



World War II Remembrance Oral History Project

'Reliving the Memories'

Morris Zamel

Interview Transcript

Interview of Morris Zamel by Frank Heimans

on 10 April 2019 at Randwick NSW

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Introduction: This will be an oral history interview with Mr Morris Zamel at the Montefiore Home recorded by Frank Heimans for the Woollahra Council's 'Reliving the Memories' project. Today is 10 April 2019 and this is file number 1 of the interview.

Okay, Morris can you tell me when and where you were born?

00:27 I was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1920 and we arrived in Australia in 1927.

You were born with a red mark under your eye or something?

00:41 It's a birthmark.

There's a story about that. Can you tell me what it is?

00:47 This mark was on my eye when I was born, quite large. So my mother took me - she heard about a woman in Paris that had invented radium and she took me to Paris when I was six weeks old and the woman told her if she had have taken me there earlier she would have been able to have eradicated it completely. So what she did was to stop it from growing any further and it's never been any larger or smaller in all my years.

Was that Madame Curie? Was that her name?

01:33 Madame Curie, yeah. She was a scientist in Paris.

She was pretty famous, I believe?

01:40 Yes, she was. She discovered - was it radium?

Radium.

01:45 Radium. Yes.

Well, you've got a claim to fame already.

01:50 Oh, already, yes, well, I mean...

I believe that your Grandma Rose was trying to remove it with some kind of witchcraft, or something?

02:01 Yes. My grandmother was one of the old timers and she believed that if she waved a chook around my head it would disappear, but my mother was a modern woman and so she took the only course that she knew of, about Madame Curie.

So how many people were born in your family?

02:25 I had two brothers and a sister.

All younger than you?

02:30 Yes, I was the oldest in the family. Firstborn.

Your father's name, what was it? Salomon?

02:36 Salomon.

Your mother's name?

02:39 Greta.

Tell me a bit about the history of your father and mother.

02:46 Well, what I do know is that all of my father's family migrated to America. I did meet some of them when I was in America. There was three brothers and a sister, I think. They all migrated, so the only one that was left in Poland was my father. My mother had all her family and they all perished in the Shoah, and the reason for my father leaving Warsaw was that the Russians were invading Poland and there were some bombings going on in the area where we were so he somehow got a permit to come to Australia. He left six months before we did, established a home, and we arrived six months later.

3:43 We travelled from Warsaw to Marseille in France, by train, to get to Australia. We got on a ship called *Ville de Strasbourg*. It took six weeks to get here and there were 24 in each cabin, and all it cost was \$10, or 10 pounds, and here we are to tell the tale.

Which part of Warsaw were you living in before you left?

04:17 In the capital. The city. Warsaw was the capital. We were right in the centre of the city. You want the street name and everything?

Why not?

04:28 [Nowowiejska]. I don't know what number, but that was the name of the street, and my father had his bakery in the same street and in the shopping centre across the road was my father's big confectionery shop, which my mother was in charge of.

What did they sell? Chocolates and that sort of thing?

04:52 Mostly cakes and bakery and so forth. It was called Cukiernicze.

Which means something?

05:05 It means the type of shop that it was: a sweets' shop.

What are your early memories of life in Warsaw? Do you have any?

05:14 Very little. Very little. I remember the marketplace my mother used to take me to, and very little after that. At seven years of age, I had very little knowledge. We evidently were an affluent family because we had a country cottage in the bush. I can't remember where it was, but we used to go there in the summertime. It was a farm. It was kept by a farmer. That's where we spent about six weeks of the year.

So was your family considered to be fairly well off by the standards?

05:59 Yes. Yes. We were a middle-class family, you know...

Because most of the other people in Poland were fairly poor, weren't they?

06:08 Generally. There was a poor section, of course, and there was an affluent section as well. It's like any other part of the world; there were the ones that did all right and those that had to become slave labourers.

What was the problem in 1920? I think you said the Russians invaded?

06:30 Yes. It was in 1926-1927.

That's when you actually left Poland?

06:39 That's when we left Poland. Yes.

So were they pogroms, or what happened?

06:45 No. You couldn't call it a pogrom. It was just a Russian - almost an invasion of Poland, and that's when they changed the borders. One year it was Poland and the next year it was Russia.

7:05 I always tell the story about the Jewish man that lived on the border. He never knew whether he was Russian or whether he was Polish. So, eventually, he threw a party for his friends. They wanted to know what the party was for. He says, "Well, when they changed the border, at least I realise now that I'm a Pole."

What about anti-Semitism? Was that pretty rife in Poland at that time?

07:37 Well, I wasn't aware of that, naturally. I was too young to understand. From what I can recall, we didn't live particularly in a Jewish area. It was a different type of living. It was big courtyards with apartments all around. But I cannot say I experienced any anti-Semitism. I was too young to understand.

Was it the invasion by the Russians in 1927 that caused your family to look elsewhere, to get out of Poland?

08:19 That's right. Yes. That was the reason for us coming to Australia.

What were the choices available to them where to go?

08:26 The choice was either America or Australia, and the visas that came through was for Australia first, so he took the opportunity, thank goodness. Smart move of my father's.

Your father came out first, you said, to Australia?

08:42 Yes.

So he took the ship and arrived.

08:45 Yeah, yeah.

What did he do when he got to Australia?

08:49 He came via Fremantle into Melbourne and we settled in Melbourne. He came to Melbourne and the Jewish fraternity was pretty strong there, and they found a home for him, and a job. He got a job, and then he sent for us and we made our way to Australia.

What do you recall about the trip to Australia?

09:19 On the ship?

Mm.

09:21 It was quite unusual. My brother next to me, Jack, he was always a sickly boy, so I had the run of the ship myself. I was never found where I want to - you know - to be, and I was always a worry to my mother because she never knew where I was on the ship, but she was always in the sick bay with my brother, so I had the freedom of the ship, the *Ville de Strasbourg*. What a boat.

Good ship?

09:57 No. No. It was an awful boat.

How many to a cabin?

10:03 We had 24 in the one cabin. Three rows of beds on each side. It was a typical immigrant ship, that's all it was.

Not one you'd want to take as a cruise?

10:19 Oh, no. There were two boats like that travelled quite regularly to Australia: *Ville de Strasbourg* and *Ville de Amiens*. They came regularly to Australia for about 10 years bringing mostly Jewish migrants from Europe. They actually all

landed in Melbourne. The first port of call was Perth and then into Melbourne, and at that time there was what was called the Jewish Welfare Society, and they were very, very, very good to everybody that came. They established them, gave them a few pounds to settle down, and that's why my father, when we got here and he established everything, went back into his old trade as a pastry cook.

In Melbourne?

11:10 In Melbourne. We were very well known in Melbourne as pastry cooks.

What part of Melbourne was it?

11:16 Carlton. It was a well-known Jewish area.

There were a few synagogues there.

11:24 Oh, yes, quite a few, and a few Jewish schools as well; kindergartens and - what were they called - Talmud Torahs.

Tell me a bit about your education.

11:42 Well, when we came here, I remember the first school I went to was called Lee Street. I picked up the language. You see, Polish is very close to English. The Polish alphabet, except for one or two letters, is identical, so I picked up the English language very quickly. Then we moved to another area in Carlton called Princes Hill, and there I finished my schooling, and from the fifth grade until the eighth grade - the eighth grade in Australia was called the Merit, in which I got my Merit. Here, it's called the Leaving Certificate.

Well, Leaving Certificate in Melbourne was fifth year, because I did it.

12:35 No, in Melbourne it was the eighth grade.

In your time, yeah.

12:39 In my time. I couldn't go on with studies because I had to get a job to help support the family, and my brother and his teachings and, of course, he was the smart one; he became a doctor, a well-known doctor in Sydney, so I had to work while he studied.

So how did you come to be in Sydney?

13:11 Well, it was during the Depression. My father's business went broke. Nobody could afford rich food and rich cakes and so forth, so his shop went down, and he got a job in Sydney. It was offered to him in Sydney. So he came over and

found somewhere for us to live and then we came over a few weeks, or a couple of months, later and we settled in Sydney.

That was in the eastern suburbs?

13:44 Yes. Yes. It was Bondi, actually. Yeah, in Bondi.

How did you find living there?

13:55 Very good. We lived in a street called Sir Thomas Mitchell Road and we lived there for quite a while. That was it. I enjoyed the surf. I was in the surf club. I got a job, got working, and that's it.

Did your father go back into pastrycook business in Bondi?

14:22 For a little while, but not for very long. It wasn't very successful, so he kept on working on a job.

What was that job?

14:32 It was in a leather factory, believe it or not, with a fellow called Scheinberg.

The same Scheinberg who has - he was in Stocks and Holdings?

14:42 That's it.

Albert Scheinberg?

14:44 Albert Scheinberg. Yes. I became his partner, because war broke out, as you know, in '39, so after the war my father was smart enough to tell him that he had a son that was coming out, so Albert told my father for me to write a letter applying for a position with a firm called Maitland and Riley Pty Ltd. I wrote a letter of application, I had a couple of references from the school which I included, and when I came to see him, interviewed him, he sent me to a phrenologist. You know what a phrenologist is? A man that reads the bumps in your head, to tell him whether I was suitable to become a partner. And he did; he took me in as a partner. Full partner. No him more and me less.

15:56 After we were in business for quite a while, a couple of years, and doing very well, and we had to put on a manager, a sales manager, at the time, a fellow by the name of Waterman. I didn't like him. He was a typical German and used to sing out, "I want this and I want that," and it's not my way of doing things. So Albert Scheinberg had promised him that after a year, if the business improved - which it did, dramatically, under his guidance - he would make him a third partner, and I objected. This, to me, was the only mistake I've made in business. I said to him, "No,

I don't want him as a partner." He says, "Well, I have to keep my word," which, he was a man of his word. So I bought him out and I remained with the company, and if I had have stayed, God knows where I would have been. I probably would have owned Stocks and Holdings.

17:11 So, to me, thinking back over the years, I think that's the only really bad mistake I ever made, but I went on quite well after that.

You joined the army in 1937.

17:28 Yes.

Was that for patriotic reasons?

17:32 Well, the reasons was that it gave me a chance to get away on what I called a holiday. We went on 10 days' bivouac and camping twice a year, so that, to me, was the only holiday I could afford. I did very well in the services. I was never one to sit back and do nothing, so I got my stripes very early. If I had've been - how can I put it to you - if I had've been one that sort of crawled after my senior officers, I would have gotten my commission, but the other guys went and played golf with them and went to tennis with them and swimming. That wasn't my style. They got their promotions and I remained as a master sergeant, and that was it.

How many stripes is it?

18:39 Three. Three stripes.

So what was your job actually in the army then?

18:45 I was an instructor. I used to teach drill, armament. I went to Mount Martha in Victoria; I did a commando course, so I finished off coaching commandoes in the army that went off onto New Guinea afterwards. So, I was lucky; being an instructor, I remained in Australia.

So what were you actually teaching them? Warfare techniques and things?

19:27 Self-defence, how to use all type of armaments that they had to use, and discipline.

What was the most common type of rifle that was used in those days?

19:41 A .303. A Good rifle.

It used to jam I believe, at times, didn't it?

19:49 If they didn't look after it. No, there was very little jamming. Most of the jamming went into machine guns. The Vickers, they jammed quite often if you didn't keep them well oiled and well greased.

So how did that career in the army progress? You were a Sergeant at 19 already.

20:16 That's right.

You got your stripes. Instructor in 1940, in three years. So, what happened after that?

20:29 I was instrumental in building what we called assault courses, and teaching them how to - you know what an assault course is? It's a palisade of tall trees. The troops used to have to climb over and back down the other side. Well, I got injured on one of those, quite badly, and tore one knee apart, stuck on top. This was in Tamworth, and I finished off in the hospital there, operated on. No, I was sent from Tamworth to the hospital here at Randwick, the Military Hospital, where they operated on my leg. I was six weeks here in the Randwick Hospital. I got discharged medically unfit for further service. That was in 1942.

How did you feel about having been certified medically unfit? It was a big blow?

21:38 Well, it was quite strange, because when I got discharged I had to wear a metal frame on the one leg. My mother was not the type of woman that would have her son a cripple, and her ingenuity looked up - there was a Dr Max Herz. He was a German doctor, unregistered. He had a hospital in Bellevue Hill, but a brilliant surgeon. So she took me in to see him - where was it - in the street in the city where all the doctors were?

Macquarie?

22:23 Macquarie Street. He saw that and he says, "Take that thing off." So I took it off. He says, "Walk to the door and back," which I did, and he said to my mother, he says, "Throw that in the rubbish tin." So, he says, "Go down the beach. Walk every day or whenever you can in the sand, and strengthen that leg," which is exactly what happened and I've got full use of that leg, although it left a big scar on it, and there was a little bit of weakness there which developed. It got worse over a time and finished off I had to get what they call a total knee replacement, which I've still got - the same one in the same leg over all these years.

How many years?

23:19 That would have been in 1943. Yeah, 1943.

You've had nothing done to that leg since?

23:31 Nothing. But the other leg suffered as a result and I've had that leg opened up twice. I've had two total knee replacements and the last one was a full replacement from the thigh down to the ankle, and I still walk around without any help.

Did you get an injury, too, when you were playing soccer?

23:58 Yeah, I played soccer for Hakoah Juniors at the time and that aggravated that injury I had in the leg as well which caused all the problems.

So you were training soldiers for overseas duty, were you?

24:12 I was actually seconded - the 2/1st Infantry Training Battalion and I trained the men in that unit that eventually went to New Guinea. They were the first battalion there, the first to go on the Kokoda Trail. A lot of my good friends never came back. The reason why I didn't go is I refused to reduce my rank. The company's sergeant major says, "You've got to reduce your rank because we've got too many sergeants in the unit. You've got to become a corporal." I said, "I refuse." He says, "Well, we'll court martial you." I says, "You go ahead and do that."

25:00 There was a very good friend of mine in brigade headquarters, his name was Shafreen, and I went down and I said, "Look," I says, "Look up my rank when I went through early in the piece in the army." He looked it up, he says, "Your rank is substantial. They can't take it off you. It's not temporary. It's a substantial rank." So when they come back to my army CO, he says, "Well, we're off, and you're staying behind." So I stayed behind in Tamworth, training fresh troops that came through. So I was very, very lucky. That's why I'm here today talking to you because god knows what would have happened if I had have gone with the Second First Battalion to New Guinea and Kokoda. Thank God.

Did you hear some stories about what happened on the Kokoda Trail from people who came back?

26:03 No.

Never?

26:04 No. I only came across one guy that I knew, just fleetingly. I don't know how it came about. I think I met him in a lift one day, and I touched him on the shoulder and he looked around and he says, "God," he says, "I didn't expect to see you. I thought you were lost in the unit." I can't remember his name, but he's the only one I knew out of the company. His name was Myers, and he was also a sergeant, a machine gunner.

Were you his instructor earlier on?

26:43 No. No. I was in the same unit as he was.

So where did you actually do the training?

26:49 Initially, when I was in the army, I was doing a lot of initial training at Centennial Park. Thousands of troops went through Centennial Park. They emptied out all the cow stalls and the horse stalls, put down bunks, and we trained a lot of troops, most of them out into Centennial Park. We trained a lot of troops in Centennial Park. Also, we did a lot of hill training. This was with the 2/1st Battalion in Tamworth. There were nine camps in Tamworth. An enormous number of troops. Tamworth, Liverpool, and mostly in the city, in initial training.

What sort of methods did you use in your training?

27:58 How do you mean my methods?

Well, I mean, what you instructed to do; how to make them aware of danger, how to...

28:06 Well, first of all they had to be taught a drill; how to march, how to answer commands, and after that they went through armament training, how to use either the rifle or machine gun, but the ordinary troops were not issued with small arms, which was called - the revolver was a Smith & Wesson was the revolver, which they were never issued with. You had to be senior sergeant, like I was, and I had my Smith & Wesson, which I was very good at, actually, as a pistol shot, and that's where we did our training.

What are some of the early mistakes that the troops make when they first try to use those weapons?

29:10 Well, not knowing how to use it correctly, how to read the rifle. If I can remember, there was a little quote we used to give them, how to look through the sights, the foresight. I can't remember now back how we trained them. But the drill that I was - you know, shoulder arms, pistol arms, present arms, all that sort of thing, sort of a drill which they had to do. Then we taught unarmed combat with the rifle; once the rifle is taken away from you, how to overcome your enemy for unarmed combat. All that was part of the training. It was like having a wrestle with somebody.

30:12 I had a very interesting situation. Do you want to hear it?

Yeah, sure.

30:18 I was a member of North Bondi Surf Club and there was a guy there called John Levy. A bit of a wrestler as well. We were in the surf club. A year went past and whatever, and next thing I know, I'm at a training course in Liverpool and I thought I saw him there, but I wasn't sure, but there was a roll call, and the roll call came out, and, "John Levenson." And in he walked, and I said to him, I says, "Why didn't you come up and say hello?" You know, "I didn't know you. Your name was Levy, wasn't it?" He says, "Don't ever say that again here. I'm Levenson." You know, a real tough guy.

31:08 So when the training started, he always used to pick on me, and he was twice my size and gave me a bit of a rough time, and I couldn't complain, but I had a partner in my room, like an apartment, and he was a Greek, you know, and a lovely guy, and he was a champion wrestler from England, and he could see what was happening. He says, "Hey, Morris, what's with this man? Why don't you complain?" I said, "How can I complain?" He says, "You leave it to me." So, next time when this instructor says, "Pair up," it means to pair up, instead of this John coming rushing at me - Theo, that was his name - Theo came and grabbed me as a partner. So I didn't get a belting after that, but I told him, I said, "Theo, thanks very much."

32:15 But that's one of the stories about not getting pumped about, and he used to give me a hell of a time, this Levy, because I called him Levy instead of Levenson. Anyhow, that's one of the stories that you go through and that, but you have to take those things.

32:29 But you mightn't think so, even at my size, I was a pretty tough guy. I was pretty tough. I could hold my weight and my size against anybody even bigger than me.

Did you ever go higher than sergeant, your rank?

32:47 No. No. Well, I wasn't a crawler.

What aspects of the training did most of the recruits have the most difficulty with?

33:02 Early in the piece, to settle down, and a lot of them not used to taking orders. Not that they rebelled in any shape or form, but eventually they got used to it, except at the situation that they had to go along with the rest of the platoon, otherwise they were sort of ostracised by their own guys in the platoon.

So your main training was drill and weapons maintenance, I suppose, was it? How to look after your armaments?

33:44 Yes.

And armaments training?

33:48 Yes.

Was there anything else?

33:51 Well, it's only how to use a rifle; how to use a rifle with a bayonet attached, which is also self-defence with a bayonet. We used to have a big sack; we used to point the bayonet at the sack and aim and withdraw, and so forth. They had to learn how to use that. Then they had to learn how to fire the rifle, how to shoulder the rifle, and the main thing was to keep it clean. They had what we used to call a pull-through. It was a cord with a weighted end. You used to put it in and put a rag through your rifle bore. It was quite interesting.

What sort of weapons were they using, the men? Were they .303s?

34:49 .303 in the rifles. Yes, always a .303, yeah. Never anything different.

And the machine gun? Vickers, was it?

34:59 There was the Vickers, and I can't think of the smaller machine gun. Can't think of the name of it. I'll think of it as we go along, what was the small Vickers, little small packet. I can visualise it.

It's probably way out of date now.

35:24 Oh, yes. Well and truly.

Now, you sustained an injury while you were in the army?

35:31 Yeah.

Tell me about that.

35:33 Well, I did earlier in the piece, with the knee. The knee injury.

So did that impact on your ability as a trainer?

35:44 Yes. Well, I mean, that's when I got discharged from the army out here at Randwick Military Hospital. That's when I got my discharge: unfit for further service.

Were you discouraged by that?

36:03 Not at the beginning, but later on I found myself the only man around the place. Everybody else was in service. So I looked around what to do. Nine months later I'm in the air force A1.

Tell me how that happened?

36:20 I don't really know. I went down to Martin Place one day and saw the recruitment officer, and enlisted. Nearly broke my mother's heart, but...

Did you have to do a medical examination?

36:39 Yes. I didn't tell them anything about my knee. When I signed up and they asked for what area I wanted, I said I wanted to be in aircrew, and I failed in the medical, so I became a ground staff instructor instead of a pilot, which I wanted to be.

To instruct pilots?

37:06 Yeah. I wanted to be a pilot, but I couldn't pass the proper exam. Mainly physical. You had to jump off ladders and things like that. Well, with my knee the way it was, I just couldn't do it.

37:28 But there's quite a twist to that. I joined the air force, as I said, and sometime later I was posted to a little town called Benalla in Victoria, and guess what that posting was? I had to teach pilots how to land on the ground after parachuting from an aircraft. The irony of it. That's why I failed to become it, because I couldn't jump off the platforms and so forth, and here I am teaching aircraft guys that have parachuted out, and how to land on the ground, in Benalla. That was hurting.

But you survived it?

38:19 Oh, yes, I did. I managed to do it all right.

So what was your rank in the air force?

38:26 Sergeant.

Again, sergeant?

38:28 Yeah. I got to sergeant quite quickly.

Were you happy in the air force?

38:32 Yes. Very. I enjoyed my time in the air force, yeah.

Was the training as an instructor in the air force similar to the training you had in the army?

38:43 Yes. It helped a lot. It's helped to the degree that when I was posted to - Bradfield Park was the training area for air force and the sergeant in charge of the

flight - it's called a flight - somehow found out that I had army training. He put me in charge of it while he disappeared.

39:13 There's quite a good ending to this. Three weeks after the training, which I took most of it for my fellow guys - they accepted it; we were good mates - a passout - do you know what a passout is? When you've finished your training, you have a grand passout where, the squadron leaders and that, you walk past them and salute them.

39:43 So, the Sergeant who was in charge of the flight that I was in was called Valenzuela. So he marched us out onto the parade ground ready to march out the March Past, as it was, with all their big shots. The WO came out, and called him out and he says, "Valenzuela, I want you in the office." That's the last we saw of him, and I got the pleasure and the distinction of leading my own flight, leading them out after the passout. Because the sergeant major, he was no fool; he knew that I had trained my flight and it was the best flight in the whole regiment.

Now, you met a Flight Lieutenant Goffage?

40:33 Yeah.

He had another name, didn't he? Who was he?

40:39 Flight Lieutenant Goffage had another name. Did I tell you who it was?

You told me the first time we met, yes.

40:47 I don't know how it happened, but somehow I got involved in entertainment for the troops. I got involved in that, and I organised a concert party, so I was told by my skipper to get onto Flight Lieutenant John Goffage at headquarters. So he sent me different things to help me with arranging concerts and so forth. I had 2000 men to pick from - they were all wonderful musicians and singers - which I did. I'm trying to think what was his main name. Oh, God Almighty. Didn't I tell you his name?

You told me, yes. Chips Rafferty.

41:49 Chips Rafferty. That's who it was.

Very famous actor.

41:56 Yeah. We were good mates in the end. Very good mates, Chips and I. We put this big show on at the Albert Hall in Canberra where we invited the Governor-General and his wife, Lord Gowrie. It was a very, very interesting evening.

They enjoyed it, and I got very well recommended from it, and made the big mistake of making out the invitation to him under the auspices of His Royal Highness.

42:36 Sometime after the concert, my CO, Squadron Leader Wainwright - Waney, we called him - called me in and he says, "You're in trouble." I says, "Yeah? What trouble am I in?" He says, "You're wanted at Government House." Who was it? Captain Bracegirdle was his name. A naval captain, he was. "So get into your proper uniform, button up your buttons and so forth, and go."

43:06 I arrive at Parliament House. I ask to see Captain Bracegirdle and I went in to see him and he looked up at me in a stern face. He says, "Who gave you permission to use the Royal Household word on a letter?" I said, "Well," I said, "I did invite him and he accepted it, so I thought it was the right thing to do." He says, "No, it wasn't." He says, "You've got to get special permission to use a heading in a letter of the Royal Highnesses," or whatever. Then he smiled; he says, "They enjoyed the concert very much. Dismiss." And away he went.

43:43 They did enjoy it, because after the concert they came in and we had a drink in the mess. He told me how good it was. Well, I mean, they were wonderful artists, good singers and so forth.

So Lord Gowrie was the governor-general, was he?

43:59 Lord Gowrie, yes, and his wife, Zara Gowrie.

44:07 Nice guy. Brilliant memory. Wonderful memory. When I was in the army, we had what they call a - what do they call it - Master of Colours? Oh God, what do they call it? Anyway, it was a presentation of colours from one unit to another and the City of Sydney was changing over the colours, or flag colours, to the 2/1st Battalion. Originally, it was the 1st Battalion City of Sydney, and then it became the 2/1st, which was the overseas.

44:56 So he was there when we presented the exchange of flags - it was under his - and it was three years later, he remembered me. You can imagine how many people he would have seen. He says, "You were at the oval at the Victoria Barracks." This is where the exchange took place." He says, "You were one of the sergeants that took over the red flags." But fancy remembering. I've never forgotten that, the memory, that he had.

When you went to Canberra in 1942, I think, was it? Canberra?

45:37 Yes.

You formed this military band...

45:41 Yes. I had a small orchestra that entertained the troops, and Government House got to hear of it, so Lady Zara Gowrie commissioned us to come and play on a Sunday morning to her morning tea friends. So I got my boys together, and down came the car with a great big crown on it to transfer us to Government House. Down on the side was a lovely crate of beer. For two hours we played for the background music while her guests were entertained on the lawn there.

What other memories do you have of your war service? Anything else that stands out?

46:29 Oh, haven't I told you enough?

You've told me some, but I mean three or four years?

46:34 Well, it's more than some. I've told you nearly almost a full six years' history.

46:43 No, just a couple of incidences. I had to go up north and bring back prisoners to go to court to be court-martialled and so forth. Well, my mother didn't like that at all. Mum says, "You're going overseas." "No, I'm not, Mum. I'm here on special duty."

The people you brought back, the prisoners, were they Australians?

47:10 Yes. Aussies. Been on drunk charges and things like that. Nothing really serious, but they didn't have any courts where they were up in the bush, or the country, so they had to be brought down to Sydney.

When did your war service end altogether?

47:30 March 1945, I got discharged from the air force.

Because the war was still going on against the Japanese.

47:42 No, it had ended. War had ended.

Not in '45?

47:46 In '45, yeah.

Not the war in the Pacific, though.

47:49 Yeah. No. That was with Japan. It ended for me, thank goodness. That was enough. From '39 to '45, except for nine months, it's quite enough for any Yiddishe boy.

So how do you look back on your war years now?

48:17 First of all, it's a good education for life. You realise just what life is all about. Whatever you did, you were determined to make a success, which I did, of my life. Had no regrets at all about serving for my country, and I say it's my country because it's a wonderful country to live in. I sit boiling on my sofa watching what goes on around the world. It's disgusting. Shocking. People going around starving. I hope to make the average Australian realise what a wonderful country this is; how easy it is to live here, and if they think being a rogue or a criminal is going to get them anywhere, not as far as I can see. We are still a very civilised country, thank God.

So what's the most important lesson in life that you picked up from having been in the armed forces?

49:33 One thing above everything else, I believe in being honest. I've been honest with my wife, who I love very much. My second time round - I was married 65 years before - and luckily I found another lovely lady. But I find that if you treat some people correctly, you get treated back correctly. Same goes with a place like this. If you say thank you to the staff, they thank you back twice.

So in the years after the war - you've already told us a little bit about Albert Scheinberg and your contact with him, but there was also - you were managing director of Howard Lowe in 1960. What's Howard Lowe?

50:37 It was the same business: manufacturer. It came about in a funny way. I was the chairman of the board of the Strathfield Synagogue. Actually, myself and three others, we built the synagogue there, and Howard became a member. He lived in Ashfield at the time. He used to come on the Saturdays and they had card evenings. So - kibitz - sitting next to him, so he said to me one day, he says, "What do you do on a Sunday morning?" I said, "I play golf Sundays." He said, "I want you to come around and see me in Ashfield," where he lived. So, from kibitzing him, I became his partner in a manufacturing organisation, where eventually Dunlop bought us out and I started travelling overseas. I travelled for 20 years; every year, around the world. I had a lot of experience around the world. A lot of interesting people that I met. A lot of opportunities.

52:01 I could have owned McDonalds if I wanted to. It was offered to me over a counter. Really. McDonalds - what do they call it? Not a contract. What do they call it?

A franchise.

52:17 Franchise. Was offered to me over a beer in Los Angeles. It was offered to me. That's how early back, in Los Angeles. I'm sitting next to a guy there having a drink, and he says, "Do you know what McDonalds is?" I says, "No? Never heard of it." He says, "You haven't got McDonalds in Australia?" I said, "No." He said, "Would you like to have it?" He says, "I'll give you the whole shebang, proceeds and everything, how to start McDonalds in Australia." I said no, I was a manufacturer; I don't want to know anything about new business.

53:03 The biggest thing that Dunlop - because we were owned by Dunlop at the time, and this is something that's aggravated me ever since. On another occasion, I'm sitting in a bar, chap next to me, and, "How do you do?" "How do you do?" "Where are you from?" "Australia." "Oh, what do you do?" I said, "I work for Dunlop." He says, "Dunlop? Is that the tyre people?" I said, "Yes." "Oh," he says, "what do you do with your old tyres?" I said, "I don't know. As far as I know, we burn them." He says, "Well, look, I'm with a big company here working for the government and we've produced a machine," or more than one, "that we buy out all the tyres from all out around America and we shred them. This machine shreds them to bits and we sell them to road people to make roads. That's how their roads are made." I says, "Good." I says, "Give me your card. I'll take it."

54:01 I came back to Sydney and I went and saw my boss in Melbourne. I can't think of his name [Eric Dunshea]. I said, "This is a wonderful thing for you." I says, "You're Dunlop. You can collect all the tyres from around Australia. Buy one of these machines, shred it, and sell it to the road companies or all the councils, to make..." The streets those days were nothing. "Yeah, I'll look into it." He's still looking into it. Now, they're the sort of things that used to annoy me. I used to bring back these wonderful things you get to hear about in America, because they were so far advanced.

54:45 I had another fellow - also like McDonalds - Kentucky Fried. Same thing was offered to me. I made very good friends with a man in America called Joe Field. He was a colonel in the American air force. He'd been to Australia already, and he says, "I think it's a wonderful country." He lived in Miami. So I had quite a few trips there. I used to go there and we used to play golf and everything. He was a great guy, and Jewish. Joe said, "Do you have Muzak in Australia?" I said, "What? What's Muzak?" "Oh," he says, "in big city buildings and in private companies, you have music going through - or in workshops." You've heard of Muzak? Well, he owned

Muzak in Miami, and he says, "I'll give you all the information you need, and all you need is one van and 500 metres from a post office," and he says, "and you can cover the whole of New South Wales with Muzak."

55:58 So I came back and offered it to the right people. Weren't interested. These are things that happen to you throughout life, you know?

Tell me a little bit about your marriages and your children.

56:14 Well, I've only had the one child, blessed be. I lost him when he was 26 years of age, and we didn't have anymore. Knocked my late wife completely off balance. That's when I came here 11 years ago, so that she could get well looked after. She was mentally completely depressed. Never recovered after his death. So, that's how I landed here 11 years ago.

At the Montefiore Home?

56:54 Mm.

When did you stop working full time? Which year was that?

57:00 When I was 80. I retired when I was 80, and I was still a partner with Howard. We sold out to South Africans. It was a big show. We had about 400 stores. We sold out to a South African company. I was with them for about six or eight months, and at that time I was in charge of a store in Hong Kong with thousands of metres of fabric which we used to manufacture overseas.

57:47 I got to know these guys. I never liked them from the start. One day he called me into the office - I can't even know his name - and he says, "How much fabric have you got left in Hong Kong?" I said, "Nearly a hundred-thousand metres." He says, "And what are you going to do when you finish using up all that material?" "Well, I'll tell you what, you can have my resignation as from next week. I'm retiring."

58:21 I know what they wanted. When that was finished, they wanted to go and give me the sack. I was a bit too smart for these South Africans. So, when he hit me with that, I immediately gave - and I was 80 years of age, and I retired at that time.

What about your marriage? What was your first marriage like?

58:43 Very good. Had a very good, even marriage. She was a Melbourne girl. I met her during the war in 1943. The only problem was that we had a sick child and I was away from home a lot with my work, you know, overseas. I used to be away 16 weeks of the year, from home. That's how I worked it out. That's a lot when you've

got a loving wife and a sick child. That's what killed her, the care and, you know. But I was compensated with a lovely lady.

How long have you been married to Betty?

59:35 Five years. Yeah.

59:39 Five years, Bet, isn't it? Five years, yeah.

Great. You don't have any grandchildren then, do you?

59:46 No.

So how is your health? Is it good?

59:51 My health is quite good. Yep. I've got no complaints. I've got a heart problem, which only last week I went to my cardiologist and he was quite satisfied with my progress. Hasn't gotten any worse. I've had two open-heart surgeries, and he says I'm quite stable. Hasn't got any worse. I hope I can keep going and get the letter from the Queen.

I think you will.

60:22 *[Betty: You'd better.]*

60:24 Of course, darling.

So what's important to you now at this late stage in your life?

60:31 Only one thing: the health of my wife and I. If we've got our health, we have got everything. We're millionaires. Money means nothing if we've got our health, and Betty is no youngster either. So if we've got our health, we can go - I've just booked two cruises to go away. The only difficulty I have is getting insurance. Do you know somebody that will insure me at my age? That's the difficulty.

Just as well it's only that, and not such a huge...

61:14 Well, it's not good to go away on a cruise if you're not insured.

But if you can't get the insurance anymore, what can you do?

61:23 Good question. What can you do? You pay through the nose. I made enquiries from one company for the 10 days and guess what they wanted? \$2800 - insurance.

So how do you spend your days now?

61:45 Well, we go out two or three times a week. See, up until now, I've had a car. That's my second big loss: I had to give my car away. Age caught up with it. Not that I couldn't drive. I was still a very good driver - aren't I, darling?

62:04 *[Betty: Very good.]*

62:06 But as my advisers have said, if I have an accident and the judge or whoever hears my age, even if I'm not responsible, they take the attitude that, at my age, something must have happened. I must have made a mistake somewhere. I can't possibly be accurate at my age of 90-odd. So he advised me to sell my car and get taxis wherever I go. So, I do.

62:46 We go to the Junction twice or three times a week. We've got plenty of activity here in the home: concerts and things like that. We don't do very much, but the days go by quick enough. As long as we're healthy, that's all that matters. Nothing else matters.

So how would you like to be remembered?

63:12 How would I like to be remembered? I'd like people to say, "Oh, Zamel; he was a good bloke." Nothing more. I've never denied anybody anything. I've always been ready to help. I was a Rotarian for many years. I held high offices in Rotary, as you can see somewhere or other, my offices. I've been a Justice of the Peace for many years, done my service in the community, and no regrets.

Excellent. That's the way.

We're coming to the end of our interview here. Is there anything else you want to put on record or you want to say before we end the interview?

64:02 I was just going to say, "End of the interview, " but not, as you said, "Coming to the end." I hope the end is a long way away. Or it can't be too far away. The Almighty - all we ask is another three, four, maybe, years. I can't be too greedy.

64:25 Physically, I know that I am deteriorating, I admit that, but I still have my mental abilities. I think you've more or less judged that, in a way. So, we do our exercises, we do our walks and so forth. We see our GP. He comes here every fortnight, checks us out, and says, "So far so good."

Excellent. Well, Maurie, I've really enjoyed this interview with you.

64:56 It's been a pleasure.

You're an inspiration to many men.

65:00 Oh, goodness me. What about women?

And women. So, thank you very much for this interview.

65:08 It's a pleasure, Heimy. I mean, you've recalled things that I've forgotten so many times, you know, and I do apologise for forgetting some of the incidences, which you will forgive me.

Sure. Okay.

So that's the end of the interview with Morris Zamel and the end of disc and file number one. Thank you.