Australians at War Film Archive

James Stewart - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 28th March 2004

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1035

Tape 1

00:39 **So Jim if we could start with the life arc as we discussed.**

Well I was born on January 10th 1930 in Kogarah, a suburb of Sydney to James and Margaret Stewart. My father was a Scot, he came to Australia with his family in 1910.

01:00 My mother was an English woman who came to Australia the same time, in fact came to Canberra, then known as the Limestone Plains before Canberra was built. My mother, her father was the first physical training instructor posted to the new Military College at Duntroon. My father's father was a builder, hoping to build the new capital. I went to school in the local school at Kogarah then went to Sydney Technical High School.

01:30 when it used to be at Paddington behind the Victoria Barracks. I intended to become an architect as the old man was in the building trade. And but in my last year at school in 1946, before doing my Leaving Certificate, I thought the army might be a reasonable career to follow. And that may have been in the genes because both my grandparents had been in the British army. My father had been in the First [World] War and also when Japan came in the Second [World] War, he

02:00 re-enlisted and served in New Guinea. My elder brother, five years older than I, served in the middle east and also in New Guinea, so I suppose it was in the genes. Anyhow I applied and was lucky enough to be accepted to go into Duntroon, and got there eventually after having to do a post in maths I, wasn't too brilliant with algebra. And when I got to Duntroon I was quickly disabused with my hopes of becoming an engineer officer, my maths weren't good enough, so I went and did the arts course.

02:30 And I was in the first post war four year course at Duntroon from 1947 to 1950, and I graduated into Infantry. And after six months at Puckapunyal were I was training recruits and then raising and training a signals platoon for the battalion down there, I was posted to reinforcement officer to Korea. I joined 3RAR, the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment in Korea in August of 1951 and served with them there.

03:00 Until August of '52 when I returned to Japan to become a company commander of the Reinforcement unit in Hiro in Southern Honshu training reinforcements going to Korea. To April '53 when I came back to take over command of the Airborne Platoon of the Royal Australian Regiment which was based then at Williamtown, the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] Station, this was pre-SAS [Special Air Service]. And I was there until the end of '54 when I was promoted to captain and went to Townsville.

03:30 Served there for the first twelve months as the Brigade Intelligence officer of the 11th Infantry Brigade which was our forward defence in those days. And then went to the, become adjutant of the local battalion, 31st Battalion of the Capricornia Regiment. Until 1957 when I was posted to Malaya, took my family to, I'd married in the mean time in 1955 and had our first child in Townsville. Then went to Malaya as Brigade Intelligence officer of the 28th Commonwealth Brigade in

04:00 North Perak in Malaya in the Anti CT operations, the communist terrorist operations, for two years. Came back at the end of '59 then the army decided to send me to America for nine months. They wouldn't send me for twelve months 'cause that meant taking the family with me, so they sent me for nine. Where I was training with the US [United States]. Airborne, number of courses there, including parachuting. We, at that time, the Australian Army was changing from the British to the American equipments in

04:30 many ways, ships, aircraft, parachutes. And I went over there and spent time at Fort Benning, with the US Army Infantry School where they have the parachute school. And then went to 101st Airborne Division in Fort Campbell, Kentucky which was then commanded by one William C Westmoreland, of Vietnam fame. And came back about November it was I think

05:00 1960 and then down to, posted down to Victoria where I took over command of 2 Commando Company, a CMF [Central Military Force] unit. And I was there for two years and then in June of '63 went to the Australian Staff College at Queenscliff. We did the eighteen months course, that's when the nuclear

threat was still very high and so we had our courses centred by first six months to learn how to handle nuclear problems.

05:30 From there I was lucky enough to be posted to UK [United Kingdom] with my family and I was two years at the Australian Army Staff College in London as the General Staff officer in charge of training and intelligence. They were organising at that time, we had something, nearly two hundred officers, NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers], warrant officers, undergoing training and attachments to the British Army. So that was a very interesting position to have. I came back the end of those two years and

06:00 then I went to Canberra for the first time, rather late in one's time to go to Canberra as a major. But, and after some time with the direct military training and with the Adjutant General's Branch I was posted to Duntroon. I was promoted to half, lieutenant colonel during that time as the Commanding Officer of the Corps Staff Cadets. That was following the bastardisation, Royal Commission, and I had always had ambitions to be posted back to Duntroon, but they were under

06:30 unusual circumstances. And it was a very interesting time to be there because it was, a part of my job was to try and convince the cadets the right way of commanding, and it wasn't by demeaning people. However that was an interesting time but delayed my time going to Vietnam. I got to Vietnam in June of

07:00 1970 and I went there as deputy commander initially, but of course the position of commander was a full colonel. And some five months later the position was dropped to half colonel, lieutenant colonel, because we were then starting to withdraw and reduce our commitment. And I was there for nine months, came back., spent some time in Canberra again, in Military Operations and Plans.

07:30 And I was promoted to colonel, to full colonel this time, and was then posted to, interesting job, as the Services Adviser with the Australian High Commission in New Delhi. It's the same as an attaché in a non commonwealth country but in commonwealth countries it's Adviser to the High Commission. I was a one man band, I had a warrant officer assisting me in clerical staff. But it was a job which required, I was accredited to India and

08:00 Nepal, and had counterparts in Islamabad, and so I had the coverage of the three services in the military industrial situation. That was the time when Mrs Ghandi was in the chair and it was just after the second Indo-Pak war and the situation was rather tense. And of course there was strong relationship between India and the then Soviet Union. The Indians were sending chapatis to

08:30 Russia and they were getting weapons in exchange. And I was there for two years then I was asked to extend for a third year. And then came back to the position I finally held here as commander in Tasmania of what was then called the 6th Military District and the 6th Fuel Force Group, that being principally an Army Reserve organisation, formation. I was here for three years then in

09:00 1979 after thirty two years and enjoying Tasmania so much with my family and I thought to myself, thought it'd be a good idea to sort of change direction. And so took early retirement rather than going back to a position of Army officer in Canberra and became a civilian or retired officer here in Tasmania. And it was a very good decision because I had productive employment for the next twenty years, that I wouldn't have

09:30 had, had I stayed in the army and had to go back to Canberra obviously. And my positions here were, first, my first sort of re-education as a non-army man was to became the Deputy Council Clerk of the Municipality of Clarence as it was then, that's the eastern shore of the River Derwent. Managed to assist in the re-organisation and re-structuring and re-training of the staff because when the bridge, when the Derwent Bridge went down with the Lake Illawarra accident, many more

10:00 responsibilities were thrust upon the local government over on the eastern shore of the capital. And they hadn't been accustomed to this and had, things were rather creaky at the time so it was a challenging job, I was there for three years. And then the position of the State Fire Commissioner became vacant. Tasmania is the one state in Australia where there is only one fire service, so no country and urban. And it is, except for Hobart and Launceston

10:30 and Burnie, the brigades are all volunteer but even in those brigades there are, are all, I beg your pardon, yes, they're all volunteer. Within those three major brigades there are also volunteer elements beside the career of fire fighters. My job there was an interesting one because the, when I came into it there was still fiefdoms, independent fiefdoms and because it had only recently come across from being a rural fire service and an urban fire

11:00 service. So there was a fair bit of hearts and minds programs to be put into place there. And I had that job for nine years and then I decided that no, there's no more challenge there. So I had a bit of a rest for a few months but then I was asked to assist with the work of the Medical Council of Tasmania, which is the statutory body which has to check on qualifications of all people who wish to practise medicine in this state and ensure they are

11:30 current and they meet Australian standards. And also in the area I was mostly interested in was the investigation of complaints against the practitioners. Being a layman I could look at you know, but having a military background I could look at these things and assess what evidence was required. And then arrange for that, full investigations to be conducted and if there was a case to be answered then have the appropriate processes followed, which in the final outcome meant that the practitioner may

have to

12:00 appear before a tribunal and show cause why he or she should not continue to practise. So it was a responsible position but I enjoyed it and I was there until December 1999 when I said, “Well I don't think I should, I want to work after my seventieth birthday”. So then I became fully retired and was able to devote all my time to the other things I’m interested in. You know, such as, well, Saint John Ambulance I’ve been with them for twenty five odd years.

12:30 Legacy, lawn bowls, I’m a great advocate of that, of being a way for old men to stay young, and gardening, bit of landscape painting and general enjoyment of family life. So that’s it in a nutshell.

In a nutshell, wow. Not supposed to say wow, but I’ll say wow once. Alright. Well we’ll try and fit as much as we can in, we’re gonna leave stuff out

13:00 **but that’s quite a life arc. So we’ll go right back to the beginning and can you tell us what your father and other family members who experienced war, told you about war and what it was all about, when you were young?**

Yeah well I didn’t learn much from my grand parents, although my father’s father was in the Boxer Rebellion. And

13:30 from my dad, you know, he hated war. It’s the last resort for a resolution of problems. But he as a young man went to the First War and served, didn’t serve in Gallipoli, served in France, was gassed in France which ultimately was the cause of his rather young death of tuberculosis. When I say young, I mean he was only in his fifties when he died.

14:00 But I suppose the fact that my elder brother who was only five years older than I, he couldn’t stay out of uniform. I remember as a kid, he was in the Scouts and he got me into the Scouts under age. And he decided to quit school before doing his Intermediate Certificate in fact and became an apprentice carpenter.

14:30 But being of Scottish background he was keen on pipes and, but couldn’t learn to play the pipes but was a drummer. And he joined the Sydney University Pipes and Drums and, as a young man. And at the age of sixteen he, we were living in Kogarah at the time, left home one Saturday morning in his best suit to go to town. And my dad had already gone to work, they used to work

15:00 five and a half, six and a half days, ah, five and a half days in those days, so he went to his, he had a firm in the city. And Mum asked, “Where are you going in, with your suit on?” And he said, “Oh I’m just going into town”. Well he came back Saturday afternoon not wearing a suit but service dress and his suit and his kit bag over his shoulder. Now he was sixteen and a half, he was, you know, he was fit but not all that sort of big but still he obviously convinced people that he was,

15:30 and he must have forged his age. So Dad knew a few officers at Victoria Barracks in Sydney and he said, “Look you’re not going anywhere old son, I’m getting you out”, and he said to us, “Well Mum and Dad, if you do, I’ll go interstate and join up under an assumed name”. So you know, best we know where he is and I can recall very clearly the departure and he was on the Mauritania, there was convoy leaving Sydney Harbour. And

16:00 he was in Tobruk during the siege of Tobruk, had his seventeenth birthday in Tobruk. Came back as a young fresh faced kid wearing the Africa Star, and was picked up by the MPs [military police] on a number of occasions for improperly wearing a campaign ribbon. He was wounded in Tobruk, wounded in the hand and the surgeon or the MO [medical officer] at the time, did a good job sewing it up but unfortunately sewed some of the tendons too, so his hand started to close up. Had to spend some time at a 113th Australian General

16:30 Hospital at Concord [Repatriation Hospital] this is, where he met his future wife, who was a nurse. Hand was fixed so he went back on active duty as a bomb disposal expert in New Guinea. Now, you know, their war experiences I suppose did influence me in some respects, but the fact that you know, I think they both came through it, they both felt that they were better persons for it. The fact that there had been

17:00 some professional soldiering in my earlier two generations removed, both sides of the family. And I always had this sort of, well I suppose inspired by [Rudyard] Kipling’s stories and you know, Boys’ Own Annual, Ripping Yarns and all that sort of stuff. I don’t know, I saw it actually as being quite a, you know, an adventurous sort of life indeed for myself. And if there was a war, well you were trained for doing the job and

17:30 hopefully you get through it and, you know, that’s why I applied for Duntroon. And in 1946 the army wasn’t the most popular career that parents wanted their kids go into. And we were a very small class, in fact our class was one of the smallest to enter Duntroon since the Depression days. And so I suppose they were happy to take anyone they could get, so I got in. And didn’t have a very illustrious career at Duntroon, I managed to, you know, to

18:00 get through though and graduate, so that started me off.

What did your father and brother tell you about the realities and the horrors of war, if anything?

They didn't tend to want to talk much about it. Unfortunately my elder brother you know, being such a young, impressionable age when he went, when he was in action, it did affect him psychologically. And

18:30 you know, beside his physical disabilities, it did affect him adversely and you know, it had many manifestations. Which did result in his rather premature death too, and also he was a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated pension]. So, no, they tended not, as I say, principally the involvement I think was in looking after Veterans and RSL [Returned and Services League] Legacy and that's where the you know,

19:00 I suppose degree of how to develop comradeship and team spirit, looking after your mates. That was the sort of message I got rather than you know, the horrors or the glories if you will of war itself.

But you could see your father and brother walking around with these physical and emotional wounds, did you realise that at the time when you were younger?

19:30 Yes, I believe I did, yeah. Oh yes, they were the penalties, yeah, sure, yep.

And your father, he had a bad cough?

Oh yes, yes, he did. And I did see how it affected my mother too you know, and I had a younger sister as well in the family. Yeah,

20:00 I think that often times people don't realise just the actual, you know, you don't have to lose a limb to lose some of your well being, a lot of well being in fact. Yeah.

How did it affect your mother having these family members away and when they returned wounded?

Well see it was interesting, I remember when Dad came back, he got two

20:30 short bouts of leave from New Guinea. My old man was a very generous person and I think he was before his time in many respects, in so far as his appreciation of his fellow man. And was, you know, not in any way influenced by colour, creed or religion or whatever. He was a dour Scot in many ways, a staunch Presbyterian, we went to church every Sunday, Sunday School and things like that. He was

21:00 one of the, he was the second of six sons, big family and as in those days the whole family lived within about a ten mile radius you know. With the six brothers, all their families, and so and we used to, after, on Sundays gather at our grand parents house, and you know, there'd be about thirty people there. And you know, it wasn't one of those Presbyterian families where the blinds were drawn and you kept quiet or sang hymns all day. But it

21:30 was a you know, it was a pretty, real entertaining time for me as a young kid. So but Dad, I will say, he was a staunch member of the RSL and founding member of the Kogarah Sub Branch Leagues Club and Life Member, he was a staunch Free Mason. And but I remember when he came back from leave as I was saying, he, the first person he brought back was the local, his padre who was a young

22:00 Catholic priest. And when he came to the front door with this young fella and Mum met them and after you know, giving the old man a big kiss said, "Good morning and what do I call you? I won't call you 'Father". So and the second time he came back from leave he brought back an engineer officer from the US Army who was working with him on building air fields who was a big negro, a fella called Johnson. I subsequently discovered, I think he was the Johnson who was the

22:30 high jump champion at the 1936 Olympic Games. And once again you know, having negroes in the house hold was you know, in 1944 was a pretty unusual thing. But that was the old man's attitude towards you know, his fellow man. And I think that sort of impressed Mum. Bit difficult you know, mark you, to take initially because it was, it wasn't sort of you know, the usual thing.

23:00 But however, no, I think that with my brother, well, he was you know a bit of, virtually a semi-invalid you know, as a very young man unfortunately. And he had to get off the trade at building and join Ramset you know, selling these power tools, because he knew how they could be used. So that did worry, that concerned Mum but she I think was quite proud, as was the old man and my brother and

23:30 my younger sister that I managed to get to Duntroon. Because as a young woman she had lived there for the first ten years and she was an only child, as her father you know, was on the staff at Duntroon. So you know my going back there and particularly when I was posted there as the CO [Commanding Officer], this is long after Dad had died, and I was posted there as the CO at Duntroon. And the Queen came out to present the new regimental and Queen's colours to the corps staff cadets and I was sort of on parade there with Her Majesty. And that was

24:00 quite a day in my mum's life, staunch royalist as she was. So, you know, I think that my decision didn't cause great heartburn.

You met the Queen as well?

Oh yeah, I met her, well I was lucky to meet her twice. Her first visit in '54 when she came out and it was her, in fact her first investiture I think at Government House in Sydney and I was lucky enough to be awarded the Military Cross

24:30 in Korea and I was one of the recipients. There were quite a few, both military and non military recipients. I can remember my company commander, a fella called John White, who was getting an OBE [Order of the British Empire] in precedence to Military Crosses so he was going in before me. And on the way out we were a long queue, you know, line up and go out in the gardens there and going in, point A, point B, point C and you know, what you do. And he said, "Jim,

25:00 she'll ask you how long you were in Korea". I said, "Oh will she John? Oh fine", "And she'll pick up that you're", I was an OC [Officer Commanding] of the Airborne Platoon, "So she'll pick that you're wings and things". So as I approached HM [Her Majesty] and got to the final position where you do the military bow with the head only. "Hello Mr Stewart, I see you're a paratrooper?" "Yes, Your Majesty, I served with the Airborne Platoon". "And you were in Korea, how long were you in Korea?" And my mind went fuzzy, "Nine years Your Majesty".

25:30 I think she had the eyebrows raised and I thought at the time, I'd made a withdrawal. So I settled my nerves with a couple of beers in the long bar of The Australian with my old man after that.

How did World War II influence you as a child growing up?

Oh very interesting World War II I had. I was a runner in the ARP in the, it was

26:00 the Air Raid Precautions unit, and a runner, not running, on my speed of a bicycle and in, I was in the Kogarah unit of the ARP. And I lived just around the corner from the Kogarah Jubilee Oval, which used to be the home of the Saint George Rugby League, you know, the red and white, the Dragons, before they moved to Hurstville I think. Anyhow under the grand stand at the Jubilee Oval and I was just around the corner as I say, about two minutes from it, was the headquarters of the ARP. And oh we underwent a lot of

26:30 training and you know, like exercises and I'd jump on my speed bike and race around the place giving despatches to people and telling them what to do, what was happening. But on the occasion when the midgets, the Japanese midget submarines came into Sydney Harbour and you know, made quite a ruckus and unfortunately a few sailors lost their lives and, and the sirens went everywhere and I slept through the whole thing. And I woke up next morning, having

27:00 breakfast, getting ready to go to school to hear about it, so I failed miserably as an ARP runner. But the war itself, well, as I say, my elder brother being away was quite an influence on me. And then when Japan came in the war and Dad decided to re-enlist, he shouldn't have but he did. He said as he left, he said, "Now you're the main of the family", you know. Here's me

27:30 all of fourteen. But oh no, I remember digging an air raid shelter in the back garden which, with the corrugated concert type roof and it proceeded to fill with water and home, a breeding ground for mosquitoes. But I had a very good victory garden, I produced the biggest beetroots in Kogarah, I think, they were the size of soup plates. But oh no,

28:00 you know, I recall you know, listening to the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And yeah, and of course when we did occasionally go to the movies you know, the Cine Sound camera man and they brought the war to us. Black outs. Yes,

28:30 it, I remember where we used to go for our holidays down to Cronulla and the barbed wire entanglements on the beaches and the machine gun posts set up you know, to repel the invasion. Yeah, looking back on it now, it's a bit, it was a token effort. And of course I can remember before Japan came in the war when Dad was in the VDC, Voluntary Defence Corp. and bringing home his wooden rifle, his 303 made of solid wood.

29:00 Yes, they were unusual times.

Did you wish you were a few years younger so you could join up?

Few years older?

A few years older sorry?

Oh look, I don't know, I think I wished I was a bit brighter and got better passes in my Intermediate Certificate rather than. No, I don't think so, I think, you know, the fact that the old man and they were both in uniform, both

29:30 overseas. And I recall in those days I think you had a, the government issued you with something you stuck to the window which showed if you had people who served overseas and Mum had one with stars which indicated two. And I think no, I think two's enough, and I had a job to do anyhow. Yeah, my sister's five years younger than I am and so oh no, I think we did our bit as kids.

30:00 **Doing the running and so on and the messages, you felt part of the war effort?**

Oh sure, oh yeah you, oh yes it was, indeed you know, had the Japanese carried out war raids there

would have been a quite a viable task because you didn't have the communication systems we have today, they were very basic. And no I felt it was something worthwhile doing.

And what was the thinking around the family when your father said,

30:30 **"I'm going back to war"?**

Mmm, well I know Mum tried to talk him out of it but she had, she realised that she wouldn't be able to stop him. And that was the only reason Dad did go because of the threat of you know, Japanese invasion. And you know, after Singapore and there was no, in his mind there was no question.

31:00 And he was fit enough to do the job he was doing which was building air fields in New Guinea. You know, which was hazardous at times, you know, with Japanese air raids. But you see he was then, what, in 1941 he was forty three so, you know, he wasn't a young man. And it did affect him physically, he, you know, he got Beri-beri while he was there and

31:30 he reminded me you know, the only cure they really had for it was gin, that made, that helped the urinary tract work. So, but he was a Scotch drinker actually so he thought the prescription could have been changed. Yeah. No, oh well Mum's a pretty dour sort of person herself and she accepted the fact that Dad, you know, considered it was the only appropriate thing for him to do. And that the house was being left in good hands

32:00 so, and you know, the good God for him woman, she reckoned that he would come back so that was it.

And when they left, did you really feel like you were the man of the family?

Oh well you kid yourself, yeah.

At what time did you know that you wanted to pursue a military career?

I suppose really struck me half way through my fifth year at high school

32:30 in 1946 when I was, and who doing the failed run up to the then Leaving Certificate, matriculation. And whilst I did quite well in the appropriate subjects such as technical drawing and Maths Two, geometry and those sort of things, I no doubt possibly could have handled an architectural course. And I saw there was a link here with the old man and my elder

33:00 brother's professions. It, well it came to me as I say I had to make a hard decision and just what do I want to do with myself. And as I say I think it must have been subconsciously there the whole time, and when it came to the crunch and I had to make the decision, it was, it wasn't a difficult one, you know, I'm gonna give Duntroon a go. And, oh, in fact I must admit, earlier in my yeah,

33:30 in my memory now, during the war. I had been in the Sea Scouts you see and I did pretty well in the Sea Scouts and I was patrol leader and troop leader and we had a very active Sea Scout troop at 1st Kogarah Bay Sea Scouts. And we had a sixteen foot skiff, you know, it was a racing skiff which was darn good. And plus an eighteen foot whaler, heavy as lead, and four of us on the oars and one on the tiller. And I was keen on

34:00 sailing and in fact I was going to apply at, in 1943, this is, Dad had already, was in the army. I was gonna apply to go to then was it Jervis Bay or Point, anyhow it was the Naval College, it was a cadetship. And I was very keen on that but the old man you know, put his foot down, said, "No way, no way", he said, "You're staying at home", so that was it. And so I suppose

34:30 you know, even then the idea of a military career was a germ in my mind and then three years later when it was possible for me to join, Duntroon was the way to go, and so I was lucky I got in.

What was the appeal?

Well I suppose the challenge and adventurous life,

35:00 a secure career. Yeah, and you know, I've always been a team man, you know, I like team games and I suppose realising that the, in the way the army thinks and works as a team, appealed to me basically. And so yeah, I had a little idea of what I'd be in for you know, through what my

35:30 dad'd said to me and also going back you know, looking at what my grand father had been at Duntroon back in the early days when it first started, 1911 he was there until '21. So, you know, that I think, that was the sort of motivation.

When you reached Duntroon, did they know about your family background, was it respected?

No, I don't know, I don't think so,

36:00 if they did it was never mentioned to me. Maybe I think in the corridors of power, you know, in the commandant's office there may have been in a dossier there, you know. Well certainly the records'd be, would show that staff sergeant major James Stamford was the first PT [physical training] instructor. And but as far as the, within the corps of staff cadets and you appreciate that the corps staff cadets is self-administered to a great degree.

36:30 And the fourth, and in my case there were only three classes, when I got there, there were three classes. A senior class which was known as the second class. When you go in as fourth class, and then you'll graduate after one year to third class, then second class. And then finally when you're ready, you're a first class cadet well, I say we were the first post war four year course so there was only two classes and me. But within the course the thing's organised as an infantry battalion with companies and the NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] from the senior one who was the senior under officer

37:00 or, he and then there's the subordinate ones, the company sergeant majors and corporals, sergeants, corporals. I would very much doubt that there'd be any knowledge within that sort of hierarchy of my maternal grandfather's involvement, no.

What was it like for a young kid to enter Duntroon and that first day and the first experience there?

Hell of a shock. I got there six weeks after the rest of my

37:30 class mates 'cause I had to do a post in Maths I. You know, I had, I got the basic academic qualifications to get in and so luckily I got through the post, so I got there in March, they'd gone, got there in February. So that, but when I arrived, and I'd always been a pretty tidy sort of kid at home, I used to make my bed and you know, polish my shoes. And used to iron my trousers by putting them under the blanket, under the mattress and sleeping on them at night so they'd, when I went to

38:00 school in the morning my trousers had a decent crease. But so I, you know, I was shown my room and made my bed and I thought I did a pretty good job. And but the next senior cadet who was, the organisation is you have what is known as a lord and master. I don't know if you've heard of this term before but he is the cadet who's in the next class senior to you who's allocated to the first year cadet to sort of guide him a bit,

38:30 he has no authority over him but he sort of tries to keep him out of too many mine fields and helps him a bit without sort of mothering or molly coddling him. He said, "For God's sake, you don't make your bed that way". You know, I had, you know, the counter pane, resting over, you know, had to be tucked in. In fact the internal sort of discipline at Duntroon never leaves you because, it might sound ridiculous, but the bed had to be made

39:00 a one, precise way, and the, you could virtually, the corners of the mattress and the blankets and the counter pane were squared off with a T-square and a slide draw. You know, they were and your clothing in your wardrobe, everything had a particular space and the, I can still remember your singlets had to be in a nine inch width pile. The socks had to be folded a certain way and a certain place, everything had to... and that's good

39:30 because it trained one in these mundane things to be system, have a system. And it helps because when you get into combat situations, I can remember in Korea, when you had a hole in the ground and you made yourself as comfortable as possible. And when we became in, you know, when we became a static warfare position, it was a bit like World War I in many respects, but we had much better conditions to work in. You had to know when the alarm

40:00 sounded, if an attack was coming in, where everything was, you had to be able to put your hand on things in the dark, so this training did help. But as I say, when you come in as a kid straight from civilian street, it's a bit of a shock. And as I say I was about four to five weeks behind my cohorts so I had a bit of rushing to catch up. And but the big thing about I suppose, my biggest recall of my earlier years

40:30 in first year at Duntroon was you never had time, you didn't have time to do it. You know, there was never enough time and of course you worked to the, literally worked to a time table. Reveille at six fifteen except Sunday when it was seven fifteen, lights out at ten fifteen or eleven fifteen on Saturday night. And you know, every, the day is programmed completely, and then beside having to look after your own gear and your own room

41:00 and have to be in inspection order at all times virtually, no dust even on the lamp shades you know. And your weapon had to be spotlessly clean you know, obviously, all your webbing, all your gear, everything. Beside doing all that which is quite a task in itself, you had of course your studies to do, academic and military, and this was, you know, you never really had time to scratch yourself.

Tape 2

00:30 **Okay Jim, could you please tell us about how your training in the RMC [Royal Military College] prepared you for overseas service in Korea?**

Well the four years at Duntroon gave one sound basic knowledge and experience in tactics at the platoon company level.

01:00 And in administration, logistics, in, and planning at a much higher level. For example one could work out movement tables for a division, not the one you have to do as a Lieutenant, but one that was part of the exercise. Tactically both and cloth models and also in the field again, using cadets as the troops,

01:30 one was given a great deal of experience in the tactics of platoon level in all phases of war. But to, because one served within the confines of Duntroon, the army saw its way clear to get our knees sunburned and leave those cloisters for a short period before being commissioned. And in 1950, I think it was about October, a Jimmy Hughes, a class mate of mine and I,

02:00 we had no Tasmanians in our class, he was from South Australia and I was from Sydney. We were all commissioned as second lieutenants, temporary second lieutenant for a period of time around Duntroon, and he and I were sent down here to Tasmania, this is my first taste of Tasmania, not being naturally born here. And we went out to Brighton camp which is about thirty miles kilometres north of the city here, where there were encamped about fifteen hundred school cadets, senior school cadets.

02:30 They were under the command of a fine officer called Major Kevin Thomas, K.B. Thomas, he won an MC, Military Cross in Tobruk. He was, started off as the being the regimental sergeant major of the 2/40th Battalion which was basically a Tasmania battalion. They went to the UK initially then they came back to the Middle East. He was commissioned in the field, won an MC [Military Cross] in Tobruk and then stayed with the battalion right

03:00 through their operations in New Guinea. And at the time we came here in 1950 he was seeing the last years out and we were out there at Brighton. And our job was to really train these young kids, wave the flag and rattle the sabre and try and convince some of the brighter ones to come to Duntroon to learn their trade rather than go university or tech [technical] college, where ever they were going to go after they got their matriculation. How successful that no, because we were, because you know, within, we went back

03:30 and within a few weeks we were commissioned then off. But I'll never forget it because being in cadet camp, it was completely dry, the mess was dry. And once we'd had our meal and made sure the kids were all tucked into bed, there was a convoy of jeeps outside the mess. And we into these jeeps, out the front gate, turned left over the river, the River Jordan to the Pontville Pub where I was introduced to Cascade ale. And

04:00 the front door closed at ten o'clock and we adjourned to the, snuck out the back with the local Gendarmerie and then get back to camp at some un-Godly hour. But bright and shiny up at six fifteen, shaved, showered, booted the spurred and get the kids out of bed. And by eight o'clock we're out on the Pontville Range and it was quite a trial being the butts' officer with the kids you know, getting their weapon training. But it was a quite an

04:30 experience the few weeks we had down here, and what little I saw of the countryside impressed me. I thought well I must come back here to, I'd love to come back here and serve. Well, what, twenty-six years later I got the cable to say there's a placement here. But yeah, so Duntroon did teach us a lot, it gave us the foundations and of course it gave those in, the

05:00 intangibles too you know, of, the code of honour if you will. The fact we had progressively, we were just given more responsibility as we went through the course in our four years, my time at Duntroon wasn't at all illustrious. You know, I didn't make the first fifteen, I didn't make the first eleven, I was in the seconds. I wasn't brilliant academically but I got through. And

05:30 but it did give you I think a love of the career of the profession of the army itself. And although in those days there was a fair bit of I suppose reaction to the Australian staff corps, which was what the, we were commissioned into initially and then allocated to our various corps. I.e. Infantry, artillery or whatever. And indeed

06:00 just harking back, during World War II, very few Duntroon graduates were given command in the field. In fact Sir Thomas Brabbie (Sp?) who was our top military man, he just did not go, did not like Duntroon-ers. And there was a well known clash between him and the then Senior Duntroon graduate, one General Sid Rahl [?], but anyhow, that's beside the point. But Duntroon-ers were mainly used in staff positions, where their training of course equipped them for the job.

06:30 It takes much longer to train someone in staff work and all those intricate procedures and processes than it does to train a natural leader who's a leader in sport or in his profession to be a Commander in the field. And so I suppose it was sensible that Duntroon graduates were used mainly in those areas. But, I say, the four years I had at Duntroon certainly gave me very sound grounding. And then the six months I had at Puckapunyal

07:00 immediately on graduation, training recruits and then training, raising and training a signals platoon for the battalion, which didn't have one then, before going to Korea, did, you know, set me up. But I learned very quickly once I got to Korea, yeah.

Do you think, actually, let me just rephrase that again. With the Duntroon training, did you have any exposure with World War II veterans at that stage?

Oh yes indeed.

07:30 Most of our instructors, both warrant officer instructors and officers had served in World War II, oh yes and I can remember when I was in the senior class and first class and our tactics instructor was one Major Stewart Graham who subsequently commanded the Australian Task Force in Vietnam. He also, he

won an MC in World War II in New Guinea and he was a very fine

08:00 tactician. And outside of the full lectures and exercises he would often come into the coffee room where we'd gather at night and we just had general discussions. And his own experience was very useful and very valuable actually in putting flesh on the bones of the theory we were learning from précis and pamphlets and models

08:30 of tactics yeah. And of the, and at the lower level the warrant officer instructors we had, you know, they were very sound in their knowledge and their ability to convey that without you know, telling, using "War-ies", quote, unquote, to make their point. They were very able to reinforce the theory of whatever the, it was, whether it be

09:00 small arms training or signals, communication training or even driver training, you know, learning how to drive Bren gun carriers and things of that nature, they could just give us the benefit of their own experienced which helped quite considerably.

Now can you tell us how you got involved in the Korean War, from Duntroon, what took place from there?

Well my involvement was that I went up to Korea as a reinforcement officer

09:30 to the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. 3RAR was originally part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan. And in fact they were in the process of returning to Australia, being the last remaining battalion in Japan after the occupation was deemed to have been concluded in 1950 and they were packing up ready to come home.

10:00 They were under strength, hadn't done much training whatsoever for war, because mainly their job was one of ceremonial, guards on the Imperial Palace and things of that nature and so they had to be reinforced very quickly. And Lieutenant Colonel Charles Greene who was an ex-militia officer who was, came back into the regular army and was doing the staff college course at Queenscliff at the time, was plucked out to go and command the battalion.

10:30 The battalion went to join the UN [United Nations] Force in Korea in September of 1950 and the battalion served continuously. I went up, the tour of duty in Korea was twelve months, twelve months in the line. After that twelve month's period people were

11:00 brought back home or went to Japan or other postings. But because a number of the officers and diggers and warrants and so forth also had served in the battalion in Korea, in Japan, prior to going to Korea, they had to be phased out. And so when I arrived in August of '51 the platoon I took over had been commanded by, a fellow who'd been serving in the battalion prior to going to Korea.

11:30 The other battalions that served in Korea, Australian battalions, 1RAR and 2RAR, they came to Korea as full battalions, having been training in Australia before coming. Served their twelve months in Korea and then were relieved by a battalion. But in 3RAR's case there was a continuous movement of people in and out of the battalion, even during, and prior to and during some of the major operations. And now when I came into Korea as a reinforcement officer I was posted to D Company, to Don Company to 11 Platoon.

12:00 And I learned very quickly, we were then on the Imjin River, which was a major river running east west, north of Seoul. But where we were positioned was the traditional historical avenue or gateway from the north to the south, to Seoul, through to Seoul. And the, when we, when I arrived with my battalion

12:30 the Chinese, who had already come into the war back in December of 1950 were some, oh must have been like, I suppose, fifteen kilometres north of the Imjin. There were patrols and outposts further south but their major defence line was through the north. And so it was a rather quiet time fortunately, for one to settle in, but we went out on a number of patrols. And in fact the battalion was involved in an

13:00 operation shortly after I arrived where we went over the Imjin River to establish forward positions prior to, subsequently became known as Operation Commando, a major offensive in October of that year. And I was in D Company, and D Company and B Company, two platoons, my platoon in D Company and Jimmy Hughes' platoon in B Company were forward on two patrols. And we were lucky enough to

13:30 have an engagement with some Chinese and captured, ah, killed two and captured two and they were the first prisoners of war of the Chinese, that the Commonwealth Division had captured, so I was very pleased about that. The Commonwealth Division hadn't, was only formed in July of 1951 so this was quite a success. The only disappointment was I was told, it may have been a pock-full story that the divisional commander or someone up there

14:00 there had said, the first platoon to get prisoners will get a bottle of Johnny Walker [whisky]. Well the prisoners went back, but the Johnny Walker didn't come forward, so, however we made up for it later on.

Can you tell us what it was like, your first combat experience?

Oh frightening, the adrenaline flows, I can sure tell you that. Well it, one is so dependent on your NCOs and,

14:30 and your diggers. You know the theory of it but you know, this is the first time you're putting theory into practice for real. I was lucky, my platoon sergeant was an old, not old, no, I was twenty one, he may have been twenty nine I suppose, maybe thirty. World War II digger [soldiers] who was a, in fact his substantive rank was lance corporal who was acting sergeant. But he was a fine chap and we had a blend

15:00 of people in our battalion, in my platoon, in the battalion, of young, regular army fellows like myself, NCOs and diggers. A number of Pommies, ah, Scots, Geordies, Lancashires, Cockneys, who were enlisted specifically to serve in Korea. They had to have served in the British Army and had honourable

15:30 discharges but they were brought out specifically for Korea on a two year engagement, and then we had the special enlistees from Australia called K Force or Korea Force. And again, if you had served in the Australian Armed Forces, not just army, but armed forces during the war with an honourable discharge, you could apply and if you were fit enough and so forth, then you were brought in. Because we had a very, very small regular army in those days, and we couldn't maintain the battalion

16:00 without the injection of these other troops, K Force and the special British enlistees. And so with the young regulars we blended magnificently and there was no animosity. In fact the old hardened diggers took the young blokes under their wing, as indeed I was taken under the wing of my platoon sergeant. And I can remember when I'd be called up

16:30 to the company commander's hootchie [tent] for an orders group and been given my orders. I'd go back and before giving my orders to my section commander, I'd sit down behind a tree with my platoon sergeant and we'd go through them in detail and I'd check out with him just, you know, what in fact, how I'd, the task was we were given. And that would be passed down and give the details and so it was a very quick learning experience, very quick. Good post graduate training you could say,

17:00 on the job.

What sort of things would the sergeant tell you about, say, for instance to look out for with the Chinese and combat?

Oh well, oh gee whiz, well I don't know that there were any specific that I can bring to mind, you know, regarding the Chinese specifically. Because

17:30 we knew they were very hard fighters. They were able to live you know, just with a, on a handful of rice a day. They could undergo you know, physical privations that would cause us a bit of concern. They were excellent in camouflage. We of course had not air superiority, but air dominance, they had no real aircraft at all except one lone

18:00 aircraft used to come across, Bed Check Charlie we called him, and he'd come across at night occasionally and drop a few mortar bombs. But so they had to camouflage, and the camouflage was actually, well of course, being a peasant army they were able to use the ground. I suppose the things which were, the techniques which they would use and I learned quickly from speaking

18:30 with my platoon sergeant and those who'd been with the platoon, with the battalion for some time, was the ability of the Chinese to infiltrate, you had to be very careful that you had your flanks protected and covered. The fact that they would use human wave contacts, you know, in the attack they would, the first line of troops attacking would have grenades, they'd just throw grenades, and then if you had barb wire they'd then all on the barbed wire,

19:00 and the following troops would just walk over them, you know, running. They had no real concern of their human, of the losses you know, as we would. Although I must say they were honourable, I mean, insofar that if you were bringing, if you had a casualty and were bringing the casualty back, they would refrain from firing on you. You know, they're very different

19:30 to the Koreans who were also involved. I guess we struck more Chinese than Koreans fortunately. No, I think that it was a blend of my, you might say, theoretical and academic knowledge with the experience of my platoon sergeant, NCOs, which stood former good, and a good meld.

But you were told these things only a bit later on, after you'd acquired some experience.

20:00 **On your first operation were you actually told anything at all about what to look out for? Was it on the job sort of, for yourself?**

Oh no we, we were given pretty good briefings. No we had, prior to, I can recall when first arriving in the battalion, we were given briefings on the CCF, the Chinese Communist Forces and their techniques, but until you experience

20:30 it, it's all just so much theory you know. But oh no we had a fair amount of intelligence on the, their methods of operation. And I can recall now that we did you know, in our training when we were on this feature known as Kamak San, just south of the Imjin River, what was, became the Pintail Crossing where we had to eventually blow the bridges. We had, we were training there, not in contact, we had to go out to make contact and patrol some distance

21:00 forward of our battle area. And there was quite intensive training and so we were equipped as well as

we could. But until the first shot is fired, you know, again, you learn quickly though, you learn that you don't sort of patrol in a single file but you deploy.

21:30 **Your first action was basically a skirmish?**

It was, no, it was more than that, it was battalion, a raiding operation. The whole battalion moved forward of our position, north to go forward of the Imjin River. And the, there were two companies up, Don

22:00 Company or D Company to the left and B Company on the right and Charlie and Alpha Company behind. And I'm trying to recall how far we did move, went by trucks and then we, I suppose we must have been about twelve to fifteen kilometres north of the Imjin River. Where we first, and then they'll say, the two forward companies were then directed to send forward a Platoon each. And there was my platoon on the left, from D

22:30 Company, and Jimmy Hughes' platoon on the right from Bravo Company, B Company. And we both had features which we had to secure. Well we struck this MG, this Machine Gun post, I can't recall what Jimmy Hughes' platoon struck, which we managed to take out and as I recall two Chinese were killed and we captured two. And then we came under heavy

23:00 fire from just another feature, another Chinese feature a little bit further away . And both companies were then directed to withdraw to our firm base positions where the battalion was set up with the two forward companies and two in rear. And we did this withdrawal and the Chinese followed us up very closely, though with heavy mortar fire too, we lost a few on withdrawal back to our positions.

23:30 There were, and once we got to those positions we then handed over the POWs [prisoners of war] and we started to dig and put out our wire as if for defensive positions. We were there I think as I recall it was for a couple, maybe two days when we then were relieved by the Canadian brigade, 20th Canadian Brigade and we were then trucked back to our previous position. And I can recall you know, how amazed I was with the amount of development that occurred during

24:00 the time we were forward. And they had built, where there had been a ferry across the Pintail, they'd built valley bridges, developed roads just in two or three days that we had gone forward. And this was all in preparation as I say for a major offensive to occur just about six weeks later, which is part of the move to put more pressure on the Chinese at Panmunjom where they were having

24:30 the cease fire discussions with the United Nations. But no it was more than just a skirmish, it was a battalion operation, a battalion raiding operation if you will in which the whole battalion was involved. But I can just sort of speak on behalf of what my own platoon and company were doing.

This took place during dawn?

Oh no, no, it was, well we moved forward from our

25:00 defence positions south of the Imjin River, it would have been about first light. And then we secured our position, would have been by late afternoon from which we then patrolled forward next morning. And sorry, think the contact must have been about eight o'clock I think in the morning. And that lasted a few hours and then we started to withdraw operation, got back to our own positions round about, I think about two in the afternoon,

25:30 when, which we then held until we were relieved.

Were night operations a part of the routine?

Not, not on that as I recall on that occasion, at night we merely secured our position, our defensive position. See it wasn't, it was occupied in haste, it was only a temporary position, we knew we were not gonna be there, you know, permanently. And we were, it was a matter of

26:00 pushing the, our forward line to make, to get, close up on the Chinese position rather than having this long no man's land between our position south of the Imjin River and theirs north. And as I recall, we would have had listening posts and listening patrols out at night for security purposes. But we didn't carry out as I can recall any offensive operations at night.

26:30 And of course we had their support, during those days out there. And the, there was quite some successful air strikes on enemy positions. And of course we had our mortars and artillery support too and tanks. But no, it was more than just a skirmish but it was only a short term operation we were withdrawn then and we started to prepare for the major operation in October.

27:00 **The air support you were talking about, was that American air support?**

We had Australian initially, we had the 77 Squadron, they were flying Mustangs initially. And the Mustang was a very good aerial gun platform because it could slow down to bring heavy and accurate point five calibre machine gun fire, very close to your own positions or if you're assaulting troops. We also had the Flying Cheetahs, the South African

27:30 Air Force they also had a squadron supporting from time to time and the US. But then the 77 Squadron were converted from the Mustangs to Gloucester Meteors, the first jets to come in the Australian Air

Force. Now these were quite good in air to air combat with the MiGs [Russian jet aircraft] over MiG Alley but weren't nearly as effective as, and for giving ground support fire 'cause they just couldn't slow down

28:00 to be sufficiently accurate as the Mustangs were.

Can you tell us about MiG Alley, I haven't heard that term?

Well have you interviewed some air force fellows?

Not yet, actually.

Well MiG Alley was the area I think in the rough vicinity you might say of the boundary between Manchuria and North Korea, the Yalu,

28:30 where the Chinese Air Force, you know, very keen to keep that area free of enemy interference. So that's where in fact the major air to air combats were, sorties [operational flights] were carried out. So we lost sight of the Sim-Sim Squadron after they converted from Mustangs to Meteors [types of aircraft].

So you said initially there was Australian,

29:00 **did you have problems with the Americans there when it came to close air support?**

Well we tried to overcome those problems by the use of a spotter aircraft they'd have. The Brits used Gloucesters but the Yanks had some other similar type of aircraft, can't remember the actual name but it was a high wing mono plane, bit like a Piper type of thing you know. Which would be, they would identify the target and drop a

29:30 market on the target. And it worked well usually, there was one sad occasion which was before I arrived there at the Battle of Kapyong where some American Corsair fighters, well the spotter plane dropped the marker on one of our company positions unfortunately and the Corsairs came in and put down napalm and with resultant Australian casualties. We had an observation

30:00 flight, Commonwealth Division had a British, had an observation flight which had some Australian artillery officers with it, they flew Austins, single engine high winged mono planes. And they also carried observations and they could also spot air, spot enemy targets for our own offensive air. And subsequently we had some Australian officers attached to the US Air Force to act as observers

30:30 in these spotter aircraft too, to make sure that the, as far as possible that the strikes went in at the right place.

Did that cause considerable tension between the American Air Force and Australian forces?

Not, that I can recall, no. Oh no, no, during subsequent operations our air support was first class, and I don't think that one could say, well I don't recall there being any tension as such,

31:00 no.

When you first arrived in Korea and up until the time of Operation Commando, what was the climate and weather like?

Well that was summer time of course, very hot, very dusty, lots of flies, you get the occasional electrical storms. I can recall that in August I think it was, we were

31:30 still back on the Kamak San feature south of the Pintail Crossing, south of the Imjin River, a rather dramatic electrical storm and I think one may even have been, two of ourselves were killed by lightning strikes. Because of the iron content in the rock formations. Yeah, rather humid when you were getting rain coming in but otherwise it was extremely hot and dry.

32:00 Of course that changed, winter came in later in the year yeah. I remember, yes, on one occasion early there we had a swimming, yeah, we, because the Chinese were so far forward of us, we were able to organise a swimming carnival in the Imjin River, which was a bit of fun. But subsequently when the Imjin started to flood it was not

32:30 funny because we did a river crossing exercise was a bit disastrous. One of our companies lost a couple of fellows from the, they had ropes across the Imjin and as they were going across, paddling across, they were swept down and they grabbed hold of a rope that turned the craft over and a couple of blokes I think were , as I recall were drowned. But

33:00 no the weather you know, was fairly I suppose typical in so far that we had a hot, dry, windy often-times summer and a very cold and windy winter. Yeah.

Can you tell us what the landscape was like, Korea, the terrain?

Oh well very mountainous. The mountains aren't all that high but they're very steep, paddy fields in between.

33:30 The areas in which we were operating which is on the western sector, the west coast only being a few kilometres to, we had I think a rock division there on our left between us and the coast. But there were some largish valleys, river valleys and as I say the corridor running down through our position was the traditional corridor to Seoul.

34:00 The mountains were very rocky, they used to be very heavily timbered but during the occupation by the Japanese following the Russo Japanese war I think it was 1905 until they were ejected in 1945, those forty years the Japanese removed a lot of timber from the country. It used to be I think recognised in the, before that as a painter's

34:30 paradise, a landscape painter's paradise. With the fir trees, alpine type of trees and the, you know, dramatic mountainous features. But it was mainly low scrub that we encountered in the areas we were operating, no major forest at all.

Now I

35:00 **suggested something about Operation Commando before, could you tell us about your involvement in that operation?**

Yeah. Well now after my initial entry into the battalion where I was a platoon commander in D Company the battalion did a bit of, or the CO did a bit of restructuring. And I was posted from 11 Platoon D Company to the signals platoon.

35:30 And my platoon was taken over by a fellow called LG Clarke who was a couple of classes ahead of me at Duntroon and I knew quite well. Now so I went to the signals platoon around about I think two weeks before Operation Commando commenced which was the second of October so it must have been, must be middle September I think, that I was posted to the signals platoon. And my principal task with the signals platoon

36:00 was to ensure that line communications was established and maintained between the CO and his tactical headquarters and the companies. The form of line communication was known as "assault cable" which was a cable, twin cable which was put into a sort of a canvass doughnut type pack which you carry on your back. And you have field

36:30 telephones which link up with the cable, goes back to the headquarters and forward to the companies. And the task was to maintain that continuously. So what we did during the, advanced a contact by lineys, that was a term used for linesmen, the lineys moving with the company quarters rolling out the cable as they went, which could be plugged in any time by the company commander using the

37:00 field telephone, back to where the company, where the battalion tactical headquarters was. And once they become established in their defensive positions, to maintain that line and when they were moving forward then to go forward again with them. Now that terrain was very difficult to lay line, often when you have telephone cable like that, very fine cable, you try as fast as possible to dig it in, so as to protect it, but it was very difficult to dig it in, in that sort of terrain. And if not then to string it between

37:30 trees, again, having no tall trees, it was difficult to do that too. And so they were, it was subject to breakage and as soon as a break occurred you had to, liney had to go out to, in a party, find the break and repair the break to maintain communications. Where we had tanks in support as we did with, particularly with our A Company in commando which was the company involved in attacking the major feature 3-1-7 from the south

38:00 east up a valley, the tank tracks and this assault cable don't mix too well either, so that was another 'cause of a problem. So the prob, the task was to continue to maintain line communications to the Companies. Now the reason why this was important was you had radio, and the radio was subject to interference, climatic interference and also the ground having

38:30 you know, electro magnetic interference. You could, it was difficult to have walls of just one to one conversation and also they could be intercepted by the enemy too. But with line communications the CO was able to talk to company commanders, not just one, but all of them directly on the line, on a party line and discuss in a much more relaxed way as we're talking now, rather than the formal radio

39:00 procedure. The problems and how to overcome them, matters of supply, matters of casualty evacuation, matters of reinforcements, air support, artillery support, type details. It was much more practical if you could speak on the line rather than by radio. And so right throughout the operation from the second to the eighth of October our task was to keep those lines open, and so this meant that I had line parties going out at all

39:30 times, day and night, and under all conditions. Often times when the enemy were mortaring or shelling and sniping occasionally, to repair breaks and keep the lines open. That was my principal task during Operation Commando.

I understand that the Chinese artillery mortar fire was quite a problem?

It was very accurate. They had been there longer than we had,

40:00 you see. Operation Commando was a major divisional operation really and our battalion really did the

bulk of it, our Brigades achieved the bulk of our Brigade's objectives. It was, the aim was to break into and occupy this major Chinese winter defensive line which overlooked the area to the south. It was part of what you, I suppose these days you'd call

40:30 a land grab. We were trying to put pressure on the DMZ direct, it's now called the DMZ, Demilitarised Zone. The front line ran roughly along the 38th Parallel but then as it got to where the western sector dipped down. So our aim was to try and swing it up and get it more sort of level to bring more pressure to bear on the Chinese negotiators at the Panmunjom

41:00 cease fire talks and it was pretty successful. In, during that six day battle we were able to not only assist the King's Own Scottish Borderers to secure Kowang San which was 355 Little Gibraltar also then the further position beyond which was 317 and that was done you know, by, it was achieved by the battalion. And it was, you know,

41:30 the, it's the first time since World War II and I think there hasn't been since where there's been a battalion operation, you know, which was complete in all phases of war. The advance, the attack, defence and then handing over to another battalion withdrawal, and it was first class operation.

Tape 3

00:31 **Can you tell us what it's like to be in a leadership position in the army and the responsibility you have to have over your troops [in Korea]?**

Yeahh well, as I say my positions in the battalion during my twelve months in Korea was I had two stints as platoon commander of a rifle platoon and then a short period as the senior commander of the signals platoon

01:00 responsible for all the line communications in the battalion. And then as was the practice my last, I suppose, three to four weeks in-country was they usually put the young fellas back to do a bit of grazing, so I was transport officer for the last month before I finished my twelve months and then went back to Japan to train reinforcements. Well the responsibilities remain fairly constant as far as

01:30 your responsibilities to your troops are concerned. They are your first and foremost responsibility, their safety, security, regardless of whether it is a platoon commander in a rifle company, a signals platoon or even a transport platoon. There, it exhibit's itself in different ways of course, but you have to weigh up risk against, you know, safety and risk against the task

02:00 to be done. In the case of, the time I would say for example the 2IC [Second In Command] of the signals platoon my task was quite straight forward. I had to maintain communications by telephone line for the commanding officer to speak to his company commanders at anytime day or night, which meant that if a line was broken for any reason by enemy accident, by accident or whatever, I had to get line parties out to repair that break in

02:30 the line to re-establish communications. And that meant that regardless of whether the area was under shell fire or mortar fire or even sniper fire, they had to get on and get that line repaired. In the case of a platoon commander you're given a task but you had to be a patrol for example, your responsibility is to first of all be quite clear as to what the objective is. Be

03:00 clear in, specifically as to the routes one has to take to go out on that patrol and back because that will determine where your company commander can bring down supporting fire, should you be in trouble, mortar fire or turree (Sp?) fire, so that you stick with the route. You have to be, the detailed information with regard to the enemy location and be it a fighting patrol or an ambush patrol or

03:30 a reconnaissance patrol, you, your responsibility to brief your troops and your NCOs and troops in detail so they know precisely what is their job. This becomes even more important when casualties occur and the mission's being carried out. And this became very evident during operation commando during the various phases of the operation that went over six days. That if a commander became a casualty and couldn't continue, be it a section

04:00 commander, platoon commander or company commander, someone subordinate in that organisation and immediately took over the job. And that's, and maintained the momentum, maintained the task and this was because of the thorough briefing that each individual had. And the fact that people trained to take over responsibility at least one step up. And there's the old adage that you think two steps down, in other words a company commander giving the orders to me to give to

04:30 the diggers has to appreciate what he's telling me to do, how it's going to affect to the troop that's two levels down. But also you train people to think one level up so they can take over should they, in the case of, well it happened when we were for example in D Company in the assault on the second, third, fourth, the fifth of October. In D Company both the company commander, Basil Hardwin and one of the platoon commanders, Jeff Leery, were both

05:00 wounded and had to be evacuated. So the senior platoon commander, Jim Young, took over as the

company commander and his sergeant took over his platoon and Jeff Leary's sergeant took over his platoon. And so it was axiomatic that you meet, and so, you know, that was the, brings out the importance of detailed orders, detailed information being given to people.

05:30 And if Australian troops, if they know what the job is and know what they're required to do, then you've got no worries, you're going to get it done.

Would this just happen automatically that someone would step up?

Yep. It happened, it did, yes. As soon as a person became a casualty and had to, and could no longer effectively command, then there's no point in them attempting to continue, they have to be evacuated. And the next person in

06:00 authority takes over command, that's, that was automatic and happened on numerous occasions.

Can you describe when you first took command as a platoon commander, the relationship between yourself and your troops?

Well of course I think they all sort of size up the new boss, not that I think they try to put anything over you. But you have to, I had to immediately gain the confidence

06:30 of my sergeant, my platoon sergeant and my section commanders, and through them the troops. And that didn't take long, you establish very close bonds. I can recall when I was with Charlie Company and we were in a defensive position on the front line and it was pretty busy. We were, we'd be on patrol at least three nights out of seven, three nights out of six usually, or every alternate night but, we'd be out on patrol. So

07:00 you, by day you rested, you prepared your weapons, you got briefings for that night's operations and then you went off and on them. When you weren't going out on patrol the whole Platoon usually wouldn't go unless it was a raiding operation, there'd be a section or whatever. But you'd man your positions at stand to and stand down, that happens just before, half an hour just before last light, it's

07:30 going into half an hour after last light and the same in the morning before first light, and after first light, because they're the traditional, they're the times when the enemy are most likely to attack. We liked to attack at first light so then you've got the day to secure those positions before the enemy would counter attack you. However, at night, I can remember in these positions we were holding, we had to

08:00 guard against malaria, it was a very malarious area so we had in those days, Atebrin before Plasarin (Sp?) came in. And each platoon had a certain book, and the platoon sergeant would go round the platoon giving the Atebrin. And my old man, my dad, being a First War and Second War digger knew that home comforts were hard to come by. So every couple of weeks a couple of loaves of sandwich bread would arrive for me, you know the old square sandwich loaf.

08:30 Which he would pull out most of the insides, inside of which he'd put a bottle of B&D Rum or Bundaberg Rum and a bottle of Johnny Walker, and they'd be square bottles so they'd fit well. And then tape them up and seal them securely and they'd arrive pretty regularly. And so as we went around the platoon, at stand to, giving the digs their Atebrin tablets, and the platoon sergeant check 'em off, I'd say, "What do you want to swig it down with, a swig of rum or a swig of Scotch?" To knock down the Atebrin. And I said, "Now don't forget there are thirty

09:00 blokes after you", which meant that, you know, they didn't take more than one gulp. So that when we got back to my hootchie the platoon sergeant and I were able to have a swig with our Atebrin. But yes we had this sort of bond and it's mutual respect really I suppose, that's what it boils down to. And knowing that each man, regardless of his level, knows his job, be he a Bren gunner, a forward scout, the platoon signaller.

09:30 They all know their task and they know how the, each one, how everybody's depend upon each one doing their job. And they gotta be cross trained so that someone can take over should they, another fella become a casualty.

How did the other soldiers perceive someone coming from Duntroon?

Well yeah. Yeah. I suppose you know, well, it was quite a wrong perception being, because,

10:00 silver tail, because we came from all sorts of strata of society to Duntroon. You know, I came from a lower middle class if you will, group, some came from the hoi polloi and you know. Anyway, yeah well I suppose well this young bloke might think you know the job but we'll show him that we know it too. And I can remember a comment made by one of my NCOs I think.

10:30 Oh he was trying to do it by the book and then, you know, and we soon showed him that it wasn't quite that way. But nevertheless the book gives you the fundamentals, you know, gives you, you might say, the parameters and it's the skeleton on which you then start to put some flesh from experience, and that was it. Oh no, we had a mixed bag of officers, when I say mixed bag, there were a number of Duntroon grad, well our CO Frank Hassett of course was a Duntroon graduate and his successors also were Duntroon graduates.

11:00 But of the company commanders, I'm just trying to recall now, A Company Jimmy Shelton, Duntroon

graduate, B Company Wings Dickles, no, he was a World War II officer. Charlie Company Jack Good, no, World War II officer. Don Company Basil Hardwin, Duntroon. Support Company yeah I think, yeah, no he wasn't Duntroon. So and the same went through all ranks, through the company 2ICs and the platoon commanders they were, and a number of RMC graduates but also quite a number of

11:30 ex World War II. So 3RAR was a happy band of warriors of mixed origins.

What are the keys to good leadership in that situation?

Well the first one you must know your job, incompetence or lack of knowledge is fatal. And knowing your men, knowing their

12:00 capabilities, knowing how to get the best out of them. I think there are three precepts I used to follow; keep them well informed keep them well briefed, keep them well fed and keep them busy. And if a soldier's busy then he doesn't have time to stop and think about how grim things are or you know. So you know, I tried to follow the KIS principle, keep it simple. But

12:30 leadership, there's a lot been written about it, a lot spoken about it, but a lot of it is you know, a lot of I think high falutin theory, if you treat each other with respect. And again the three Fs, you may have heard of this one, fair, firm and friendly. And as long as you're consistent you know, too, I think is awfully important. And you think your diggers respect that and they realise that everyone's got a hard job to do and yours is

13:00 no easier than anybody else's. But if they have the confidence in you then you get a response and respect from them too, you know.

In your first confrontation with the enemy and there were troops dying around you and so on, how does that hit you and how does it affect you the first time?

Well there were no troops dying around me,

Oh sorry.

In the way you put it. We were lucky, I think we had

13:30 two wounded in that first engagement that I had back in August or was it early September. And I say we killed two enemy and took two POWs. Well the adrenaline's flowing so fast and the beauty of being a platoon commander I think, in one respect is, you're so damn busy, you don't have time to think about yourself. And

14:00 so not that you take unreasonable risks or anything with your own safety, but you know, your job is so all encompassing. And you're trying to think two steps ahead the whole time and keeping your platoon section commanders informed and getting information back from them. And where necessary changing the position and what routes you have to follow or occupy positions and so forth, doing the job and

14:30 to secure your own troops' positions. And you find that time just flashes by and you just don't have time to think about yourself. So yeah, you accept it, you know, there may well be casualties but you don't really think about your own, no, no, it just doesn't cross your mind.

Do you have time to reflect on it later on?

15:00 Oh yeah, sure. As I say after every operation there's a debrief and because there are always lessons to be learned, things that could have been done better. And that gives you time to go over you know, that's happens as soon as possible after the operation so things are still fresh in your mind. And of course also you can only, what you see is not the whole picture, so you have to then get information more information from others such as your section

15:30 commanders, I'm talking now at platoon level, and your platoon sergeant. And so you distil those and sure, from that you do hopefully learn how, if a similar task is given us, will necessarily be given to you in the future, how you can do it better. On patrol for example if you're in an ambush patrol, running an ambush patrol in a sort of frozen paddy field.

16:00 You very quickly learn that you have to maintain complete and utter silence, you have to be able to react immediately to any enemy coming in your line of fire. And so you learn that you can't afford to take on patrol, for example, anyone who's got say a cough, you, you know, they have to be put back, they'll be back in their Platoon position helping to secure that whilst you're out on patrol. You learn

16:30 that once you put your ambush in position, there can be no movement, any movement is enemy, so, you know, would be fired upon. I remember one particular fellow, he wasn't, he was a young officer who was a, he, in fact he joined the battalion after I left and gone back to Japan. And he was keen to check to make sure his Sections were in the right positions for this ambush, and he was stalking around and he collected a round in his backside, which, for his

17:00 troubles you know. It was these fundamentals. No, you, I'll say after each operation, regardless of the level is where your platoon or company or battalion, there's a debrief at every level and from that you learn, there are a lot of lessons learned, which you then put into practice. And of course there are what we call SOPs, standing operation procedures which your battalion has and it comes down through to

company. And there's so that things

17:30 which are of a routine nature and tasks of a routine nature, be it in combat or not in contact, you don't have to give orders, people know precisely what they've got to do anyhow, so you get on with the job with a minimum of delay.

Can you describe for us more about these patrols, you went in the ambush patrols and how long you were out there waiting and so on?

Yeah okay, well first of all the, there were standing patrols first of all. Now they're

18:00 patrols which go out forward of your own wire and mine fields into positions which observe possible enemy lines of approach. And their task is to give warning of any enemy approaching your defensive position. Now they can be as small as two or three men or they could be up towards a Section. And then you have a reconnaissance patrol which is usually of a small number, it's a platoon commander's job

18:30 sometimes, depending upon the task, it can, may be an NCOs job, usually a lieutenant's job, (UNCLEAR) job, which he has a small protection party of maybe three or four others only in communications. And of course the job there is to see and not be seen so the fewer of you there are, there's less chances of the enemy observing you. And that is to go forward to make a reconnaissance position of an enemy position to try and find out intelligence which is not known at that time. Maybe just, may be simple things like his

19:00 wire defences, where he's got his wire, where possibly if we make a breach of the wire if we want to attack that position, mine fields. Or indeed it might be more detail, it may have to go, in some cases where there's a gap in enemy positions to patrol round the rear positions to get more information of the enemy. Now they're reconnaissance patrols and that could, each, first of all patrolling usually is done by night, although sometimes patrols have to lay up by day in their positions because they've got to be out there the distance is so far they can't do it all during the hours of darkness.

19:30 And of course in Korea you have a short night during the summer time and a longish night in the winter. It depended upon the range of the patrol, the distance it has to cover. It is usually goes out just after last light and comes in just before first light, but it may in some cases have to lay up in concealed areas which is concealed positions over during daylight hours and continue during the following night. So there's the standing patrol, there's the reconnaissance patrol and there's

20:00 a fighting patrol. Now that can be of a level from a platoon to a company. When it gets to a company size it usually is referred to as a raid, a company raid. That's where it's to go into an enemy position, attack it, secure it for a short period, usually to try and get a prisoner. It became fairly popular toward the end of '52, '53 but

20:30 because of the number of casualties that was caught, it was considered by the powers that be, and rightly so that it was not really a very fruitful exercise, so those company raids ceased to be practised. But all is short, platoon level fighting patrols, not infrequent, and that also, that's to a position known where you have fairly good intelligence but to secure a prisoner. That is, that could be also out of

21:00 after last light and back during the hours of darkness, before first light. And then there's the ambush patrol where you go out to a manned position which is on a known enemy route. And after you've been occupying a defence position for some period of time you get to know the enemy habits, by observation by day and by night, aerial observation also. And this, the aim there is to ambush enemy, again, kill and capture, but also to dominate the no man's

21:30 land. This term was used fairly frequently, the no man's land of course being the ground between your own forward edge or FDLs, forward defensive line and the enemy's. And if you can dominate that by your presence , both physical and by your artillery and mortar fire, it, you take the initiative away from the enemy, and that of course is an aim too. And in some cases in

22:00 the UN. Forces their areas were so, the area of no man's land was so dominated by the enemy that they retained, they didn't have anyone really forward of their actual wire, defensive wire. Which of course is abdicating the area to the enemy which allows the enemy then to get up close, form up quite close to your objective, to your positions and then attack, in strength. In the Australian

22:30 positions we never allowed that to happen. We always used to patrol actively and aggressively as well as bring down quite substantial harassing fire on their own positions and defensive fire in forward of our own positions to dominate, making sure of course they weren't where our patrols were. To dominate the no man's land and so retain the initiative.

How do patrols affect you mentally and physically?

23:00 Well each one is different, there's no one, no two are the same. Mentally, well, well you know that you're going to be going, you know that it's going to be coming up every other night or every third night, or whatever, so you mentally attune to it. You, your clock, you put your

23:30 physical clock in reverse and night becomes your working time and day becomes your rest time. That takes a bit of adjustment of course but it's quite amazing how quickly people do adjust to that. Because

as I say you, if you're on patrol for that night, well then during the day you can try and give the, although the troops still have work to do, they've still got to improve their defensive positions, excuse me, maintain their weapons, do a rehearsal. After you've gone, got your orders and you're given your orders,

24:00 do a rehearsal or formations or whatever are going to be your attacking positions. Check that you might have a mud model of the position and brief people on that and then you do, sometimes formation practice in rear of your own defensive position. So although I say by day you rest, there's not a great amount of time for it. And then you go out on the patrol and complete it, come back through your own lines, giving the pass word to make sure that you're not shot at. And

24:30 come through the area, the route you've been designated so you don't walking around mine fields. And the troops then rest, you go and you report to your OC, your company commander, give him an immediate de-brief. And then you go back and have a short kip and then you go back a bit later on to be briefed in more detailed by the, if necessary the commanding officer or at least the battalion intelligence officer. And as we used to then develop in the battalion, a

25:00 patrol master. The patrol master being usually the company commander or the support company. Because the support company is the company, which consists of the mortar platoon, the anti tank platoon, the signal platoon, the assault pioneer platoon. So those platoons of specialists are deployed throughout the battalion defence position doing their job. So the company commander himself has no sort of direct command responsibilities, so he was often an experienced senior major who was, then got the initial task of being the co-ordinator of patrols.

25:30 So you'd brief the patrol master and the IO [intelligence officer] on the details and if it was intelligence they mark up the map with the additional information you required during the patrol. And then you go back and of course you won't be going out that next night, that night, you then just have the task of you know, making sure your defences are right and you've had the Stand To and issued your Atebrin tablets. And then you have your pickets to check on, depending upon the degree of

26:00 likelihood of any enemy offensive action so you're standard of, stand to. You might have, if it's imminent if you're fifty percent stand to, that is one bloke in every two actually awake, rostered, you know, in his weapon pit. Or maybe could be one in four or maybe even lower, depending upon the Intelligence you had on the enemy. Physically, well, it's quite a demanding task, patrolling .

26:30 Psychologically you're really on the QV [on the alert], the whole time as you can appreciate, the time you leave your own defensive wire you're trying to get back. Every nerve is a, you know, the antenna is really working. Physically it can be very wearing because the conditions and the terrain was very difficult to traverse. And even on an ambush patrol, sitting in a frozen paddy field is no great fun, and many blokes

27:00 you know, have had piles from the, sitting in ice. If you're in the ambush position and you grab hold of your weapon, the metal part of the weapon, you find your hand sticks to it because it's frozen. So the only immediate action, the immediate action there is to piddle on it. Because your urine is body temperature is warm enough to dislodge your fingers which is stuck to the metal of the weapon. Physically also during

27:30 winter time, particularly when it's damn cold and you're wearing your gear. What we called it, was a British gear which we didn't have in the first winter of '50, '51, they had just the World War II service dress. But the second winter '51, '52 and subsequently, we had what was known as the British CWW, cold wet weather gear. This was excellent gear, it was better than Americans in fact, from the boots to the top. Your boots, well I'll get to that in a minute but

28:00 were so well insulated that once you started to patrol you have to unzip your jacket to let some cold freezing air in, otherwise you'd overheat. And then you'd get to your position and you'd zip it up so you didn't freeze. And it was a, you know, it was, it could be quite wearing. But our troops were very fit and they were very fit, well fed. Our combat rations though, the American combat rations

28:30 tend to be rather high in carbohydrates and so although we were very active we tended to put on weight. So anyway but no I think that, most of our troops were able to handle the patrolling tasks without any obvious adverse effects, physically or psychologically. I can't recall in my time, my twelve months, anyone sort of

29:00 being psychologically affected to the extent they had to be evacuated. We had of course a system of R&R, after four months in theatre you had five days rest and recuperation or relaxation back in Japan and after eight months you had ten days. And we would truck it back to Iwakuni, I'm sorry, to Kimpo, the air force base at Seoul where

29:30 the RAAF DC3 transporters would take us, fly us to Japan to Tokyo airport. And the five days you only had time to stay in the R & R [rest and recreation] hotel in Tokyo and you know, so you did things you wouldn't be able to do in Korea there. And you know, that was on the Ginza, so you have a nice hot bath in the bath house and plenty of Kirin beer and plenty of cigarettes of course and

30:00 telling war-ies. The Maranuchi Hotel as I recall, that was the officers' hotel for British Commonwealth Force officers, number one hotel was Maranuchi, and it was a good pub. And so you were with your,

everything was so dirt cheap it didn't cost you much. That was after four months and so you'd get back to the battalion and having a chance to, time to sober up on the flight back and the truck back up to the Battalion. And

30:30 after eight months then we had ten days R & R and gave you time to see a bit of Japan. And again the air force would fly us back to Tokyo and then a lot of us used to go then down to a place called Ito, I-T-O, which was south of Tokyo on the inland sea. And it was a holiday resort built by a Japanese industrial magnate in the thirties in the form of a medieval castle. Which had, don't know how

31:00 many rooms but used to accommodate lots of people, and had two eighteen hole golf courses. These golf courses were kept maintained by an army of Japanese women with scissors, cutting the fairway. And you also had Japanese caddies and so when you hook the ball into the scrub, the bamboo, suddenly there's, funny enough, it appeared on the fairway when you got down to it. Course if you sliced it into the inland sea well you had to find another ball.

31:30 These two golf courses plus the, they also had a traditional house where we had a traditional Japanese food and the Japanese women playing the Samisen thing, I forget what it's called, the type of guitar. And we had massage, masseurs laid on and good food. This was occupied by or acquired by General

32:00 Red Robbie, General Robertson when he was GOC [General Officer Commanding] of BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupational Forces] back in 1945 before McCarthy got his hands on it. So it was the one place that all ranks used to enjoy going to for the ten days R & R. So you know, with those two breaks and when we came out of the line, although usually we didn't get far enough back to be completely non-operational, there was always one company on stand by to run up if the break through was imminent in the front line. We're able to relax a bit

32:30 and you'd be out of the line for, maybe for a month in every three. About three weeks in every eight you'd be out of the line and so you could have a bit of a rest and sleep under canvass.

When you went on R & R was it with your platoon?

Oh no, oh no, no it was rotation, it depended when a person came into the country, when they went out. No, it wasn't with your platoon. There may have been at any one time, there would have been

33:00 something like say, four or five blokes from each platoon on R & R. But and then of course you were getting in reinforcements coming in continuously on what was called a trickle flow reinforcement system. So no, you never had a, but when you were in reserve, as I say, "reserve", quote unquote, you had the chance then to mix with the digs [diggers] in the platoon and have a relaxing time. And the messes were tented messes you know, and

33:30 twelve or fourteen tents linked together and you were living in hootchies. But at least you had, you had straw palliasses, floorboards, so you're off the ground and you're able to live reasonably comfortably, yeah.

How important was it to get away on R & R after what you go through?

Oh well it was important but it was also mandatory. I mean to say it was part of the adjutant, or the assistant adjutant's job in quarters to make sure that the R & R roster was

34:00 being maintained. Oh no it was important, it was realised that people needed that break in order to maintain the efficiency and so you know, it was accepted as part and parcel of the twelve months tour. But I say, had you, or if you were wounded and had to be evacuated for any length of time, then for the period of time you were evacuated from theatre, once you were fit, back to the battalion, you had to make up that

34:30 time. So that if you had a wound which made you not incapacitated so you couldn't continue to serve but able to be repaired and you're out, say back at the BCOF hospital back in Kure in Japan for maybe six weeks, from operation to convalescence and back and then fit for duty, then you went back and your returned to Australia date was put back by six weeks.

Where was the first place you went to R & R?

Well

35:00 first, on my five days was, I didn't get out of Tokyo, the Hotel Maranuchi in, on the Ginzer.

And what did you think of Tokyo when you arrived there?

Oh, out of this world, I was gob smacked really. But I can, yeah, well I, you know, it's all a bit of a haze actually what I recall of Tokyo, but the second lot was ten days R & R at the R & R centre down in Ito was quite

35:30 remarkable it was so relaxing. Very different, very different, but I didn't have a chance to see anything until I went back on re-posting after I finished my twelve months and went back to 1RHU which is the Reinforcement Holding Unit based in Hiro, just out of Kure in southern Honshu. Where we trained, we received reinforcements from Australia, officers, NCOs and diggers and trained them there and at Haramura which was the battle training school up in the mountains.

36:00 And I was posted back there as a company commander and then I had a chance to see a bit more of Japan.

What were the pubs and clubs like in Japan when you got there, accommodating?

Oh well I didn't see any, well the, well I say, in Tokyo the only pub that I can recall was the Maranuchi. Well put it this way, there was no fraternisation. And but when I went, when I got back to Kure,

36:30 to Hiro after my twelve months, which was August '52 and I was there until April 53. I can remember, course we had, that was where the British Occupation Force was, the Australians particularly from 1945 onwards. So there was a fairly heavy Australian sort of environment there and or British Commonwealth environment. And we had a very good club, a very good club there in Kure, a very good hospital.

37:00 We had a very good repatriation centre on the little island, islet really in, just off Kure. I had to spend about ten days there when I came back, I got a bad attack of appendicitis and rushed into the Kure hospital, had the appendix removed and then I was at this little island rest centre where one Major Alexander Weaver was the officer commanding, and he was quite a character as

37:30 you may know. And but it was, that was a typical Japanese place, very clean and of course people are very courteous and very subservient really, looked after us well. But I can recall one occasion we were fit enough just about ready to be discharged and another bloke and I, he was a tall, long gangling fellow in the armoured corps n Australia. And we managed to get a day's leave to go to Hiroshima so we got the ferry across to Kure and then got a jeep and drove down to

38:00 Hiroshima. And that was quite amazing to see that place you know, and where the ground zero of the atomic bomb. And we went to a, called in to an American officers' club there for a meal and they had some poker machines, the old one armed bandit. And we thought, "Oh well, we might try some of these". And this fellow had a technique whereby because he was about six foot six, he'd lean against the pillar and put his foot against the poker machine, I'd put the coins in and pull and we broke about three jackpots so they threw us out

38:30 the club.

When you arrived at Hiroshima, how did that impact on you and what did you see there?

Well as I say the place is starting to be rebuilt of course, because this was 1952. But, you know, the scars of the atomic bomb were still very evident. And I suppose just the sight of that Park of Peace, I think it was some name like that they called where the ground

39:00 zero occurred, and that dome with just some of the reinforcement left standing. It was quite a, you know, an impressive sight. And then when one saw the actual you know, photos and films of the actual place after the explosion, yeah well, just, you know, brought home the fact that just you can't afford atomic wars. Yeah.

Did you feel safe in terms of

39:30 **radiation and so on?**

Oh yes, well we were only there a few hours, we, you know by the time we were thrown out of the officers' club we, they'd got the jeep and came, drove back. So no, we had no concerns about that.

Did you deal with any locals there in that short time you were there and talk to them?

Not really no, we were just, you know, we were sight seeing you know and, so no. Oh no, the impression I just got from Hiroshima was one of utter devastation and the fact that it was a

40:00 sort of, that weapon was something that should never be used, you know, it was so indiscriminate in its destructive power. You don't feel too badly about, if someone's shooting you, shooting back at them but when it's such an overwhelming destructive power that weapon has, it's something else, it's not on.

Do you think it should have been used to end World War II?

Well one could argue that had it not been used, what would be the alternative you know. To attack Japan in a conventional way, having served there and having trained there,

40:30 it's such a place that could be defended. You know, those steep hills and the Japanese wouldn't have, they couldn't have, you know, the loss of life to them wouldn't have been anything they were concerned about. They would have been devastating for us. No doubt we would've finally won the war but it'd gone on for a long, long time further and with much more loss of life. One of those things.

Tape 4

00:31 **With regard to the static phase, after the battle of say Maryang San, what sort of operations were you generally involved in, what was your daily sort of role, duties encompass for the latter stages?**

Well we, the battalion handed over 317 to the King's Own Scottish Borderers on the, I think it was the 8th of October or 9th of October, because the frontage we were holding at that time was far too wide from there down to the

01:00 eastern ridge line to the Imjin River, for one battalion. The King's Own Scottish Borderers came forward from 355 which we assisted them to secure earlier in the operation, took over 317 and we moved to the right, you know, closed our frontage somewhat. We then had battalion defensive position on the right flank of the Commonwealth Division with the Imjin River on our right, with two companies forward and two companies in the rear and battalion headquarters.

01:30 Regrettably, just a month after, or thereabouts, after we handed over 317 to the King's Own Scottish Borderers this would have been November, about early November 5th or 6th of November. The Chinese, who were rather frustrated by their losing 317 which was a dominant observation position over, covering the whole area to the south, managed to push the King's Own Scottish Borderers off 317. Incidentally in the

02:00 loss of 317 the King's Own Scottish Borderers, one Private Speaton won the Victoria Cross, however that's beside the point. As a result of our, of their losing 3-7 that forced our battalion to come back one ridge line so we would not have the 317 dominating us down the flank, on our flanks. I can recall when we withdrew to go into reserve in, before Christmas, it must have been let me see,

02:30 must have been about mid-November, no, late November. We had four company outpost positions on the ridge line which we'd had to vacate running from 317, and each company provided a section to man those outposts for security. And the CO, Colonel Hassett, decided rather than have that, to make the withdrawal and hand over to the Filipino battalion more

03:00 sort of clean, that only one company would provide the outposts and muggins was selected, this platoon. I was commanding 8 Platoon Charlie Company then to be the platoon to man these four outposts and to hand over to the newly incoming battalion which was a Filipino battalion for us to withdraw. And so we went out and occupied these four positions and there was a bit of enemy mortaring and rocket fire but we

03:30 handed them over to the platoons of Filipinos and as we then withdrew to our company position. And I can remember we were coming through our lines to pick up our gear to then go into trucks, at the rear of the position to go back into reserve. Because our position was occupy, was dominated observation wise by the Japan , the Chinese on 317 we had very strict discipline whereby we

04:00 did not go on the forward slopes by day at all. We would stay on the reverse slopes, we had communication trenches which we could crawl along and not be observed. But no one sat on the forward slope, of course just attract enemy mortar fire by day. When I arrived back with my platoon to position, to the platoon position, the Filipino platoon commander I saw him sitting on top of the dug out strumming his guitar. He obviously thought it was a bit of a picnic, I don't think he stayed very long.

04:30 Anyhow we occupied, we went down, got into the trucks, and I remember it was three, ah, GMC 6X6 General Motors trucks, open trucks, no canopies. And we just fell asleep on the tail boards when we were taking 'em back to this little village which is a staging post before occupying our new Reserve positions and we were so dog tired we fell asleep and woke up snow covered. And this village

05:00 which had been abandoned by the Koreans, South Koreans, our echelon area, our company 2IC and his troops had prepared it for us, and it was one of the most comfortable nights I remember having in Korea. Because we were sleeping in these Korean huts, house if you will, mud walls, thatched roof, floor about four feet off the ground. Underneath the mud floor they had the heating was fires, and these fires were going and heated the

05:30 whole place through. And in our sleeping bags or fart sacks as we prefer them, we had a most enjoyable restful night's sleep, quite secure, and then next day we, on the trucks and back to our new Reserve position. But when in the line, we then had that reserve position, we had, I remember it was, it was winter, we had a parade there, a pre-Christmas parade. But we were back in the line by Christmas

06:00 and occupying features to the, on the north western slopes of Little Gibraltar, 355 Kowang-San. On, we were on the right flank, Charlie Company of the right flank and I had the right forward platoon on the right flank company of the right forward battalion and the right forward brigade of the Commonwealth Division. So the nearest dug out to mine, the nearest hootchie to mine was occupied by three big negroes of the 3rd US

06:30 Cotton Bale Division who were occupying 317 itself and we were on the forward slopes.

That's a peculiar name?

Cotton Bales. Yeah well I suppose it was only because they were recruited from the south, from the southern states of America. Their colour patch was a square with blue and white diagonal stripes and they were integrated, they had, the Americans had integrated the negroes [African Americans] into their units at this time, in

07:00 World War II they had separate negro units and white units. But no, that was the formation on our right

flank 355. And so we occupied this position where we had an outpost forward and that was really dominated by the Chinese on the other side of the valley. But we maintained that outpost with about three men every night just to give us early warning you know,

07:30 of any possible build up of enemy troops. And, as I say, it was a, the routine there very much became one of patrolling. Fortunately our defences were very sound, well laid out by Colonel Hassett and by CO, our company commander Major Jack Gurk. And so we had defence in depth and we had inflate fire and we had mine fields out, protective and defensive mine fields and our wire. And with our patrols forward, we were able

08:00 to maintain security defensive positions, so we were never ever, and maintaining, as I say dominating the battle, the no man's land. We weren't during our period of time there, subjected to any large attacks.

Okay, that's interesting. Now just a few questions about some of the units you served alongside with, the Filipino Battalion?

Well they, we didn't serve alongside them, the

08:30 Filipino's were part of an American division under command of Americans. And the boundaries between the Commonwealth Division and the American Division had changed so that when we pulled out of that position the Americans took over and we moved to the west. And so it was a case of not serving alongside, they relieved us in our position. Now the Commonwealth Division consisted at this time of two Australian battalions, the 3RAR and 1RAR which had come

09:00 up by this time into Korea, a British battalion, I'm sorry, and two British battalions. We had support from the New Zealand 16 Field Regiment, artillery and a succession of British armoured units with the Centurion tanks. And at this stage the command of the Commonwealth Brigade had been taken over by Australians. The late General Tom Dailey was the first Australian

09:30 brigade commander to take over. So the Commonwealth Division consisted of the 20th Commonwealth Brigade, the 25th Canadian Brigade and the 27th British Brigade. So we had alongside us on that particular occasion of course the Americans, the 3rd US Division. And it meant coordinating with them our patrols so that we didn't have any conflict,

10:00 any actual contacts. And I can recall Colonel Hassett, our CO, telling the CO of this battalion adjoining us, who, on top of 355 that his machine gunners had orders if they saw any "cee-gars" coming down the reverse slopes, they would open fire, but to ensure that the 355 wasn't vacated, they didn't bug out. Yeah. No, we had good relations with them but

10:30 just a matter of keeping them informed. But we didn't carry out any operations with them as such.

Can you tell us what the differences were between say for instance the Americans you had coordinated with operations or even just daily sort of routine duties, what sort of problems did you encounter?

Well I suppose the problems were overcome by,

11:00 by good liaison. We maintained contact with the adjoining the American platoon on our right and of course, as I say, our CO made sure he maintained good communication with the, his counter-part on top of 355 so that we knew what we were each doing. Problems, well, no, as I say, during

11:30 the time we had them on our flank we were, the Chinese, they tend to harass us. And I remember on Christmas Day they I saw the patrols left overnight, they left little Christmas cards hanging on the wire in front of our positions, they were very cheeky that way. But I don't recall their operations, there may have been the odd patrol problem with them patrolling outside of their

12:00 area but it wasn't of a great consequence, so I can say that we had pretty harmonious relationships.

Were there any other units at all that you liaised with outside the Commonwealth units? I know there was a Turkish unit there.

Well Turkish brigade yeah, they were also under command of the Americans. And on Anzac Day

12:30 in 1952, April '52 we invited, we were in reserve, dunno whether it was by coincidence or by design but we happened to be in reserve, again with a company on stand by. And we had a large Anzac Day parade and remembrance service and we had an attachment of Turkish men and invited them across to join us and they had officers, NCOs and sergeants and diggers and Turkish troops.

13:00 And they all, in each, in the various messes had quite good Anzac Day reunions, if you will. And but we operationally, when I was there, had no direct contact with them. Earlier on, 3RAR, in the earlier days of the operations in 1950 did have of course, at times the Turkish brigade

13:30 was in the same division as the Australian brigade, the Australians who were with 27 British Brigade, so that they did occasionally then work together, but not during my time no. But we had great, you know, admiration and respect for them and I must say these social visits were very successful and, yeah.

So how aware were they of Anzac, was this also equally important, not so much Anzac but Gallipoli [famous First World War landing]?

Yes, oh yeah extremely important to them,

14:00 very much so, because it was the birth of the nation really in some respects, the modern Turkey. The Turkish commander there being a Turk who became of course the President of modern Turkey. Oh no, I think that you know, there's a great deal of mutual respect there.

You must have had some interesting social conversations with the Turks?

Well as far as one can converse, but they all, we both enjoyed a good beer.

14:30 **Okay, now also with the patrolling duties during the static phase, how often would you normally do a patrol, on a weekly basis say?**

Well the CO tried to share this around obviously, so as not to flog any particular company over duly. And so depended upon the, well the patrol program was determined

15:00 at higher echelon by Brigade and maybe even division and depending upon the intensity that was required. But usually a platoon say, when I was commanding say, 8 Platoon, Charlie Company, usually either the platoon, part or whole thereof, would be on patrol maybe three, at least two, maybe three night in a week. And so the patrol task was shared,

15:30 the company patrol task was shared around by the three platoons but it was quite intensive, quite intensive yeah.

One thing I'm very curious about is the actual, the patrolling pattern you'd use. How would that work generally speaking, if you're leaving your forward line area, how would the pattern of patrolling work?

Well, let me say there's a process you go through. Yeah okay well,

16:00 I say again the briefing of patrol has to be in significant detail because every individual, you're out there on your own. And so each individual in the patrol must know what their task is and what the whole task is. You would move from your own platoon position just before last light and by a covered route, go possibly through your own company or adjoining company position down to the,

16:30 the break in the wire, the wire protection, the defensive protective wire which would be manned by the company responsible for that sector of the front. Pass through there, they would know when you are due back, approximately the time you're due back, the pass words of course would be known. And then you'd proceed out on your designated patrol route to the objective, say, be it an ambush patrol, or a contact patrol or a fighting patrol.

17:00 You'd carry out the task whatever that happened to be, and if necessary, if you got into strife and you had to call down artillery fire help you extricate yourself, you had to know your position, and often times that was by dead reckoning. But you had of course your compass and so you could give, hopefully an accurate map reference as to where you were so the, your friend artillery fire could bring down fire accurately, but not on top of you hopefully.

17:30 And whether the patrol had contact or didn't have contact. If it had a contact its withdrawal back to our position may be, may have been precipitated but it depends on the position at the time. If there was no contact well then you'd withdraw from where ever your location was out in no man's land. Through again, not usually going out, coming back the same way you went out because if the enemy were on patrol and they could observe you on the way out, they may just

18:00 be waiting in ambush to get you on the way back. So you'd, where possible, come back by a different route, may even mean coming back through your own wire and protective mine fields by a different access point to the one you went out on. Once again because, through your own battalion area the pass word was the same throughout the whole battalion so you'd have hopefully no problem of being strafed up by your own fellows standing guard at that particular point. And you'd return, hopefully, just

18:30 before first light so that your returns would not be sighted by the enemy, unless of course the patrol had to have a, such a duration and had to stay out over night, ah correction, had to stay out over during daylight hours in which case you'd go into a, hopefully a concealed area from the enemy, whilst you lay there. And that of course very, very difficult to be completely, you know, for a period of daylight, completely still and you know,

19:00 obviously no cooking or anything like that, no smoking. And but, so that type of patrol was a rarity.

Is that considered a standing patrol?

Oh no, no, the standing patrol is where you go out to a position which is to provide additional protection to your defensive position, forward of your own forward lines of wire and mines to a point where it's appreciated is a likely line of approach. And that is where you,

19:30 to observe any possible enemy approach or build up. And usually those standing patrols went out just

before first, just before last light and came back just before first light.

Yeah, you had quite a range of patrols?

Oh yes indeed, well each was different task.

Can you walk me through them, standing patrols, recon [reconnaissance] patrols, what were the other ones?

Well there was the ambush patrol, the fighting patrol.

20:00 So in brief, well the overall mission is to dominate no man's land, to make no man's land, your man's land, and not the enemy's, okay. So that is the overall aim to, so have the enemy sort of keeping within his own boundaries. So that's the task of the patrolling in the main except for specific tasks where it is

20:30 to either, a prisoner snatch raid, to occupy any position, forward position, to grab some enemy prisoners, withdraw and back to your own safe lines and use that prisoner hopefully for intelligence on the enemy. There's the ambush patrol where one goes out to set an ambush on what is a known enemy area or route that they take, to hopefully ambush enemy coming in and again kill and capture. Reconnaissance patrol, where one goes

21:00 out with a small number to carry out a reconnaissance of enemy position in order to obtain again more intelligence information of the enemy, locations, weapons etcetera. And then there's the fighting patrol which is similar to a raid but a raid's usually a company strength whereas a fighting patrol is a platoon, usually platoon strength. Or for a specific task where,

21:30 where engaging the enemy is part of the plan, not to be avoided but to be carried out successfully. Hopefully sort of a quick jab and get the prisoner or whatever it is your, the fighting patrol objective is, and withdraw. Yeah, so it's a very heavy demand on man power because I think that 3RAR particularly during my time in the brigade, in the battalion, we possibly had a higher percentage of our

22:00 battalion on patrols at night than any other. But we felt that was, it was worth it because it maintained a, our security and increased our knowledge of the enemy.

I understand that other units had different systems, for instance the Americans, other armies for that matter? Could you tell us about those, did you hear about, anything about differences?

Well the Americans and I think the South Koreans too, tend to patrol

22:30 in larger numbers than we. That may be necessary at times but it does present the enemy a, with bigger targets to observe and engage. It's more difficult to maintain security in the patrol because of the noise factor, and so there wasn't a policy that there be observers. But you know, it's a different horses different

23:00 courses, or different strokes for different blokes I suppose. It's just that I think our forward training also where it's very individual. This came home to me when I was in America for the, what, nine months or so I was there in 1960. Because of the size of their army, the mass of people in their army, to a degree they have to follow the 'had me for' principle, you know, the production line principle. They have to get people trained to a certain level of competence so

23:30 they aren't a risk to themselves or their comrades and then get them into Units and in the field. We followed the Brit form of training more, where it's a more individual one on one or within the case of, certainly one on one as far as specialist training's concerned. But where, we train the individual more than just the group, the mass group, and I think that equips our soldiers more fully with the skills,

24:00 knowledge and therefore confidence to do the job. And therefore they're, they don't feel the need to have a great mass of them going out on a patrol that maybe other army's do. We feel that we, our fellas can, we can handle ourselves reasonably well and so therefore work with smaller numbers.

Yeah the ROK [Republic of Korea] units, did you ever liaise with them?

Yeah, well in fact towards the end of my time we were starting to have the

24:30 KATCOM's coming in [term applied to Korean troops attached to the 1st Commonwealth Division – Korean Augmentation Troops Commonwealth scheme]. COM I think stood for Commonwealth, K-A-T, I can't recall the pneumonic in detail but it was in fact integrating some ROK army people into our units, you know, maybe two in a section. Hopefully they knew a bit of English, unless they learned some, used to learn some funny sort of English phrases too. But they were there I think for a number of reasons, one was to possibly the standard of their Military

25:00 ability, but also to give us, you know, immediate sort of, if you will, interpreters, for prisoners or other situations where knowledge the language was useful. The other area though where we had a great deal of, a great debt to owe was through the ROK army KSC, the Korean Service Corp. Now the Korean Service Corps consisted of

25:30 men ages ranging from about sixteen to sixty. And these were mainly peasants who used to carry our supplies to us when we were in defensive positions up these yahmers [?], the features of the mountains, on wooden 'A' frames on their back. And they became forty or fifty pounds or more of water, ammunition, food, petrol if necessary for some of our, sort of, well,

26:00 certainly for our choofers, the heaters we had in our dug outs. And also in the event of evacuation of wounded, they also were used on the return trip to carry the wounded back. Now the, without their support it would have been very difficult, had we not had that Korean Service Corps, porters as they were, re-supplying us. 3RAR certainly, I can speak from my own experience, couldn't have achieved what we did both in

26:30 our defensive positions and also during Operation Commando for example. Because they were you know, we speak of the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels you know, from the New Guinea campaign, well these were the South Korean equivalents in some respects. But they used to be say, a porter train of maybe twenty blokes are carrying this stuff on their backs with maybe two South Korean Army. But typical of the, I suppose, you know, their attitude toward life and problems in their having to secure

27:00 their own country from this invasion, their attitude of their soldiers toward these Korean Service Corps was rather strange. These are quite steep hillsides, quite steep mountains, and at times during winter particularly, very slippery with snow and ice. And if a sixteen or sixty year old fella, slipped and fell with his weight on his back, he didn't get a hand up by the Korean guard, he got a butt stroke, to just tell him, "Get on your feet and get moving", you know.

27:30 Which I sort of thought was rather a strange attitude, we thought, to adopt. But they were, I say, in both our defensive positions, invaluable, and during Operation Commando were mobile operation in bringing supplies forward, when, through shell fire, enemy mortar fire, shell fire and evacuating casualties, they were excellent. And I don't recall of any occasion when, you know, went in and sort of dropped their loads and bugged out. Maybe 'cause they knew they'd

28:00 get a round up their backside from their Korean guards but however, no, they did a first class job.

After spending so much time in Korea, did you start to appreciate the social differences of the Koreans?

Well,

Social, political,

Well, politically it was pretty straight forward, Syngman Rhee had just been elected, or had been elected a bit earlier by the South Koreans as their President

28:30 when the United Nations plebiscite, ah, resolution to have a plebiscite over the whole of the country was denied by the Soviet Union who were the guardian power you might say above the 39th Parallel, all the United States being south of the 39th Parallel, and so the division occurred immediately after World War II. There was no question you know, Sigmund Rhee was the boss man in South Korea and he ruled the country, well as martial law virtually. And socially one,

29:00 you know, all one saw were the old mamasans and papasans with their funny Korean gear and kids in bullock carts and wheeling their stuff coming south when they, the Chinese were pushing them out of their own hamlets up the north. And some of the villages we passed through when we went back either on R & R or whatever, going back to Seoul. I remember going through Seoul on my last, when I was moving out eventually, how devastated

29:30 the city was, you know, there was hardly a building that wasn't, you know, if not completely demolished, you know, full of shell holes. And there was only, I think, one bridge across the River Hung, there were a couple of others but they were demolished. So it was quite a change when I went back two years ago, as part of a remembrance mission going back in 2002

30:00 to see Seoul, fifty years later, quite different.

With the, regard to the Chinese, you did mention something about them being honourable foes?

Well yeah they,

As opposed to the North Koreans?

Well put it this way,

30:30 I can only speak from the Australian point of view, there was some mutual respect there with the Chinese. And they did observe to a degree the Geneva Conventions, particularly with regard to, in my experience, to those wearing the Red Cross arm band, stretcher bearers, you know. And if one was evacuating a casualty then I can't recall an occasion when they were fired upon. But similarly we allowed the Chinese to

31:00 take their wounded away, Jimmy Hughes may have mentioned to you after the Battle of the Hinge where there was some hundred and twenty dead Chinese around the company position. There was a local

cease fire while the Chinese evacuated their wounded and dead. And speaking to some of our fellas who were taken prisoner, the Chinese were more

31:30 I suppose say, civilised, in the way in which they dealt with our POWs [prisoners of war] than the North Koreans. But by the same token they were very keen to brain wash and proselytise the communist line and hoped to get some of our blokes turned round, which they failed to do in every occasion. Not so with some of the other nations of course, who were taken POW. But no, I think

32:00 you know, well I think that the Chinese respect for authority may have been one reason, I guess it's an old civilisation they had the respect for I suppose, age and authority. But no they were good fighters, they were clean fighters. And they certainly knew how to camouflage their positions because I remember on one occasion when we were moving in to a new location, I think

32:30 it was the one I mentioned after Operation Commando we were going back onto the forward slopes of 355. And as we hadn't been there before, that position, that particular area the platoon commanders were given the chance to do reconnaissance by air. And this was quite a bit of a thrill going up in one of these Gloucesters [aircraft], which was just, you know, canvass strung together with some aluminium framework and so forth. An Australian officer I knew was piling in with Australian artillery officers

33:00 and went forward of our battalion position to observe the enemy and I couldn't see a damn thing. So we said, "We'll circle and see", 'cause we knew they were somewhere there trying to locate weapon pits. Took about twenty five minutes circling around, couldn't see a blessed thing, to finally, must have frustrated somebody to such the extent that he popped out and started to fire at us because, you know, we saw anyone at all. I don't know why, they were past masters at digging too, some of their,

33:30 their positions which we finally occupied, we thought we were pretty good, we had our bunkers in our defensive positions had to have six feet of overhead cover, overhead protection. That meant you dug down twelve, ah, about ten, about eleven to twelve feet into this very hard features, difficult terrain to dig in. And then on top of your, you have, say, three or, two or three or four man

34:00 sleeping bay which was then joined up to a fighting trench, which is then joined up to a communication trench. These hootchies, we'd call them, they were, had the, had logs, logs you could find, and or RSJs, rolled steel, not RSJs, ah, you know, steel pickets lined up and then sandbagging, upwards of six feet of overhead protection, because

34:30 you know, if you go, shell, direct hit, you need that sort of protection. We'd line the walls of this, these dug outs, these sleeping quarters with bamboo we got, which came up with the Sari beer once a week, that stopped when, the soil from crumbling, you know. And to keep us reasonably warm we'd have, ammunition box, mortar ammunition box, about yay

35:00 by, six hundred by four hundred by four hundred. Have sand on the bottom, a copper pipe coming down to it with a little drip tap on it, a Jerry can of dieseline up on top, a chimney coming through the six feet overhead protection. And you just throw in a match and that would light up and within a few minutes the ammunition case was glowing red. In the middle of winter you could be

35:30 in there in your singlet and short, singlet and shorts. Because even though it might have been minus twenty outside, it was quite hot inside. So one tried to make oneself as comfortable as possible. And that helped again to maintain personal hygiene, 'cause you could keep yourself reasonably clean, and morale. And it meant that when you could rest, even in the front line,

36:00 you could sleep soundly knowing that the security was right. You had your pickets, sentry's on guard and you had your listening posts and what ever. And but you had everything ready to go, you had your, you slept with, fully clad with your socks and your boots ready to pull straight on. And if the balloon went up you knew where everything was and you could go out and man the firing bays and that was right. But no we had some home comforts. The Lord Nuffield Trust,

36:30 a British pier, he had bequeathed a heck of a lot of money to the NAAFI Institute, Navy, Army and Air Force Institute. And so once a week, I think it was, set up under the NAAFI Trust was, I think it was a bottle of beer a man, a Sari Japanese beer. During winter time you had to put that in your sleeping bag otherwise it would freeze and burst. But so that was

37:00 controlled, the consumption of that, and also we used to get through the NAAFI Trust, a tin of fifty cigarettes, Wild Woodbines or Senior Service, unfiltered, and so fifty cigarettes a week from the NAAFI Trust. And our combat rations, of course the American combat rations all had a packet of twenty either Philip Morris or Pall Mall or Lucky Strike or Camels [types of cigarettes]. So in one week you were given a hundred and

37:30 ninety cigarettes, and, so no wonder a lot of blokes finished up with lung complaints. If you didn't smoke you had a lot of stuff to trade.

That's a lot of cigarettes a week.

It is indeed yeah.

Even by my standards, my past standards. Okay, well, with the Chinese infantry tactics, how would they counter Australian you know, forward domination?

Well

38:00 they attempted to get such overwhelming man power superiority at any point. The artillery was very accurate, artillery mortars fire was very accurate, they had no air power. But where they did have, if they decided to launch an attack on a sector, they usually would try, by their intelligence to decide to make an attack at the boundary between two units or two formations where they would hope that the coordination

38:30 wasn't as good as within a sector held by our battalion or brigade or whatever. And after heavy bombardment they would then mass attack and they were in human waves, that's the term used, and without any consideration of their own losses of personnel, to try and overcome the superiority of fire power. But I say I think the respect they had for the 3RAR was such that

39:00 after Operation Commando there was no, even the time I was there, there was no major attack. Subsequently just before the armistice, or just before the cease fire, I beg your pardon, back on the Hook, they did try mass attacks against 2RAR at the time, but that was after I long since left. That was again a political decision to try and just before the decision, it was in fact, the cease fire time and date

39:30 had been announced and they launched this twenty-one hours before hand, to try and get you know, some political mileage.

What about Chinese snipers, was that a big concern at the front?

Well I mean to say, a sniper's only as good as his weapon, his eyesight. And well no, they were no greater concern than any other, but I would say as far as I can recall their rockets, they had a lot of you

40:00 know, they were well equipped by the Russians, and their rockets were quite a problem.

What type of rockets?

Oh gee whiz, you're testing me now trying to recall. I think they were around, no I'm sorry I can't really give you, have to get an intelligence report for that, particular details. But they were quite effective and accurate but I say also with their mortar fire and artillery fire, they were quite adept.

Also we overlooked your,

40:30 **you being awarded the Military Cross in an action, could you tell us about that?**

Well it wasn't just one action Sergei [interviewer], it was, the award was what was called, not an immediate but a periodical award, there were two types of awards. Our CO, Colonel Frank Hassett and company commander Charlie Company, Jack Gurk were awarded Immediate Distinguished Service Orders. Mine was what's known as a periodical award, and like all decorations it can never be fair

41:00 to everybody. But because of the numbers involved in Korea, so the, I suppose the British Government with the concurrence of the Australian Government decided upon a certain number of awards that could be made over a period of twelve months. And well, Operation Commando in fact did result in the greatest number of awards being made, I think somewhere like eight MCs and one got a Barter, an MC [Military Cross]

41:30 that he'd won in World War II. But my particular MC was awarded for, not just the work that I did with my signallers in Operation Commando but subsequently when I was platoon commander with 11, with 8th Platoon Charlie Company patrolling and so forth. So it was an award for a period of time in action and I was extremely fortunate to be recognised that way but it was the, my sigs in the signal platoon and the diggers in my

42:00 rifle platoon that won that award.

Tape 5

00:31 **After Korea, where did your military career lead you?**

I came, well I came back in August of '52 to Japan where I was appointed as a company commander, which is pretty high flying for a lieutenant but so you get high (UNCLEAR) lance captains' pay which is pretty good. As a company commander at the Number 1 RHU, which is Reinforcement Holding unit. That was the Australian

01:00 unit established in Hiro, a small town on the outskirts of Kure in Southern Honshu. Where, together with the British Commonwealth Battle School at Haramura which was a training school, originally a Japanese Imperial Guards training school up in the mountains west of Kure, we trained reinforcements, officers, NCOs and diggers coming up from Australia to go to Korea.

01:30 And it was manned by officers and NCOs who had previously served in Korea. In fact my company commander from C Company who came back after, ah, before I did because he had served earlier, he served in Kapyong actually. He was the company commander, ah, he was the unit commander, the CO of

the Reinforcement Holding unit. And two of my other colleagues, Maurie

02:00 Pears, he had, he was training an officer up at Haramura and another one Brian Favey was the adjutant. And so it was a good position to be in because we were fresh out of Korea, we were current with our knowledge and we could pass on a fair bit to people coming up from Australia to go in to Korea. So I was there until April of 50, let's see from August '52 to April '53. I remember

02:30 I left on April Fool's Day '53 and I remember getting, went by launch from Kure down to Iwakuni which was the RAAF Base in south, near Hiroshima and snow was falling, which was very pleasant. And got back to Australia and then went straight to RAAF Base Williamtown. I was still single in those days, so I just said, "G'day, to Mum and Dad and then went off

03:00 to RAAF Base Williamtown where I underwent parachute training. And even though I'm not built ideally to parachute, being long of arm and leg, I managed to get through that okay and I was appointed as the officer commanding the Airborne Platoon. The Airborne Platoon had only been raised a matter of eighteen months or so and it was the pre-cursor to the SAS. It already, it still is in existence but

03:30 it was, it pre-dated the SAS Company and the SAS Squadron and the SAS Regiment in W.A. So I took over Commander of the Airborne Platoon at Williamtown and that's where I met my wife, Margaret. She was at Newcastle and I was engaged six months after, we were engaged six months after I'd met her, that was in my second year at Williamtown. And I was promoted to captain in December of '54

04:00 so I was at Williamtown just under two years. And then posted to Townsville as the Brigade Intelligence officer of the 11th Infantry Brigade. In those days we had no regular army force north at all, there was no, as we have now. And the 11th Infantry Brigade was a beefed up CMF, Central Military Force brigade. Insofar had a regular Brigadier commanding and headquarter staff,

04:30 a regular Brigade Major Operations. Regular DAA & QMG it was known as, deputy assistant adjutant and quartermaster general. Now that mouthful means he was responsible for the administrative logistics support of the brigade. Had three battalions and had a brigade intelligence officer which was I and a staff captain and a few others, based in Townsville. The colour patch was interesting, it was an eleven pointed white star on a red field with two red arrows going

05:00 like that, so that was our forward defence of Australia in those days. So we had a battalion based headquarters up in Cairns, one in Townsville and one at Mackay. And it was the, my battalion area had headquarters at Eame [?], had two companies in Townsville as well as the headquarters, air and home hill and Charters Towers. And because we had in those days the first national service

05:30 scheme running where the two year commitment, of course that was the days when you're eighteen your number came up and you went in, regardless of what you were doing. And you had three months full time training, in this case the Queenslander's down at Wacol, and after three months they then had to serve twenty one months in the CMF for a two year engagement. But some of them of course came from the far west, Long Reach and places like that. In fact my Battalion area ran from the Gulf of Carpentaria down to the South Australian border,

06:00 like a funnel shape from the coast, going up like that. It was, because that meant it bought in were all what they call the "camp only personnel", meant their only obligation was come to camp once a year for fourteen days. The trouble is it took 'em seven days to get in to camp and seven days to get home again. But that was an interesting time because I was, after my time as brigade IO, I then became the adjutant of the local battalion, this battalion, 31 Battalion.

06:30 **Just on that, what was your role as brigade intelligence officer?**

Well it was training people in battle field intelligence, that was the main aim. And also helping in the train, in the, did a lot of exercises to train the Units. And presenting the intelligence pictures, the enemy order of battle and the enemy tactics and things like that. Our enemy in those days were called the "Fantasians". Some mythical country to the north

07:00 you know, was going to invade us. And so we used to have annual camps out at places like Macrossan and Sellheim which is out of Charters Towers, you know, in the, out west of Townsville. With the brigade deployed it was quite an interesting time and one learned a hell of a lot in that. Because, you know, you'd only been commissioned four years and you'd had operational experience, sure. And in my case followed that,

07:30 parachuting as the Airborne Platoon, demonstrating and acting as enemy for other unit's operations, training. But this was the first time I became involved in administration because as Adjutant, you were the senior regular officer on the regular army card of staff. You had very good CO, a very good CMF officers, my CO was a particularly fine chap called the Skipper Dawning. He was a medical officer, he was a medical officer in

08:00 Townsville, but he commanded a field ambulance in the Middle East during the war and won himself a Distinguished Service Order as a CO of Field Ambulance. But was now a CO of a different battalion which is quite a, you know, he took off the red arm band and, Red Cross arm band, but he was a very fine CO. And I had very good company commanders who were ex World War II so it was a learning experience for me and a very good one. I married Margaret after twelve months of engagement and she came and joined me up in

08:30 Townsville and we produced our first child there and then off to Malaya.

After Korea was there any question of you staying in the armed forces?

Oh I didn't question at all, oh no, no. I'd signed this, signed up for life. And Margaret didn't try and talk me out of it. She doesn't come from any sort of military background whatsoever but you know, I suppose you know, her parents saw that the

09:00 well, he was a nice and reasonably reliable sort of character and was, and I had a sort of guaranteed income. And oh no, but she, you know, it takes a different sort of person to be a service man's wife because particularly when you're on the move. You see in those days postings usually were two, maybe maximum of three years in any one place. And so, you know, you have to make a new home wherever you go to and when you have kids, if they school age, they gotta

09:30 adapt to the new schools and new friends. So it has its problems but it has a great deal of advantages too.

But even after serving in Korea and seeing what it was all about, no question that you wanted to continue?

Oh no, oh no, none at all.

Good. When did you first, I've missed my own question there. With the intelligence officer, did you have to go through more training for that?

Oh yes. At the School of Military

10:00 Intelligence, yeah. Oh yes, well you learn to, what you have to do is start to think like the enemy, you see. And in order to present credible position, situations for your own forces to be involved in exercises, and that was an interesting exercise, you're in turn, you're thinking about it. And no, I suppose that's maybe one reason why when I'd finished my, what

10:30 three years I think it was there in Townsville, and my number was up to go to Malaya, I, rather than going with the battalion, it wasn't of my choice, I was, you know, you're directed, you're told where you're going on postings. My contemporaries from my class at Duntroon and who were going through and served with me in Korea, in the main, they were going as captains with the battalion to Malaya in the anti communist terrorist

11:00 operations there. And but I was selected to go to the, take over the job of intelligence officer for the 20th Commonwealth Brigade serving in North Perak, Malaya.

Before we get to Malaya, it seems like you have a great desire to learn and to progress when you're coming back and taking all these new courses and so on?

Well it was, well, it may be perceived that way but it was what I

11:30 had to do or what I was told to do.

Oh, okay.

Oh no that's the great thing about the, you know, in the regular army, you have the opportunity of such a variety of types of activity because the army's such a large, complex organisation which has to be self sufficient in so many areas. And so people have to be trained to undertake these various and varying roles.

12:00 And this was just one which, so luckily or unluckily as the case may be I was, my name went up for it. It meant, in some respects in my own case, that I didn't have the usual progression of an infantry graduate of Duntroon, going from, case of Korea then to say, adjutant of a CMF Battalion

12:30 and then back to the battalion of the regiment, either at home or overseas. And then staff postings, and as one is promoted, you know, possibly coming back as a Major company commander and then promoted lieutenant coming back say as a CO of a battalion. In my case the only, I only served in a battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment initially on graduation to Puckapunyal to 2RAR and then Korea 3RAR.

13:00 I mean I left Korea in August of 1952, that was the last time that I actually served in a battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment. Because my other postings were to well, well, the Brigade Intelligence officer in Malaya as against being with the battalion. The training team in Vietnam, went as a

13:30 lieutenant colonel and prior to that as a major, Commando Company. Again not back into the regimental stream you might say, so unlike a number of my colleagues or cohorts if you will who decided to stay in the army as long as I did, who had the sort of more regular progression in rank and postings in a Battalion Regiment and out of one. I suppose it meant that a, I wasn't too good as a battalion officer or maybe they thought I could do other things.

14:00 **So on Malaya, you were posted there, and what was your role there and what was your take on the situation?**

Well it was a fascinating position. As the Brigade Intelligence officer I was responsible for running the brigade command post. And the brigade command post was located with the Malaysian Police or the Malayan Police, before Malaysia became, Malayan Police Operation Centre in the State Capital

14:30 of Perak, that's Ipoh. Now Perak is a very rich state, rubber and tin. And the communist terrorist organisations were very strong in the jungle. I worked hand in glove with the Police Special Branch, plain clothes, and the police operations office and we had, our offices were co-located. The brigade headquarters was in a town called Taiping which was half way between Ipoh and Penang.

15:00 Around about, I don't know, must have been, took us about an hour and a bit to get there, so I suppose it's around about sixty kilometres north of Ipoh. Our Brigade was responsible for the whole of Perak north of Ipoh to the Thai border and west coast included. We had three battalions, there was Australian

15:30 battalion 3RAR, a New Zealand battalion, the 1st Infantry Regiment, no, four battalions, a Ghurka battalion, and a British battalion. And the commander was a British brigadier and the headquarters in Taiping was joint Australian British. We had an Australian brigade major which is the senior operations officer but the rest were, oh we may have had the odd captain, the rest were principally British. The command post had an Australian

16:00 brigade IO and that was myself as OC of the command post with another Australian captain there as an officer . And then I had a mixture of Australians, Brits and Kiwis as radio operators, drivers, cooks, bottle washers, tech ah, clerks and we manned the command post twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. But we had what they call an echelon which is a logistic area, which

16:30 was an old double storey house out, just on the outskirts of Ipoh where we established our, we, you know, where we lived. I, being a married officer, luckily I had also my married quarters which was not just, on the other, about fifty, no a hundred and fifty yards away from this echelon area where my wife and first child and then second child lived. But this echelon area was alongside a new village, the

17:00 Gunung Rapit [?] New Village. Gunung is the name of a mountain or hill and Rapit is a limestone so, limestone hill. So this Gunung Rapit New Village was where the Chinese who were mainly rubber tappers were all brought in as, this was a program right throughout Malaya. New villages were formed to bring in the Chinese into concentrated areas to isolate them from the communist terrorists in the jungle. They'd go out under control and surveillance to do the rubber

17:30 tapping by day then come back at night and live in these villages which were barb wired and dogs and search lights and the lot. Inside that new village, as inside most of them, there were very active communist terrorist cells, VCT cells. They obviously knew where I was and who I was and where things were, but again they realised that to take any action against us or my family, would have been rather dangerous for them so we were left alone. But the job was,

18:00 the brigade commander I used to visit occasionally and every week on one particular day, he would have a brigade commander's orders group or conference in my head, in my command post, or his command post which I used to run for him. Where he would ask me to review all the operations of the preceding week, where all the contacts had been made with the communist terrorists, the results of those contacts. What intelligence we had gathered, what was forecasted

18:30 as their possible operations they would be conducting. And then he would, after questions were answered, he would then, having got that information from me earlier and with his operations officer and so forth, discuss what they should do. Then he gave his orders to his unit commanders, COs or battalions and the armoured cars and the air OP (?) and to where they should deploy, what they should do. And it was a very interesting job, I had two quite different brigade commanders

19:00 to work for. My first one was a fellow called Brigadier Peter Moore who had two Distinguished Service Orders and three Military Crosses, from his work in World War II. His major task was when he dropped in to work with Tito, in Yugoslavia, organising their guerrilla force there in Yugoslavia. And he was an engineer with a slide rule type mind, he, his eye for details was remarkable. Every communist terrorist, known communist terrorist, and there were hundreds of them, he knew personally

19:30 by, oh not, but he knew, he could recognise their face, their photograph and their communist terrorist serial number virtually you know, quite a remarkable fellow. He, even the detail he'd go into in giving orders too. I remember to certain officers, a CO would get up and having got his outline of operations from the Brigadier would say how he intended to deploy his unit, his troops and Companies. And Brigadier Peter Moore would say, "Oh no John, not there, I think you

20:00 should put that ambush on that side of the river, not that side", you know. But quite a remarkable fellow. Anyhow after him, he was followed by a fellow called John Mogg, who became a field marshall in the British Army and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff who was quite the reverse. He was very laid back, he used to give his outline of operations what he wanted, quite clearly so everybody knew precisely and let people get on with the job. And so he was, as I say, I had an

20:30 interesting time in those years working for those two different Brigadiers. And it was fascinating you know, you used to go into the jungle from time to time to interview captured enemy personnel, right on the spot and make sure the information we got was hot, it was red hot, was you know, sound and immediate. And you know, it was a funny sort of operation, successful, because it was seen, it wasn't a

quick fix. You see,

21:00 the communist terrorist organisation started off during World War II as the MPAJA the Malaysian People's Anti Japanese army. And in fact were trained and equipped by the Brits who dropped in to Malaya, similar as in Yugoslavia, Force 136 was the name, was the unit which went in. And they trained and did awfully well and

21:30 Shin Peng [?] who became the boss man of the communist terrorists after the cease, after war ended, stayed in the jungle. And of course all the weapons that they had been given during the war, they put away in caches in the jungle. Of course his intention was, being a good communist that Malaya become communist. And then after the war when Malaya, when the Brits made it clear that they were going to hand over and Malaya become independent, and it was a progressive operation.

22:00 And this is where I think we succeeded in Malaya where the failure in Vietnam was quite the contrast. The Malayanisation of every strata of Malaya you know, in organisation, in government, in semi government, in police, in communications, in Military, was progressively Malayanised. And Malays were brought in and trained and educated and trained to take over

22:30 progressively, as against Vietnam where the French wouldn't have a bar of anyone but the French running the show, and as a result, there was this vacuum. But also the Templar Plan, and Field Marshall Sir Gerald Templar was the CIGS [Chief of the Imperial General Staff] at the time who devolved the plan, pretty obvious one. You start off in the south at Singapore and you work your way up the peninsula, clearing province by province or state by state. Making it so that the, you remove the

23:00 communist threat and normality could be resumed, and, until you got to the top, until you got to Thailand. And also of course having, being a peninsula, the borders, was only really one border to worry about, because the east and west were sea-borne. But it, due to the Malayanisation program throughout the whole of the country, and from government right through to every level of government, right down to the village, it was you know, where the Brits

23:30 handed over progressively the reigns of control as people became, indigenous became qualified to do it, it worked, and it worked well. It was a long, slow process. And when I was there we virtually, just about cleared the whole of North Korea of communist terrorists. There was still what was known as the Betong Salient, B-E-T-O-N-G Betong, in a border of Thailand which was a bit of a sanctuary for the CTs. And of course

24:00 we had to strictly observed the fact that we could not go into Thailand but that was forbidden. But it worked and it was a sound operation, it was a funny operation insofar that those who had families, had families there. Penang was the principle family base for Australians, we occasionally had prisoners there but my family lived in Ipoh which was basically a British area. And

24:30 we, I say our second daughter was born at the British military hospital in Taiping, next to headquarters, you know, born in a battle zone. But it was, no, you know, we had our good times too. We, you know, we had when we could, we had mess parties and occasionally we'd get up to Penang and enjoy the high life in Penang. So it was an interesting few years there.

So how do you interview a communist terrorist?

Well with a,

25:00 an interpreter first of all. And you try and sort out the bullshit from the fact, you know. If he starts to try to proselytise, you cut him short and you tell him, you tell him, not everything you know but you give a communication to him that you know more than you do know, so he comes forward to confirm, what you don't know. But no, it's oh, individuals of course are different,

25:30 some you couldn't get a word out of but most of them, when you explain to them you know, why we're there and that if they want to have a Communist Party after Malaysia was free to the terrorists, it's up to them, the Government of Malaya. So but it's an interesting country because as you know there are three races in Malaya, there are the indigenous Malays, the Indian Malays and Chinese Malays. And we used to say that the

26:00 the Chinese Malays because they have most of the businesses, they quote unquote "own the country". The Indian Malays, because they're good at organisation and administration and the British Raj background, they're good at administering, so they run the country. But the Malays, sit beneath the Durian tree and they enjoy the country. No, you know, it's not much to it I suppose but really, but it did appear to us even in those days that there was,

26:30 you know, Tunku Abdul Rahman, he was the first Prime Minister of Malaya, had a pretty strong, with his UNMO [United Malays National Organisation] Party, the United Nations Malaya. Anyway the Malaysian party was very strong and was a one party Government really, let's face it. But because of the fact that the Brits had trained people

27:00 and progressively they took over responsibility in a pragmatic and sensible orderly way, it worked well. But it was virtually, you wouldn't, couldn't call it democratic in a true sense but it worked. And I think you know, the three racial groups seemed to work pretty well together and I think they're, they accept a fair bit of direction, much more than Australia's willing.

How severe could

27:30 **an interview get with the Communists?**

Oh well we, yeah well, we had, well as far as interviewing concerned, we only did the initial scanning interview you might say, at our level. Because we were more involved with the operational activities and so we would get the first sort of level information that was going to be of use in time. Because

28:00 again you gotta relate the information to the time frame when it could become, be of value in your deployment So we would do the initial scanning interview and then they'd go back to, oh I don't know, Kuala Lumpur I suppose, where they were put through the third degree, or whatever they did to get the, you know, further info from them. So I can't really answer professionally just how that went on, but we would get enough to be able to give to the brigade commander sufficient information for him to make any changes to

28:30 his concept of operations within our own brigade area.

Overall what was the strategy to get rid of the communist terrorists, was it to work with them, get rid, just wipe them out or, how did they plan to remove them?

Well principally by cutting all their support from the population. And that was done, I say, by resettling the Chinese Malays, and there were some, also some

29:00 Tamils, Indian Malay who were communist sympathisers. But by isolating them from the communists in the jungle and that was by use of the new village system, by curfews, by controls on food stuffs, medications, salt in particular and penicillin. Very you know, rather

29:30 draconian measures taken for any infringements of the security regulations. Which meant that the, it was virtually a matter of attrition, of starving them out as well as convincing them that there was no point in them trying to continue with the terrorist activities. You know, it was a long, it was a far cry from what happened with the Mau-Mau.

30:00 Or, and indeed, as the operations progressed throughout the ten years or so that the, it was started back in the early fifties you see, when Gurney the then British High Commissioner was assassinated on his way up to the Cameroon Highlands. And so, you know, it was about a ten year program. And so we were successful I think because we were able to maintain the inter, the line of supply

30:30 of intelligence, the food stuffs, the medication, the salt to the CTs in the jungle by the controls we placed upon the local population. And you know, and so we used to get a lot of SEPs or surrendered enemy personnel as well as the captured or CEPs. And so you know, they lost heart, they realised they were on a losing wicket and there

31:00 was nothing to be gained by it. And so you know, I think that that's one reason why it was the success it was.

How long did it take to see results coming in that it was working in the right direction?

Oh pretty much, it was pretty much as soon as one got involved because it was progressing. You know, in our Brigade, and I can speak only principally of our Brigade, but the, our own Battalion the 3RAR, the Gurkas,

31:30 particularly good at jungle operations, and the Brits, they were well trained and they were equal to the CTs in the jungle. You know, because the type of operation you go on a patrol maybe for two weeks and you carry everything on your back with what you need. And you don't smoke, you don't wash, you don't shave, you don't, in other words because there might, anything which changes the jungle

32:00 environment is a give away. And so this means that when you're on patrol in those situations you have, you have to live on cold tucker, and you know, every night you go into a harbour where you have your own, you don't pitch tents, you've gotta lay, it's virtually just a ground sheet, just covers you from you know, any heavy rain. You, and you have pickets so you know

32:30 if any movement out there which could be either CTs or it could be in fact tigers. And they're what, we had a couple of occasions where fellas were dragged off by tigers, we managed to save them but it was a hazard. But, you know, you couldn't afford to have your presence detectable, that was the whole point. And when you did know of the location of a CT camp, communist terrorist camp, and they established quite a network of camps and because they

33:00 had couriers running between camps and they'd lived in the jungle since, well, during World War II. You had to ensure that when you approached that camp you did it in a very stealth way, you approached from down wind, never up wind. And, I'm sorry, what am I talking about, that's right yes, the wind was blowing away from you, yes, so it was down wind. And you sent out, you'd have a point and two sides, you sent cut off parties

33:30 round to both flanks of the camp, so that they were, could then fire on anyone trying to get out, and then you did your assault and they were very successful, very successful. The other Battalion which did the, had a very good kill rate or capture rate were the Fijians. The Fijians used the operations like a bit

of a rugby game. You know, charge through the undergrowth like bull elephants, run

34:00 down the CTs. But no, it was a most successful operation.

As intelligence officer , do you know what role Moscow and Beijing played with the communist terrorists?

There was no doubt they were getting propaganda fed to them, coming down through Thailand. I don't know, and of course they were getting, yeah there would be some supplies coming through too. Unfortunately we

34:30 couldn't do much about that, the Thai territory was out of bounds. But I think that it was, I don't think it was a major factor, 'cause it was the end of a long line of supply. And of course they did have the token sort of opposition from the Thai Government too, it wasn't free passage through Thailand they would've had. So I don't think that was really a major contribution, they had to rely upon what they had and what they could get

35:00 from the locals.

How much activity did the Terrorists get up to in what they did?

They were reduced I think to peripheral offensive actions against rubber plantations and tin mines which obviously because the locations were vulnerable, being in the,

35:30 in the jungle itself. But they decreased quite markedly during the last few years of operations in Malaya to what they were at the outset. Because you know, the locals had formed themselves into sort of self defence groups, pretty carefully. And the Police were much better equipped to warn them of any potential

36:00 attacks. They had informers, you know, in the ranks of the CT so that the major threat in fact was to those areas. Yes, I can't, there were no, I don't think the CTs were enough strength to make any major attacks into built up areas, towns or the small villages yes, but not major towns.

Do you

36:30 **know if Moscow or Beijing sent intelligence officers to give them advice on movements and so on?**

Well one could assume that but I have no, I don't recall there being any positive evidence of that yeah.

So overall the whole operation took ten years you say?

Yeah, yes, as I recall, I think Gurney was assassinated in '51 or thereabouts. And I think the final wrap up of the operation was about 1961 yeah.

So with your experience there,

37:00 **what do you think when you see what's happening in Iraq and Afghanistan?**

Yeah well I think that any idea of a quick solution is completely erroneous and it need, you've got to have public support for these operations to be successful. And they're working hard to try and achieve that in Iraq at the present time. Afghanistan's even more difficult to Iraq in some respects because of the dispersed nature of the,

37:30 of the threat. But you know, I can only work on what you read in the press and media. But I think it's gonna be a long haul. I don't think there can be any realistic anticipation of either area becoming a place where it can be democratic, and democratic elections, and reasonable security for the population against insurgence or

38:00 terrorists, or call em what you like, those who wish to overthrow the recognised authority and Government for many years to come. I think it's gonna be a long haul, I don't know, could be ten years.

How similar or different does it seem Iraq to your experiences in Malaya?

Hard to find similarities really, it's very difficult to find similarities. You know, the scenario for Iraq is so

38:30 unusual, where a ruler, even a despotic was overthrown by an external power, or external powers. And it's you know, it wasn't the case in Malaya by any means. And, no, I think you know, a lot of things can be learned but the main thing to be learned is that you've got to get the population on side and the population prepared to support you by means of information

39:00 and on the threats, the enemy threats, and the integral, Government or infrastructure working. And until that occurs and of course their own security forces, to the level of efficiency where they can provide the right degree of security, and it's gonna take a long time. We have a small team up there now, training I understand, about forty-five Australian diggers

39:30 training some of this, the new army but he was, you know, that's gonna be a big task.

How important is intelligence in fighting Terrorists in…?

Oh, it's essential, it's essential, otherwise you're like a boxer blind folded, no, you've got to have it. But you've got to be sure of the authenticity. And I can recall when we got reports, we had to grade them a, by source, the reliability of the source

40:00 and then by the I think the timing of the, how old or young the intelligence information. And so we gave them various gradings, now C-3 Report was average. I know 1 Report was red hot, you know, so it was, it's absolutely essential, sound and accurate and up to date intelligence is absolutely, it's, without it, intelligence operations just wont work.

40:30 **So after Malaya how long was it before you went to Vietnam?**

Oh some time, because I came back from Malaya and within a month I was on my way to America and training with the US Army, or the Airborne particularly. And then after that I came back to Australia and I was then with our operations and planning group in army headquarters. And then I was posted to Duntroon after the

41:00 Royal Commission, the bastardisation, the CO and after that I went to Vietnam, so, you know, it was quite some time yeah.

Tape 6

00:33 **Can you please tell us how you came from the Malayan Emergency into the Australian Army Training Team, if you can walk us through the process from there?**

There's a long gap between the two.

Well you're most welcome to explain what took place.

Well there's no direct relationship between the two, put it that way. That was just a matter of various

01:00 postings. But following my two years in Malaya, I came back at the end of 1959 and the Australian Government had made the decision that they would move from UK as the source of supply for equipments, to America basically. And that in fact meant not just a sort

01:30 of small arms weapons but the lot, you know, Charles F Adams destroyers, C-130 Hercules, helicopters, tanks. Oh no, sorry, not tanks at that stage. But also what affected me directly was we moved from the, using the British Irvine parachute to the American T-10 parachute and also we're now moving into C-130s

02:00 and also the oh, De Havilland and Caribou aircraft as well as the Iroquois helicopter for parachuting. And so I was selected because I suppose of my previous years with the Airborne Platoon to go to America and I was there for nine months. And there I

02:30 did a number of courses, air transportability, planning course at the US school at Fort, in Virginia. And then I went down and spent the majority of my time at Fort Benning in Georgia which is their Infantry school but also the school of, their parachute school where I went, I did all of their training. And then I was on the Staff training them and I did a Pathfinder course which is, where you go in preceding an airborne operation.

03:00 to secure a dropping zone and layout dropping zone, for oncoming, incoming sorties of paratroops. And following that time in the training scheme or system I was then posted over to a 101st Airborne Division, the Screaming Eagles, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, ah sorry, Fort Eustis, Alabama is it? Alabama, anyway

03:30 one of the southern states, I think it's Alabama. Which was at the time commanded by 2 Star General William C. Westmoreland, later commanding in Vietnam. I was attached to the 127 Regiment, the Bastone Bulldogs. 127 Infantry Regiment had featured in the Battle of Bastone in World War II and they were part of this division, all airborne. And I was there

04:00 posted as, again I suppose because of my intelligence background with, in Malaya as S-3 or the intelligence officer with that battle group. The battle group was about seventeen hundred men, it was a pretty big Battalion you might say. And I was with them for about five months or so. And undergoing training, going on exercises, a lot of parachuting, until I finally came back about October I think it was in 1960.

04:30 And then subsequently was posted down to Victoria where I took over command of 2 Commando Company, which is a CMF unit. I was with them for two years and being a commando unit it, they specialise in airborne operations, cliff assault operations, shallow water diving operations, small scale operations, inserting into enemy areas,

05:00 and so you have to learn the various skills. And my background was Airborne but then I had to quickly

learn other skills, small craft handling, shallow water diving, cliff assault. And I was with them for two years and then I was posted to do the staff college course which is part of the progression in the regular army for an officer. So I'd been a major then for about two and a half years, and so I went

05:30 down to Queenscliff to the Staff College to do eighteen months. I'd previously been selected to go to do the staff college at Quetta in Pakistan but because of the Indo-Pak war the courses had been cut short from twelve months to only six months. And the army wasn't gonna send an officer with three kids to Pakistan for six months. That didn't bother me over much, so anyhow for my sins I did eighteen months at the Australian Staff College, not that we're slow learners but there was more to learn.

06:00 Particularly as at that time the nuclear threat was paramount. In fact when I left America just the year before, the nuclear threat was the biggest worry to America. They had regular exercises with school kids, you know, having to leave school and go into the underground shelters and so forth. It was a big threat and so that's why we, the army extended the Staff College course from twelve month usual to eighteen months. And there were two,

06:30 we were the second last of the eighteen months courses. After that course I was lucky enough to get a good quasi diplomatic posting to UK and I had two years there with my family. Quite delightful being in, having diplomatic privileges, in certain areas, quite useful.

Oh we know diplomats.

No, but you know, duty free

07:00 things, that sort of thing. Anyway that was an interesting job there for two years and then back from there to a period in army headquarters in the training branch as a major and then to the administrative branch, where I was made lieutenant colonel. And then to Duntroon as the CO of the Corps Staff Cadets. And there was following eighteen

07:30 months there and I was then posted eventually to Vietnam. So there was quite a long break between my Malayan experience and posting to Vietnam.

Was it basically, after Malaya, did you actually write about any of your operational experiences in Korea and Malaya?

Write about them?

Yeah, for any military purposes, internal purposes that is?

I'm trying to recall. I did a bit of précis pamphlet writing when I came back from America.

08:00 I had about four months at the Infantry School as it was then at Ingleburn, I'm just trying to think what they were now. There may well have been some on anti-terrorist operations as well as airborne operations but that's, sorry, I can't recall anything else.

What was your understanding of communism?

08:30 **At this stage, before you went to Vietnam, having been to?**

Well interesting that question because in 1951 or was it early '52, it may have been in '52 when then Prime Minister Bob [Robert] Menzies tried to outlaw the Communist Party, the party in Australia , the ACP. There was a referendum and

09:00 the troops deployed in Korea were required to vote in this referendum. Now I, I think, I was spending, I had a short term as the assistant adjutant I think at the time and, so must have been '52 I think, yeah. And I had to sort of check to make sure that we had no, all the referendum papers were filled out correctly. And although we were fighting communists, they were shooting us and they were shooting, and

09:30 we were shooting back at them, I think about ninety five percent of the battalion response was, "No, the Communist Party should not be outlawed". So I think that reflects I think what the average Australian digger thought, you know, they've got their views, we've got ours. But again better the devil you know than the one you don't. And to force them underground was not a very sensible thing to do. So my views on communism, well all I can say is, it's proven to be a failure in, every

10:00 where it has been used as the means of controlling the population. And the only last two I think real countries are Cuba and North Korea. And I think that you know, in time they will see the light. And you know, I can recall in my early days, my old man saying that

10:30 if a person is not a socialist, I think it was the words in those days, not a socialist before he's twenty one he's got no heart and if he's one after twenty one, he's got no brains. So you know, the philosophy of equal distribution of wealth, and equal opportunity and all that is fine but you know, it's got to be practical, sensible. And I

11:00 think talent is worthy of reward and there has to be some sort of order in any organisation in any country. Now that usually depends upon some hierarchical organisation, someone's gotta accept responsibility somewhere along the line. As long as everyone accepts their own responsibilities it should

work. So if you ask me my views on communism, that's about it.

Were there people of left

11:30 **wing political standing in the army?**

Oh,

When I say political standing, I'm not referring to overt political opinions, but who may have had sympathetic views towards left wing movements?

Look I don't really know, you see, within the army there are three things that you don't talk about, one is politics, one is sex and one is your football team.

I thought sex would be talked about now and again?

No, no I, look there may, there may have

12:00 been but, you know, it would never be something that would be, look I don't know of anyone who was sort of disciplined for their political views. No, it's your own business and I hope it stays that way.

It's quite interesting that you said that the Korean troops, Australian troops there voted against banning the Communist Party?

Because we were fighting for freedom you know, and if a person, must have freedom of

12:30 expression. You know, was it Voltaire said, was it, Voltaire [French 18th century philosopher]? You know.

Plato [Greek philosopher], I don't know.

I might not agree with what he says but I'll fight to the end for him for the right to say it, you know. As long as it's not hurting somebody you know. No, no it's quite interesting that that was the view and that was the common sense view of the Australian digger.

What about the Americans?

Oh well I don't really know, they didn't have a referendum to outlaw the, McCarthy [American politician associated with era when communism was seen as a threat to American society] did all that for them didn't he?

Well exactly, I mean

13:00 **that was pretty rabid, that kind of anti communist movement in America. Did you ever come across any sort of sentiment through the Americans you served with in Vietnam, in, well I don't think you came across them in Malaya but you know, Korea?**

No well, no, no, well I didn't. My closest association with Americans was my time in America itself. And what impressed me there was how much

13:30 the American Army from what I could see was in advance of the population in general. Insofar that negroes had the opportunity to be promoted along with the white caucasian American. Mark you, I think the average American say, master sergeant or captain was in some respects had to work harder to get that rank and was therefore usually, you know, of a higher calibre than his average counter part. Not all, but average counter part.

14:00 And of course see, Colin Powell, he rose to the very top of the American military machine. So they were I think in some respects in advance of the population overall. But again I think anti communism was something which was not said, not spoken of but was pretty strongly felt. Because of the threat, because of, you know, the threat they felt they were

14:30 under from the Soviet Union at the time.

Were you, how would I say this, how did you view McCarthyism?

Oh well that didn't occur whilst I was there.

What, well you know,

No well I was in the southern states, where you would have thought that, you know, was the red neck stronghold. But again, when you're within, living within an army base and those army bases are like little townships. At Fort Benning I had to buy a Sears Roebuck

15:00 scooter to get around. Because it was, from my bachelor officer quarter to the officers' club or to the regiment headquarters, I was, you know, the school, the headquarters you know, you had to have a motor scooter to get around. You were insulated from, you know, the general population to a great degree. So I never came across any Ku Klux Klan, didn't see any lynching.

Can we stop for a moment?

15:30 **Okay so you didn't see any KKK [Ku Klux Klan] or anything like that? I suppose being in such**

close contact with the Americans, with people like you know, General Westmoreland stuff like that, did their attitudes at all impact on you in any way, whether be negative or positive, what did they do?

16:00 Well it made you, well there's some impressions I got from the American Army, was first of all the intensity of their training. They work extremely long hours, not always very productive but extremely long hours. They, they're very much as I, for my observations, very much control, under, it's a controlled environment.

16:30 The Pentagon, or DA, Department of Army, runs the show. Now if I could give you an example. On the annual battle exercise, assessment exercise, the 101st Airborne Division, which I was with. They were being umpired, in other words check on how they were operating, were being carried out by the assisted division,

17:00 the 82nd Airborne, the all American in Fort Bragg. The exercise involved an actual pathfinder force going in, securing and marking the DZ, the Dropping Zone. The division flying in by regiments, regiment combat teams and dropping, and going out to their various objective areas. And it was a live firing exercise with real rounds and real artillery and so forth,

17:30 but with the necessary safety precautions being observed of course. But the CO, the commanding officers of this regimental combat team I was with, the 127 Regiment, his final orders to his company commanders and supporting arms commanders and so forth was quite unlike what I'd experienced before. In fact what it was, was a check list, issued by the Department of Defence or Department of Army, beg your pardon. And

18:00 as he came to each box, it was ticked, to make sure that that was what the individuals under him responsible, his support commanders had done or were to do or hadn't done. The whole exercise was a pre-planned down to the last minor detail and it appeared to me it was the standard exercise which was only changed by putting a different map over which the exercise was to run. It did not allow

18:30 as far as I could observe much in the way of initiative being shown, it was very much stereo typing controlled. Not at all I think like we attempt to run our exercises here where the situations can change because they say the best laid plan goes out the window as soon as the first shot's fired. And so commanders at every level have to be able to adapt their pre-planned operation

19:00 to meet a changing of circumstance, but this was not, this was set, now I say if the enemy made any different plans to what he though it would, you would have been up the creek without a paddle. That was a bit disconcerting but there again one's got to also you know, appreciate the numbers involved in their army as compared to our own. And the same way in which they trained their airborne people, when we trained a person to be a military parachutist, we take a stick

19:30 of ten students, stick being the term used. And that stick has one warrant officer Instructor who's a competent, qualified, experienced instructor who takes the students through every facet of parachuting. From how you put on the harness, how you fit the harness, how you enplane the aircraft , how you prepare yourself for the exit of the aircraft and how you exit the aircraft, how you control your flight, so you don't come into somebody and tangle them and

20:00 get caught up with their rigging lines. How you could adjust your flight or your landing, depending upon the way the wind is blowing, how strong it's blowing, and how you land to reduce the risk of injury, how you collapse your parachute and so forth. So the, from go to woe you always do the PJI or parachute jump instructor establishes a rapport and confidence between himself and the individuals. It's a very nerve wracking thing jumping out of an aeroplane. It's

20:30 they say it's the second biggest thrill a man can have jumping out of an aeroplane with parachute.

What's the first?

And it takes your mind off other things. But in the American system because of the numbers involved, they follow the Henry Ford principle. And when I was at Fort Benning as part of the staff of the Parachute Airborne School there, they've got very competent, very qualified and very experienced sergeants, master sergeants or sergeants first class

21:00 teaching their students. But one instructor teaches them how to put on the parachute, how to wear the harness, another one teaches them how to get into the aircraft, another one teaches them how to exit the aircraft, another one teaches them how to control their flight, another one how to do the landing. They're experts in those various facets of this simple thing of how to use a parachute, how to do a parachute descent into an area of battle. But there's no way in which they can establish this confidence, mutual confidence to know what you're doing as we can, because of the numbers involved.

21:30 You know, the thing about our parachute training is that when you see a bloke go through or a person go, of course they're training women too, at the, standing at the door and complete their parachute descent successfully, by day or by night, the report usually says, "Qualified, he was", or, "She was nervous but controlled". And that's it, you've gotta have the adrenaline flowing otherwise, you know, you'd be silly in the head, but you control your actions. Now because of the mass in the American system,

22:00 and I suppose the same applies in the Soviet or the Russian system or the Chinese system they can't afford the luxury I think of the individual approach training that we do. And so they've gotta have this sort of pre-pared, pre-designated operation. But where it came home to me that, where I think it fell down was, now I was with the 101st Airborne, the highest trained in the army really, they consider themselves a cut above what they call the straight legged Divisions.

22:30 And yet in the assault, the assault of this, where we used the fire and movement exercise, technique where you know, in a platoon attack say, you've got three sections. And one section'd be on the ground giving covering fire while two Sections assault or move toward the enemy. In this system it was what they call, "marching fire", so that the company was lined up in a long line and they were walking forward, firing.

23:00 Unfortunately some of the troops firing had their eyes closed, so I was standing behind them.

Is this 101st Airborne?

Yeah, oh yes, yeah. No, you know, this is a bit disconcerting but once again you, you know, one has to accept the fact that when you're dealing with a mass of people that they have to train... against our, we can be more selective. And it's a, I suppose any mass production system does have these, have weaknesses.

23:30 **It, does it seem to you that they were concerned about casualties?**

Oh yes, they're concerned about casualties of course, but,

But I mean, what I'm trying to say is that, if they're using a system where it seemed that there was a higher probability of losses?

Well no, there was no live enemy in front of them, they were going towards a target, a feature which had you know, silhouette targets, you know.

Certainly.

Yeah. But just that the level of training of the individual was lacking in some respects because the

24:00 automatic weapon they have in their hands, wasn't fully under control.

Presumably, having already said that I understand, but the actual marching attack, is that actual technique.

Oh marching fire,

Operationally worth?

Oh well I suppose, in some cases it might be quite effective. It's not one which we would be employing no, you know, that was just the, one of the down sides that I noted then.

24:30 **Okay. Now 101st Airborne you said were one of the highest units?**

Well there were two airborne divisions in the American Army, 101st and 82nd. Oh they're fine units, they're fine regiments, they're fine divisions, you know, don't get me wrong. It's just that when you get down that low level I just saw some deficiencies, which could have I think been corrected, had their been the ability of their training system to be more individualistic and

25:00 concentrate on the individual rather than the mass. But see that's one of America's principles of war, mass. We don't have that, we have one which is called, "economy of effort." We try to economise rather than use a mass as a means of cracking the walnut.

Can you tell us about your meeting with General Westmoreland?

Oh well, I only met him occasionally, he was the 2 star general, he was God. I was just the foreign officer

25:30 attached to one of the regiments of his division. Oh no he was quite an impressive character, but, you know, you don't talk to generals in the American army.

So, can you tell us how you got to Vietnam, how that came about?

Well I, that was a posting which came up,

26:00 whilst I was the Commanding Officer of the Corps Staff Cadets at Duntroon. And I don't know whether I may or may not have been due for posting to Vietnam prior to that, but my posting to Duntroon was a very, it was a sudden five minute decision. I was a lieutenant colonel at the time, I was working in the office, in the

26:30 adjutant general's branch of the army in Canberra. In fact my job was the Deputy Adjutant General, Ceremonial and Discipline. In other words I was responsible for formulating policy on matters required for ceremonial aspects and discipline within the army. When Justice Fox's Royal Commission was concluded into bastardisation of Duntroon,

27:00 the army saw that there had to be some movement at the station, some heads had to role, figuratively speaking. The commandant of the day, General Fraser, was already on posting to go to Vietnam as the Commander of the Australian Force Vietnam. And the CO of the Corps of Staff Cadets, a friend of mine, Colin Townsend, who was one class ahead of me at Duntroon, had a fine record, he'd been a fine CO of a battalion in Vietnam, he was posted summarily to Northern Command to Brisbane. And I was,

27:30 I was required to report to the adjutant general, one General McDonald at five o'clock on this Friday afternoon. Now remember my job at the time was ceremonial and discipline policy. And so he marched, I was marched into his office, I reported myself to him and his question was, "When were you last at Duntroon Stewart?" And I said, "When I graduated Sir in December 1950". His answer was, "Right, report to General Fraser", who was still commandant on nine o'clock Monday morning, you're going to Duntroon as the CO of

28:00 Corps Staff Cadets. What was the rationale? I don't know, maybe because it was thought that well, they've got to be good at ceremonial over there at Duntroon, the drill, and discipline was the thing that had to be straightened out with this bastardisation nonsense, and so I was the obvious choice. But that could have meant my deferment of a posting to Vietnam, I don't know, it could have. But that certainly was not a planned posting, it was one which came out of the blue like that. So it

28:30 meant I was twenty one months I think, yes, twenty one months in, at Duntroon. And I suppose in some respects they wanted Stewart to get some Vietnam experience and what job was going. Well obviously I couldn't get a CO of a battalion because there was no battalion to be CO of and I would've had to been with them for twelve months before to train and so forth. And so the job of Deputy Commander of the Australian Training Team was due for replacement in June of

29:00 '70. And at the time the training team was commanded by a Full Colonel, with a colonel. And so I was posted to become the new deputy commander, so I arrived there in June of '71, ah June of, was it '71? Just a minute, or '70, it's in that square I gave you anyhow, to take over command, to take over deputy commander.

29:30 That was at the time when the Australian Government had decided already to reduce its Force in Vietnam. And we had, about that time, about a hundred and seventy I think, all ranks in Vietnam, but was being reduced down to a hundred. And we were to concentrate our operations in Phuoc Tuy Province where we had the Australian Task Force based. And so

30:00 my job as deputy commander was to assist the commander, the full colonel in the co-ordination of the changing of the role of the training team and the reduction of people from the other regions. There were four regions in Vietnam, MR, Military Region One, Two, Three, Four running from the DMZ down to the delta. And, as on posting, not having people replaced from their jobs as either advisers with the mainline ARVUN, or

30:30 Army of the Republic of Vietnam units. Or in the various mobile training teams or in the jungle Warfare training centre which we had established. And so it was an interesting job, as the withdrawal was affected so the job was changed, the commander of the job was changed from a full colonel to a half colonel, lieutenant colonel. When Colonel Jeff Leary was posted in December ,

31:00 I was appointed the CO of the training team. But then in February or March of '71 I was then reposted back to Australia and I handed over to Lieutenant Colonel Keith Kirkland who had been running the Chief Instructor at the Jungle Warfare Training Centre, which we had established. But it was a time when we were reducing our involvement in Vietnam. And it became one of training

31:30 of officers and NCOs at the JWTC [Jungle Warfare Training Centre]. And then also together with the American, our US Green Berets, Special Forces, training plane loads of Cambodians in the Long Hoai training camps in Phuoc Tuy Province to go back to fight the Vietminh in Cambodia. So it was an interesting time, not all that rewarding professionally in some respects because you know,

32:00 it was even then quite a lost cause. The motivation was the thing which was lacking in the Vietnamese Army and also you know, the way in which the pro, the whole concept of operations was not really very successful. Success was counted in the number of body bags, you, either, the few you sent back home or the numbers of enemy killed was the way in which success was

32:30 determined. So it wasn't, shall we say, the most satisfying of operational commitments, but an important job to do all the same.

You would have already I suppose formed an opinion of the conflict before you went, having, you know, going in the latter stages of it. Can you tell us what your views were?

Well

33:00 they were that the Australian commitment, Australian involvement demonstrated a high calibre of our force. Speaking from the army point of view, the way in which our battalions operated, did highlight the fact that we were the most professional in Vietnam. Once again due to our training, due

33:30 to the fact that our battalion before going to Vietnam had trained together for a minimum of twelve months at every level, individual, section, platoon, company battalion. And they were equipped

professionally and psychologically to do a good job. You know, the various operations which no doubt you've already interviewed people on highlights that. And so my going to the

34:00 training team was of course something special because the training team were the first Australians to go into Vietnam in 1969 and the last to come out in '72. And they were all highly professional and experienced in their various roles. And we had various, virtually every corps in the army involved because we were training the Vietnamese in all aspects and including medical.

34:30 And you know, they, it was a particularly fine unit and of course unique, there's never been one like it, before or since, and the fact that four Victoria Crosses were won by the unit makes it, you know, quite outstanding. The fact that those four VCs were won by people not doing the job they were trained or supposed to be doing was another thing. But what they did was quite magnificent and those VCs were well and truly earned. So my

35:00 views before I left to go to Vietnam were that you know, I was very privileged and proud to have been posted to the unit I was and it was the only job which really was available for me. So I, although I got in rather late I was the last of the COs still living, the person I handed over to, Keith Kirkland, became a general has since died. And the bloke he handed over to, Colonel Peter Johnson, who incidentally was the chappie I took over the platoon from, some thirty years before, has also

35:30 since passed away. So I'm the surviving last CO of the training team.

How big was the organisation at that stage?

What the training team? As I recall, it was about a hundred and twenty I think and it was being reduced quite dramatically. And when I left I think we were down to, I think it was about, at the Jungle Warfare Training Centre we had,

36:00 it was about fifty I think, officers, warrant officers, NCOs. And we had about maybe twenty or so deployed on other tasks with the Green Berets at the Long Hai training camp and also in the few of the remaining mobile training teams and detachments with the ARVUN. But it was you know, I say people were not being replaced as their time finished

36:30 and in my case my tour was cut short, I was only there for what, nine months not the full twelve.

What did you think about the movement against the conflict in Australia, anti war movement?

Well,

At that time?

Well I don't know that it affected the morale of our troops in Vietnam all that much. I think they respected the fact that people's political opinions were their own

37:00 as long as the support for our involvement was still there in material ways. They had to accept the hard fact of life that some, it was a divisive force within the community and in fact some of our chaps in Vietnam, their families were possibly against their being involved, but they were professional soldiers and they did, you know, they knew their duty, as the RAR regimental motto is, "Duty first".

37:30 And so they got on with the job. No, oh, just I think demonstrates that in a democracy people have the right to voice an opinion.

Why do you think there was such a movement against the war in Vietnam that was quite unlike that before?

Certainly unlike Korea. I can remember in Korea there was only one occasion I think when a ship supplying us in Korea was held up by wharfies [wharf workers], but we had ninety-nine percent of the population was with us in Korea. I suppose

38:00 oh, I think the failure of the operation was one thing which came home and there was then the question mark as to whether we jumped or were pushed. Whether we asked to go to Vietnam or whether in fact, it was an initiative taken by the then government of the day. I suppose the fact it became so political was the thing, and of course as we all vary

38:30 in our political persuasions, it naturally then spilled out into demonstrations. But oh I think it was healthy rather than again, you can't you know, if you've got a problem let's talk about it, face it, let's air it not subjugate it. And I say I don't think it did, I don't think our efforts in Vietnam were any way adversely affected by the knowledge that there were demonstrations. I think when our troops came back,

39:00 I think it was Alec Preece's battalion when they marched through Sydney had eggs thrown at them, that was a very poor thing. But again, that was from a very, very minute, a minority, and I think that the public at large thought that was a disgraceful thing to do, it wasn't their fault they were in Vietnam. And so if you have someone to throw an egg at, throw it at a politician. So I think one has to accept that in a democracy, freedom of speech is something which is

39:30 very precious and has to be maintained.

Did you see, I mean you knew that the AATTV [Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam] was in the process of down sizing its presence. Did you see or, is that what you refer as being sort of like not the most fruitful of appointment?

Oh no, not so much that no, the fact that, oh no, that was an important job to do. You say, one didn't question the fact that we were reducing, that was a government decision and rightly

40:00 so, they make decisions, that we were in the process of reducing our involvement numerically and that had to be done. But it had to be done in a correct and professional way. So I found that quite a challenge professionally to help to organise this withdrawal of our involvement but maintaining that what we did have still present in Vietnam, in an operational and viable and secure way. That, and indeed that was not an easy task. And so no I found that aspect quite professionally

40:30 challenging and rewarding. But the overall concept of operations from you know, US Army headquarters or from the Pentagon if you will, down. I found, you know, it didn't gel with what I was accustomed to particularly trying to compare it with the Malaysian experience.

Tape 7

00:36 **What were the circumstances unique to the war in Vietnam?**

Unique, as compared to other insurgency operations you mean?

Mmm.

Well one was that I think the

01:00 control operations was not in the hands of the indigenous themselves, the country themselves, it was in the hands of the Americans. Another would have been that the country itself was divided insofar that the, not all South Vietnamese were in favour

01:30 of the operations against the Vietminh and Viet Cong. You had of course a number of, a large number of refugees from North Vietnam, principally those of Catholic persuasion who were wanting to get away from the communist territories. But you had what I think made it unique in some respects was the fact that the operations were

02:00 dictated to a great degree, particularly toward the end of the campaign by public opinion in America. And the fact that success or otherwise was determined by casualties and the American public became tired of seeing bloodshed being served up with their Kellogg's Cornflakes [cereal] at breakfast time on TV [television] every morning,

02:30 and there'd been no sort of, no sign of a successful conclusion. Now I suppose every operation is unique insofar as there's never a carbon copy of previous ones. So it's not fair to draw a comparison between that operation and the operation against the communist terrorists in Malaya or indeed I suppose in

03:00 other countries. But I think that it was, it's principal downfall was the fact that the South Vietnamese people didn't have their heart in it, they'd been at war for twenty five years, ever since you know Dien Bien Phu, and they were just tired of war. And I think they felt that you know, the losses of their own people and

03:30 the tragic loss of some of their beautiful old buildings due to the conflict, was just not worth it. Maybe they thought they were being pawns in the game of international politics and so I suppose in that respect it was different to previous counter insurgency operations. Yes it was a very sad country, you know particularly where, for example in the task force area,

04:00 in Vung, ah, the local Vietnamese who were bringing, who were doing the dobie, the laundry for the troops and bringing them coffee and tea, morning and afternoon and at night would be just in their black pyjamas and brassing up their positions with burp guns, you know. There was no known front line as you'd appreciate and the enemy was very difficult to detect and they

04:30 came in various forms you know. As I say there's the local cells, then of course you had the hard line, ah the hard core Viet Cong units, then there's the Vietminh and so it was a very messy operation. And I think there's a lot of woolly thinking on the part of the overall planners.

05:00 I could, you know, it was quite clear that if the political will wasn't there, and it clearly wasn't you know, toward the end, then there was no real point in its continuing because there'd be no successful outcome.

What do you mean by woolly planning?

Well, I don't think there was any clear direction, you know,

05:30 the Australian task force, their job was to try and ensure Phuoc Tuy Province was clear of enemy. And so they would go out on battalion operations or company operations and clear a, if they were lucky make contact and destroy some of the Viet Cong units, oppose them. But then they'd then come back to their safe base, their firm base and those they

06:00 killed or captured or destroyed would be replaced by others, so you know it was an ongoing thing. And you know, I think the Vietnamese people and the country side just soaked up like a sponge. And so it you know although individually I think in our Units collectively also did a first class job and showed as I said before their superior professionalism, the, there was no

06:30 real defined objective reached you know and that was the problem I think. I don't think that our troops in any way lost heart in what they were doing, in fact I think what did spur them on was the fact that we were holding the flag high for Australia, showing that you know, we could do it better than the other buggers.

What specific knowledge did you take to you in Vietnam that you learned from Korea and Malaya?

07:00 Hard to put a handle on anything specific really, because you know, the situation was so different. No, I would think that you know, one's general background experience was I suppose mainly just in the way in which you get the best out of your

07:30 troops. And I think there were, for example I didn't do any specific training at Canungra before going to Vietnam. There were courses being conducted for members of the AATTV but I didn't undergo any of those. I was plucked straight out of a job which was, couldn't be more different, CO of the Corps Staff Cadets at Duntroon to becoming deputy commander of a training team. But it was

08:00 therefore, it was a case of using my knowledge experience in the command slash administrative job that I had to do with the training team. I was not directly training Vietnamese, put it that way, I was coordinating the activities of all of our teams who were doing the training. I had to make you know, contact with them and contact with the Vietnamese counter-parts to maintain good liaison, but I wasn't directly personally involved in

08:30 hands-on training. So, I would say there was nothing in any way specific that I could have brought from my Korea experience, or indeed from my Malay experience, it was more of a general professional approach to the job.

And what were the people in the training team teaching the Vietnamese.

Oh, there were a number of things. We had specialists in

09:00 many areas who were attached to the ARVUN main line units, some were sensor specialists. I.e. they were trained in how to put out sensors to determine movement of enemy to help maintain security of their Divisional Operational areas. We had specialists in fire support, artillery and air fire support who were assisting the

09:30 various level of command brigade and battalion level, sometimes divisionally. Coordination of air support and artillery support where they didn't have the competence or the experience that our people did, specialists in the medical area. We had trainers who were training the regional forces and the home guard units. We had these mobile teams, MATS they were called and they

10:00 used to be an officer and a warrant officer, a couple of diggers, couple of NCOs beg your pardon, who would travel around part of the province. And they would train the village home guards in basic defence of their village, the use of Claymore mines and small arms, in security in general, and also training the regional forces, which were sort of the paramilitary regional forces. We had specialist units training

10:30 people, the ARVUN in night operations, which we were fairly adept at. Not many of the free world forces were keen to go out in the jungle at night, but our troops were competent to do that and so we trained some of the ARVUN in night operations. Latterly we had the Jungle Warfare Training Centre where we were training officers and NCOs, that had a very frustrating start for the first CO there,

11:00 a fellow called John Sullivan. It improved over a while but it was difficult to get the thing underway and difficult to get the right level of South Vietnamese officers and warrant officers in there as instructors, so we had a team of officers and warrant officers instructing there. And also, subsequent, we had the, combining with the American Green Beret Special Force troops in the Long Hoai hills, they were part of

11:30 Phuoc Tuy Province north of Vung Tau, training Cambodians. It's funny, they used to send plane loads of these Cambodians across, they'd arrive and they'd been given very basic instruction before leaving Cambodia. The organisation of the battalion shall we say was based upon the village hierarchy. So the village Head Man became the CO, and so it went down, and there were Cambodians ages from sixteen to sixty in these.

12:00 And in the space of about six to eight weeks they went through the machine, again, the American machine, of you know, mass well, you know, conveyer belt machine, training them in the basics of how Battalions should operate with all its supporting weapons and so forth, pretty hairy, pretty hairy. But they got, went back to Cambodia, a bit better trained than they were when they left but of course it

wasn't very successful as we all know now, but it was an effort. So we were involved there in training this,

12:30 so that's how the training teams would have finished up coming in from all of the further regions into Phuoc Tuy Province. And the important thing was that the security of those troops was being maintained, so we had a small Force still left there and eventually I think they pulled out in about June of '71 I think it was, about then yeah.

I think you've said already one of the hardest

13:00 **things is to identify the enemy in Vietnam, what were the tactics you used to do that?**

Well it's not difficult when you're out on patrol in the jungle or in the rubber plantations, because once the (mettle-ess UNCLEAR) starts firing, you know where the enemy is. Well you rely heavily in other situations, such as around the fire bases and our task force bases with the civilian

13:30 administration, with their identification cards and so forth, to recognise who is and who is not a sympathiser. And so you have to, and that's where sometimes of course the situation was that it wasn't very effective and that's why we did have you know, people doing your laundry but then at nights drafting up with burp guns in their black pyjama suits. But we couldn't do it for them, we couldn't do the

14:00 vetting for the civilian administration, we had to rely upon the Province Chiefs and their staff. The Americans had some civilian staff assisting too, mainly CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] type people, just how competent they were varied of course. But that was the big problem, just how to identify, who was and who was not fully with you.

So these regional people who were doing this vetting, do you think they were successful?

Oh, they were

14:30 partly successful but they couldn't be completely, it was quite impossible. I don't think the infrastructure organisation was there really, in the first place. Oh no, there were obviously, there were sympathisers and also informers at every level of Government too, so you know it was very difficult, very difficult indeed.

Was it a corrupt government?

Oh well, I think that's

15:00 been proven hasn't it, the amount of money socked away in America by previous prime ministers or whatever, yeah. The answer can be yes to that but now, to how far the corruption went and how many were involved, I wouldn't have a clue, but certainly it was.

Would have the war gone better in a way if Americans or Australians or another nationality was in control of identifying

15:30 **these, identifying the enemy basically.**

Well, I don't know that you can even presume that would be successful, not unless you had people of your own organisation in the country for a generation, really, to know the people, And you know, there's no other way of doing it, you know, to you or me, they all look the same. You know, so and to be able to define who are and who

16:00 are not the enemy when everyone gets around in the same sort of gear. And you know, the Vietnamese are a very pragmatic people and you know, they realised where the buck is and where they can get it, and they realised that their future was pretty dicey regardless of who won the boat race, it was, and so they looked after number one. And I think that it's that situation

16:30 could not have been resolved to any degree of satisfaction and can't be compared to the situation in Malaya, they're so poles apart.

Do you think it's possible that Australians were training North Vietnamese sympathisers, not being able to identify them?

Within the units, no I don't think so, I think that, you know, after all the,

17:00 we were involved in training the main line ARVUN Units and I say the regional forces, popular forces and the village home guard. Now those people were either trying to carry out offensive operations against the North Vietnamese in the fields or they were protecting their own homes, and hamlets and families. So even though they may have had doubts as to the eventual outcome, at the time, their job was to

17:30 look after again, their own people. And the main line units well, whether that was by force of you know, coercion or whatever, their job was to fight the enemy when they found them. Oftentimes of course they went out not with the objective of finding them but the objective of making sure that the enemy knew they were there and hopefully would walk away or melt into the jungle and not be found so as to avoid

contact. But, no I would think it would be a pretty long bow to draw to think that we

18:00 were involved any time in, well certainly not knowingly, in training North Vietnamese sympathisers.

How successful were these Vietnamese that you trained?

Well they were better than they were before we trained them. How successful? Yeah, yeah, well, I think the village home guards, our MAT teams, our mobile teams did a pretty good job in

18:30 helping them secure their own backyards. There's no question that our advisers with the main line units in the areas of operations they were involved in were successful in assisting them to control such things as air support, artillery support etcetera. Our teams operating

19:00 the specialist equipment, such as the sensor equipment were successful in assisting in securing operational areas. I think our success rate could be considered pretty high. But when, in the final analysis, when you look at what, how things finished up, you can't say that the operation overall was a success and maybe it never would have been.

How were you training the troops for jungle warfare in Vietnam?

19:30 Here in Australia or in Vietnam?

In Australia first.

Well that was the job of the, of Canungra, the Jungle Warfare Centre Canungra. Now I was not involved there directly so I can't really answer that from my own personal experience 'cause I didn't, I wasn't required to undergo any training before going to Vietnam. But all I can say from my previous experience at Canungra, it would be very realistic, to the extent that they had a mock up Vietnamese village as part of

20:00 the set up there at Canungra which simulated to the nth degree the type of situation that our troops would and did strike in Vietnam. How to search a village, you know, the sort of tricks and ruses that the Vietnamese got up to into concealing themselves in these villages. So Canungra was extremely effective and it was proven in the performance of the troops in Vietnam.

20:30 What we tried to do at our own, when the training team ran the Jungle Warfare Centre in Phuoc Tuy Province was to try and have a mini Canungra, including the set up of a village, a typical type of Viet village. And I think they were pretty successful in the training of their officers and NCOs at that school, too. That was our final sort of fling in Vietnam and then left it to them to run their war,

21:00 which lasted another year or so.

What were the jungle war techniques that were specific to that conflict?

I think the search and destroy type of procedure, the tunnel, how to investigate the tunnels, of course the Vietnamese like the Chinese were "excellent diggers," quote, unquote. They would,

21:30 they had quite fantastically sophisticated underground developed headquarters, hospitals, schools, you know, you name it and our engineers who were trained to search out the tunnels were quite expert in that. That was a unique situation which we hadn't confronted in Malaya for example. The type of village which, type of typical village and the methods the

22:00 Viet Cong, the Vietminh used in concealment in the village to conceal weapons and stores and indeed their own people was again different to what we'd experienced in Malaya, in the jungle camps in Malaya, so that was unique to Vietnam. The search and destroy operations were different to Malaya because of the type of terrain, it was more open, paddy fields, rubber

22:30 plantations, except for the highlands, less jungle than we experienced in Malaya, so they were different, in Phuoc Tuy Province particularly. So that's where it did differ, you might say was unique to the Vietnamese campaign.

Can you tell us what the intelligence community was like in Vietnam compared to Malaya?

Well, it was

23:00 virtually CIA and as a result, it was you know, territory into which one wasn't allowed to go. Whatever intelligence the Commander of Australian Force Vietnam got and was able to then dispense down to the task force was not really at the sources, and so forth, not known to us. We in the training team were not directly affected to the same degree

23:30 because we had our specific roles and our specific areas of operations and therefore we relied upon local intelligence rather than the intelligence network which was established by the CIA. So and of course they used a lot of sophisticated means too of intelligence gathering, we of course assisted in that with our sensor people in, at divisional locations. But they had airborne sensors, all sorts of

24:00 whiz bang devices which they used, besides having their own informer organisations. But in the training team it didn't come across us you know directly, we had our own local sources, and that was sort of

village gossip you might say, which helped, in the way which our sub units you know deployed and operated and how it may have affected their operations.

Do you think the intelligence gathering and sharing could have been improved?

Oh, it could have been,

24:30 you can always improve it. Again it depends upon the reliability of intelligence. You can share intelligence, but if the intelligence itself is faulty well then it's, it can be extremely dangerous to react to it.

Do you know how identifying the enemy affected the actual soldiers on the ground and knowing who was who? Did it have a large strain on them?

25:00 Well I think they just accepted that, at night any movement outside their fire base or if they were on a patrol and they'd bash it up for the night and they were not back in their own fire base, any movement was enemy. So again, you had to be fairly oh, well, sensible about the whole thing.

25:30 You still wanted to get your laundry done, so if the person was doing your laundry quite successfully, and if that person happened to get in your sights at night, wearing a pair of black pyjamas, well you might have to find a new laundry man, new dhobi wallah. I don't think that really it caused them to overly sort of be concerned, it was just another one of the hazards.

26:00 **Do you think Vietnam was more of a fight for independence in that country, rather than necessary for international action?**

Well,

26:30 it was a, well as you appreciate, it was part of the old French Indo China. And with all due respects to the French, and you know, they're a fine country with a fine history and so forth. But I don't think they were very good Colonisers insofar that they took no opportunity to help to train the indigenous Indonesian, ah, Vietnamese nor Cambodians,

27:00 nor Malaysians for that matter in taking over the country. I think they had this funny idea, maybe a Gaullist idea, that French Indo China would always be French Indo China and there was no need to train the locals. And of course when they were forced out of Dien Bien Phu, the Paris agreements as I recall, again, set up this arbitrary dividing line,

27:30 and the parallel. And I suppose again, a bit like Korea, we can draw some comparisons there that the non communist south should have been allowed to prevail and do their own thing and not be subject to being overtaken by the communist north Vietnam. So I

28:00 suppose in some respects we could say, you could say that the free world forces, of which I think there were thirteen all told, thirteen countries in Vietnam went there with similar sort of intentions as the much more numerous countries did to go to the aid of South Korea. But it was I think, still it wasn't as universally a supported move internationally as it

28:30 was the defence of South Korea, and therefore our involvement didn't have that overwhelming support nationally as did our Korean involvement. Whether it was the right decision at all or not, I find hard to answer that one because I think that South Vietnam would have self destroyed anyhow, with the sort of

29:00 Government that they had and people running the country. So it may finish up as it is now without any loss of life by America or Australia or anybody else who was involved in the free world forces side.

What was your view on the domino theory at the time?

No I thought that the days of that were over, it certainly was very much the case when we went into Korea, because that was

29:30 the first stand that non communist world had taken against the communists and arguably the most successful. But subsequently when one looks at the subsequent operations in Malaya and the fact that democracy was prevailing in other countries of South East Asia, except for Cambodia, I don't think the domino theory

30:00 really had much credibility, so I wouldn't think that would have been a strong argument for our going into Vietnam. It may have been voiced at the time by some people who wanted us to be there for other reasons, but I would have thought, I think it could have been argued strongly against being a cogent reason.

What do you think were the strongest arguments for us being Vietnam?

Oh well, it's always good to have big brother

30:30 on your side and so maintain the entente cordiale with our friendly neighbours across the Pacific. Yeah, well I don't think I can say much more, being a soldier you go where you're told, you do what you're told.

You think that's the primary reason we were there to stay good with big brother?

Well,

31:00 we'd been there in a small form since '61, Colonel Ted Serong, who took the first thirty blokes in there, when the training team first went in, before we deployed our infantry units and so forth and air force and navy. Had been also working with the CIA for some time both there and in Burma, so he was pretty instrumental in giving information

31:30 to the decision makers. I met him a couple of times, he's now dead poor fellow, but I don't know whether he was overly, overly influenced by the Pentagon, he may have been and his, his being the source of information to our own decision makers, it may have over-influenced them. Hard to say, it's easier to be wise in retrospect.

32:00 Yeah, but I again, I think the result of, in Vietnam, as it is today, would have occurred anyhow, had we been there or not.

In the '60's while Vietnam was happening and you weren't there, were you wondering why you weren't sent there yet?

Oh no I wasn't wondering, I was a bit disappointed, but not wondering. No, I had my job to

32:30 do, I'd been very fortunate up to that stage in the postings I'd had and they'd given me quite a bit of variety of tasks and experience. As I say, I was greatly honoured when given the position that I had at Duntroon, although under the circumstances I would have preferred differently. But no, I didn't wonder why, I just as I say, was a little bit disappointed that I hadn't,

33:00 been. But oh no, well you, you know you don't lobby for positions in the army, at least I didn't, and so, you go where you think you can best do the job.

Why were you disappointed?

Oh well, because it was operational service and I just wanted to increase my, my, my operational experience. And, as I say in Malaya, my position there was one of Intelligence officer for the brigade, not

33:30 operationally with the battalion. My previous operational service with the battalion had been in Korea, so if it was at all possible I would have liked to have gone there either as a company commander or as a battalion commander or whatever, but the way in which things happened, you know the phasing of things, that just didn't occur. And it make have been because of the precipitous posting to Duntroon which put me out of consideration for nearly two years, may or may not, I don't know.

And when you get to Vietnam

34:00 **it's not long before troops are starting to be taken out and scaled down, yet the Americans are still there. What were you thinking about the Australian Government pulling out?**

Oh no, well the Americans also were starting to de-escalate the situation as far as they were concerned because of the political pressure being brought to bear. I think it was [American President Richard] Nixon who you know had, firstly said that we are going to come out and then Johnson. It was a, it was

34:30 well, there was, the Americans are very gung ho, their military position is gung ho, so they try and maintain a bold face on the situation, what ever it is, how bad it is, and whatever they're thinking they often times don't say it. Oh they still maintained the gung ho situation and it was awfully gung ho when one was in one's BOQ [Bachelors' Officers Quarters], which was the Brinks Hotel in central Saigon, just directly opposite the,

35:00 the big French hotel, what was it? Oh I've forgotten now but the number one pub in Saigon. And you'd go back there at night if you had no task in the headquarters of the Free World Forces and go upstairs to the open air restaurant on the top floor of this thirteen storey building. Where we had our flat was on about the seventh storey and you'd be sipping your Californian red and having a nice bit of steak and hearing the gunfire and looking at it you know about twenty miles out. You know, you could

35:30 see the flashes and hear the woofs and the crumps, and there you were in a sort of at a grand stand seat, it was a bit eerie, quite bizarre really. But no, there was the occasional terrorist the occasional bomb throwing in Saigon of course, but nothing of the scale that you know, people are experiencing today in other places.

Do you think the Americans are gung ho to their advantage or detriment?

36:00 I suppose you know, we're all a bit gung ho, but with the Americans it's a much more disciplined gung ho-ish, where we tend to be, we tend to sort of gung ho our own way. Whereas with the Yanks it's you know, one, two, three, four, you know, you've seen the films, the boot camps and the way they carry on. Well you know, they've got a much more disparate population to draw their people from than we, although we're becoming much more

36:30 thank God I think, in some respects. You know various ethnic groups, nationalities and so forth, we have

mixture in Australia, we're no longer the purely Anglo Saxon you know Celtic whatever. But with America, it's such a diverse group population, I suppose that's part of the bonding, you know male bonding or whatever, but certainly they do put a lot of stress on this, you know, through these portals

37:00 pass the greatest in the world you know, second to none, so that's why we call ourselves "none".

Do you think the Americans produced a smart soldier?

Well they're very, very competent technically in many respects. What, what is a smart soldier? Well first a smart soldier is one who knows how to use his equipment, they're pretty adept at that.

37:30 Then the thing is, what do you do when the equipment doesn't work? And that's where we train our people how to work and do the job when the equipment fails. When the GPS [global positioning system] battery goes flat, how do you still map read using a compass and your eyeballs and a map and not lose yourself and be able to give a map reference to artillery fire if your GPS, you know, goes on the blink. So I think this is one way in which maybe, again, because of our size, we're able to develop the individual soldier to his maximum, or her

38:00 maximum capacity and not just be so, to be a hundred percent dependent on the equipment you have.

You said a smart soldier would need to know how to use the equipment, but also, when to use the equipment?

Yes, sure, sure, ah yeah, indeed. And yeah, well that goes without saying, you don't waste your ammunition, you use it effectively, and you don't just blast off a gun to make it sound good, you use it

38:30 selectively on targets. And because ammunition has to be brought up, it's got to be, you've got to count the rounds virtually so you, oh no, it's got to be discreetly used, but it's got to, you know, how to use it to it's maximum effect, and when, yeah.

Do you think the Americans knew when to use it?

Oh well, obviously, some did and some didn't you know but, yeah well, you know, the tendency of the American

39:00 to rely heavily upon their technical advantage I think is something which we fortunately don't and can't because many of it, you know much of it is imported anyhow. But I think we've got to use our own animal cunning and skill and improvisation. This is where I think you know, again, the Australian soldier can do things which others are incapable because he's able to improvise. And he's able to think

39:30 quickly and not just rely upon a drill which has been drummed into him and I think you know, he's very adaptable. And even though we are a very, you know as a population very urbanised, I think there's still some of the basic sort of outdoor, you know, sort of fundamental knowledge in us all, and that can be exploited to a maximum

40:00 and in our army training this does happen.

So you think Australians are trained to be a bit more independent and think with their own resources?

Oh yeah, oh yeah, I do, and independent, but not indisciplined, yeah indeed.

Tape 8

00:37 **At the stage you went to Vietnam, can you tell us about what you knew about fragging [officer killed by his own troops]?**

Oh, I'd heard of the alleged occasions of disgruntled soldier shooting up or using a grenade to

01:00 injure some of his own, but that was all. I don't recall ever seeing detailed reports of the incidents. I was rather surprised I must say, that if the, if the, you know, allegations were proven that this did occur, and, but I wouldn't certainly pass judgement on the thing without knowing the full details.

And that was quite prevalent amongst

01:30 **Americans especially, can you tell us what you knew about that?**

Not much at all really, no I didn't. No you see one's rather flat-strapped doing one's job with one's own unit. And I had a, I was on a big learning curve when I got to Vietnam, because as I said, I wasn't, I hadn't undergone any training specifically for the job and therefore I was learning, had to, you know, start

02:00 sort of from scratch and with running when my feet hit the ground at Saigon Airport. So, I had a short period with my predecessor, Lieutenant Colonel Bill Stilverston (Sp?), about three or four days before he came off back to Australia. So, you know, one really heard of these things, but a lot of it was bar

gossip, and so didn't put much credence in it and you had to get on with your own job.

It was prevalent I know in the Australian Army,

02:30 **as well to a small degree.**

Well I don't know about prevalent, I don't know that it was prevalent in the Australian Army.

But the fragging did take place?

There were, I think one or two occasions only, but minor, to my recollection, I don't think we can say it was prevalent. I think it may, and again, I say, I've not been privy to any of the reports of the allegations, but I understand it may have occurred on possibly one or two occasions, but certainly not prevalent.

03:00 **In dealing with the south, the ARVUN Forces, what kinds of problems did you encounter?**

Well first of all, language problem, you gotta have, you know, be able to communicate. And language was a thing you had to overcome, we had some trained in Vietnamese, trained at the RAAF School of Managers before going. But you never have enough, so you were relying upon the ARVUN

03:30 to provide them. And they often times didn't have sufficient to go round, that was particularly so in our, with the Jungle Warfare Training Centre, Than Kiep [1st Australian Task Force unit base at Nui Dat?] in Phuoc Tuy Province which we were running, the training team running, interpreters. In some cases the level of military knowledge of the officers and warrant officers posted to that particular

04:00 training centre was barely adequate for the job. In some cases their dedication was lacking, and in some cases they were just bone idle and lazy. And in some cases they were not very honest in what they were doing, because what they said they did, they didn't do. And so, again, as I say, by that time, war had been going on

04:30 in Vietnam for twenty five years and people were getting tired and that was reflected. So, that was one of the big problems.

What was the ARVUN force composed of in ethnic and religious terms, their composition?

Ethnic and religious, well they were all,

Well was it primarily a Christian force?

Oh, no. Oh, by no means, no. No, no, Christianity was a very small percentage of the population, oh, no.

05:00 You know, they were Buddhists, there were some Christians, but no. No, and, you know they were ostensibly all non communist Vietnamese, either refugees from the north or residents of South Vietnam, so I think it was you know, a composition of the forces of The Republic of Vietnam were reflective of the population, you know.

05:30 **How do you think the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] and the VC [Viet Cong] managed to infiltrate so deeply into South Vietnam?**

Well the NVA were able to use many means of infiltration. The Vietminh Trail, the Ho Chi Minh Trail as it's referred to was not a trail, it was a network of tracks running down the spine of the

06:00 mountains which divide Vietnam from Cambodia and Laos. And you know, well protected, overhead camouflage and with sympathetic villagers, Montagnards and others giving them some security and so they were able to bring down that corridor, large bodies of troops, and indeed

06:30 equipments and weaponry and artillery pieces and so forth, quite safely. The Americans tried to deter them with their bombing but it wasn't very effective. Occasionally the ARVUN would make a foray out to that area, but they weren't very well equipped to do the job. And so that was one means of the North Vietnamese army being able to bring concentrations of troops down as far as Saigon in the south,

07:00 back down to Hue, down to the delta. As far as the Vietminh was concerned, well they were either disaffected South Vietnamese or North Vietnamese who had just filtered down in penny packets, mixing with the villagers. And as I said before, how do you detect by visual means one Vietnamese from another, you can't. So that was you know, the

07:30 advantages all rested with them, so I don't think anyone can be blamed for that. That was just one of the facts of the situation.

Was the Australian Army Training Team involved in Operation Phoenix?

Not to my knowledge, no.

What was Operation Phoenix, the theme of Operation Phoenix? Did it have any sort of coordination with Australian ground forces?

Well it was mainly intelligence gathering,

08:00 but the degree to which I think Australian ground forces were involved is not known to me, you know, I

can't answer that one, sorry.

You were telling me about the problems with the ARVUN before, why do you think that, outside war weariness, what was the reason for such investment of military resources and yet not getting the results

08:30 **in combat operationally speaking with the ARVUN? You had the NVA who was highly disciplined, you had the ARVUN on the other hand which was disintegrating?**

Well it was the US Government's you know, their commitment to the Government of the Republic of Vietnam,

09:00 South Vietnam, to support them in their fight against communist take over. They saw it as you know, as being the honest sort of commitment they had and so that's why they maintained it to the nth degree they did. Until the situation became quite clear that they just would not succeed and they had to make a rather hasty and precipitous and embarrassing withdrawal. You know, there was no other way

09:30 in which I think the American government could have done the job. You know, they tried to get as many other nations involved as possible but really it wasn't very successful. They got the Koreans, the ROKs and they got the Thais, they got a few others but not many. So, it was principally let's face it, an American initiative which didn't succeed.

10:00 **The Cambodian troops, were they from the Lon Nol regime?**

I'm not sure which part of Cambodia they came from. We just received them by the plane load, put them through the machine for six to eight weeks, then put them, sent them back by the plane load, but what regions from Cambodia they were recruited I don't know. They came as virtually village entities or provincial entities you know and went back to their own villages and provinces, hopefully able to withstand

10:30 the, you know, the Cambodian,

Khmer Rouge?

Khmer Rouge, but of course unsuccessfully. So, again it was an initiative which was unfortunately a failure, it was a token I think, that's all you can call it.

Was there to your knowledge at that stage, was there collaboration between the Khmer Rouge and the Vietminh, oh sorry, the

11:00 **NVA, VC?**

There could have been well, there could have been, I say because of the boundary there, the Ho Chi Minh Trail boundary, I would imagine there would have to have been some sort of liaison between them. I can't see any reason why not, I mean to say the same political persuasion and objective, so why not? And exchange information, sure, yeah. To what degree it assisted them in the operations with the other

11:30 NVA, I don't know but, I would imagine that there would be some exchange of information there.

Was there a degree of apathy amongst the training team about training Cambodians and ARVUN troops after the problems you'd been encountering?

There was frustration rather than apathy, frustration and disappointment I think, but never at any stage was the morale of the training team low. I mean to

12:00 say, they did the best they could and they were proud of being who they were and they, their effort was you know, one hundred and ten percent all the time. So no, there was no apathy, there was as I say frustration, disappointment at times, but the odd success which helped it make it worth while.

How did this manifest, the frustration?

Ah, well the reaction of some of the,

12:30 of the ARVUN themselves and, the fact that they were not sufficiently enthusiastic at times to get involved in the training. Because, I suppose they thought it was going to expose them once they'd finished their training to create a danger when they got back to their units, being highly trained. So, but yeah, that was one of the reasons.

How would you rate the NVA as a fighting force?

It was very well trained, very disciplined, on the Soviet model.

13:00 Their equipment was good, you know they built on their success of Dien Bien Phu, took it from there, and of course they politically they were all heavily indoctrinated. And Uncle Ho, Ho Chi Minh was you know, the godfather of them all and you know I suppose when they died they went to their own particular nirvana, if they died in battle. So, oh no, they were a very formidable

13:30 opponents and as our task force in the first battalions who fought there, in their SAS too, realised. But

you know, I don't think we underestimated them at any time.

So, their individual training methods, were they in any way similar to Australian or Commonwealth troops?

What the NVA?

Well yeah, I'm trying to sort of like look at regimes, as you said the Americans concentrate on mass

14:00 **whereas the Australians or the Commonwealth tends to concentrate on more individualistic training.**

Well I think the fact that they were fighting in their own country placed them at a great advantage to say what the Americans could do. I think remembering again too, the American's recruitment was based upon college drop-outs and the unemployed so they weren't, and they were conscripted, so they weren't very well, highly motivated. Now these NVA were, they were highly motivated, they were

14:30 fighting in their own countryside for what they saw was a justifiable objective to have the whole of the country under their own communist regime. Now, you know, that make, and their training methods I'm not familiar with, I must say, but I would imagine they'd have been not been dissimilar to the Chinese, where you know, a loss of life is no great, it's no great, of great concern, not as it is for us. I mean to say we're,

15:00 you know, if we can achieve the objective without loss of life that's great and we minimise the loss of life whenever we can, or injury or wounding. But with the Chinese, and I would think the same would apply to the NVA, that wasn't as great a concern. But I'm not familiar with their precise sort of training policies, regimes or processes, no.

In the mini jungle warfare school,

15:30 **you said that it was based on a framework of Canungra in the sense of training policy. What types of techniques would you train them in, in jungle warfare, was there any similarities to Malaya or the Second World War in Papua New Guinea?**

No it was more like, no what was had been learned by our own troops in Phuoc Tuy Province from our own operations based upon their successes so the training program was devolved for

16:00 the ARVUN at that training school. So, no it wasn't based upon Malaya or New Guinea, 'cause the conditions and situations were quite different.

Was this more like a medium intensity conflict or a high intensity conflict?

Oh well it's always intense when you're in contact. It was based I say on our operations in Phuoc Tuy Province, search and destroy operations and patrolling,

16:30 fire base security, so, would you call it high intensity, I don't know that you would. I don't think you'd put a handle on it like high, low or medium intensity. It was specific to, well to the degree of threat that the NVA and the Vietminh posed, the Viet Cong posed yeah.

So what sort of knowledge did you have of the

17:00 **NVA VC Jungle Warfare techniques, things like traps, tactics in the jungle they would use, that you would train them to counter.**

Yeah well, of course the use of pingies, the barbs, stakes, bamboo stakes in trenches, often times with some poisonous liquids on the spikes which defended their own sort of

17:30 firm bases. Their methods of encirclement, where, if we were in an exposed position, their use of mass in the attack. Oh, there was various other you know, well, what from experience which was learned by our own Task Force Battalions which was then transmitted to the ARVUN in our training school.

18:00 It was very country specific and say, there was no previous we could draw from to run that successful operation there.

Was it known that the Viet Cong NVA did build bridges under water, was that common knowledge at that stage?

Oh I think that was part of intelligence which we gained,

18:30 yes. And their spider man holes you know, beneath buildings, beneath huts and their underground tunnelling. This was all intelligence which we gained the hard way, yeah. And their ability to camouflage, yeah I think the battle field intelligence that we had

19:00 was reasonably good.

The equipment that was given to these soldiers from Cambodia and the local Units you trained, were they American firearms?

Yes, oh yes, American equipment was fully used right throughout.

The AATV, what sort of equipment were they using?

We trained them with the American equipment, yeah.

Including their own equipment, their personal equipment would also be American?

Yeah, yeah.

Can you tell us what type

19:30 **of equipment they were using?**

Oh gee whiz, well there was the M1 rifle, the Carbine, of course the anti personnel grenades, and anti personnel mines, the Claymore mines, what else, trying to go through the inventory of weapons. But the basic Infantry Battalion

20:00 weapons which, oh the sixty mill [millimetre] mortars and US supplied, because that was the only source of supply, the US, for all of the units there in Vietnam, so it had to be standardised.

How did SLRs [self loading rifles] fare in Vietnam, what problems and things did they encounter?

I don't think there were any problems. As long as the ammunition was kept clean and the weapon was maintained,

20:30 it was quite an effective weapon. I don't recall any reports of any problems, any unusual problems with the SLR.

What about the M16 [machine gun], did that have any problems in Vietnam?

I don't believe so, no, not that I can recall.

In a tropical environment, did things like rain, mud, that sort of stuff?

Oh well, it does place a greater burden

21:00 on the individual soldier for maintenance, yeah, for sure. If, you know, you must spend more time and more regularly maintain the weapon than you do in other drier conditions, sure. But otherwise as long as it's well maintained, no problem. And protected from the environment when it's not being used.

So you were the last batch of Australian troops to leave Vietnam?

Well, when I left, I handed over to Colonel Keith Kirkland,

21:30 and then when he left, he handed over to Colonel Peter Johnson and he brought the team back and that was either late '71 or early '72, yeah, just prior to the fall of Saigon. But there had been plans, you know, right back in Billy McMahon's time and then was reinforced when Gough Whitlam came in, that we were coming out. And so the de-escalation of the situation as far as Australia was concerned was fairly rapid in fact,

22:00 and it meant I say, a rapid reassessment of what we could do, where we could do it, how we could do it and how secure we could do it, how secure it would be. So that's why we just withdrew the force quite significantly and concentrated on the training at Phuoc Tuy and a bit of protection for our embassy. And I think we may have also had some navy there doing some mine clearance,

22:30 that's about it I think, yeah.

Were you relieved to leave Vietnam?

Oh, yes, I was certainly, it wasn't, yeah I was happy, I was certainly happy to come back to my wife and family. And you know, looking forward to the next posting wherever it happened to be, and that was an interesting one. So I came back to a good job in army office, with people I'd worked with before,

23:00 some I'd known since early days at Duntroon and in Director Military Operations and Plans, but only for about seven or eight months before I was promoted to full colonel and went off to India as the Service Advisor to the Australian High Commission.

Tell us about the Indian appointment, it's quite an interesting one.

Well, it was. Yeah, we arrived, I think it was February of 1973 and

23:30 I took over from a previous military advisor who was, or service advisor, who's a full colonel, one Jim Ockletree who'd been a commander of a battalion in Malaya, much older than I. But we bought with us our two younger children, and we eventually had a quarter on the Australian High Commission compound at Chanankyapuri in New Delhi which was very pleasant. An Australian bungalow type thing with air conditioning in most rooms, which

24:00 more often was breaking down than working. And I had a warrant officer to assist me in the office. But I

was accredited to Nepal as well as to India, as indeed was the high commissioner accredited to Nepal. And I had a counter part in Islamabad in Pakistan but I was also, had to keep an eye over the river in Bangladesh as well as Nepal. And the job was, I was seconded

24:30 to the Department of Foreign Affairs during that time with diplomatic you know, privileges and immunity. It was a case of overt intelligence gathering which I did fairly successfully I think, because I had good liaison with the Indians. As Gough Whitlam, the Prime Minister of the day and [Indian Prime Minister] Mrs Ghandi were very close in political persuasions and also in their commitment to the

25:00 Zone of Peace, being the Indian Ocean and Australia and India being the two largest liberal states on the Indian Ocean, they saw a collective responsibility here. And in the British Military Mission at their High Commission, which consisted of a 2 star general, my counter part, and then a naval captain, an air force colonel, and an air force wing commander, air force

25:30 group captain and a naval commodore and subordinate staff. The Brits, because of their relationship with Indians, their sort of love hate relationship after two hundred years of the Raj [British colonial] rule, but still the Indians did realise that they owed a lot to the Brits for their present position in the world. For what the Brits left them in the way of government infrastructure, the way of political democracy, the way of the

26:00 services. They and Australia, we seemed to have a certain rapport with the Indians and we were I'm sure were given entree to many places that even the Soviet [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – now Russia] Embassy, Soviet military attaché and the Americans were not, and the others too, because of that situation. And so I was able to report back on a number of current factors which was

26:30 of value to Canberra for decision making on how the situation in the sub-Continent was developing and how they, how Australia may or may not influence the situation. India at that time of course was heavily linked with the Soviet Union, exporting soft goods and chapatis and getting back arms in return. But also, New Delhi was a very interesting location

27:00 because it was the cross roads of the east and the west, as well as the north and southern hemisphere. It's a very large diplomatic post and as a result, one had the eastern Europeans, as well as the western Europeans, the Americans, the Brits and ourselves, and other south east Asian countries including you know, all of those which have since changed governments, such as Iraq and

27:30 Iran and others as part of the diplomatic corps. So one was able to get a fair amount of information which sometimes became quite good intelligence from just casual conversations. And the job was very highly representative because the defence advisor or attaché in non commonwealth countries is virtually the number two to the high commissioner as far as representation was concerned. The deputy high commissioner, in our

28:00 case, was number two from the diplomatic point of view, but representation. So one would be required to be uniformed and at receptions, official receptions on at least four to five nights a week and maybe more than one reception at a night. There were the various national days, armed forces days, motherhood days, whatever days that that embassy was holding, one was there. And one would be there for an hour or so, each one,

28:30 listening to these national anthems which lasted about five minutes at a time in the middle of the summer, which was not very comfortable, but often that was a good source of information I'll say. In fact I got to know a fair bit about the Soviets because my, the Soviet naval commander who was part of their organisation, general commander in charge, navy, army, air force colonels, he was a Georgian. And the Georgian's always feel a bit independent from the Kremlin from

29:00 Moscow, and so he was an interesting person to talk to. My Chinese counterpart, who was a mister, they don't wear uniform, the Chinese military service attaches. After about, being at dinner with him a couple of times and a couple of brandies in between courses as is their custom, I discovered that he was the commanding officer of a Chinese battalion which was sitting opposite us in 3RAR at one stage in Korea when I was a platoon commander.

29:30 It was a very interesting re-meeting. But no, the job was an interesting one, you know, the Indian military industrial complex was a fascinating one, how it was developing at that time. And what was of interest to Australia of course was their development in nuclear areas and going to the various cantonments and visiting them, that was interesting.

30:00 I would go to a, visit say an army cantonment and start the inspection, or visit, about seven in the morning. 'Course it was so bloody hot you know, by nine, half past nice you had to go into the mess for eleven-ses. And you'd walk into the mess and look around the room and there you'd see faces of the previous commanding officers, all wearing the same uniform, right back you know, to the nineteenth century, up until, they're all looking the same, until 1947, when

30:30 the faces suddenly changed colour, but they still wore the same uniform. And their weaponry, their equipment hadn't changed since 1947. And this is where Australia's different you see, the Indian Government realised or the army convinced them they could handle the Pakis, and handle the Chinese who made an incursion into the North East Frontier Area, NEFA, with the equipment the Brits had left them in 1947 without having, going to the expense of buying new stuff or building

31:00 new stuff. That was the situation when I was there in the 60s and so they were still using the old ’37 equipment and the pre or World War II equipment shall we say. But no, that was quite a fascinating time, the three years I had there. And Nepal was interesting because one would visit there occasionally and you’d go up onto the northern boundary of Nepal and look across the Friendship Bridge to Tibet where the Chinese were standing guard

31:30 their side and the Nepalese army on the home side. And it was, of course India itself was a fascinating country, my grandfather had served India and so I had a bit of a feel for the place and as a boy, you know, I read Kipling’s books. But the, it’s like a, not a country, well it’s a subcontinent of course,

32:00 but everything centres on Delhi. And you know, although the variety of ethnic groups in India I found fascinating you know, from going from the far north in Kashmir, which we visited a couple of times, and I can see why the Pakis and Indians are both fighting over it because it’s a beautiful part of the world. Where indeed we had at the time an Australian agricultural program going, oranges, in Kashmir. But you know, the lakes in Kashmir are quite remarkable and so we had a

32:30 couple of very pleasant short stays on houseboats on Lake Nagin. But going from there, where with the blue eyes and blonde hair, some people say it’s the remnants of Alexander the Great when went through with his soldiering. Going through the country right down to the south, where not only does the curries become from very mild to very hot, but the language is quite different, the religions are different, the

33:00 dress is different. And from Rajasthan in the west of Bengal in the east, it’s an empire where everything centres on Delhi. And of course the time I was there Mrs Ghandi had an iron fist, but it was the army which was really, I was able to say, was the cement that was holding the country together. Because there was a fair bit of you know, feeling in the various states about the centralised control and the fact that Hindi

33:30 was the only accepted language if you wanted to get a job with the government, regardless of what your native tongue was. This didn’t go down too well either in some places. But no it was quite remarkable, and again of course the fact that it had the history that it had. And went up to Shimla, which used to be of course the summer capital in the old days when the Raj used to transport everything and get em at the funicular railway to Shimla. Using

34:00 Dehra-dhun, their Military Academy. And the High Commission had a change of air station in the southern, in the lower Himalayas, which was you know, quite remarkable to get away from the heat of the plains up to there. But no, it was three fascinating years and when I got the telegram in 1976 that you’re coming to Tasmania

34:30 to take over command in Tasmania, I welcomed it because always, as I said, I hoped to serve here some time. But getting here is quite a cultural shock, from India.

Can we just stop for a moment? All right, we’re back. Can you tell us the differences between the Indian Army and the Australian Army, in terms of its structure?

Well the Indian Army of course is a massive

35:00 organisation. Let’s see, because of the caste system, it’s different in many respects. As I recall, the officering of the army as against the other ranks, the rank and file, they tried to keep the caste system sort of, that it can’t be ignored,

35:30 and therefore does affect the structure of the army. Of course as deployment throughout the sub-Continent as such, it is obviously using as many of the buildings the British Army left behind, and the British Army in India left behind. But they are strategically placed, both for the defence of the country in Kashmir in the northern boundaries, but also I think for the internal security of the country.

36:00 So, I think that their role is quite different to Australia’s. The fact that they have not, and I don’t see them committing troops in combat outside India as a factor. We had in Korea an Indian unit, but it was a field ambulance. In fact it was the Indian 16th Parachute Field Ambulance and they were an expert organisation, they were very good. And I visited,

36:30 when I was in India, the Parachute Training School. And they’re run very much on British lines, same as ours are. Yes the army’s role, I think is, there’s quite a heavy weighting on internal security, they have been used from time to time in that role. But so was the British Army’s role in India too, so nothing has really changed much.

Did it operate very similarly to the British Army in internal security?

I think

37:00 so, yeah, I think they still find the same course of action. You have to give the magistrate and you have to read the riot act and when you shoot, you don’t shoot indiscriminately, you shoot to hit the leaders, the rabble rousers. And you try and hit them in the lower part of the body, the legs if you can, rather than have a fatal, mortal shot. I think that, I’d never witnessed any of course, I must admit that, but I think their SOP, their Standard Operation Procedure is, as was with the Brits and

37:30 they didn’t see any need to change.

What were the differences between the Pakistani and the Indian Armies?

Well, I say, I was not accredited to Pakistan, I visited Pakistan as I did when I visited Iraq. I got to Kabul, took my wife for a trip up the Khyber Pass and down into Kabul. The Pakistanis, they're very similar, very similar indeed to

38:00 to the Indian army. 'Course their basic training some generations before, was the same, was identical. But I can't really speak with any degree of authority on the standard of training of the Paki Army, one can only really I suppose draw comparison with the way things are being handled in Kashmir by both the Indians and the Paks. I think they're much of a muchness

38:30 really.

Having stayed in India for a few years, what potential do you see between India and Australia as far as military relations are concerned, foreign relations?

Well I think there'll always be a pretty strong liaison with Australia and India. I think it's important that there is, because, you know, they are a dominant force in south Asia, and there has to be an acknowledgement of

39:00 that. And I think that we, I believe we do, I can't be sure of this, but I believe we do, still maintain a military or defence advisor with the Australian High Commission in India and I think it's a well worth while part of our overseas Diplomatic network of information gathering and maintaining presence. And I think whilst we are there and can maintain good working professional relationships with India and with Pakistan for

39:30 that matter, well to the good. I don't know, I don't think we have anyone in Burma in Rangoon but maybe when there's a change of government there, there could be.

Now, with all the experience you've had in three different conflicts, how has that affected you, whether that be good or in bad terms, whatever you'd like to see it for, how has it impacted?

40:00 Well I think fortunately, well health wise not too much adversely. I have a small disability pension from the Department of Veteran Affairs for my hearing which is impaired, and some of my legs is a bit but I'm still reasonably hearty for seventy four so I don't think it's impaired me that way physically. Mentally or psychologically, I suppose it's been one where I've realised that you know the, that

40:30 warfare is the final, and it must be the ultimate decision making process and every other avenue should be explored before it is used. But by the same token, until we have a perfect world I think there will always be a need for an adequate defence force, and we're a long way from a perfect world yet. So I think that as a country here in south Asia,

41:00 in the south Pacific and a more advanced country than most others in the area, we have a need to maintain a viable defence force. But as to how it's affected me, I think it has opened my eyes to the other country's problems to a greater degree than otherwise I would have had, understanding. I think it's rounded me off a bit

41:30 more, than I would have been had I had a nine to five job, came to the same place every day for the thirty five years.

Tape 9

00:31 **Okay, so from all your experiences, what has been the highlight in your military career?**

Well I'm glad to say first of all, I can't recall any low lights. The highlight. Oh well, it's very difficult to say, because you know, at each stage of one's career you,

01:00 you know, if you have a good posting and what you believe is a successful one, you've achieved something, it's a highlight. No I think that all of my postings have been interesting, that's the first important thing I think. And I think in all of my postings I've had something to contribute and in, I hope all my postings, that contribution has been worthwhile. As for a

01:30 highlight, well I suppose you can say if you go out with a bang it's okay, and I decided you know, to go out with a bang. And that was when I came here to, posted here to Tasmania after India in February of 1976 as the commander of what was then referred to as the 6th Military District and the 6th Field Force Group. Which was the formation which I was commanding which was all the units in Tasmania,

02:00 the Field Force Units, and the 6th MD or Military District Units, or the Non Field Force Units. That was a highlight because you were the senior defence person in the state and you were responsible directly to the Chief of the General Staff for overall conduct of what happened in the state. And also directly to the functional commanders of the generals commanding the Field Force Command Op,

02:30 Logistic Command and Training Command, to work within their guidelines and policies. But being and

island state and being divorced geographically from the mainland, it is different and so one was able to get on with the job and make decisions which sometimes would not be possible elsewhere. And I think in some respects, it was the best full colonel's job that one could have in the army. And so, I suppose one could

03:00 see that as a highlight, being my last position. And after three years here, we as a family decided it was, you know having had the chance to live in many other places in Australia, except South Australia and Western Australia and the Northern Territory. But we felt that you know, this might well be the place where we could stay fairly permanently as we had fairly

03:30 semi-permanently, you know habitats in these other places. And so we decided to stay and become a civilian here in Tassie, and it was I think the second best decision I've ever made, well maybe the third best, anyway, certainly the second best.

And the first best was?

Oh it was meeting my wife and marrying her and joining the army, they go pretty much hand in glove and then staying here. Because it gave me the opportunity of

04:00 continuing an active working career, which had I not taken up, had I gone back to Canberra, which may have been to a brigadier's position, of course I'd have another five or six years to go. At fifty five I would have been obliged to retire and then what does one do at fifty five, one of the band of the army of retired red hats in Canberra. And we had no real wish to live in Canberra as a place to live, and the pace of Tasmania

04:30 appealed, and it was to the degree that you could determine your own pace. The place itself, although we were, become Tasmanians by adoption, our passports stamped that they may return when we leave the place, it's such a convenient place to live, and such a, climatically as well as topographically and geographically it's rewarding. And as I say, it gave me the opportunity to have an effective working life for another

05:00 twenty years, which I possibly, most likely I would say, would not have had, had I gone back to Canberra to enjoy six more years of service, six more years of salary, six more years of superannuation. Decided to make the decision to quit when I was ahead at the age of forty-nine when for a future employer, you haven't crossed that magic fifty mark, so you still you know, possibly can learn new tricks. So, that was it. So I suppose you know, in retrospect

05:30 whilst all my positions, all my postings, all my jobs have been very satisfying, I suppose my last posting here, my, must be seen to be, if not the, certainly a highlight.

Could you take us through what personal growth you went through after these conflicts and how they changed you as a human being throughout your life?

I suppose tolerance is one thing, it made me more tolerant to other

06:00 people's points of view. I suppose, the acceptance and the dependence upon other people and working as a team rather than just a purely individual. I'm not, not by any means saying, well you always must have someone to be with you, but a,

06:30 a team of people can clearly achieve much more, usually anyhow, than an individual can on his own, or her own. So, I think that was one aspect. Oh I think what changed me is my real appreciation of the Australian way of life and the Australian individual. And because the army is a microcosm of society I always feel, and the people you get

07:00 in the army, they're not rabid militarists, they're not gung-ho killers, they're ordinary blokes who are attracted by the army way of life. Be it the discipline, be it the uniform, not that it wins many points some places, be it the salary which doesn't win any points because you're on a set bloody salary and regardless, there's no overtime, there's no sort of bonuses

07:30 or... But I think that it made me appreciate you know, what the Australian individual is capable of doing, and which is far more than we ever, most of us really appreciate. And how when the chips are down how they stick together and how they look after each other and help to protect each other, and, you know, brotherly love is a corny term, but how it is evidenced so much in the defence

08:00 forces. Yeah and I suppose in many ways it made me appreciate more what Australia is and how lucky we are. Because when you look around now, particularly so many places in the world. But even then, going back now thirty odd years, it was still you know, the comparisons were still quite clear to me.

08:30 And yeah, the three areas of conflict, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, and with the underline those things if you call that development, that's what I think I have drawn from it.

Did you recognise the changes in yourself at the time?

Oh, I'm not one for self analysis, I don't really know, I leave that to others.

09:00 Oh, well, I suppose with maturity, with experience, you know, these things too become more obvious. And again with the job one's doing and the responsibilities one has, that, that I think does bring home to

you the changes that have been affected in yourself. And you know, if one learns from experience, and

09:30 this is the way in which, you know, one does change. And hopefully make the mistake only once if you can possibly avoid repeating it.

You mentioned earlier in the armed forces brotherly love, is that, would you use the term mate ship to, that's an important part of army life?

Oh yeah, very large part, very large part because you know when the chips are down, when you're

10:00 in a combat situation, you're so dependent on each other and oh no, it's highlighted in those situations. The mate ship and the camaraderie you know in general terms and the esprit the corps, the fact that you belong to this brotherhood, if you will, and the fact that your pride in your unit is something which is a bonding, very strong force. And

10:30 yes it sounds pretty corny these days, but I still think it's still something that's worthwhile.

I've heard before that no matter why people go to war, that once they're there, they're fighting for their friends and their mates and to survive. What do you think about that?

Well you know, combat situations as I said earlier, you're given a task. Now that, to achieve

11:00 that task you know, you have to rely upon the people you have with you in your unit or your sub-unit. And therefore it goes without saying that their safety and security are utmost in your mind and without that they may not be there the next minute, and therefore to get the job done you've got to. No, it's something which is axiomatic, there's no question about it. And

11:30 you know, when we were in Korea, we weren't necessarily fighting for Queen and country, that didn't come into our minds much whatsoever. We were fighting to achieve the objective we were given because that was what 3RAR was about. And as our motto says, "Duty First", and so you get on with your duty, and duty is to do the job given you, to the best of your ability and yeah. So looking after your mates

12:00 was of paramount importance and foremost in mind. And as a young platoon commander of course you were, the safety and security of your own troops is always paramount. So whilst you have to accept risk, and the diggers know that they have to accept risk, you minimise that risk by the decisions how you achieve the objective and what approach you take. You don't go straight up the guts in the face of enemy fire, you take a flanking movement where you hopefully can move in dead ground to the

12:30 enemy and attack from the flank where he's not expecting it, so reducing the possibility of casualties and achieving the objective. So yeah, it's a sine qua non if you will.

As you rise up the ranks, do you miss getting further and further away from the front lines?

Well coming, you

13:00 don't have the opportunity to share the experience with the digger as you do obviously at the junior rank. But you make it your business to make contact with the junior ranks as often and, as you can, because, for a number of reasons, to get first hand knowledge, not trying to usurp the responsibility of the junior commanders. In other words it's, you don't go into as I say, when I was commanding

13:30 a field force group here, if I wanted to visit the units you cleared it, you contact the commanding officer and say this is what I'd like to do, and you get their concurrence and you work with him as to a convenient time and place. And when you go from the battalion down to the company, similarly with the company commander and the platoon commander. So you're not trying to undermine or usurp their level of authority, but you attempt to make as much contact as you can with the troops because a, they like to see you and b, you want to

14:00 know them, and you get a feel for the unit, for the morale for the situation. And so, whilst your job is not to be in the front line commanding the section, your job is to command shall we say a brigade, or a battalion or a company from your tactical headquarters which is located as far forward as you possibly can so you can maintain a sense of what is happening. Your job is not to do the job of some of your subordinates, what people have

14:30 to remember you know, you don't give a person a job and then try and do it for them.

Was it easy to keep in contact with the soldiers in the front line?

Oh well my job as a platoon commander in, my job as a platoon commander in Korea, I was there the whole time, so it wasn't different.

But as you were, later?

Well in the case of Vietnam,

15:00 well the case of Malaya first of all, I was the brigade intelligence officer, so my troops were with me the whole time, the command post staff. In the case of Vietnam I got out as often as I possibly could to visit

the attachments, the training team, the mobile training team detachments and the Jungle Warfare Training Centre, and our advisers. And that meant jumping in a jeep or a helicopter and again getting the clearance of the various commanders in the area

15:30 and going and visiting it. But one couldn't do it possibly as often as one would like, but you did it as often as you could.

How much politics is there as you get up into the higher ranks?

Politics, well that's a rather broad term.

Within the army itself?

Well there's no party politics of which I'm aware, never occurred. I say regardless of the government's persuasion of the day you served under the government, you're an extension

16:00 of the government of the foreign policy if you will. Politics, within the, well I mean to say, I don't think there's politics per say, that I experienced in the army. There are professional jealousies, there are professional preferences, there are professional pride, there's,

16:30 between units there's professional competition, which is good and healthy. But politics, no, I wouldn't think, I can't sort of equate any of my experiences with any indication of politics as such being involved, no.

Later on you moved into a bit of a political life?

When I left the army you mean? Well yeah but again, not party political.

Human political?

17:00 Well yeah, yeah, well in my first sort of engagement in civilian life, I was appointed as Deputy Council Clerk of the Clarence Municipality which is the eastern seaboard here of Hobart. And that was an interesting job, yeah, political insofar as I had to deal with amateur politicians, the elected representatives of the people in the Council. The Councillors as they were called, not aldermen, councillors. And you know that was interesting. There were some party

17:30 politics played by them, but I, as the Deputy Council Clerk had to be quite you know apolitical in my position. But I was aware that there were some politics being played there. And how some of the aldermen or councillors, used their position for their own purposes rather than for the good of the community at large. Yeah, but my job kept me busy enough not to worry about that and so I just got on with it and that was it. No,

18:00 no, that was one area where politics were on the periphery of what I was doing. When I subsequently became the, after I did my three years there and which was my re-education into civilian life you might say, and becoming the State Fire Commissioner, which was, I was the Chairman of the State Fire Commission and the Commissioner of the entire unified fire service in Tasmania,

18:30 rural and urban. The career fire fighters, united fire fighter union members and the volunteers urban and rural, there became political insofar as the funding of the fire service is partly through the fire service levies, which each municipality by act is required to levy on their individual rate payers. And there was always complaint from the local Government that they were

19:00 acting as our debt collectors. But really they, what it meant for them is putting it on a line on their rates demand, and the extra money they got from that, which was minuscule compared to their overall rates, they then sent to the government to pay for the, part pay for the fire service. What they didn't say when they were making their complaints publicly, was that they got a four percent collection fee for their efforts which was quite infinitesimal really. And, you know one had to know the political game

19:30 when one involved in that position, because you know certain municipalities reckoned they weren't been given the same sort of treatment as other municipalities, as far as their equipments were concerned, the fire stations, the fire tenders, whatever, so you had to know the game there, but it was interesting. And I didn't, you know, whilst you remain individually apolitical and the fire service has to remain apolitical, although obviously individuals were, some were quite strongly pro and some were

20:00 strongly against the government of the day, it wasn't, it didn't affect the job. And so really politics has not been my game and I never had any ambition that way.

You fitted a lot into your career, and how hard was it day to day, how many hours would that take up?

Well I'd better ask my wife Margo that, because she knew how many hours

20:30 I wasn't here. Yeah, well, you know, the fire commissioner job particularly meant a lot of travelling around the state, because again this is where you have to know the local scene, so it meant being available to visit brigades. You know, sometimes just a pleasant thing like handing over a new fire tender, or handing out some long service medals, or you know Australian service medals and having a barbecue afterwards,

21:00 that sort of thing. Other times it was handle disputes you know and, with Councils but also to get a feel for the local situation and have those blokes at the fire front see you, that was important. So quite a fair time away from home and as they're volunteers these activities mainly were concerned at weekends when, you know, the ordinary person maybe spent time with the family, so I wasn't, on many occasions. But oh no, I've been I suppose a

21:30 bit of a workaholic and so over the forty-nine years we've been married, my wife's become accustomed to it.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having such a lengthy military career?

Well mine at thirty two years is not overly lengthy, I mean to say there are a number of people I know who've had forty years of service. I don't think there are many disadvantages, I know some people these

22:00 days, some officers are getting out much younger than I did, and at a more junior rank because they see opportunities. Of course they're better educated than we were. They get a higher degree of education non-Military education than we did in my time and some are much sought after, head hunted in fact. And so when they see that dollar sign being multiplied by quite a few quotients from what they expect to get in the army if they stay in, it's a hard thing

22:30 to refuse. So I think it depends, I mean to say, it's a pyramid which is, gets pretty narrow toward the top. So once you get past the, once you get to full colonel stage you know, you're going pretty well. And so as I said, I could have possibly, got to one star, to a brigadier if I'd stayed in for the further six years. But then again you way up the disadvantages, what do you do when you're fifty-five? And what the current Government is saying, the current Treasurer

23:00 is saying about work 'til you drop is nothing new. I say you don't work 'til you drop, but at fifty five you still got a heck of a lot of potential left and experience to draw on. And so I just made that appreciation of the situation as we call it in the army, considering all the factors and thought that forty nine wasn't a bad age to retire after thirty-two years in the army. So I think it's horses for courses and opportunities as they present themselves. But, I'm not unhappy that I stayed in as long as I did to give me the opportunity of doing

23:30 what I've done since.

With your experience and background, what are your thoughts on the current global situation with terrorism and so on?

Well, it's a very changing world, we've never experienced this before and there's no one got an immediate solution for it. Iraq we'll take it, I think you know from our experience in Malaya where there was a much more stable situ ation

24:00 than there's currently in Iraq. It took ten years to pacify a country and get normal government administration working right throughout the country. In Iraq, because it's not the political, it's not the geographical situation that Malaya is in and it's, the scenario is quite different. You know, it's not deposing a ruler from office by a foreign power and then occupying the country

24:30 and then trying to establish, re-establish government infrastructure, logistics and everything else that goes with it. I think it's going to take as long if not longer. I, so I think that we're in for a long haul and whether of course again the American public is prepared to accept that, whether the Australian public is prepared to accept it, I don't know. But we've started something, we've got the tiger by the tail and I don't think we can just sort of leap off and expect the tiger just to passively just

25:00 you know, sit down quietly in his lair and get on with the job. I think that, and also this job of training, that's not an over night task and there's so many, there's so many people and organisations to be trained in Iraq, I'm not even looking or thinking of Afghanistan [reference to conflicts occurring at time of interview], to get that country back on its feet, so it can, as an independent nation operate effectively. I think we're going to be there for quite some period of time and our involvement may be even bigger than it is now, I don't know. But

25:30 a lot will depend I think on, November the what ever it is, that happens in America, and how the American public respond because after all they're the power brokers and they're the suppliers of the money, equipment. And it's not going to be an easy task. Afghanistan, something again. I mean to say Afghanistan's even, I think more, any solution to that problem there is even more remote

26:00 than Iraq. The ability of the various groups to hide away in the Hindu Kush and other places and with soft borders they can use as sanctuaries. Yeah, I think that part of the world is going to be unstable for a long time to come. And a lot of work to be done by the willing to, who ever they are, and the capable of getting in and doing it.

Do you think we're looking at decades rather than years?

26:30 Yeah, yeah, oh yeah, well, at least a decade I would say. You know if Iraq is able to run its own organise, its own people, its own country in a democratic way with freedom of speech and freedom of elections, and with the competent infrastructure providing all that's required of a modern day society in ten years, they'll be doing very well indeed, and they're going to require a lot of help to do it.

27:00 **Not sure I should ask this, but do you think it's possible to actually defeat terrorism?**

I suppose you got to put yourself in the mind of the terrorist, and why are they? And of course the situation in the Middle East is again different to the situation in Iraq and in Afghanistan, situation in Palestine and Israel. Look until, until, well first of all,

27:30 I don't know that you can ever hope to convince the real, the true radicals that they're wrong. It's only by education I think, and that takes some generations to be acquired, that people will come to some appreciation that there's a better way of doing things, a better life to lead. But you know that there are so many deficiencies in these countries, so many things

28:00 that are wanting in these countries that, that has to be redressed. How it's going to be redressed, by whom is the question. And until that is done, until the terrorists can cease to have a legitimate objective, and it can't just be killing people, it's to achieve a better way of life for their own believers, their own followers if you will, then I don't know that we're going to get much further down the track than just looking after

28:30 our own back yard. I think we're just lucky to live where we do.

Do you think we have to change what we think as much as the terrorists have to change what they believe?

Do we have to change what we think? Well, mmm, well I think that we've just got to try and, look to erode the terrorist influence that's the only

29:00 way that we I think, can achieve the objective and, that is to repair the deficiencies that the Terrorist feels are worth while them blowing themselves up for. And while people take hard nosed positions and just stand each side and just refuse to acknowledge each other as a point of view, we'll get nowhere. I don't know about the Road Map for Peace in the Middle East, but it seems to me it's got a lot of,

29:30 I think it's got to have a lot of detours to get around the mines in the road if we're going to get anywhere and it's going to take a lot of time. And unfortunately politicians only think in periods of three or four years, whatever their period of government is, four in the States and three here. And the long haul is not something they're happy with, it's a hard thing to sell to the population, but I don't see it happening in the short term.

How do you feel that conflicts just keep occurring

30:00 **and keep happening and, you know not a, it seems not a day or week goes by that a new conflict doesn't arise in the world?**

Well why does, when Kane slew Able [biblical reference], you know, that was the start of it, and why did he do it? I mean, you know we don't live in a perfect world and that's I'm afraid one reason why again people see it as, it's a reaction

30:30 isn't it really to a situation they're not prepared to endure. No well, we don't live in utopia, never will I suppose, but yeah, one can just hope for the future, and I am an optimist.

Are any of your other family members now interested in a military career?

Thank heavens no. I have three daughters, and I didn't try to

31:00 induce any of them to join the army or the services. And one grandson, a six and a half year old, who's pretty belligerent I must say, but I hope we can sort of ease him out of that frame of mind. Of course I don't think I'd like to see him in the services either, no.

Can you use the army training on him to keep him in line?

Oh well, that's a grandfather job, you know, it's not a, I'm not his father, not his mother or his father, and so

31:30 one's got to be careful the way one sort of tries to influence. They say grand kids are great for a short time, but it's good to give 'em back to their parents.

So you wouldn't actively encourage family members to follow your road so to speak?

Well my family's pretty small, I say we've got three daughters and only one of them married, only one grandson at the present time, and the answer is, the short answer is no, I wouldn't. No, no, I've had a

32:00 good and rewarding life in the services and my post service life has been very satisfactory too but the world is, the present time, no I wouldn't. But I wouldn't discourage other people, but not my own immediate family, no.

How much did luck and perseverance play in your career?

Oh well, I suppose, a man has been lucky, otherwise he wouldn't be here I suppose.

32:30 Perseverance, well that's the motto of the training team, AATTV, Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, motto is 'persevere.' And one had to because of all the frustrations and problems which one came up against in training and advising the South Vietnamese. So I suppose they've been pretty equally shared and being of Anglo Celtic background I suppose it is a, I'm not saying other, people of

33:00 other ethnic origins don't have the same degree of perseverance, but you know, I think it's sort of in built. So I suppose, both have been pretty important.

You served in, and participated in conflicts that don't have as high recognition as other wars, say like World War II and so on, do you think they got rightly appreciated?

33:30 Well World War II of course was a world war and post war 0perations in which I've served were local in their locations and but were important at the time. I think that they've been given sufficient notice, though often times the Korean War is mentioned or spoken of as the "Forgotten War". Well, it's only forgotten really because it was a, it was successful and it doesn't therefore make news if a thing's successful and b, there was no

34:00 real political confrontation about it. The country at large reckoned we should've, we should, we were right to be there to prevent North Korea running over and taking over South Korea, a Democratic Republic of South Korea. And that's the reason why, because it wasn't put before the public gaze, regularly, as was Vietnam, that's why it's called the "Forgotten War". It's now become a little more prominent, people are starting to recall, and I think it's good to see that in schools

34:30 there are education projects and programs, where we don't want to create a militaristic youth, but they are, the involvement of Australia in overseas operations in the conduct of war is an important part of our history, and hence it's being taught. And I think in the case of Malaya, well Malaya would not be where it is today had we, had the British Commonwealth and it was the British Commonwealth nobody else,

35:00 not been successful in prosecuting the anti communist operations in Malaya. So it may be forgotten elsewhere, but I don't think it's forgotten in Malaya although the past Prime Minister was very quick to criticise Australia on many occasions. And as far as Vietnam's concerned, well I think that's best forgotten. The sooner it is the better I think because of the debacle, that it finally turned out to be.

You're happy for it to be forgotten?

I think so, I think it was,

35:30 you know, as I said before, the current situation in Vietnam I don't think would be any different had we not been there at all. And it's just one of those things the, you know the country was artificially divided, but the South was, the South and the bureaucracy and the political masters in the South just did not have the confidence of their population. And the North, they were, they felt they had the

36:00 future in their hands and they saw it being through a unified Vietnam, and that's the way it is. And so I think there was some bad appreciation's, maybe initially by the CIA, but when the French were thrown out, I think they should've had a long hard look to see why. And the artificial dividing, line whether it was going to be a viable one or not, and I think they made the wrong decision personally.

Does it hit you personally to be

36:30 **part of, on the losing side in a war?**

Oh no, I think not because we did our job and did it well. And I don't think anyone can take that away from the Australian military involvement in Vietnam. We showed that we were highly professional, dare I say, more professional than any other nation's involvement in the progression of the war there, no it doesn't disappoint me at all. And I'm not at all embarrassed or ashamed of it no.

37:00 **Through these years after your military career, do you still keep in touch and is Anzac Day important and so on?**

It certainly is, yes we keep in touch, we have a career veteran's organisation here in Tasmania which is pretty strong, both here in the south and north and north west. And we have regularly here in the south, as they do in the north, lunches every month and our wives maintain interest in it and they join, mixed lunches. And they raise raffles and we keep this money for helping out people

37:30 who might be in need of it. And Anzac Day is an important day, Kapyong Day is an important day, which is the 24th April, and by our own efforts we have had a Korean memorial erected in the grounds of Anglesey Barracks here in Hobart. And that's where we lay wreaths on Kapyong Day and Anzac Day and we have a barbecue afterwards. And we march in Anzac Day behind our own Korea veterans' banner and have a get together after that,

38:00 so we maintain contact that way. There aren't many of the training team, ex-training team members, we used to have an AATTV association fairly, not fairly strong, but when we had about fifteen or so in the south here, of whom about half a dozen were serving regular soldiers and officers here in the state. And but now they've all gone and it's fairly moribund now, the Training Team now because of lack of numbers association. But the Korean Veteran Association is and, you know it's a good

38:30 organisation to belong to. And as I say, I'm involved in the RSL and also Hobart Legacy and that maintains a broader contact with supporting widows of ex-service, our ex-service men here. We've got something, over two thousand widows here in the south, that we have in our books and we help them as much as we possibly can in advice, and financially sometimes. With the children who are still in school age, we help them out supplying with computers and assistance in that way.

39:00 Yeah, so one's service life is not just a thing of the past and forgotten, it's an ongoing thing.

There's still a strong sense of community there it seems?

Of course there is, yeah, yeah. You don't lose that, no that's with us forever I think. And it's very evident that the increasing number of funerals that we attend of our ex-comrades, you know, very strong.

Must be sad about that, as the years go by?

Oh well it's sad, but usual, one's got

39:30 to, you know we, there's only two things we're sure of in this life and that's death and taxes, so there it is.

Okay, we've got two minutes to go.

Oh God, two minutes more.

In this two minutes we give you the opportunity to say anything that you think you haven't said or is important to you that you'd like to say or address the people who view this tape in the future.

Well all I can say, I've been particularly lucky and more than so lucky with the

40:00 girl that decided to marry me because she's made my life tolerable and bearable. And wherever we've been posted she's made it a home and helped me raise our kids even though oftentimes I wasn't there when I was running the commando unit, I was away on weekends every weekend. And subsequently, so that's been, I think, one of my greatest assets and the support I've had from my wife and kids.

Jim, thanks very much, great going.

Okay.