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Coming Home from Overseas -." Bill Daye, Sydney: (Bill, were there towns right near the battlegrounds?) Yeah, yeah. It wasn't all really smashed to pieces like you'd figure. Some places it was like a desert--there wasn't a bloody thing left. But other places there were streets and villages. But they were all--holes in them and the roof off them and everything--you know, smashed up. You'd see a dirty, rainy, miserable, stinking cold night. And the roads were nothing but mud--there was no pavement or anything--real mud, halfway to your knees, from so much traffic on it. The frost coming out and everything like that. You'd see men, women, and kids--dark at night, when we'd be travelling to another town-- coming through that in the night in the rain and cold without a goddamn thing with them to eat or anything else. Maybe a woman carrying a baby. You might come across 50 or 60 of them, plowing through there in the night. Getting the hell away from what they could get away from, and getting wherever they could get. My god, it used to make your heart sick, you know. But we were good friends with the Belgian people, and then the Germans were good friends with them when they were in there. You know, they had to get along. Course, they took all their cows and hens and chickens, most of that, from them. I remember one night I was on guard over at the place where they kept a bunch of mules. And two of our own men, or I think they were Australians or New Zealanders--"How about letting me get one of those mules?" I said, "I can't let you get one of those mules. Those mules are needed here." "Come on, come on, we want to get one." "What do you want to do with it?" "We can sell them," he said, "and get some schnapps"-- they used to call this stuff, it was like gin, or moonshine. "You won't miss a mule." I said, "I can't let you take a mule." And they begged me. "But I'll tell you what I can do. I can go around the other side," I said. "But by jeez, you'd better not be here when I come back." When I came back, they weren't there. The next day I saw the mule hanging up in a butcher's shop for sale, in pieces! (How did you know the war was turning?) Well, the Germans were on the run steady, going back to Germany. You could have all you could do to keep following them. They were on the run, everything pulling out, pulling out. Of course, an awful lot they didn't pull out was smashed and no damn good to them. We were supposed to follow them, whatever work to be done. We didn't have a hell of a lot to do then, when they were pulling out. I don't know how many days' march we had to be to Germany, to the Rhine River. And just two days before we got there, we were ordered to come back. The war was over. Well, we didn't believe it. We didn't believe it. That firing was going on for 3 or 4 days, more than a week, after the war was over. But the war was officially over. Eleventh of November. I'll never forget it. We didn't believe it was over. We were told there's no need of us going all the way to Germany. To turn round and go back, and they'd billet us. We kept all the company, what was left, together. There was no more fighting or anything like that. There were a lot of fellows stayed over there to bury an awful lot of the dead after. They could sign up and stay there and do that if they wanted to. I remember one of my buddies that went in the army when I did, he stayed over for a whole



year doing that, burying people. A lot of them had to be dug up and their remains sent to a certain graveyard. We all had a tag on so you'd know who we were. John Angus MacNeil, Inverness: After the Ypres, on the front there, I remember one night there was a bunch of Queen's Own Battalion in the British regiment, going in the line. And we were there. And there's one of my men that went with them, to escort them into the front line. And going across the moat, across the Ypres gate, it's all concrete. Then this shell landed on the concrete and exploded and killed 8 of them. So we had to take them in there and just bury them in Ypres, in the one big grave. We put a big cross there, and that was there for--they'd know that very well. Later on, when the war was over, all (13'