mills and I were sent with two ambulances to a map reference on the island, this time to the west of Bukatima Road, and only - this was at night too - and it was quite dark, and people were coming back past us and said, 'Where the hell are you going to?' We told them the map reference, and they said, 'Just turn around and go back. That's been in the hands of the enemy for the last hour'.

Good Lord. As the morale dropped - and I'm coming back to the question of morale because I want to know how the unit worked - what about tasks given and loads carried, tiredness, fatigue, people saying, oh, they can't carry on, people saying they can carry on? Did you come across instances like this?

Yes I did. I felt like it myself very often, and when we were finally pushed right down onto the water front, and we were in these grounds of St Andrew's Cathedral, and had our trucks and our ambulances there, a call came out for the ambulance to send out two medical officers to the Tanglin area where the AIF were holding a perimeter. And the CO came along, and we were sitting down there, lovely day - except for all the noise - and started on two of the members of our Field Ambulance who both remonstrated that they were so tired they couldn't give a good account of themselves, and then he moved to the second one and said, 'Well what about you going?', and he said much the same thing. And there was a stranger between him and me, whom I can't recall the name of, and I knew I was going to be the next, but before he had a chance to ask me I thought, 'Well I'm not gonna let you ask me, I'm just gonna say, "I'll go"', which I did. And Frank Mills was the other one because they wanted surgeons out there and so we both went out in an ambulance and passed through these empty vacated bomb-ridden streets of Singapore with not a sign of anything alive, and with bits and pieces suddenly disappearing without any noise from some of the buildings, which was a strange experience. But we got out there all right.

What happened when you got there?

Well they had a sandbagged residence there ready for us and we were able to set up an operating theatre and they already had a number of MOs out there who were giving anaesthetics, and Frank Mills and I did all the surgery. We did a lot of surgery. We

went right through the whole of that day, the whole of the following night and there was a bit of a lapse in activity the next day, which was Saturday the fourteenth ...

Of February

The day before we surrendered.

And then you came back to your unit and then came the surrender?

We didn't come back to our unit, we didn't see any part of our unit again. We were evacuated with the rest of the people from Tanglin and all met up again at Changi.

You'd been captured at that stage?

We'd been captured, yes.

And now we come to the crucial time of the first moments of capture, and I'm just going to ask you about that. Tell me how you felt, tell me what happened that first day?

Difficult to put into words because it was such a tangle of emotions. There was a great sense of relief that everything had come to a stop, come to an end, because it was such a disastrous situation for so many days, not knowing exactly what was going to happen, and we naturally thought of our loved ones. It was great to get back again to all the people that we knew in our unit and chat over things and try and imagine what was going to be our situation - how long were we going to be imprisoned, what the food was going to be like, all those things. I can't really specifically be any clearer than that.

Were you sad, forlorn ...?

No, I think ...

... downcast, morale low?

I don't think so. I think this had been building up for the previous two to three days or even weeks. It was naturally a situation where we felt hopeless in a sense because no longer did we have any directional impulse, we had no plan to formulate our living for the next few months and weeks. We didn't know what was going to happen. I think that probably the real study in contemplation of what had happened to us started to occur after two to three days when we started to feel really hungry and the belt had to be tightened up. I think that was the time when we were able to articulate our discomfort more.

Hm. How did you ...? What happened at the time? You had suddenly You got word that the garrison of Singapore had - the force in Singapore had capitulated. Then what?

Well there was very little time really on the fifteenth and the sixteenth - perhaps nothing on the fifteenth, of course - but on the sixteenth or seventeenth - I can't even

recall the exact day that we did march out. We were held for a time and then we were assembled, we were disassembled, and then transport came along. We had to move in ambulances or walk or march, whatever the case was. I was fortunate enough to go out on a truck with ambulances behind and in front of me, and fortunately the weather was good and the march took place. I do recall one thing in particular and that was the sad faces on all the Chinese and all the residents of Singapore, all native population, who were lining the road as we marched and were driven out to Changi, and of course in order to protect their own security, every one of them had been supported - well, when I say 'every one', I mean there were thousands and thousands of little tiny Japanese flags that they were holding - not in any sense of glory or happiness, but because they were ordered to do so - very low down at about their belt level, and not waving them.

Yes. I'm sure the plight of those Chinese must have been dreadful too, as much as it was for you.

Well they were, of course. I mean, many of their houses were completely and utterly wrecked and they just looked as tragic, I suppose, as we did - perhaps more so, possibly more so.

And so you were transported out to Changi in the north-east corner of the island of Singapore?

Yes, and ...

Then what?

We went, we were allotted the barracks on the square, and we had one building where my particular unit - and we were all mixed up together; all medical units were all mixed up together. Some were in various other parts of Changi of course, but I'm just thinking of the parts that I was in, and we started to try and organise ourselves. There was a great delay in getting our first meal. We went throughout a whole day before we were issued with anything at all. We did have some rations which, of course, we'd taken out with us, and we were using our own rations for at least two to three days - nothing from the Japs at all, not a thing, not even rice.

What was the population of Changi in terms of prisoners at that stage? It must have been a very crowded place.

Yes, I couldn't give you the figure on that really.

But it was crowded?

Yeah. I would imagine that probably at that time, during the first week, there must have been somewhere in the vicinity of - well, it's hard to say, but certainly in my area twenty thousand troops from around that particular area.

And you were never in a cluster of medical units. There were battalions and there were gunners and all the others that would have been caught

up in that. What about the civilians, the British, the Caucasian civilians in Singapore? What happened to them?

Well, here again, to me it's a blank because I didn't sight them at all. We never saw anything of them and I understand that they were all rounded up and put into camps.

Yeah, yeah.

But we only started to learn more about them and their fate many years later, perhaps after the second year in "The Bag", or even the third. And by that time news started to filter through to us.

All right. Now, tell me about the early days in Changi, what you did.

The first thing which we gave our attention to, of course, was to try and control what we knew was inevitable in that some form of disease - diarrhoea and other bowel infestation infections - were going to recur, was to get adequate facility for disposal of the human waste from such a vast body of men crammed into such a small area. So we were able to get through to the Japanese, and our own engineers helped with augers which were able to dig these great pits for us, and the position of these was We tried to keep as far away as we could from human habitation in the area. We just put them in all over the place, and seats were constructed on top of them and we called them bore holes, and that was our method of disposal of human waste. The other thing which we were very much concerned with was to try and get as much as we could in the way of books and things to try and occupy the troops' minds, and a lot of representations were made to the Japanese to try and help us to obtain from houses which had been closed down or evacuated by the occupants, books and records and all this type of thing to try and occupy the mind of everybody there.

Did you go out on working parties? Were you required to work or were you required to do any ...?

Not at that stage. For about the first three to four weeks nothing was done - perhaps the first three weeks. After that they called for parties to go down to the wharf and they went down to Kepple Harbour and day after day they were loading all the British stores - all our stores, our bully beef, all that sort of stuff - was loaded and sent to Japan on transports, so that all we were left with was the rice which was issued to us and just occasionally a symbolic sort of issue of some biscuits or something like this which was really totally useless. And it was during that first two to three weeks that we really suffered very badly with malnutrition, and because of malnutrition our emotional lives suffered badly too.

Hm. Were you getting thinner and thinner over that two to three weeks? Could you feel yourself ...?

Well not in that time, no. We were still living on our own fat, and we were feeling the withdrawal of the food, and we couldn't sleep at night. We'd lie awake and think of all that wonderful food back home, and absolute sheer anger. Sometimes in the middle of the night (laughing) I can remember thumping the bed with my fist - because we did

have beds, which were there in the barracks in the square, so we were very comfortable in those early days but very very hungry.

Yes. What types of duties did you have to do apart from ...?

In Changi at that time?

All working parties, or out or identifying, or did you have to search areas or ...?

Yes.

Did you [inaudible] areas or ...?

When I moved out on working parties, in my particular case we moved out to the vicinity of the area of Bukatima and [Adam Park?] and around the racecourse. See, all around that area we were moved on about two to three occasions to different localities and here again we were only there because of our proximity to the centre of Singapore and so that the working parties from our area really just went from there rather than from Changi down to the wharf, just this business of loading ships and unloading ships and all this sort of business went on. And we also, after a time - which was rather strange of us - were put to work by the Japanese building memorials on, for example, the Golf Course, digging out little creeks and holes for the Japanese to put in some of their beautiful Japanese gardens, or dear little wooden bridges as a memorial to their own troops who'd fallen on the island.

Is that right?

Hm.

Goodness gracious. After the battle were there many corpses and wounded ...

Yes.

... and all these sorts of things?

Yes, initially the first area we came into The padrés did a good job with this. They knocked together all the personal effects of these putrifying corpses - it wasn't a very pleasant job - but the Japanese did allow us to search over a fairly wide area, and we got their pocket - any books they had, little pocket books they had, any photographs and of course we took off all their identity discs and kept all these together in a little bundle for each person, and as much as possible we were able to identify quite a few people and give the records to the padrés.

Well now, we're talking about operating from Changi and into the working parties in the countryside. Did you come back into Changi every night or did you stay out in working parties overnight, or how did you work or where did you work?

No, no we didn't come back into Changi every night, no never in my experience anyway. We worked from area to area, wherever the work had to be done, and quite often we'd change an area and go into another lot of houses. These could last for two weeks or a number of days, or sometimes as much as a month. I think probably the longest working party I was on lasted for about six weeks, and that was in the Bukatima area. And then later on we moved to an area on the western side of Bukatima Road, but I can't recall just exactly where it was, but we were in a house there and a surprise event occurred on one night when we were settling down for the night. There was three of us - there was doctor from Sydney by the name of Dick Parker, and a dentist by the name of Roy Mannion and myself. We were sharing a room, and we'd got into bed and the door opened and in came somebody and a voice said, 'Bucking saints'. The other two, of course, didn't know what he was talking about but I did because it was the war cry of St Peter's College, to which he also went, and he proved to be the canon who was an aid to the Bishop of Singapore who was given permission by the Japanese to go throughout his diocese and boost the morale of his flock, and particularly the prisoners-of-war.

Had you known the canon at school, or was he an older man than you?

No, he was older than I was. He was even older than my brother so he must have been about nine or ten years older than I was but I knew of him, and somehow or another, he must have looked up amongst the lists of prisoners-of-war somehow - I don't know how - but he found out that I was there and that I went to Saints.

Yeah. Isn't that amazing. Was the nature of the working parties ...? You gave medical cover to these working parties I imagine, and ...

Yes, running sick parades.

... and you'd conduct parades and that sort of thing, and looking after them health-wise. Did you work all areas, down in the docks and all the rest of the things?

Yes, all over the place, yes. Down at the docks, although mostly it was the workers themselves. Mostly we stayed in the camp allotted to us - that is, by us - I mean, we in the dental and medical professions. But there were occasions when we were able to move from one area to another because of the Japanese pass. And on one occasion I remember getting a pass to go across to an area which was occupied by a neighbouring working party and in which Colonel Galleghan, known to us all as '*Black Jack*' was esconced in a private house, well surrounded by cockeys posted all over the place so that the news could be derived from a wireless built into an armchair - the arm of an armchair. And he was there. I presume the Japanese had given him permission to be there because of this necessity to recover as many of our casualties, our bodies, and create records of them, because he was very clever at this sort of thing with the Japanese. He would bring up all sorts of reasons and rational suggestions to them which, strangely, their interpreters often were prepared to accept from him and not from other people.

Kanburi - or Kanchanaburi - the same place?

Well, the same thing. Kanchanaburi, or Kanburi shortened, which is on the river, on the Mekong ...

And then what did you do?

We had a fairly liberal time there for a while because we were able to go down to the river itself and bath and wash, and wash our clothes. Of course all the local population were along there, and selling us these pineapples and bananas cooked in fat, in a little open wok in front of the sellers. They were all women, and of course there we were I was incredulous to find that I'd, having washed my body and washed my shorts and so on, I left 'em to dry on a bit of sandy, stony stuff on the beach, got some money from my pockets - some occupation money - walked down to one of these women and said, 'Yes, I'll have pineapple' - pointing to them - 'and banana', and they did them in fritters. They were delicious and they were cheap. You know, I suddenly realised I didn't have a stitch on!

(Laughing).

It just shows how all these things, these necessitous things, produce a sort of oblivion to everything else.

Yes, yes it does. And so you stayed in the one place by day? You didn't move by day?

No. We never moved at all by day.

And as the night came, off again?

Off again. Yes, we'd form up, and then once it was dark we'd start marching on the next leg.

Colin, perhaps you might like to carry us across the route up to the railway. Were you going to work on the railway? We've got to our first night stand. I know it's repetitive, but perhaps you could describe the sequence of days and some incidents that might have occurred along the way.

Yes, surely Allan. We passed from one holding camp to another on this 200 mile plus route march. We stayed at several camps which were of particular interest and will ever remain in my mind because of certain incidents, whereas most of the stuff was, as you say, repetitive. We passed through Nieke and Konkoita, these were just in the jungle, just Japanese staging camps. One night, on the second night I think it was, after we left Kanburi I think it was, I went along to ask the Japanese guard for something to do with some of our sick. They took no notice of me whatsoever and amused themselves by catching large moths and holding them with their wings or

their feet into the candle flames on the table. They were shrieking and roaring with laughter like a lot of idiot baboons. Eventually I managed to have my say, but they still took no notice of me and I was just shown the door.

Good God.

This happened on a number of occasions, this sort of sadistical [inaudible] treatment, and indifferent treatment. Another occasion we had at another camp, we'd marched for a long time and well into the morning which was unusual. We'd marched for hours in daylight, and it was pretty hot, and we hadn't had a chance to replenish our water bottles until we got to the next staging camp. There was everything prepared for us. We thought, 'Oh, isn't it marvellous'. 'All men line up. All men line up to fill water bottles'. But they had the water boiling hot, and of course it was ladled into our water bottles, boiling hot. It was just steaming. Nobody could touch it. We had a This was more sadism. They knew we were all dying of thirst more or less - not dying of thirst, but we were just so keen to get to that water, they were going to prolong it, prolong the agony.

Was this type of guard that you associated with on this phase of your captivity more severe than what they were on the island of Singapore?

Oh definitely, definitely. Once we started to march up on the railway we got all the delinquent Japanese types in the world who were apparently on a fairly permanent basis staged in these camps, and so they had plenty of opportunities to learn their sadism and their brutality and their indifference. As force after force, or march after march marched through, they got even more explicit and more competent, as sadists.

Were Japanese officers commanding in each of these areas where the ...?

No, never. No, hardly ever saw a Japanese officer. Occasionally during that march we saw one or two in some of the bigger staging camps who were really there only to survey the health of their own troops and their own guards. They were all, just about all, NCOs and below.

And they were the poorer types you would imagine then, were they, from your observation?

I would think so, except for a spattering of one or two, who were very kind on very odd occasions. I can give you an instance or two of that.

Yes.

On one occasion, in I think it was Tarsau camp, was the first occasion in which we had any shelter whatsoever, and they had flies with tents stretched between trees and we were able to shelter under these. But we were soon to be relieved of our optimism because they started coming in underneath these shelters and grabbing people's knapsacks and haversacks and tipping them upside down, and then taking whatever they wished, or trying hard bargaining tactics. In my case they came into my shelter and tipped my knapsack upside down, grabbed a pair of socks which my wife had knitted for me, and which was my last pair of socks apart from one Red Cross issue

and the pair I was wearing, which were pretty precious up there on the railway marching along.

I would imagine. Yes, what happened?

Well I just felt so furious that when these two Japanese guards with not a stitch of clothing on except a G-string, and very bearded, walked off with my socks, for about three seconds I just boiled and walked quietly after them, and with their backs to me they didn't see me coming, and I just snatched my socks back and retreated, hopefully. Strangely enough, they took one look at me and walked away. I thought I was going to be done over there and then, but I wasn't. But two or three minutes later, three of them appeared - two of them carrying big bamboo sticks - and they twisted me around and one held me while the other two belted my back. I don't know how long, but the odd thing is that my anger was still so great that I didn't feel any pain at all.

Yeah. And is your back scarred from the beating?

Well it wasn't permanently scarred, but it was all denuded and bleeding. A lot's been said about some of the guards who they brought down from Korea as being very brutal, which was true, but on this occasion two little Red Cross Koreans were so worried about the state of my back that they put Mercurochrome all over it and were very helpful. And that night, one of them even went so far as to come along and gently nudge me while I was sort of half asleep, and present me with a nice big piece of steak on a banana leaf.

Good Lord!

I suppose he must have been a different type of Korean, quite obviously.

That's a pretty gentle sort of thing isn't it?

'Course our worst Korean of all - right up and down the railway, everybody speaks of him - was a Korean called Toyama who the Japanese were using as an interpreter, and he was pure poison personified.

Was he? A sadist of the worst order?

Absolutely.

Can you tell me why you say that?

Well at every opportunity he tried to humiliate us and make things as difficult as possible. He did it to all ranks, even the Colonel in charge of our camp later on up at Kami Sonkurai, right up at the top, and right down to the lowliest private.

Was he brutal as well as trying to belittle you? You speak of belittling, I think, in terms of that.

Yes. I can give you several instances of that. He on one occasion, which I felt personally We'd had an influx of troops. This was towards the end, the conclusion of the construction of the railway, and the actual joining of the railway was fairly near to our camp - that's the joining between Burma and Thailand, and so there was a big influx of troops from lower down into our camp, and we built up quite enormously. Immediately they came in we got about, oh it's hard to say, perhaps twelve hundred from both Sonkurai and Shimo Sonkurai - Shimo Sonkurai means lower heaven ...

Yes.

And Kami Sankurai where we were, means upper heaven.

Yes.

And they came in, and of course immediately the Japanese had to have a Tenko, which is a count - head count - and some of the men which were brought from down below, the camps below - there were three I think on stretchers; certainly two of them died within twenty-four hours after they arrived - and so they were disposed on the strip bamboo in the atap huts and were just put there while all the rest of the people who'd arrived were lined up and counted. And then Toyama came into our hutment, and of course we were very used to this because we had the head count morning and night, and so we were aligned in our appropriate position in the centre. By 'we', I mean the staff, the officers, myself as the MO, Eric McGlinn as the quartermaster, Reg Schwartz in command, and orderly RAP staff. Toyama came into the hut, every man had to sit to attention that were sick in the sick bays - but of course the three people on stretchers couldn't sit to attention, they were moribund. They had no idea where they were, and as I said, two of them died in the next twenty-four hours. Toyama started screaming because they didn't sit to attention, went up and kicked the stretchers, so I broke ranks and went up and told him that these men were very sick, they were going to die. He took no notice of me whatsoever; he looked straight through me and walked straight down to where I was supposed to be to the hiatus in the rank, the front rank, and started screaming like a demented monkey. And the rest of them pointed to where I was - he knew damn well where I was - but I was then summoned back to my position and then received a couple of haymakers from him. That was the type of fellow he was.

Yeah. This cruelty, it started to increase on the way you marched up and stayed with you for all the time that you were on the railway?

Yes. Actually when we'd finished the railway and we were on the way back with one or two people that he'd decided to focus his attention on, it became even worse.

Did it?

In the Not so much for the violence, but with the belittling of them.

Yeah. In case we don't come to it, what happened to Mr Toyama?

Toyama was finally executed - so I heard on the ship, just when I boarded the ship to come home at the end of '45. I think there were a number of summary executions and I heard that he was shot on the beach.

Was there any torture applied? I mean, this straight brutality of, you know, that clapping over the head and beating and that sort of thing, but was there any torture?

There was. Of course it's well known that there was torture. Up and down the track men were put into a hot house in the sand and covered over and left there for twenty-four hours until they'd almost expired from heat stress. The mental torture was the one which we were acquainted with more than that physical torture - where I happened to be.

Yes, tell me more about the mental torture.

Well, this Toyama seemed to have a great delight in instigating oppressive psychological methods on senior officers rather than the other ranks. That seemed to give him more pleasure.

Yes. And what did the other ranks not involved in that torture feel for their commanders, these senior officers being tortured by him psychologically?

Well I can't really answer that question. It would depend on how those senior officers conducted themselves and withstood the torture.

So some got a lot of sorrow and some were not so well acknowledged?

Yes, some were indifferent and showed some dignity under the attacks, and others were more inclined to comply with this humiliation in order to perhaps save a bit of physical discomfort.

Yes, I understand. All right. And one other thing before we go on. You talk about these head counts. Did anyone ever escape? Did any of the soldiers try to get away or leave the march on the way up to the railway, or while they were on the railway?

That's an interesting question this because, yes, in a way probably different from what you're expecting me to answer. Only in desperation - not to escape, but to get away from the trauma of the march and to die peacefully in the jungle while the march moved on. This happened to us. On several occasions men dropped out and were later discovered, as we found out later by subsequent parties. I had one or two. One man in particular who was almost blind with Keratitis, riddled with malaria, dysenteric all the time. Poor fellow was dropping out of the march during the night. We'd get a guard to come back with several men to try and find him - they had torches - and then he'd rejoin the march. I remember that incident particularly. That was a nightmarish march because we were still fairly far south. It was at the early stages of the march and on this occasion the Japanese were using vehicles, six-wheel drive - like four-wheel drive but they had six wheels. They had four at the back and two in the

front and they were all linked up, and these were the only vehicles you could get through that jungle mountain terrain which was pretty mucky in the middle, at the beginning of the monsoon. And we had a rest period for about ten minutes in every hour, and we were thoroughly exhausted, and we'd gone down. The Japanese had blown his whistle, we'd gone to ground, which we did - just stuck a water bottle under your head to keep the mud and water out of your face, and we were immediately asleep - just like that! And one of these six-wheelers came along before our ten minute sleep - yazume - was over, and everybody panicked. These lights appeared suddenly in this jungle terrain and the noise, and everybody panicked. It was sort of a mob psychology thing. I don't know what triggered it off but everybody went absolutely mad and raced to the jungle.

Good Lord!

It was the most extraordinary psychological venture, and immediately that you did this too, you suddenly became aware of the fact that you'd just imagined the whole thing, 'cause there was a truck there with a large ... extraordinary!

And when the fellows were away - I mean, went into the jungle to die - there was nothing much anybody could do about that I wouldn't have thought?

Well as I said, we did try and recover them. If we found that somebody was missing, particularly somebody on whom we had our eye, because we knew that he was pretty desperate. Some of the fellows were wonderful the way they'd take one of these blokes between them. They'd take it in turns, two fellows one on each side of a very sick man helping him through and up these muddy slides. Another thing that tormented us too at this time, when we got down a bit into the valleys we'd go up and then we'd go down into a valley, and then we'd strike midges by the millions, and these midges nearly drove us silly. They'd get into our hair and everywhere, and they were so bad that apparently some of those people in the villages along the route - not right in the centre of the area I'm talking about, but down south and further up north again up towards Burma, who had yaks, couldn't keep them unless they lit special fires for the yaks so that they could keep their heads in the smoke all night long. The midges could not abide smoke and the yaks could not abide midges.

Good Lord! So it was pretty rugged. Tell me, was the terrain rough to walk over? You were walking at night, too, weren't you?

Walking at night, and quite a lot of the time we were on all four extremities, you know. We were clawing our way up some of those slopes, and of course the Australians were absolutely marvellous. Many a time did I see, did I hear the epithet in the particularly difficult stages at night, 'These bastards aren't gonna get me'.

Yeah, yeah. Did the Japanese walk too?

They walked, they walked. They couldn't go any other way. These were only tracks which were jungle tracks made by the jungle gorillas, and some of them were, as they say, lower down in the south. They were wide enough to take these four-wheel drive,

six-wheel drive vehicles. Further up in the top they were only just footpaths - well not foot paths - they were pathways through the jungle.

Were you carrying packs on the back or a ...?

Yep, yes.

Your clothes with all those things?

Yeah. I had two packs. I had my own pack on my back, and I had another big pack with my bed roll and blanket. I had a ground sheet which was marvellous, and I had my slouch hat, and at night when we slept we used to get our back up against a teak tree, we'd cut a few bits of bamboo about three or four inches in diameter and put those down as a little platform to put your feet on so that the water could go around and underneath your feet, and sit on your pack on top this, put your slouch hat on, put the cape over your shoulders and you'd go to sleep in any position at all, and be reasonably dry in the morning when you woke.

Yeah. All right. What other incidents on the march? This repetitive business of marching by night ...?

Some of the incidents along the road which don't apply to the Japanese of course entirely, but on one occasion we were marching well into the morning, and we saw the track - I was right up the front at that time - we saw the track of a huge python. The track had crossed his path. It was the width of a man's body. It must have been a terrific snake. And on several occasions, too, we were near tigers. Another occasion - at night, this was, and the wind was blowing furiously that night - we came to the top of a rise and there was a tremendous rushing just to the left of us in the undergrowth and bamboo and so on. It was something disappearing into the distance and a very strong smell of zoo. This sort of thing occurred on several occasions and was experienced by other people in various parts of the column. The Japanese were terrified of these tigers, and when we did stop at night, of course with all this bamboo around us we lit giant fires and got these tremendous fires roaring. Took all our clothes off and held them in front of us in a protective way. The fire was so fierce that we couldn't stand it on our bodies so we used our clothes and our blankets. So we served two purposes. We got ourselves nice and warm, and we dried off our clothes, and then we'd settle down for the night around these fires and the Japanese guard would then, at the very last moment before we settled down, they'd come in and they'd gesticulate with their hand, pushing all men further away out from the fire, further out towards the dark circle of the jungle, so that they could get in between us and the fire to make sure that if a tiger came along it wouldn't get them.

Yeah. You've had trouble with tigers and things in your life haven't you?

Well, I've had encounters with them, some of which I've not been cognizant of.

Tell me about that. We'll now digress a little if we might while we're talking about animals. Tell me about your incidents?

Well, before, long before the war started actually when we were up at Mersing and had come back into battle stations, and we were encamped on both sides of the main road up from Kota Tinggi to Mersing. On one night I went up to see another medico - Jack Catchlove - and he was an RMO, a battalion RMO, and I went up, oh, I suppose a mile and a half up the road. Lovely road, sealed road.

In Malaya?

In Malaya. I should say that just prior to this incident when we were still in Mersing about two to three weeks before we had a rubber tapper brought into us who had been bitten through the lower part of the spine, er, lower part of the neck, and he'd died very instantly. Nobody seemed to know anything about a maneater being in the district, but we more or less forgot that incident and thought that possibly he'd run into a tigress with cubs or something. And then when we got into battle stations another MO called Picone who graduated in Melbourne, he was with the artillery and he'd built himself an RAP where he had two holes. So that he had like a fox, two holes to his burrow. He had an exit at the back and he had an entry at the front, and he had this enclosed on a triangular basis with barbed wire which the engineers had stuck up for him all around this, so he had an escape route through the back. And on one occasion he was going off to battery headquarters to have a drink, just in the early part of the night, and he had a five battery torch with him and was walking down from his RAP down about forty-fifty yards down to this very narrow entrance which had a bit of a slot in it, with a few duckboards. And he was just coming to the entrance to this, which was very narrow, when he heard 'Huh, huh, huh,' behind him, turned round with his torch and put it on a lovely specimen of stripes going by and who shot with two bounds straight past him and through the opening. And Picone didn't go on for his drink, he went back to the RAP. And that was an extraordinary thing. They tracked it in the morning and found that it had come in through the back of the RAP entrance, the double entrance. So this takes me to the continuation of my story.

Yes. So tigers were there.

Tigers were there, but still we didn't worry too much about this because we always felt that a tiger would probably crawl across two white men to get to a black one. We were told that, but we didn't know (laughing) whether it was correct or not. So on this occasion, having spent a very pleasant night with Catchlove, I just came back along the road, walking out in the middle of the road with the hobnails on my boots resounding against the sealed bitumen, and I did have a silly little .32 pistol in my hip pocket, but I mean I hadn't then taken my army revolver, my .45 with me. I just had this little thing in my pocket and that was all I had. And I just walked down this road back into camp, passed through the cooks' quarters, the cooks' lines, went over through about another forty-fifty yards of tents and into a big tent where I was sleeping with Frank Mills and our adjutant from the 2/9th Field Ambulance, and I proceeded to quickly clean my teeth. We had a basin and water and stuff in there, just outside the tent, and got back in and put the pistol under the pillow and got into bed, and I'd no sooner tucked my mosquito net in than I heard right outside my tent, 'Groooowl'. I thought I did, but then I heard - I imagined I'd heard this very softly - but I then heard some wild cats fighting, and all of a sudden they knocked it off and then I heard them again fighting further away from the tent and then again they knocked it off, screeching. They make a sound which is hard to describe, but it's just a

bit like a domestic cat fight except that it's more intensified. And then I heard them again and then they stopped. And then I heard, quite definitely, this noise again, but this time was 'GROOOOWL' (very loud growl), right outside and I absolutely froze. My heart was going like this. I didn't even, didn't even have the courage to slip the hand under the pillow for the pistol, which wouldn't have done much good anyway because I was frightened to make any noise. So I just waited for about, I don't know how many seconds, and then I had the conscious realisation that Frank Mills was awake. Well he was asleep when I arrived back, and I said, 'Frank did you hear that?', and he said, 'Yes'. And with that we started chatting and then we woke the adjutant and we were all chatting. There was no more thought of the tiger but in the morning some of our fellows who had been bushmen and who were pretty good at tracking tracked this tiger - or tigress, whatever it was - tracked the pug marks back. It had followed me for most of the way back from my visit the previous night, but it had crossed from one side of the road to the other, so I presume it was padding along beside me too, and I was making a lot more noise than it was.

Well, I bet you're glad you didn't know it was there.

Sure was.

But you had an incident with a wild cat when you were a little fella didn't you?

Yes I did, yes.

Didn't you tell me that at one stage?

Yes. Yes, this was ...

You've a fascination for these wild big wild cats. Tell me about that.

Yes, I was only eight at the time and it was the very night on which we got the news of the armistice in World War I, and being a young boy keen on circuses, I'd been carrying water for the donkeys during the day, which entitled me to a free ticket ...

Was the circus in town was it?

This is the circus in Tanunda, yes. Perry Brothers it was.

Oh good, yeah, go on.

And my old man who didn't approve of this sort of thing - his sons carrying water for the donkeys - did allow me to go along because he realised that I'd be terribly disappointed if he stopped me, so I was allowed to go along. We didn't live very far away from where the circus was in the paddock, and during the performance we suddenly heard this noise of kerosene drums being beaten, and it became so loud as this march came down the main street of Tanunda that the circus was stopped. And the ringmaster came in and said that the armistice had been signed, they'd got the news by telegraph from Adelaide, and that unfortunately all the noise had frightened some of the animals in the cages. And one leopard, a black leopard jumping from side

to side had tipped his cage over, and the bars were intact but the back of the cage which was made of wood had been broken and the leopard had escaped. And so he asked us if we would all be prepared to go home, very much in groups, making a lot of noise if possible, but just to make a noise. Unfortunately, my direction home, nobody lived anywhere near me, so I shot off and marched straight down the middle of the road whistling as loud as I could, and then made a mad dash for the front door hoping they hadn't left it latched, and that was it.

A very scared eight year old?

Very scared eight year old. And that leopard, strangely enough, was recaptured fourteen miles away three days later in a culvert at a place called St Kitts. They were able to net it. Hadn't killed anything, no animals.

But you wouldn't know what happened to it then, but that's an interesting interlude. So you and your big cats?

Yes, I just seem to have a predilection for joining forces with them and on a fairly peaceful basis too.

Well now I'm going back to the march. There you are. How long did you plod along that march to where you had to stay?

We had thirteen night marches.

Very rugged, very tough.

Very rugged but very beautiful country except that the monsoon was on, the weather conditions were awful. Later on when the monsoon stopped in October and the whole jungle came alive with beauty, with butterflies and birds, and bromeliad type flowers that just sprung up out of the jungle floor of all colours, in pink and purple to coral yellow and golden, beautiful. Birds, wydas and weavers, with long tails, everywhere. Breeding season, they were mating. It was beautiful country.

You of course were marching in April 1943 - I think you were. It would have been the dry period wouldn't it? The monsoons hadn't come at that stage.

It was when we got When we got to Bangkok and Bampong and started the march it was, as I said earlier I think, it was bone dry, hot as hell and the monsoon started on the third I think it was the third night it started and it intensified, and it went right throughout May, June, July even into August. It was really the end of September before we started to see good weather. In October was a time that we came back on our completed railway, that it was absolutely perfect again.

Again. So there we've got you marching at night in the wet.

In the wet, and in the dark.

Did you cross bridges? Any bridges to cross?

We did. We crossed a number of these wooden viaducts over ravines ...

Is it along the railway?

We were marching first of all, of course, along the railway which had already been constructed but never on it unless we came to a ravine and we'd go back to join the railway ...

Oh I see.

... and march over these viaducts and things which had already been constructed by working parties, and then we'd divert again, we'd go back into jungle again. The idea was to always march at night because of possible aerial surveillance from Burma and also they didn't want us too near the actual constructed part of the railway because they kept to camps well back and I guess this was in case the railway was bombed.

Yes.

'Cause that was visible from the air in daylight.

Yes, yes.

There's a canopy.

Did you find it difficult crossing some of these railway ...? You must have crossed on railway lines and sleepers at night did you?

We did. Yes, we had one terrifying experience where the sleepers were so far apart that it was positively quite difficult, especially in darkness. You couldn't just step across them. In daylight you may have been able to because you could see them properly, but we really just had to go across on all fours.

Yes. That's the reason I asked about the monsoon. The nights would be very dark if the cloud cover was over. There would be no stars and no natural light very much. It would be quite oppressively dark wouldn't it?

Yes, well that's my memory of it. I mean, I suppose we must have had, during this period we must have had some full moons on occasions, but I guess a lot of it didn't ever come through that canopy, as you say, but ...

Canopy and heavy rain cloud?

Heavy rain clouds, and one of the beautiful things that I do remember in the midst of all this intense darkness too - not of course on the march, because one's mind was distracted and occupied with the effort of getting from A to B - but when we were in camps, particularly when we were right up north at Kami Sankurai, not far from Three Pagodas Pass on the Burma border, the fireflies turned on a performance which I have only read about in one book ever since. Somehow or another they have some unbelievable ability to all turn on together and all switch off together, and we really

felt that we were just seeing things and imagining this thing, but as time wore on we realised that this was really happening. And it was quite dramatic - there'd be an instant switch-on, the whole jungle would be alight. An instant switch-off perhaps a second or two later, and it'd be absolute darkness again. And I did read about this later on, many years later, that it occurred.

How fascinating. The dance of the fireflies. [inaudible]. Did you lose many people on the march? You were the doctor. Did many die ...?

On the march we hadn't run into cholera. We were still supposed to be the fittest people out of Changi for this march up. Of course, it was ...

F Force was?

F Force was supposed to be. We marched up 6,998 strong. I think I mentioned this before.

Yes. I thought you said the F Force was 2,000?

No, 6,998 - two short of 7,000. At the conclusion of eight months up there, 3,089 had died. Now those were relatively fit men from Changi who started it off ...

So fifty per cent, almost fifty per cent ...?

Yes. So as we progressed up, where the stress and the starvation and with the disease, everything deteriorated very rapidly, so that when we reached the top of this route along the river, in and out along the river until we reached the top of our destination, the state was that we were in no shape to meet up with the cholera which hit us at that particular time.

Yeah, yeah.

We just walked straight into cholera which had been brought up by Tamils. Well, I don't say it was brought up by Tamils, but we marched into a camp which had been occupied by the Tamils and when they were all dead they just sort of closed it off and the Japanese said, 'We'll use this camp now for the next group of men coming up from south'. And there were still Tamils dying, one or two - not many - raising a pathetic hand to us. And they weren't in the huts either, they were just out in the edge of the jungle.

And you had to occupy that camp?

We had to occupy that camp, and of course cholera just flared immediately. Was all ...

What night was that? Is this on the march up or was it when you were working on the railway itself?

This was marching up, this was the final camp actually. I had already come in contact with cholera lower down at Shimo Sonkurai. I'd been sent up to Kami Sonkurai by Bruce Hunt who is a great man. He was a wonderful fellow. He'd pulled me out of

this march - well, we all stopped the march actually at Shimo Sonkurai and I was there for a few days with him, and they were having a nice old cholera epidemic themselves at the time.

What do you do about cholera? Tell me about that.

Cholera is one of the quickest killers of all diseases known to man, afflicting man. It is caused by the cholera vibrio which is ingested and immediately creates a tremendous amount of distress in the bowel, with outpouring of fluid so that there's intense diarrhoea, nausea and absolute collapse of the whole circulatory system. And the patient just simply dies within hours. I've seen men in camp laughing and joking with their friends in the morning - as much as one can laugh and joke under those circumstances, but figuratively; I'm speaking figuratively - by 4 o'clock in the afternoon they were dead of cholera.

What could you as a doctor do?

The first thing that ever happened with the onset of cholera was suddenly a person became deaf, he couldn't hear. His blood pressure dropped so rapidly that the small vessels in his ear created a tinnitus, a ringing, and then there was deafness. And if you saw a man at a sick parade holding up his hand to his ear, you didn't have to go any further with your diagnosis. You knew he had cholera. And sure enough, they had cholera.

And he'd be dead in a matter of hours?

Dead in a matter of hours. 'Course, mind you, they all didn't die. I mean we had a number who managed to recover and managed to get through it.

What brought about their recovery where others died?

Well, I guess in some cases the vaccine - we all had cholera vaccine, of course, before we came up - and the other thing to remember ...

You'd got that in Singapore had you? You'd been injected ...

We had that before we ever left Australia. We had to have that because we were going into an endemic area. But the other thing that occurred too - the Japanese realised that their railway was being screwed up with all this sickness and ill health and death all over the place, and so they did finally relent and towards the end of the cholera, maximum period of cholera incidence, they brought in a whole lot of vaccine and we were all We gave all the men vaccine of cholera in very big injections and then they shut off and later on the Japanese came back again when the cholera looked like having a resurgence, brought in a party of pathologist people with petri dishes and anal probes which they didn't even give us the benefit of having them made of glass. They used bamboo rods and we all had to bend over and have these things inserted and then scraped on a petri dish to see who were cholera carriers, as the Nips thought, and who were not. But the whole thing was a farce, because when they decided in my camp, which by that time at the end of the formation of the railway, had almost just before the monsoon had finished, they decided that I was a cholera carrier, all the

RAP personnel were cholera carriers, the quartermaster was a cholera carrier, two cooks, two wood and water men - we were all cholera carriers - just enough to make a nice little cholera isolation compound across the river. So we were all shut over there and we took the remaining cholera convalescents with us. We only had about one more cholera case after that, but that's the mentality of the Japanese. We didn't have any more and we just had these fellows over there recovering from their cholera which left them all just looking like pieces of paper and bits of bone, but a lot of them did recover.

In the harrowing experience that you had, did cholera strike a certain type of person rather than others? Could you predict who cholera would strike or was it absolutely random?

Yes, I think that's a good question. I'm glad you asked me that because I can remember several instances. I remember one in particular was of one of the British officers, a very young fellow, who'd come up from one of the lower camps and he was in fear of cholera, and he was also in fear of tropical ulcers. He didn't get the cholera but by this time of course the tropical ulcer situation was starting to hit us. As the cholera intermission wore on and people became physically more and more debilitated, we got this tremendous onset of tropical ulcers. We controlled the cholera to a certain extent. It had gone and we could say it had left us. We were left with amoebic dysentery, we were left with the ulcers. And this particular person - you asked me this question about cholera, but I'm applying this one to the tropical ulcers. He had this fear of a tropical ulcer and eventually he got a little skin scratch and he did get a little ulcer. And we'd had fellows with tremendous ulcers and I'd amputated a lot of limbs. I'd amputated legs, mid-thigh amputations, and I'd amputated an arm or two, and we couldn't control it because of the state, the physical state was such that there was no ability for the body to fight back. So when this particular person about whom I'm speaking contracted this ulcer, he died so rapidly that it could never be attributed to death from a tropical ulcer. So when the quartermaster said to me, 'What should I put him down as having died of?', because we knew he'd been brought up by an aunt in England. He was an orphan, poor fella, and so I said, jokingly, 'Well put him down as having died of a maiden aunt', because this is the sort of thing that occasionally did happen. People gave up, they just tossed it in.

And so there was a will But it would strike anyone. Did officers die of cholera as much as ...?

Of course, of course. There was no differentiation.

No differentiation?

No differentiation. The strange thing is that some people reacted better and made antibodies in a more efficient manner than others did, and this is why, although everybody had the same chance with the same injections, some died, some recovered.

Hm. Is willpower something to do with this?

I suppose with many diseases it is, but with cholera I'd say if you get a really strong dose of cholera and it's going to knock you, willpower's got nothin' to do with it.

Okay.

You've got no hope in hell.

Yes. That was the point of the question that I was asking about.

Colin, tell me some more about cholera and other diseases.

Cholera is, as I always pointed out to the men, a disease which you can catch by eating it or drinking it. You can't catch it per se - you can't inhale it, you can't inspire it - you can only eat it or drink it. It's a disease of the bowel. I insisted that they all had to dip their dixies and their spoons, knives, forks, whatever they had in a cauldron of boiling water before they got their rations issued to them at each meal session, and they learned that pretty quickly. Unfortunately, the sad thing is what they didn't appreciate was that you could go out to a latrine which was always running with water and liquid faeces and bluebottle flies and the lot, the middle of the monsoon, find that ... One soldier in particular I remember found that he had his boot lace undone, and I caught him at it fortunately, but this was a method by which you could contract cholera. After he'd been to the latrine he stooped down, did up his boot lace, which of course was infected and infested with faeces and muck, and then proceeded to pull a roll of tobacco twist which we'd bought from the locals at times further down the track, a little sheet of paper, either very precious toilet paper or a few pages of the New Testament or whatever, to make a cigarette, roll it, wet it with his lips, put it in his mouth, light a match - he was a certainty almost for cholera because his hands were unclean.

Yeah.

The Japanese didn't realise what was going on as far as the cholera was concerned. We had in our cholera compound, our cholera isolation area across the river, the Japanese had put up a number of notices in Japanese hieroglyphics stating that this was a cholera camp, and the troops marching up to battle in Burma, who were coming along being emptied out of trucks and things further down the railway line, were horrified and tied their handkerchieves around their faces, showing the stupidity of the Japanese. They didn't realise that ...

You didn't breathe it.

... you didn't breathe it.

You just got it from unhygiene Must have been extraordinarily difficult in the circumstances you were living.

It was. It was there constantly, absolutely constantly.

Colin, could we now discuss the railway itself, the work in the railway area. You've got there.

Yes. The method of construction and the various utensils and baskets which the men were using to build these huge embankments which were approaching a viaduct area were all done entirely by hand, entirely by manual labour. There was no other method. They used chunkels and picks and shovels.

What's a chunkel?

A chunkel is a sort of large hoe which is used throughout the Far East area, and it's just belted down into the earth and removes a big hunk of earth and rocks. The other thing which was used for driving the piles for the bridges was again done entirely by human labour. They'd have a huge monkey fixed between two uprights. There was a great lead and steel ball on it and right at the top, fixed to the top of this, there'd be as many as thirty different attachments for ropes. They'd have thirty men or more even around some of the bigger ones, and at a call from the engineer, the Japanese engineer, they all pulled a great jackhammer up to the top, and then at another call, they'd release their ropes simultaneously, and it'd come down and drive that pile about two inches or something into the mud and muck. And this would go on at an undetermined rate for hours and hours until that thing was driven down into the ground. The trauma to feet was absolutely horrific because so many of these men were working in bare feet. They'd lost their boots weeks before. Men were marching up with bare feet. This is where it was so essential that when anybody died of cholera, and when people were dying all the time, the requirement from the quartermaster, Eric McGlenn or anybody else who was assisting him, was to make sure that any boots that were worthwhile and were available for other men who were working with no boots were allotted to them. So we had a roster of sizes - who needed boots and what their sizes were - and that was a very essential thing, and helped considerably. The same thing, of course, applied to the clothing of the deceased, although by this time I'm afraid they were nothing but tatters because we were seeing men going out to work and coming back at night, 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock at night even, towards the end of the stress period before the railway was finally joined up, with nothing but a G-string, barefooted, not even a hat, many of them.

There must have been problems with things that come through the feet - worms, strongyloides or whatever it might be - the one way that they're absorbed into the foot areas, the mites and all the ticks and scrub typhus and all those others sorts of things.

Yes that's right, and of course hook worm came into this as well.

Yes, yes.

And the strongyloides infection which later became so apparent amongst prisoners-of-war sometime after they were repatriated. At the time that was not the sort of killer disease, it was only one of many intestinal infestations. But the other thing which one has got to consider, too, is as you mentioned, the mites in the jungle, and they could be acquired quite easily, not necessarily through having bare feet. They could simply attach themselves to any part of your body, and they produced a condition of scrub

typhus and various conditions which were quite horrific, and often meant death - certainly debilitation.

What about, but with all this sort of physical attitude, efforts being, taking place, they probably needed some sustenance to be able to perform properly. What was the rationing like? What was the food like?

Well the rations that we got were dependent on the ability of transport in bringing it up to us from the south or down to us from the north, from Burma. There were plenty of rations available in both Burma and in the lower parts of Thailand, but unfortunately we in our particular plight were plum in the middle, and so it was difficult often to get anything down. On occasions they got a few yaks down from Burma, but by the time they'd walked the yaks down, the yaks didn't have much flesh on them either, and so that really they were only used when we did get them occasionally - one yak for twelve hundred men when the camp became a bit bigger and got up to twelve hundred, and later even up to two thousand in this particular camp - all we could do was flavour the soup with the beef of the yak. The fat was never there because the poor yak didn't have any fat. He was just completely debilitated, so that on one occasion I was called by somebody - I can't remember who it was - asked me to have a look at a yak which had died, and which was thought to be unfit for human consumption. So whatever it had died of was not important to me, the fact was that it was not putrified and so I said, 'Give it to the cooks immediately and we'll boil it up and eat it', because the fact that it's died of something is not important to us. It can be sterilised by cooking and it's all extra protein and something to sustain the troops. That was one incident which occurred, and another thing which I might mention at this stage is that just about all the rice that we got was pickled rice, which was pretty horrible stuff to eat. It was never fresh, it was pickled so that it could be held in storage or it could be held at some point for long periods of time, and also in the hope that it would keep the weevils out, so that quite often when we did occasionally have rice which did have weevils in it, we always ate the weevils as well because we always felt that they added a bit extra protein in infinitesimal amounts.

Were the men emaciated at this stage? What was their general health at this stage, at the end of the march and the beginning of the railway, constructions of ...

Well at the beginning of the march, of course, they were just emaciated to the extent that anybody in Changi was emaciated through insufficient rations. As the march progressed and as debilitation from disease increased and as the workload started to wreak its havoc on them still more, they became more and more debilitated. They were eventually, at the end of the period that I'm talking of, when the railway was finally completed, just walking skeletons. Those that were fit and well that had managed to dodge disease were walking skeletons.

How much weight would they have lost? You know, if you said that the average man was around about ten stone at that age group, what would they be down to?

It's hard to say because - at that time it's hard to say. I can give you an answer to this question in a roundabout way. It's hard to say because we had no scales, no ability to

weigh them, but I do remember myself and friends of mine weighing ourselves when we got back to Changi and then finally on to Kranji weighing ourselves. I remember that I was normally about eleven and half stone stripped - that would be my normal weight at that time - and I was one of the relatively lucky ones insomuch as I didn't suffer from any abdominal disease, but I did suffer from arthritis, polyarthritis. I suffered from malaria, I suffered from beri beri - but I considered myself one of the luckier ones - but I had gone down to eight stone ten, I think it was, from eleven and a half, and I was relatively fit.

Goodness gracious me. There were many lighter than you then?

Many. There was nothing to some of them.

Were the Japanese thin?

Never.

Did the Japanese [inaudible]?

Never. They were never thin, no.

Their rations came all right then?

Oh their rations were all right, yes. And one or two funny things happened too because on occasions the Japanese wanted some treatment for something or other. They wanted something sutured - they'd gashed a hand - or they wanted a splinter removed or they had a sore eye, they wouldn't go to their own people who were not really Ishas. The name for ...

Meaning?

... doctor is Isha in Japanese.

Right.

They would go to us because their Ishas were not Ishas who were available up in the railway, they were only sergeants and corporals and so on who were semi-trained in medical dressing. And I had to deal with this on several occasions and on one occasion where we'd been burning rice until it was charred and then pounding it up and then putting it in boiling water, we called that our nightly coffee. We had that, and this little fellow one night in recompense for lookin' after his problem, which I can't recall now, but I do recall the fact that he brought me a beautiful billy full of pure superb coffee, and everybody in the mess had a great time for a while.

(Laughing). Yeah, there must have been very great strains on the human endeavour, as the fellows stayed. As a doctor, what did you generally treat? I mean, you've spoken of cholera, I'm sure there must have been accidents. Just what was it that you gave? Was it always disease or was it injury or ...?

I would say that I think it'd be a fair thing to say that over ninety per cent of it was disease, probably more than that. I mean, these fellows if they did Supposing they slipped on a bit of slimy mud or something or other and cracked a wristbone or even an ankle or something like this, they were so jolly light there was no weight to them. This was the thing that struck me as being so extraordinary that the weight of a falling body is so important in creating a fracture.

Yeah. Yeah, I can understand that. So they just fell and bounced?

Fell and rattled.

Oh rattled, yeah, that'd be a better word - fell and rattled. So the great How many men would you treat a day on the average?

It's very difficult to say because our mind was so obsessed with other things we didn't do a count and it varied from time to time depending on what guard engineers were in charge of a working party, and sometimes men would go on until 10, 11 o'clock at night. I can even recall running a sick parade after midnight. Again we had to do them in the middle of the day because it was a continuous effort on the railway. Nobody slept continuously at all. They staggered the working party so it was a continuous effort to join up the railway. They had a certain date by which it had to be done.

And did they drive you? Were the Japanese overseers tough or ruthless or ...?

Yes, they gave the workers hell all the time, and they even insisted on a certain surveillance of people who were genuinely sick wanting to go off and evacuate their bowels. Sometimes they were denied this. There were occasions when men were digging up a hunk of earth and shovelling it into a basket at one minute, while faeces was pouring down their legs from sheer inability to contain themselves.

Goodness gracious me! If they worked for long hours and they were in emaciated state, they must have been, their proficiency must have fallen off drastically because they would have tired very easily. Did the Japanese take any account of this or did they just drive them all the harder?

None whatsoever. They cared nothing whatsoever about the effect on human bodies that they were utilising to achieve the end.

Did any drop dead?

Some were brought back dead, but only one or two to my recollection. They probably would have died at that stage because This terrible strain on us who were responsible for deciding who would be sent out on a working party and who would be retained was just so cruel that it caused a great deal of distress to those of us who had to make the decisions, because we knew that if we didn't make that decision and send out somebody - they demanded a number, and if we didn't give them that number they'd come into the sick bays and remove people who would have died before they even walked to the work site.

So you had to provide the numbers. The doctors' responsibility?

Absolutely. We had to do it, and we had to send out at times men who were not well enough to go out by a long shot, and who were going to deteriorate as a result of it, because we knew that if we didn't take the best, or the least afflicted with disease, and the best possible bet, then they'd come in and create havoc amongst the post-cholera and post-malarial convalescents. They wouldn't last ten minutes.

How long did the working parties go out for? Was there a defined shift, like eight hours or six hours or four hours?

Well originally, when we first got up there, everybody slept at night, or tried to sleep at night. I mean, there were no, there was no night work at all, and as the time factor became so important ...

To join the railway? To link the two sides of the railway?

Yes. They had the directive from the Japanese high command that it had to be completed by a certain time and because of the monsoon and the conditions and the poor state that their labour force had deteriorated into, the thing became slower and slower, and the Japanese hierarchy started to scream louder and louder. And this was where all the pressure and the stress came on towards the end, so that miraculously, when the whole thing stopped, everything was just wonderful. They even gave us a party - they called it a party - but our rations were increased. The rations weren't needed then. They were needed while the work was going on.

Yes, but they didn't bother to consider that. Did they try and increase the rations so that the fellows' output and work, in work terms could be ...?

I don't really know. I don't really know how much they tried. They were only intent on one thing and they didn't care how many human bodies they wasted to achieve it.

Yeah, yeah. What a harrowing time. What a responsibility for you. I am sure some of the fellas must have protested to you that they couldn't go out working.

Well, as far as that question's concerned, I feel like saying no to that.

That's good. That shows a [inaudible] of spirit. Can you go on a bit more, why you say no?

I don't really recall. I suppose there were one or two instances. No, I think their attitude to the whole thing was magnificent. We were an absolutely solid body of opinion. We all loathed the Japanese, we loathed what they were doing to us, but we were going to face up to it as a body, not as individuals, and we did.

So the morale amongst the Australian people there in terms of team spirit or team work or working together or understanding was great?

Yes. That's absolutely right, and you said, 'Australians', and that's right. I can't say that about other nationalities.

Why?

Because they didn't match up to the Australian ability to create some way around a problem, always. Of course, I mean there were those individuals, of course, who were not much chop.

Yes. Colin, were you ever sick?

About the most worrying time for me personally occurred in about late May '43 when we were up at Kami Sankurai, and I'd marched up with a few officers and about two hundred other ranks, and was there entirely on my own without any medical help or advice, and I developed a typical attack of acute appendicitis. I had all the symptoms - anorexia, no desire to eat, I had pain and tenderness over McBurnies point, and I felt nauseated. And I realised that I had a definite attack involving my appendix and so I decided that I would have nothing to eat for three days except rice water, that I would keep absolutely quiet. I conducted sick parades from my perch on the split bamboo decking, and I was able to be made comfortable by some of our staff of the RAP cutting bushes and leaves and things for me to lie on, which gave me a little bit of protection from the hardness of the bamboo, and I used my volume of H. Letherby-Tidey's *Synopsis of Medicine* as a pillow to rest my head on. And after three days, and after having taken about three tablets of M & B 693, I miraculously recovered. And so I overcame that obstacle all right, much to my relief.

All right. What are we going to talk about now? We've got a number of other things to cover in this haven't you? What would you like to talk about from a whole list of things that's got to be covered?

We've talked about the sick parades, the physical strain, the rations. I could add a bit to the rations. What we had amongst our personnel were people who were able to interpret the origins of some of the plants and vegetables which are used in civilised states today, and they originally came from the jungle. I could mention one in particular - the passionfruit plant. The jungle had a lot of wild passionfruit in it. It had the same lovely flowers that passionfruits had. It never created a fruit, but our botanists found out that we could, or assured us, that we could eat the leaves of this passionfruit, boiled up. It would give us a bit of roughage and a bit of greenery which was otherwise completely lacking. We ate things like that.

What did they taste like?

Awful (laughing).

But you forced the soldiers to eat them?

Yes, and we had no salt whereby we could have made them a little bit more attractive. No salt.

Colin, in a separate conversation you mentioned to me about the Gabbtt story. Could you tell me about that?

One of my cholera convalescent patients - I can't recall his name - but he was quite determined that having passed through the shadow of the valley of death, and defeated cholera, nothing was gonna stop him from getting back home. And with this in view, of course, he made every opportunity that he could at getting a little bit more nourishment into himself in some way or another. And he'd spied up in a tree which the Japanese were about to fell - a big teak tree - a mother bird feeding nestlings, and so he positioned himself in such a way that he felt that he'd be nearest to where the nestlings were precipitated from their nest when the tree fell to the ground, which is exactly what he did. He was there in no short time and had these birds and had wrung their necks, and without even troubling to pluck them, was starting to eat them raw, which was quite incredulous. But it just shows you the extreme to which people will go when the chips are really down. While we're on the subject of this episode concerning this convalescent whom we later referred to as 'Gabbitt', referring again to Marcus Clarke's story of *The Term of His Natural Life*, where Gabbutt, one by one, killed all his mates and ate them. The elephants were very much in evidence at that particular time, which reminded me of the incident which occurred when we were on the march up, and on one particular occasion when we were thoroughly tired and exhausted and just dropped where we were standing, to spend a few hours of sleep. We were walked through that night by supposedly wild elephants, because none of us in our group were disturbed or woken, and one of the army doctors, a Captain Cahill, who was an FRCS, was lying not far from me and had his water bottle which consisted of a segment of giant bamboo smashed absolutely to matchwood not far from his head. I was lying about ten feet from Cahill and there were elephant pug marks near me but not as close as they were to Cahill, and in the morning when we woke, of course, we found that the droppings were all around the place as well, which was rather an extraordinary thing, and had us all completely and utterly flabbergasted to think that we hadn't woken.

Yeah. Well that's the ration side of the things. We've done the fatigue side, we've done the medical side. What else?

I suppose one's got to consider the rather unhappy subject of the disposal of the bodies which were dying each night.

Yes.

By this time almost completely denuded of all types of drugs and dressings - occasionally they'd make a gesture and bring in something like a bottle of concentrated antiseptic or something, which was helpful in a way. During the cholera epidemic it was helpful if you had antiseptic to keep a bottle of it diluted with some water. I used to keep a small flask in my hip pocket. There was no means of washing or scrubbing up or anything like that, of course, but I just used to take this out and put a few drops on my hands and rub them together, and never dried them, just let them dry in the air, after examining a cholera patient. This sort of thing. That was helpful at times, but we got to the stage where we were treating dysentery with charcoal, which we got from our fires, which we had going perpetually in the huts, and in between the huts as long as there was enough atap over the top to stop the rain

belting them out. And we used this, powdered up, and administered that to people who had bowel infestations and infections and diarrhoea, so that we said in short we were treating dysentery with faith, hope and charcoal. And I was talking about the sick, the dying, and those that died having to be disposed of. Well, we had big pits dug some distance from the camp, about eighteen, twenty feet, about six feet to eight feet deep. We always had to dispose these on the top of a bit of a rise because of the incessant water and soakage, so that we had drainage from them, so that they didn't fill with water. And we created big fires in these with this giant bamboo, which even in the wet we could burn because inside it was perfectly dry and it contained a resin, as I think I mentioned before, and this enabled us to get a tremendous heat up and we cremated the bodies. They were just thrown in on top of these fires. Of course we had to watch there and stay. The quartermaster and I were always present. Eric McGlinn, he was there. We did the right thing. We always said a little prayer and then some of the boys who had carved out little portions of bamboo into these little containers which were then named by carving out the regimental number and the name and the rank, at the end of the cremation period when the ashes had cooled down a bit, we'd take some ash and put some into each one. It didn't matter whose ash you got. I mean, it was a symbolic thing we did. And these bodies which were thrown on didn't take too long to disappear, even with this type of heat, because we had fierce fires and there was very little body to burn up. Of course the bones were left, a lot of the bones were left, except after future cremations in that same pit. 'Cause we had them going every day, and the corpses assumed extraordinary positions, of course, at various stages of cremation. It was a very horrific macabre type of operation to do. It was essential, but I mean we had to be lighthearted about it all, and on one occasion with one of these bodies, as it was being consumed by the flames, I can remember quite clearly one morning the mirth that was started by this poor corpse's body. The hand started coming up and up in the air like this, rising above everything else there, and one of the corporals there said, 'Yes, you may leave the room'. A very improper story to repeat, I know, but it's only an example of another story that I can tell you which occurred when we were in a relatively happy period when there was not much rain about. This was getting on towards the end a bit, and the sick bay I happened to be doing a round in with my RAP corporal at the time, contained a lot of convalescent blokes who were woefully thin and miserable, but who were very happy to be alive. And one of them, some days previously, had started to grow a beard and he got to look for all the world just like a Gibbon ape. And of course, I muttered this just in a sidelong way to the corporal who was with me, holding a sheet of paper on the board, and somebody heard it, and everybody sort of automatically just burst into uncontrollable laughter, not the least of whom were the corporal and myself. I have never felt so painfully distressed with laughter. I couldn't stop. It was just one of those silly things that triggered this sort of mass hysterical situation which was just dying to come out of all of us. It did us the world of good. At the end of it, we felt as though - all of us felt as though - we'd had a good massage and everybody's morale just leapt up.

That's great. They're great incidents, aren't they?

They certainly are, yes. Another thing which we were able to do at this time, as the finish of work approached, we were able to go for little walks in the jungle. See, there was nothing to restrain us. The Nips never said that we shouldn't go, and we did this on occasions when we had the opportunity. The sickness rate had dropped and the

weather had improved, and we'd go for little walks in the jungle and just quietly we'd get to see some wonderful sights of little deer, completely fearless, walking about. We used to go about a hundred to two hundred yards out into the jungle but we didn't venture too far because we were afraid that we mightn't find our way back. But there was a lot of beauty and it did us all a lot of good. When I say, 'us all', we did it in little parties, not in a great party of course.

Yes, I can understand that. Did most of the fellows do it? Most of the fellows take a walk ...?

A lot of them did, a lot of them did. A lot of them were too sick of course, and they couldn't move.

Yes. Now we come to where the railway is finishing. What happened around about that time? Were you being driven harder to meet the deadline date?

Yes, it was a continuous exhibition of hysteria on the part of the Japanese to make sure that there was no time lost at all until the railway was finally joined up. And the minute that it was joined up, they became just like a child that had been screaming for a toy and is given one and finally shuts up. They did everything in the world, from their point of view - they thought they were doing everything in the world - to try and expunge from our memories all the misery they had inflicted upon us. They gave us what they were pleased to term a party, and they had bunting, and of course all the Japanese officers were down at the scene of the centre of celebrations, drinking some sort of Saki I suppose it was. We got an increase in rations, which we really could have done with a lot earlier.

I bet you could have done. You mentioned to me, away from the recording on the tape, about the harrowing time when the railway lines from Burma and from Thailand were approaching one another, and the blasting that took place.

Yes, that's right. That was just before it was joined up. The final few kilometres had to pass through a rock face which was only about a couple of hundred yards from our camp, and of course the whole project of the railway depended on pretty accurate and pretty intensive and pretty frequent blasting of rock. And this last piece had to be done, and instead of evacuating the camp, they gave us no warning. They just set all their charges and took cover themselves, of course, in appropriate places. But a lot of this stuff fell into our camp - huge things. I can remember one piece about the size of a large watermelon and it bounced and hit one of our fellows. We had a couple of casualties. Fortunately, we didn't have any deaths.

Yeah, rather indiscriminate of them isn't it in fact.

Hm.

Now once the railway had joined up, what happened then? What did they do with you? Oh, I'm sorry, before we do that perhaps you should tell me what Do you remember the date the railway joined up?

I don't remember the date because I couldn't tell you. I could tell you approximately the month. It was about October ...

So you'd started in April ...

Somewhere there.

Started in April and went through to October in your case?

Yes.

And it joined up somewhere near, Three Pagoda Pass, on the boundary ...

No, not Three Pagoda Pass. It joined up between Three Pagoda Pass and Kami Sonkurai, the camp south.

Right. On the Thai side?

On the Thai side.

Yes, okay. Thank you. Now what did they do?

Well, when everything came to an end - this is, we had had a fairly comfortable time, and as I said, rations were improving, and then they decided that they would have to evacuate us, and some of those of us who were in the working party up there and had been there for a long time, and also all medical personnel, they decided to evacuate in two open trucks, pulled by a diesel locomotive just ...

Along the railway?

Along the railway. This is another instance of the extraordinary inability to try and predict what the Japanese mentality was really about, because they had this diesel which probably could have pulled ten, twelve or more trucks, yet they only put two open trucks on, and put fifty of us into those two trucks.

Hm, and where did they evacuate you to?

Well we started to move south, and we moved the first time over this railway through this beautiful country and beautiful weather. We were open to the elements but it didn't worry us. I mean, after all, we'd been marchin' up in the elements and living in the elements. It didn't worry us if it rained, poured with rain. And as we got further and further south we saw all these wonderful engineering marvels which our own men had created for these people - the Nippon go, with their bare hands. And the beauty of the jungle was absolutely wonderful, together with removal of the stress of the situation, and the ability to buy from time to time from the jungle people who occasionally came alongside, when the train was negotiating a particularly difficult piece of the railway line and was moving at a very slow pace. We were able to buy bananas and gorge ourselves on those with our occupation money. We were able to

buy these things and later on eggs when we got down further south and got to Kanburi.

How long did it take to get from where the line joined, where you got on the train? How long were you aboard that train?

Oh, we were aboard it for We were lined up, I remember we were lined up, assembled to join it early in the morning, and of course, in typical fashion, we were kept waiting there for about four hours before we were even allowed to board it, and no meal was served of course. We missed lunch completely that day - or the rice, such as it was - and then we boarded early in the afternoon. We went through that day, we went through the whole of the night and early next morning, that's when we started to contact these Thai people, the jungle Thais. And later on some of the more civilised ones who supplied everything that we required, to such an extent that we made absolute pigs of ourselves. I mean, it was nothing for a man during that trip that night and that day to eat a whole comb of bananas, and so you can imagine what was happening at the latrines the next morning when we got to Kanburi.

The dysentery or the diarrhoea must have been enormous.

It was most extraordinary, but we had the bulk there, the bulk of the fibre from all this tropical fruit. It was just one continuous effort. It was a most extraordinary experience.

You mentioned to me, though, that there was an endeavour to stop fellows eating too much.

Yes, well that happened right at the very end of our incarceration when we were back on Singapore Island ...

Oh was it, okay. Well we'll come to that. But you couldn't stop them on the way down in the train, eating bananas and other sorts of things.

No.

So you got back to Kanchanaburi, I presume, or Bampong or wherever it was you got off the train. What happened then?

Well that was one of my most uncomfortable moments because on an occasion some time prior to the completion of the railway, I'd developed a severe upper respiratory tract infection which went to my antrum, and I got a severe antritis with purulent exudate. I couldn't relieve it in any way, and I finally, when I got down to Kanburi, the weather was completely different, we were down in the lowlands, and that night had what was the equivalent of a frost in our country - it was just extremely cold, we were just lying on the bare ground, and I woke with all my joints swollen up with polyarthritis, the result of carrying this chronic infection in my antrum, so that from that moment onand we were there in Kanburi for I think about three days, we had large quantities of eggs and we really had a ball, and were then moved on down to Bangkok and taken to the wharves, and we were in a go-down on the wharves for three days before we were put aboard a ship, which was a British ship which the Japs

had captured at the fall of Singapore, and which took us down stream and out into the bay, and off down to Singapore. But my arthritis, at that stage, was pretty painful. It was not bad during the day but as soon as the sun went down everything started to throb and ache, and I just couldn't move. And the fellas used to pick me up like a baby, a couple on each side, and at one stage when we were moved into a stinking little lighter from the wharf, a stinking little lighter to go down the river, we were down in the hold and we were then taken out to sea. And there was this freighter out to sea, and the sea was moving a bit, and we had to jump from the They brought us up on the top deck and we had to jump from the top deck of this little river craft into the poop deck, sorry, into the well deck of this freighter. And as the two were side by side, the gap used to open from anything to nothing with a great bang between the two steel hulls, to about ten feet. So one by one the men had to jump this awful drop of about twelve feet from one deck onto another, and if you missed it or made a mistake, you could be either crushed between the two hulls or else just dropped into the water. I had no hope of even attempting it. Some of the fellows did a very good job. I couldn't move very well, so here again I had a couple of the strongest blokes on each side and one behind to give me the final push, and they just waited until the two hulls converged and then I was hurled over the edge and I had a good bunch of men below to catch me. Fortunately, it was very well timed.

Good gracious. You said that there were fifty came down. What happened to the rest of the ...? I mean, you said that the force was nigh on seven thousand and that perhaps well over three thousand died on the route. What happened to the rest?

Yes. I've only described the fifty of us that came down in that particular ...

Yes. I'm just going back a little bit to make sure that we know ...

Yes. And of course on the way down we stopped overnight at one place, and it was here that there was a performance which was not very pleasant. This Toyama was with us, unfortunately ...

Yes.

... and it was here that there was a performance which was not very pleasant. This Toyama was with us unfortunately ...

Yes.

... and Colonel Kappe and Captain Schwartz were with us, and he singled them out for particular treatment with his sadistic approach, to our discomfort. We stopped for some sort of lunch, and I can't remember the exact details. I can remember him calling this parade. I've got a very clear picture of the whole thing, but I can't remember the exact details of who provided the rice at that time. But he called his

usual Tenko, even with fifty men, and then decided he'd have a little bit of a play on his own and embarrass everybody a bit further by hoisting the Japanese flag in front of us at this camp. And we were all lined up with the Japanese flag in front of us, and Colonel Kappe and Captain Schwartz were forced to kneel before the flag and before Toyama in full view of us, and we just realised that this was Toyama all over again.

Yeah, very belittling. Okay, we'll go back now to you going down on the ship. Down the river you went, and out to sea and out into You got back to Singapore?

Yes. An interesting incident happened on this ship because some of the very old Japanese veterans from the China campaign happened to be on this, going down to Singapore from Bangkok, and to our great joy took a tremendous dislike to our Toyama who'd ensconced himself on the top deck reading a Japanese version of Balzac. And he must have said something to them, but the upshot of it was that they got him to his feet and one of these old Japanese veterans gave him a clout on the ear which resulted in him getting a ruptured eardrum, and he had blood running from his ear. And of course the first thing he did was come over to me squealing for some sort of medical help.

What did you do?

Nothing.

You had nothing?

I did nothing. I knew that if he started on me these fellas'd do his other ear for him (laughing).

(Laughing). How long did the trip take by boat?

I think we only had one night. I think we only had one night, yes, only one night, and we did a lot of zig-zagging of course. And it's interesting now that you've asked me this about the trip, when we got to Singapore and came into Keppel Harbour, one of the first things we saw was a German U-boat tied up alongside and of course we were all on deck. We had a good view, and we came within, oh, within a hundred yards of this thing. And here were these Teutonic officers in absolutely splendid white uniforms with their epaulettes gleaming in the sun, all with Zeiss binoculars - I suppose they were Zeiss binoculars - up to their eyes, scanning this ship. And of course they could tell that we were of caucasian origin, and after a few moments observation of us, they all universally gave us a wave.

Did they?

They did.

Isn't that amazing! I wonder why that was so.

I think they probably appreciated the fact that we had had something in common, even though they were our enemies at war.

What a lovely story. Now, you got back to Singapore and I presume they took you back out to Changi did they?

Yes, yes. I can't I've got a very dim recollection of getting off the ship and going back to Changi. All I can remember is that we were on the ship and the story I've told you about the U-boat, and then we were back in Changi. I suppose we were just picked up by Japanese trucks and taken out there. Our minds were too full, I guess, of other things to even remember the actual journey out to Changi, but it was just like coming home.

What sort of reception did you get at 'home'?

Well a wonderful reception because they all looked so fit and well and tanned and you know, just pink and white and clean flesh all over again, and they gave us so much of their food. During the time that we were away up on the railways they had managed to create hutches and hutches of rabbits. They were breeding rabbits, they were growing papayas, they had ducks, the ducks were producing eggs. We got all this, all this given to us as soon as we got back, and we were just completely overwhelmed. Of course some of us had to go straight into hospital and I was one of them, and the amazing things that were on the menu, quite incredible. I mean, 'Would you like some fried eggs this morning or would you sooner have some fish?'. And of course the fish turned out to be shark, but that didn't matter, it was all fish. It was absolutely wonderful, just like coming home.

Were you the first force to get home? I mean, Australians were in other forces weren't they, in fact?

Yes. No, we weren't the first force, no, but what had happened to us had gone before us, and they'd received news of F Force. They knew what they were going to see.

Yes.

The tattered remnants of F Force, so they were prepared. They knew something about us. It had got back to them.

Yes, yes. And that must have been in about September/October or October/November of 1943?

Yes, about November. We had some time before Christmas I remember.

And I presume that the tide was about to start to turn on the Japanese at that stage wasn't it? Was anybody aware of that?

Yes. Well, we were getting the news on only odd occasions when we were up in ...

The railway.

... in the railway. We heard quite a bit about the Italian campaign - the North African campaign, of course, and then on into Africa - only at odd times because there was

about one set, I think. We had it in a broom, and another fella had one in a piano accordion. We didn't have one in our camp but we got the news that filtered through as personnel changed from one camp to another or came up or went down, and this was happening all the time. And the problem was to get power to operate these receivers, and on several occasions the Japanese were aware of the fact - we feel they were aware of the fact, because all of a sudden, without any motive, they'd suddenly call a complete search of the whole camp, and we had to empty out everything. The odd thing is that they didn't worry about things like if somebody had a compass or something like that, which somebody else would co-ordinate with in an attempt to escape, they didn't think about that, but they'd be very suspicious about torch batteries, if somebody had a torch battery, because they knew that they were being used to operate these clandestine radios. I do know of one occasion, too, when some of our operators - this was further down the line - crawled out at night, and at great risk to themselves, and got to the battery of a Japanese truck at the appropriate time, and were able to activate the set and get the news and then deactivate, join the battery up again, (laughing) and come back again without being detected. So we got another lot of news that night.

Yeah. But this really marked the end. How long did you stay in hospital for?

I've got no clear recollection, but I had treatment, having my antrum washed out for quite some time. I suppose it was about, somewhere between three and five weeks.

Oh, it was as long as that to get over it?

Yeah, it took a long time to recover. I got another whack of malaria and ...

You were pretty run down at that stage so recovery was automatically ...

Yeah, it was slow, yeah.

Understandably being slow.

Even with the good food.

Yes. Was the good food Had these people lost weight at Changi?

No, no. They were looking better than when we went away.

Yeah.

Oh yes.

You talked about, you know, the starvation diet at the start of the journey ...

Yes, we all lost weight originally in Changi.

And then you built up again.

Yes.

Well, you're in hospital and you're obviously recuperating after a very torrid time up in the railway, and you're suffering from some effects of that. Would you talk to me about your recuperation and perhaps you'd give me some idea of the routine in Changi at this stage, as compared with when you were in it before you went up on the railway, what changes you'd noticed, and all those sorts of interesting things.

Well the first thing that we noticed, I suppose, was the very clear and obvious significance of the improvement in all surgical, medical and general facilities of running a jolly good hospital under very difficult conditions of physical incarceration. When I got back, many of those people whom I knew before I left and who were struggling a bit with wounds and limbs with suppurating conditions, had improved tremendously with this regime of ducks, ducks' eggs, fruit, extra fish, extra rations. The whole thing had improved out of sight, and when I'd recovered finally from my condition of sinusitis, I worked in the hospital there and I worked with the physicians and surgeons just as though I was working back in a hospital back at home. Extraordinary operations were being performed. I mean, a lot of people - I'm not referring to our force in particular, I'm referring to the force that remained behind in Changi and came from other working parties and so on - had developed gastric ulcers, and a lot of this was due, I guess, to the stress of food being inadequate, of worry and a general priority towards developing these things anyway in civilian life, so that very good surgical techniques were being carried out by people in hospital - surgeons. And gastrectomies were being done, and in many cases where it was appropriate, an appendicectomy. Nothing was there to deter anybody from trying anything, and what a wonderful lot of nurses the male nurses were. They were absolutely superb (as theatre sisters).

Yeah. They had that reputation later on, too, in Vietnam. Tell me, where did they get all the Did you get enough medical supplies to be able to do these ...?

At this stage they seemed to be getting some. While we were away they seemed to increase their supplies because when I got back - I don't know whether it was by juxtaposition, it seemed so absurd to me that things could improve so quickly. Perhaps our own desolate state made me imagine that things were better than they were in Changi, but I don't really think that. I believe they were, and I think they managed to extract a lot more out of the Nips.

Yeah. And what do you Was it a normal routine life you were living? A routine hospital life? Were the soldiers going out on working parties? Were they suffering any debilitating effects or ...? [Inaudible], I'm sure of the health picture.

As far as I can remember, and I think this is pretty accurate, they were not going on working parties to anywhere near the extent that they were previously. In fact, I'm not certain to what extent they were secured. It seemed that we were just one great big compound and people were moving about everywhere. The sick were recovering, they

were recuperating. People were sunbaking. We had the ability to play chess, we had music underneath the Casuarina trees again, and the education centre with its books. It had a tremendous library. Everything was functioning like a normal prisoner-of-war camp should function - not like we were faced with at the beginning.

How did the soldiers do their physical exercise? How did they keep fit?

Yes, people were playing cricket. We had cricket balls and stumps and bats, and we had the oval and the pitch. It was a cement wicket with matting. We had all that, and everybody played cards. It was a totally different situation.

Isn't that strange?

Absolutely.

Yes, and so there is no real thing you can talk about the routine of Changi at that time?

No, it's just a general conglomeration of all the things I've spoken of, and of course undoubtedly, this increased improved treatment from the Japanese was due to the fact that the tide of war was beginning to make itself felt, and they were starting to see the writing on the wall, and if it didn't come from below, it certainly must have come from above because everybody changed.

In what way?

There was more liberality, there was less brutality. They seemed to have settled down into a state of rational humanity compared with what we'd been experiencing up on the railways, certainly. I'm not sure whether my observation of these two facets in my life, coming straight from the valley of death down to Changi with its brightness and its sunshine and all, has made my judgement a little bit ...

Colourful?

Colourful, yeah.

Well that leads me then to ask, who was running the show? The Australian officers or the allied officers or the Japanese?

Well you'd have to say that, of course, the Australian officers were running the show. That suited the Japanese and it suited the whole situation in which we found ourselves.

So you were running a normal military life?

Normal military life. Guards were hardly ever seen, unlike the early days where, of course, a lot of the Sikhs turned against the allies and went over to the side of the Japanese in order to procure for themselves some additional favours, and became absolute ratbags and bastards as far as we were concerned. And I can tell you a story about one Sikh who was such an objectionable individual in the early days of Changi,

and I believe this story. It was acknowledged abroad and he was at a certain guard post in a certain area where two areas were adjoined and you had to get a Japanese pass to go from one to the other. And this Sikh was given the option of deciding who should go and who should not go, to such an extent that a special party on one occasion grabbed him at night when he was on duty and put him down a bore hole. And nobody ever knew what happened to the Sikh.

Never seen again?

Never seen again. The Japanese couldn't understand it, thought he'd escaped.

Well that's pretty interesting. So then, you suddenly were shipped off Why? Shipped off to Kranji weren't you?

Yes. We were moved out to Kranji because the Japanese were about to move the whole of the establishment at Changi into the gaol itself, which meant that some people had to go to other areas because there wasn't gonna be sufficient room in the gaol anyway, and I, thank goodness, was chosen to go out with a number of senior British officers and senior Australian officers out to Kranji, where we had what was called a convalescent camp, but we soon found out that we had to start clearing the rubber trees and creating lanes of fire and putting in fox holes. Officers and everybody had to work hard with a pick and shovel and chunkel. And we didn't mind it because it gave us something to do. The weather was good on Singapore Island at the time, the rations were not too bad, we had some contact with the Asians, we had a canteen established, we had reasonable living quarters, we all had beds. We made our little bedside tables out of boxes and things. Wasn't a bad life at Kranji.

How long were you there for? I'm sorry, let me go back. When did you move out to Kranji? Can you remember what time of year it was?

Somewhere in '44. As I said before, I was working in the hospital in Changi, before the move to the gaol. It was before the move to the gaol, and as I didn't go to the gaol, I'm not too sure just how close it was.

So out to Kranji you went and you found And you were, what, a medical officer?

Yes.

An RMO at Kranji?

Yes, yes, and we had our convalescent wards out there. Nobody ever got very sick. There were still a few who died of course.

Yes. And what would you say Were you digging the trenches and fire lanes for the Japanese, obviously because the tide had turned?

Well we were clearing the fire lanes, and then these fox holes which were all timbered and sandbagged were being established there, and the whole progression of the thing was quite obvious to us, that they feared a landing on either the Malaysian peninsula

or on Singapore Island itself by the forces of Mountbatten, and we were quite happy to just go about living as we were. Even the senior colonels, couple of the senior colonels in the British army were out there, managed to acquire dogs and used a certain amount of their ration each day to feed their dogs, and they became part of the scene around the camp. The amazing thing out at Kranji was, as the war started to close in on the Japanese and the super fortresses started to come down and make their raids on Singapore Island, and we were all in a position to see the bomb run of the super fortresses which was right over the top of our camp, in order to close the naval base. They closed it, and although it was about three or four miles from where we were, all that high calibre, that big calibre artillery stuff in the way of shells and I suppose mines and all sorts of things went up with one hell of a roar on one occasion, and we got so much stuff into the camp that a lot of it hit our canteen. We were able to buy peppercorns in great quantities in sacks from the local population, because we found that ground pepper which we were able to grind ourselves with something that the boys fabricated, improved our lack of sufficient bulk in our diet, and by putting this on our rice and so on, it sort of gave us more satisfaction. So all these sacks of peppercorns which accumulated there were used, actually, as walls to the canteen and they had them stacked everywhere. And some of this shrapnel hit these peppercorns and there were peppercorns all over the camp. You couldn't walk properly because if you got on some peppercorns you'd roll. Your foot'd go from underneath you. And the strange thing was, of course, that when I got home after being in this abundance of peppercorns, I got home finally to be told by my wife that she'd managed to procure some peppercorns for me from the local grocer, which were absolutely unprocureable in Australia (laughing). She knew I loved ground pepper.

At this stage there must have been a relaxation of tension amongst those, the captives, amongst those who'd been prisoners-of-war, and I suppose there were some aspects of relaxation you could achieve. Could you give me some examples of that?

Yes. I hadn't mentioned earlier that the concert parties in Changi which were created by our own men with wonderful expertise, especially in the way of using our own male personnel who were of appropriate build and stature to play female parts. The parties were absolutely superb and they developed to a degree of expertise which was very noticeable to us when we returned from the railway.

And how often did they have such concerts?

About once a week, and they were regularly attended by the Japanese officers, of course, who were given all the seats right in front, and who applauded and just loved them.

Was it Vaudeville or plays or what?

Everything. Mostly a mixture. I should say mostly it was various items which were created often by the men in camp and hilariously presented to us.

Isn't that grand. And did the concert parties take place at both Kranji and Changi?

Yes they did.

Yeah, okay. This seems to be an appropriate place, Colin, to come back to a point that you mentioned earlier in the tape. You said that just before you left Changi for the railway the Japanese had said that you could take a tin trunk. I presume you took a tin trunk. Did you ever see it again?

Well we never saw those tin trunks until right at the end when we'd completed the railway and we were back in Kanburi and then on down to Bangkok, where we were embarked to return to Singapore. A corporal whom we all knew of old, who was one of the Australians whom one doesn't regard with a great deal of affection or respect and who was known as a bludger, came along to me and said that he had my army tunic, my officer's coat, and that he'd obtained it from the trunk which had bore my name and which the Japanese, he said, had ratted. We were of the opinion that he had stayed behind and never got up in the railway at all by fabricating various states of ill health in order to get his way, as only these types with the propensity for rat-like qualities are able to do. And I had no use for it at all, and I knew what he was, but I said to him, 'Well try and flog it to the natives and we'll split whatever you get for it. You can have fifty per cent and I'll take fifty percent', as I felt I would be able to buy some food with it. But because I never saw him, or the tunic, or the money for the tunic ever again - he just vanished.

Yeah, okay. Now I want to turn to the capitulation of the Japanese and those changed circumstances where the captors become the captives. I know it was an emotional time for you all. Tell me something about those emotions and what happened.

Yes. Of course, we approached it gradually with great joy at first of all hearing about the atom bomb being exploded, both in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which we were able to realise the Nips had suddenly heard about too. And although they tried to keep it from their men to a certain extent in Kranji, we realised that there was a sudden acceptance by the Nip guards of the fact that they'd lost the war, and they were coming around to us asking for testimonials, and being especially nice to us, all this sort of thing.

Did they? No-one gave them one did they?

No-one gave them one, of course not. They got a few other things but not testimonials. They were sort of just told to exit the place very rapidly or else it would be for them this time (laughing) "Kura". And when the actual moment came, of course - as I said, it was gradual - but we were given the freedom of the city and we were told not to stir up any problems with the Japanese. There was one unfortunate incident happened where some of our fellows went down to the wharves and got hold of a lot of torpedo juice and decided this was a good thing to drink to get them onto a high, and two out of three died. We got them back in Kranji camp. Right at the very end they just foolishly tossed their lives away. And we also, in my particular little group - there were about three or four of us - were walking around. We got out to Kalang airport and we were asked if we'd like to take part in a flight over Singapore, which was a practice flight, for the fly past for Lord Louis Mountbatten and Lady

Mountbatten the following day. And we foolishly accepted. It didn't do us much good because we were in no state to cope with this sort of thing, especially when the three aircraft in which we were dived down over the airport and two peeled off to right and left and we shot straight up and did a stall turn. And we were seated in a mosquito bomber and along benches, and it was very difficult not to throw up. When we got back on to the tarmac again we were all like jelly.

Yes. I think that was a very foolish thing to do. When the capitulation occurred, did the Japanese just disappear and you became free, or did you see any more of the Japanese, or ...?

No. Much the same routine continued on and it was a gradual influx of our own troops that came in and ordering the Japanese about. And of course, as I think I mentioned earlier, we got an absurd ration given to us of butter from the Singapore cold stores where every man got a pound of butter per day, which we couldn't cope with.

No. Your metabolism couldn't handle that sort of thing. Tell me, what did you do after the capitulation? Did people come in to see you? Did the allied commanders come? You mentioned Lord Louis Mountbatten, for example, which prompts this question. Were you flooded by well-wishers and visitors?

Yes, yes we were, and it was a very happy time, and special daylight concerts were put on by our own people for these people coming in, just to show them how much we'd achieved in a theatrical world. And they were quite amazed. We even had this party at the time that Lord Louis and Lady Mountbatten came in, and I was given the job of taking them on a tour of the wards.

At Kranji?

At Kranji, and they were very gracious and very warm, and Lord Louis told us how they were knocking off the Japanese like shooting rabbits in the last stages of the Burma campaign. And at the conclusion I shook hands with them both, and they wished me well, and I found that it was very moving.

Did any Australians fly up? You speak of Lord Louis Mountbatten, did you get Australian officials or generals or ...?

We did. We had our own Australian army people coming in, and of course they I can't recall. I mean the moment was such that there was such exhilaration that I can't really differentiate between who was there and who wasn't there.

I can imagine that being so. How long did you remain in Singapore before you left and returned to Australia? Tell me about that sort of arrangement.

I would say not very long. They tried to hurry it up as much as they could. They did a very good job. It wasn't very long. It was only a matter of a few days.

Right, and what, they had a ship there to take you home?

Yes, yes. We got aboard and we had nice cabins. I was in the same cabin as Jack Catchlove, the man that I told you I went up to visit before I was tracked home by the tiger, and he and I had this two-berth cabin. It was just like being in heaven, and the food and the rations were superb. Of course, we all had to consume regular quantities of mepacrine, which is atebirin, which makes your skin very yellow, so that by the time we got back home we looked like Chinamen. But this was to make sure we didn't have any more malarial relapses.

Yes. And did you eat too much? Did they have health inspections every day? Did they Were you tried to be made fitter, or some way of ...?

Yes. We weren't fed too much and we didn't eat too much, but we ate adequately, and we spent all day sunbaking on deck and doing exercises. And we started doing these exercises again - press-ups, and you name it, yeah.

Yeah. And now we come to the welcome home eh? Where did you arrive?

We came down through the Java sea and we had wonderful fun on board. We were allowed to operate the Orlikon guns, which they had, and we were taken on tours of the ship right down into the very bowels, right down to the propeller shaft, which I didn't appreciate very much because the person who was conducting us there said, 'Everybody who comes down to make this final inspection feels that he is alone with God, because we have to shut the watertight doors behind him as he goes down into the propeller shaft housing'.

Good Lord.

I couldn't get up on deck fast enough. I'd got this far. I wanted to get home. (Laughing) What were you saying?

Which way did you go?

When we were on the trip home in the *Arawa* from Singapore at the end of 1945, the first port of call which we came to was Darwin, and it was a wonderful moment to get on shore again and feel one's native land beneath one's feet. I was short of clothing. I made one or two purchases amongst which was an officer's army cap. I also bought a pair of shoes which was the first pair of shoes that I had possessed since before going into action stations up at Mersing in December and January of '41 and '42. But that was not the most important thing, of course, that I did. The most important and memorable thing that I did that day was to ring Patty at Woodside. We had six minutes, very clear line, and I had to do just about all the talking.

It must have been grand to have spoken to Patty after all those years. When you left Darwin, though, which way did you go then? What was your first port of call?

Well we came down through the, inside the Great Barrier Reef ...

Oh, you came through the Torres Strait?

Yeah, yes, and then when we got to Queensland we had a wonderful welcome, but we weren't permitted to go ashore in Brisbane because it was a quick turnaround and we were on our way back down to Sydney. When we got to Sydney it was a most superb welcome, and everybody was flooding the wharves. There were flags everywhere and it was everything but tick-a-tape. And a cousin of my wife was there, too, and when she finally found me there I saw her waving madly amidst all the rest of them on the docks, and I got We were told we could have the whole day in Sydney and she took me out to her home. Of course I met Pat's uncle and aunt again, and that was a great day. And then we didn't leave until that night and I, of course, had to go on by train from Melbourne but we did ...

Down to Melbourne, from Sydney to Melbourne?

Yes, but we No, only from Melbourne on to Adelaide.

I'm sorry, I thought we were in Sydney weren't we?

We're in Sydney. I'm sorry. Yes, we did go on by boat from Sydney to Melbourne. We got another great welcome there, but not like the one in Sydney (laughing), not like that one. And then that night in Melbourne, of course, I boarded the train and left for home. And unknown to me, the Melbourne Express coming through to Adelaide made an unscheduled stop at Ambleside to pick up Patty, unbeknown to me, but known to her, and she came aboard the train and everybody watched out of the windows.

What a thrill for you!

Terrific. Indescribable.

I can imagine.

And we went on, and when we disembarked from the train at Adelaide, there was Michael my five-year-old son and my mother, and my mother-in-law.

And now, as you get older, do you think back to those prisoner-of-war days very often?

Yes I do because many of these old associations are renewed from year to year, and particularly on every VJ day, or as near as possible to the fifteenth of August, we have a main reunion of all officers in the Naval and Military Club in Adelaide, and that's always a very happy time. And from year to year it seems that our memories never dim of each other, even though many of us never see each other from one year's end to the other.

Do you remember any particular incidents of people that you hold dear to you that have made an impact on you?

DR COLIN JUTTNER

Perhaps we should finish on that note.

I think. The last hoorah.

The last hoorah. Can I say, Colin, thank you for these memories, and thanks for everything you've given to this tape, and from those who will be interested in it from here on in.

Thank you Allan for all you've done.

You know it's a pleasure.

END OF INTERVIEW.