

Australians at War Film Archive

Lesley Burton-Cloyd (Elizabeth) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:41 **Well good morning Elizabeth.**

Good morning goddess.

I was wondering if you could start for me this morning by talking a little bit about your childhood and your family and where you grew up.

Right. I was raised in a little mining town called Captain's Flat, which is thirty-eight miles out of Canberra. I was born in 1947 at St Margaret's

01:00 Hospital then when I was one year old we went to Captain's Flat so Dad could teach rugby league football, 'cause he used to play first grade for Balmain in the '40s and then he went to Captain's Flat as a coach, as a football coach, and then we stayed there 'til I was thirteen and then we came to Sydney and we lived in a place called the Riverwood housing settlement, which was army barracks made into

01:30 kind of petitioned off for families while they were waiting on homes and they were doing a major home building campaign out at Blacktown and those places at that period and my Mum and Dad, my Mum particularly, didn't want to go to Blacktown so we waited in the Riverwood housing settlement 'til they got a house at Mount Colah. Then they lived there for I think about twenty five years. I stayed there 'til I was seventeen when I left home and I did my I went

02:00 moved in with some other girls and but I was doing a hairdressing apprenticeship by then and what happened after that? Then I

I was just gonna ask a little bit more about I guess growing up and your family at Captain's Flat.

Well it my Dad worked in the mine, as well as being a football coach, and that was a very scary thing because you would hear the siren, like there would be a fall in a crash in the mine

02:30 and all the children would be holding their breath hoping that their Dad wasn't the one that was gonna be 'cause some of the children's dads did die in the mine and actually my Dad's eighty one now ah, eighty I think, and he I was just visiting him and he told me that one time he and another man were sitting in the mine and they'd just walked away from one section and a whole big slab of cement fall down and he said they could have been killed if they had have

03:00 you know just been two seconds away they would have been killed. So it was a scary place and I think my Dad lost his hearing through using that jackhammer thing. It used to snow in Captain's Flat and that was very exciting in the winter. We'd play well we weren't allowed to eat any white sugar or any white bread. We always had to have brown sugar and brown bread and we had to chew every mouthful twenty two times and my Dad did things, wonderful things, like

03:30 made us a mini golf course up the hill you know. Like because Captain's Flat was a little town and you had the bush behind your yard and we had a happy time. It was a happy childhood. a bit dysfunctional like families of that era. My Dad was not in the war. He was too young to go to actually the war but he worked he was in kind of when they bombed like around

04:00 Darwin. He was working up there on the roads. He was with the Department of Main Roads and he was working in that area when all that kind of happened in the wartime. So my Dad didn't go to war and my Mum, oh my Mum's amazing because she kind of raised us. The eight of us. Seven of us are living. One little boy died when that was when we were in Captain's Flat and we lived in two different homes in Captain's Flat. One

04:30 was near the slime dam and then we moved and no grass would grow near the slime dam and the only thing that grew was daisies and Mum had white daisies in front of that house but she could never get anything to grow there. It was really weird. I think it was poison land myself now when I, as an older person, and then we moved to a place that had grass and we had a vegetable garden and that was very

exciting because we would be allowed to go and choose our carrots and our beans.

- 05:00 'Cause we weren't allowed to have too many lollies or anything you know. As you can well imagine, finances were rather tight with so many children and we all went to Catholic school and when I was eight years old a Catholic priest put his penis between my legs and rocked to a climax and my Mum took me to the nuns and they called me a dirty little liar. Well when I was forty I was telling somebody this story
- 05:30 and my Mum said to me that when that actual happened that was a visiting priest and she tried to see that priest but he ran away from her, 'cause when that happened I ran home and told my Mum and, 'cause I knew it was something bad, but I didn't really know what it was, right, and then when I was she said, "You didn't tell me that," and I said, "Mum I don't you remember the incident?" and she said, "Yes but you didn't tell me the actually what happened." But because it's so vivid in my mind, at eight years old I didn't have the
- 06:00 vocabulary for that. So when I was forty and I was re-telling that story to somebody and I was telling the story because I went to a personal development weekend where I gave a striptease dancing class and they let me do the weekend. I and it was fifty people, twenty women and thirty men, no thirty women and twenty men, and it was a really big venue and lots of and doing all kinds of personal development. It was so fun giving that striptease
- 06:30 standing in class, because I always give a shawl for the women and a tie for the men and then I got them to swap roles and they loved it. They like people love to just chop and change and jump into another place. Anyway that's a long time after my childhood. Where am I up to? Oh okay, the priest and so when I went to that personal development program I regressed back into
- 07:00 that little girl and I drew a picture of a priest with a really big hard penis, a presbytery, a good little girl going in and a bad little girl going out and so it was such a light bulb moment for me because, "Wow, I'm really not a bad little girl." and like that was very good by the time I got to forty after I'd done all the bad things I was gonna do anyway. So that was a huge thing and that had to be suppressed
- 07:30 and this is a very very terrible thing, that people have to suppress those kind of things because I think it does muck you up in your brain and your and in the back part of your brain it's always there and like I was a bad little girl for 'til I was forty in my subconscious. So anyway, my Mum never told my Dad about that, 'cause he woulda shot the priest. that's my Dad's kind of thing and nothing happened you know. Like there was no
- 08:00 talking about it or there no help. You just dealt with it and on you got. Then when I was thirteen as I said we left Sydney. I don't know what else? Where am I up to?
- Oh just growing up I guess with so many brothers and sisters I just wonder how that**
- Oh they're lovely. I have Kenny, Evelyn, Cathy, Brian, Michael and Danny who are all still alive. Trevor was the one who died. That was a very traumatic because
- 08:30 he was just a little baby and my Mum I think might have been post natal depression or something at that time. Every time Mum had a baby we went to Sydney and stayed with my Nanny Hodges in, that's my Mum's Mum, in Clovelly and we went to a Catholic school. That was we had to drink hot milk and we didn't like that. So it was it was a nice childhood. We had our little funny dysfunctional things that
- 09:00 happened but basically we were very lucky. We survived it and then my teenage years, where was I? Well I was I used to go to Bondi every weekend when we lived at Riverwood, 'cause my Dad went to school with Uncle Owen and Uncle Owen and Auntie Norma had a home right on Bondi Beach and they had records and they had records of all the musical comedies and I used to play the records
- 09:30 and look out at the ocean and I was every heroine that ever was and oh I just loved it. I just had the best time going there. They had a daughter, Robyn, and a son, Buddy. They've got two other children but much later in life and they were very kind to me and that was kind of my escape from a lot of responsibility as the eldest of eight children you know. Like you were really in there doing it with your mother.
- 10:00 You know you peeled the vegetables every night and did the washing and the ironing and put the kids down and blee bl blah, all that. So then I did my hairdressing apprenticeship and that was funny because the first job I got a hairdressing job and this bloke named Louie Cordone was my boss and Louie wanted me to go into the back room and rub Grecian 2000 [hair gel] on his head
- 10:30 while he rocked in his chair and I just didn't want to do that. I felt like that was so dodgy to me you know. Like I didn't feel comfortable doing it and so he wouldn't let me be his apprentice and when my Dad asked him why did I get fired he said, "'Cause that girl's got no pizzazz." So I really proved him wrong in my later life and then I got a an apprenticeship with Elizabeth French. A lovely man named Donald Newstead was my boss.
- 11:00 He did put up with a lot because towards the end I was go-go dancing and I was arriving really late and like all that and he tried. He pushed me all different in his salons to try and make me pull my act together but by three and a half years of my apprenticeship, and the last six months I was probably late every day, he fired me and then I went to Canberra to finish my apprenticeship at David Jones or Grace

Bros. Grace Bros? One of those big stores down there and my Mum, ah,

11:30 Dad's sister, Auntie Cecilia, lived in Canberra so she was my godmother and I got to go there and that was a lovely family and I finished my apprenticeship. The day I finished my apprenticeship I went, I got went back to Sydney to start getting ready to go to Vietnam because I had been go-go dancing and then of course I left Sydney and went to Canberra and I wasn't go-go dancing there but while I was in Canberra, one lady named Virginia Marinesi rang

12:00 me up. Her Dad used to own the 'Here' discothèque in North Sydney and I had worked there as a go-go dancer and so Virginia rang me and said that a man named Bill Kafalis was looking for go-go dancers and he wanted me. Would I be interested in going to Vietnam with a show? Well of course. What an adventure. I had no idea what I was getting into. I didn't comprehend anything about war: it was just you were going off in a show and

12:30 you were going to entertain all the troops and it sounded really exciting and that's what happened.

Can you tell me Elizabeth I guess how you began dancing and then go-go dancing?

Well I always loved dancing you know. that was just I think it's in your blood and I think it's in all people's blood if they let it happen and my friend from Bondi, Robyn, she was a go-go dancer at 'Romano's' and 'Checkers' and

13:00 what was that other great place that Sammi, I can't think of it now. Can't think of it off-hand. It was down on Pitt Street and it was called and Sheila Cruise was the choreographer. Oh I just can't think. Sammi Lee was the guy who owned the place, but I can't think of the name of the venue, and anyway she worked all around and this one day she had two double-booked and we used to go to 'Stomps' and all those kind of things together and I was so outrageous I embarrassed everybody

13:30 because my dancing was just so over the top you know. Like I couldn't just do the little stompey wompey. I had to be really goin' off, right, taking up the space of the floor. Anyway she had too many jobs and asked me did I want to do a go-go job at Redfern RSL [Returned and Services League] and in those days it had a band and the cages. A stage there was a stage and a band on the stage and while the band were having their break the

14:00 go-go dancers danced in their little cages and I loved it and I borrowed her costume and and then as soon as I did that I ran off and tried to find work myself and I worked at the 'Here' discothèque and I worked at the 'Menzies Keller' which was downstairs underneath The Menzies Hotel and they had a little three-piece combo and a beer barrel cut in half and that was our stage, our go-go dancers stage. So while the band break was

14:30 on, the go-gos went onto the little half beer barrel and did their you know, whoo, all their go-go dancing and their fringe, shaking everything around. So that's how I started and then I went down to Canberra and then I got that job going to Vietnam and the show was called 'The Rainbow Show.' Ah, Robert Riviera was the entrepreneur of that show and they had four

15:00 band members and a young girl singer. There was a lady trumpet player and she played vibes as well and another lady who kind of she didn't do, she did the strip but it wasn't really a strip. Some things came off but she ended up with a big fringe bikini on still. So it was a strip but it was not in down to nude or anything like that.

Can I ask, just before we go on to Vietnam, I guess just what the purpose of

15:30 **the go-go dancing was? When you first got into it just in a at the clubs or the bars.**

What was the purpose of it?

Yeah, like why

It's just entertainment so when the band was not working there was still music and the audience had something to look at I presume. Like why do they have showgirls you know? Just a part of the entertainment.

I just wondered if people would be dancing along or if it was a...?

Oh yeah.

16:00 Mm. Yeah, yeah, you often. Mostly. like it was probably just I don't know, maybe to help the people how when there's a dance floor and there's a band and it takes just one couple to get on the dance floor and then everybody floods on the dance floor but everybody doesn't want to be the first couple. So it might have been that. I don't know. I just took the job 'cause I loved it you know. I would have almost done it for free and we almost did. Like when I went to Vietnam I

16:30 only got a hundred dollars a week and here we are in a war zone and I got fined all the time but Robert Riviera was the entrepreneur. His wife, he had a wife and two sons. Bobbie was only eleven and Tommy was nineteen or twenty or something like that. Tommy he ran the, 'cause Riviera had two shows, and 'The Rainbow Show' and 'Pussycats

17:00 A Go-Go' was kind of their premiere show and The I don't know why, because we were all fabulous in 'The Rainbow Show,' but his wife used to book the shows. So in Vietnam there were enlisted mens', officers' and NCO [Non Commissioned Officers] clubs and in each of those clubs it had a different manager. So you would you'd have to have somebody who booked your show to go and book in all the clubs because they paid

17:30 Riviera and then Riviera eventually paid us. So that's how that all worked right, and his wife was the booker of our Rainbow Show. I forget where I'm up to. I haven't even got, um.

I wonder about just preparing to go away. You said you didn't know really much about Vietnam or the war.

Had no idea what I was getting into I promise you. I was so illiterate. Not illiterate but ill-educated about anything politic, political

18:00 or certainly about anything war. I I was happy to be dancing. That was basically my thing. Ah, getting ready, well you had to have get your costumes together and of course in those you had to go and have your injections and it was just exciting you know. Like I was going on an adventure and well I was twenty-one, two days after I arrived in Vietnam. We left Australia October the 2nd 1968

18:30 and so I had a twenty my Mum made a dinner for me a kind of a party thing with my brothers and sisters and everybody at home at Mount Col before I came away and then when I was over in Vietnam I used to send, anybody who was coming to Australia I'd say, "Oh," if they were coming to Sydney, "Oh here's my Mum and Dad's phone number. Go and visit them." So my sisters, I wish they should could be here, because they could tell you such funny

19:00 stories of how they would go to meet these different people that I had sent. Like Mum'd I'd say, "Oh Mum they would really love a home cooked meal," and so my sisters would go into town to meet these people and one time it might be a small Asian-looking guy. The next time it might be a six foot black man or a Jewish guy or an American Indian guy you know. Like it was a real mixed match of people and my sisters just make me laugh about some of the stories. Actually one of the

19:30 men, Cal, was a I think he might have been a Mexican or a Puerto Rican guy. He wanted to marry my sister, Cathy, in the worst possible way. He fell so in love with her and my mother spoke to his mother and all of that kind of thing happened because I'd sent this boy from Vietnam who was on R & R [Rest and Recreation] to go and visit the family. 'Cause it was so sad in Vietnam. Those young men, the majority of them just really didn't comprehend what was why

20:00 they were there. They they were just doing what they were told and they were very very young, as I was.

How would your family respond to your the news you were going away?

I look to tell you the truth I don't really my Mum of 'course how it would have been as a parent. How my Mum would have felt, right, as a now but then I had no inkling and they just I said, "I'm doing this," and they went, "Okay." like

20:30 I pretty well did what I wanted to do once I left home, and that was when I was seventeen. I ran my own life. Mmm. So

I wonder if there was anybody who was saying, "Don't go," or "You know what are you doing?"

Nah. Amazingly no. like amazingly not one person said, "Have you got any idea what you're getting yourself in for?" No way. Nobody said anything to me, so I suppose it was just I was all

21:00 wrapped up in the adventure. I was going on an adventure and then actually when we arrived in Saigon and I was freaked out from the second we got there because there were guns. Everybody was carrying a gun and that's so not normal and then we had to do a you have to do a show for the American enter... Military Entertainment Board and they look

21:30 at your show and if it's too rude or if they think it's not wholesome enough for their little killers out there then you've got to change it, but our show was okay. So our first show was for the Seebees [construction squadron]. no, no, no, the Green Berets [United States Special Forces], which was kind of a special unit of really tough guys. 'Cause one guy was burning his hand with a cigarette and saying, "See I'm tough. I can take it" you know. things like that.

22:00 Even though it seems quite silly it really really freaked me out you know. I thought, "Oh my goodness," you know, "where are these people's heads coming from?" and that was our first show and it I that was the second day we'd arrived. 'Cause we'd already done the show for the military people and then here we are doing the show for the Seebee for the Green Berets and we were living in a hootch, which was they give us a tent and half of it was boards and then they've the top half is

22:30 like a tent material, whatever that is. tarpaulin-type stuff and they did have did have a ground. It had like a board ground so and there was just your beds and a that metal kind of cupboard thing that military people seem to have and all the toilets were outside and there'd be six toilets sitting in a row and often you had to have guards while you were having a poo,

- 23:00 which was really hard and when you used to come to a place where there was a toilet that had a flusher it was so exciting and like every day you get up and you go to the toilet and you flush your toilet and you take it so for granted. of course when I was a child we had outside we had an outside toilet. I think a lot of Australians had an outside toilet, of my era particularly, and when we eventually got the inside toilet we were very excited. That was at Mount Coolah,
- 23:30 but not until a couple of years after we'd moved there, 'cause we had the outside dunny there for a long time too and then I remember going to Chu Lai and this wonderful Lieutenant Colonel Frankie Petersen. He was a very special man to me. He was really kind and explained a lot of things to me about lots of things in life and he had a flushing toilet and the girls in our show used to love to go to Frank's house just so we could
- 24:00 go to the toilet. So like little tiny things like that when you're in war. Did I tell you there are no winners in war? Did I say that already? 'Cause really there are no winners in war. Nobody wins. Where am I up to?
- Well I wonder just going back you mention the guns but I just the other first impressions of Vietnam and what you saw.**
- smells, of course you're going into a Vietnamese country with all its different
- 24:30 spices and the people were so gentle. Amazingly right in this mad war, madness, they were very gentle people you know. obviously you were only shown seeing what they were showing you, but I only saw gentle actually that day we stayed in a great big French-style hotel, and I loved it that you woke up and they brought you beautiful smelling coffee
- 25:00 and a croissant and a sugarless, oh, no, salt-free butter and jam was our brekkie [breakfast]. I loved that. They did steal my those shoes with the spikes [Dr Scholes sandals] in them. Though you remember those sandals like healthy sandal things? Well I hated them anyway so I was glad that somebody took them, but my Mum bought them for me, so I had to bring them along and anyway they did take those and I was a bit disappointed in that. That was the only thing that I ever got taken and
- 25:30 it was just at the very beginning when I got there and that was the first night we stayed in that hotel and then we went off. like we used to travel by truck a lot. Helicopter. Duck belly plane [Caribou aircraft] and usually the girls had to hitch rides. So what would happen is, Robert Riviera's wife, which I cannot remember her name for the life of me, but I can remember
- 26:00 what she looked like, 'cause she was a circus performer. She was a girl that did that thing like hung from the ceiling by her teeth [trapeze] and she had this really strong jaw and very lovely teeth and she was a petite kind of square lady. Do what I mean? Like she was a square-shaped woman. Very strong, petite and walked like a circus person you know. You knew that she had been something that was really disciplined because she was strong
- 26:30 and she used to do the booking. So then say you were in Chu Lai and you had to go Duck Pho or Bin Tui or some bloody other place. Well if it was a really long way you'd go to the airport and you'd, with the whole band, and you'd hitch a ride on an aeroplane or you might hitch a ride on a truck if it was only a short space away. Or when you got off the plane you had to hitch a ride on a truck to the venue.
- 27:00 Sometimes they would get [to] a, the venue would give you a, you know, send a truck to pick you up, but we had to do a lot of hitchhiking. The girls mostly did the hitchhiking 'cause they were male people and the band boys just loaded the gear on and off the trucks and when and then we did our gig. I remember once we arrived in this place and it was a bald hill and the only thing that was on that hill was a big steel girder that they would throw
- 27:30 across a river if so that they could all get across the river. It was already a bridge made and on top of the steel girder was plywood and there was a generator and a tent. No people. The helicopters dropped us. The boys were setting up the band. like the instruments and everything like that on the on the girder and we were in the tent getting dressed and you could feel the earth moving, right? it was there was a vibration
- 28:00 in the earth and then when we came out to do our show there were tanks with nozzles like that and all the guys were sitting all along the top of the nozzles and all on the top of the trucks. There were just people, hundreds and hundreds of people all around the girder and in the bald area and they told us that the Viet Cong would they'd stopped the war and the Viet Cong were watching the show from the trees with their binoculars. So I felt wonderful that I'd stopped the war for a few minutes.
- 28:30 It was an amazing experience and then we after that show they took us back to their where they camp. It was scary because we were in Viet Cong country and the chef in their camp had made us a huge vanilla cake, I'll never forget it, and it had coconut on it and it was huge because ev all the boys were getting some and this was like a temporary, ah, rest
- 29:00 place for those people who were normally out in the bush and fighting all the time and they could come back here and there was a mess hall and showers and they could get thems a bit of an act together and then they go back out into the bush. So it was a horrible life for them.

I wonder if you can take me back to that maybe that first show for the green berets and I

guess just what you were going through. performing to troops for the first time.

Well

29:30 excitement and nerves. like you got your stuff to do. 'Cause we did rehearse the show loosely before we came there and like it was just exciting and very nervous. Very, very nervous and then when we went home that night I was shit scared 'cause they were drunk and they were outside but what, they were extremely disciplined and we always, always had guards. like watching our tents and

30:00 stuff like that. So I think fear and excitement at the same time. "Oh my god, what did I get myself into? What is this really all about?" so and try and just live in the moment.

'Cause it is quite a confronting

Oh huge.

Introduction.

Oh yes, yes but we were like

30:30 we were a little band. we were a little team and we stayed together and when we travelled we travelled together and where we lived we lived together. So Robert Riviera had us sign a piece of paper before we left Australia saying we would have nothing to do with people other than Caucasian. Now I didn't know what Caucasian meant. I tell you the truth. I didn't. I didn't even bother looking it up in the dictionary. I was gonna sign anything. I was going on this adventure.

31:00 So when we got to Vietnam and I talked to all people. if you're sitting in a airport and here is a white guy and here is a Puerto Rican guy am I gunna say, "Oh, I'm not talking to you, but I'll talk to you." I don't think so. I spoke to everybody and that's why Robert Riviera fined me a lot. He fined me because I spoke to other than Caucasian people and I got defiant. If he was there I would grab a black man's hand even if I didn't know him or because I just hated

31:30 him telling me I can't talk to these people. What are you on about? I did not comprehend the American black/white thing. I had no idea about that because when I was raised my Dad worked in a mine and he bought all kinds of multi-cultural people home who worked in that mine and then he worked in Bougainville [an island mine] and some of the people from Bougainville came to our house. So we had black people and Spanish and German. Many, many kinds

32:00 of people coming to our house over my life you know. There was no instilled in me racial prejudice. So that Australia had a white Australia policy and that there were a lot of prejudiced people in this country, but in our family that's that that wasn't like that. So when I had no comprehension of what was happening in America at that time because we're talking '68 and they were bussing people and having riots and Martin Luther King [leader of the civil rights movement] and

32:30 Teddy Kennedy [brother of Robert Kennedy and American senator], Robert Kennedy [American President], those assassinations happened in that period of time. So like of course the Americans had all that going on, but I didn't comprehend any of that but they did segregate themselves when we did our shows. If you often it would be all black guys on one side and all white guys on the other side of the show and one time I walked in and I sat on the black side. I wasn't in the show. I went to watch

33:00 a show and the people that night threw mud on my hootch [tent] and called me a nigger lover and all the my thespians turned on me and that was when I was asked to leave Vietnam for the first time and then but lots of things happened prior to that you know.

Did everyone else in the show kind of adhere to those rules of

Yep. Everybody in the show turned on me so viciously when I they called me a nigger lover. I was the nigger lover. Now you know

33:30 I'm a human lover. I it just blows me out that about all of that. About racism and sexism you know. Like I don't comprehend people being sexist about anything and I don't comprehend them being racist about stuff you know. You might hear me speak and say, "Oh look what these fucking Jewish people are doing at the moment. They're going for the Palestinians and they're doing exactly what

34:00 they did had done to them," and it really upsets me, but I don't feel like I'm racist towards the Jews. I just don't like what they're those military people are doing you know. Like why really they lived for many years the Palestinians and the Israelis in quite harmony and then what happens? Something happens and this hideous stuff starts coming back again. Well I don't think, tit for tat. I don't think, "If you kill me I'm gonna go and kill

34:30 somebody of you." There's gotta be some area where we communicate and all of us bleed the same blood you know. when you get down to the nitty gritty of it we are so the same. So I there's no winners in war and I just find it totally immoral what's happening in our world. where am I up to now?

I'd just love to talk a bit more about the segregation you saw and I just wonder what what you saw of how the

35:00 **I mean they're all soldiers but I guess the white soldiers**

Yes, they were all soldiers and this is what was really amazing. Imagine going out on a what do you call a bivouac thing or whatever and having a black man and a white man together and they've got to rely on each other you know. that there many there was many friendships made and many bridges were probably built in that period of time between individuals but on the mass it didn't happen like

35:30 that for the way I saw it. So and of course Riviera didn't want us to have anything to do with the black guys because they said the white guys'd be jealous. Well when you as I said, when you're sitting in an airport with thousands of people all sitting waiting for an airport, plane, I wasn't about to just segregate and talk to only white people. So I did talk to everybody as I said and that was really went against me.

Well I wonder in the beginning when you when you would start

36:00 **talking to people that weren't Caucasian, what Riviera would say to you or**

Oh no, he wouldn't say anything in front of the people but when you'd get back to your accommodation he'd say, "You're fined twenty dollars," or whatever it was and I'd go "Oh yes, okay." Like I'd be lucky if I got thirty dollars out of my hundred each week you know. I'd be very lucky. So it wasn't about money obviously.

36:30 It's never been about money. It's always been about the art but I didn't realise that then and it was such an art form and it is an art form dealing with a whole bunch of people who are in that extremely stressful situation and not getting yourself hurt all the time. It's it is an art form to learn how to deal with all those people and I found honesty was the best policy you know. I would say to the guys, if I was with twenty guys like once I got accused of

37:00 fucking niggers on a bunker. Now what in fact actually happened was I was dancing with a multicultural group of GIs and we were they were showing me different tricks and we were dancing. We were having a lovely evening. No sex, and why no sex, because I said, "Listen guys. I can't fuck you all. Let me make my own choice," and I didn't choose any of those guys and that was good 'cause I wasn't make

37:30 you know like everybody was having a dance. We were all having a dance and then the MPs [Military Police] came by and we weren't supposed to be on top of the bunker and so we all jumped down and I jumped down and hurt my ankle and two black guys dragged me helped me to the chapel where I sat in the chapel and then some other people came and took me to the P [?] doctor place where I got but because they were black guys that took me to the doctor place, that was the

38:00 accusation. I was fucking niggers on a bunker and that was kind of the beginning of my demise you know. I was called a nigger lover and eventually the American Military Entertainment Bureau and Robert Riviera wanted me to leave Vietnam and I did. They put me out and they sent me to, but prior to that in that same period I got raped and by six allied soldiers and I had machine guns in my head and a gun in my mouth. Now how

38:30 that happened was we were in Da Nang. We had accommodation in the Da Nang Hotel and we used to do lots of shows all around and we'd maybe helicopter out or truck out or you know, however we got there, but that was kind of a base and we went to a few different places from there and this day we were off and I wanted to go to the beach and I got on a Vietnamese bus and went out to the beach and I was all by myself on the beach. There was nobody there but it was an off-

39:00 limits area. I shouldn't have gone and I was laying down, looked around, nobody there, and I was skipping in the water and having a lovely time and put my sarong on the ground and had my undid my top so I just had my little g-string on and I was laying in the sun and then a cloud came, and it wasn't a cloud, over my eyes and there were guys standing around me and they grabbed me by the arms like this and started dragging me to a hut like a round hut. Sand on the floor.

39:30 There was boards around there. There was just boards here, that was empty, and then there was a thatched roof like that and

Tape 2

00:31 **Elizabeth, before we finished the last tape you were about to tell me about the rape on the beach.**

Right. So we had a day off. We were living in Da Nang in the Da Nang Hotel and I went on the bus, the Vietnamese bus, out to the beach and the beach was deserted but the beach was off limits and I loved it. It was beautiful, the sun was

01:00 shining and I had a bit of a romp in the water and then I came up, laid my sarong down, had my bikini on but I undid the top and then I was laying in the sun there and then a cloud came over and it wasn't a cloud, it was guys, and they grabbed me by my arms and started dragging me back into a hut and the hut was sand on the floor, wood around the edges like that and then you could see through

- 01:30 around the middle part and then it was a thatched roof and I was talking, "Please don't do this." I begged all the way up to the thatched roof and then, up to the hut, and then we got to the hut my body my spirit went out of my body and I was sitting like this looking down at the girl, which was me, thinking, "Oh that poor girl," and what was happening was there were six men, machine guns in my head
- 02:00 and a gun in my mouth and they were taking turns to have intercourse with me. I really consider myself blessed that they didn't actually do anal sex or try to stick their penis in my mouth, or anything like that at that time you know. All they were doing was actually having intercourse and in the end I wasn't bleeding or anything but I was so devastated and also I wasn't in my body, I was out here, and when those guys finished having sex with me they talked about whether they should shoot me
- 02:30 and the guy goes, one guy goes, "Oh no. She's not gonna last. Look, she's not even there you know." So they left and when they left my spirit came back into my body and I crawled down to the ocean and I sat there with my legs really wide apart and I was washing my vagina and asking god to forgive me so that where my Catholic head was at that time and so I spent quite a lot of time on the beach. I was crying a lot and really quite distressed and then I
- 03:00 got on the bus and I went back to the Da Nang Hotel and I told one of the girls that I was working with and she said, "Don't talk about it. It'll be your fault you know." "You're just gonna create really a lot of mess for everybody if you discuss this." So I put it aside and I actually put it aside for twenty years I thought, even though I was acting out in my life and did lots of crazy things.
- 03:30 No I'm not. Mm. That was strange. Anyway so I went back and talked to the girls and they said, "Don't tell anybody." So I didn't tell anybody but it was really a scar in my heart for a really long long long long time and I think it still affects me actually. I'm sure Vietnam still affects me because when I go into an elevator nowadays I'm back in that
- 04:00 bunker and that was another thing that happened while. You went when there were outgoing rockets, the earth moved but when there were incoming rockets, the earth moved as well. So yeah, the sirens, you would get sirens saying there are incoming rockets. So you would go to a bunker and a bunker was a big hole in the ground with sand bags all around and it was wet and smelly and had rats and really big cockroaches 'cause
- 04:30 it's Asia and those kind of things grow big in the tropics and the whole earth was moving. So you were in an enclosed space that was moving. That's why Vietnam flashes back to me every time I go to get into an elevator. I'm very frightened of tunnels. I avoid them and high rises I don't do very well either. So I don't know if it's just me who's a psychological mess or whether I'm still affected
- 05:00 by being freaked out in those days but what eventually happened was, I didn't want to go to the bunkers 'cause they freaked me out, so the boys the GIs [Government Issue ~ US Soldier] told me if you're near your hootch take your mattress off your hootch off your bed, go underneath your bed and have the mattress on top of you so it's the bed, the mattress and then you. So if there is shrapnel and everything flying around you might possibly be protected by those things. one day we
- 05:30 were eating a meal in I think it was Chu Lai, 'cause we were attacked eight times when we went to Chu Lai, and there were two bunkers. They were upstanding bunkers, not in the ground bunkers but sand bags that had been built into like a little a bunker and one bunker got a direct hit and I was in the other bunker. So when we came out there was just this little claw of a hand left out of all the people. It was just like
- 06:00 a big hole in the ground and people had been blown to smithereens. That was like ten minutes ago we were eating a meal with those people and now they weren't there any more and there aren't any winners. like all of those young men that were in that bunker their Mums, their Mads, their wives, their children. all of those people are tortured and sad 'cause they've lost their, you know, and what good did that do? it was
- 06:30 that's why I think why have they why are they doing it again [reference to conflicts occurring at the time of the interview]? Here we are here we go again. Similar situation you know. It's none of anybody's business what's going on over there. Like I'm sorry, but I think that there are terrorists in every country in the world, not only the Middle East and I don't think that it's a Muslim story. I think it's an individual story. So I it's almost sim so many parallels it frightens me.
- 07:00 I don't want there to be war anymore. Right where are we?

I was wondering if I can take you back to when you were raped on the beach and I just wonder, was it common for the girls to go out were would you go out by yourself?

No, it wasn't common for the girls to go out. That's why it was my fault you know. Like I had to take responsibility for it because I was in an off limits area and it wasn't common for people to go on their own you but you know

- 07:30 there were so many people always all around you and everybody wanted to talk to you and it just "Aaagh let me have some space. Let me breathe some air. Let me have some ocean," and that's what I got. So I didn't go off on my own very often again. It was a major lesson but I do think that it's important the major reason that I'm really speaking to you today is that rape is not an answer and it has been used

as a war tool since the beginning of time

08:00 and nobody talks about it or very few people talk about it. like many years later the Japanese ladies came out, the Bosnian and Rwandan women I think even some of those ladies came out. So I don't I think it's a disgrace and when you talk to the men they always go, "Oh ye those guys did that," but I believe that a lot of our soldiers

08:30 raped as well. I'm I don't think they were perfect. I don't think any soldiers are perfect. They're all human beings and in a mass situation people do some really nutty things. So I don't believe I believe that all armies have committed rape and I and it's not an answer. It's a terrible thing. Where else are we?

I just wonder I guess going back

09:00 **I mean you mentioned that you were sitting in the ocean asking for forgiveness and**

That was before I got Buddhism. I was so lucky I got Buddhism in my life, because it really saved my life. It made me understand that I create my causes and I get my effects. So I really take responsibility for things that have happened in my life and by me going to an off limits area on my own, I didn't ask to be raped but that was

09:30 almost like what was gonna happen and I didn't think my head wasn't there. I wasn't thinking that.

How far into your first time into Vietnam was that?

Um well we were that was after Christmas, so 'cause I was only in Vietnam four months. So I was there October, November, December, January. So that would have been not too long before I came back to Australia but then I went back

10:00 with another show called Whatever is a nice girl like you dong in a place like this? and you might say, "You've just been raped and treated like poop in that country and now you're going back." I'm the kind of person that if somebody says, "You can't do it," I have to try and do it. It's just the challenge and because I was put out of Vietnam I had to go back and I stayed five months and Lola McDonald was the lady who

10:30 ran that show and they were different. like being run by an Australian woman as opposed to a French-American guy, the shows were different you know. The Lola show was kind of bigger and showier in a way.

I wonder, you mentioned I guess having quite good times with a lot of the soldiers

11:00 **that you would meet on on I mean...?**

Yeah.

Very friendly.

Yes.

I just wonder how much of a sense of security you had around the men that you were performing to before the rape occurred?

Well what, even after the rape the majority of the men were incredibly gentlemanly considering the whole deal. They were incredibly caring and incredibly gentlemanly, the majority of them and we did have good fun

11:30 and I remember once we arrived I think at that place was called Binh Qui and Ione was the trumpet player and when we arrived at our hootch we heard this fabulous trumpet music and we look at each other and Ione says, "I'm gonna find that music." So we were walking listening following our ear and we were walking down these boards, 'cause it was a rainy season and they had made like little wooden

12:00 walk ways between the hootches because there was so much mud and everything everywhere. This day it was a lovely sunny day though and we walked down and we heard this music coming out of this particular hootch, so we knocked on the door and nobody answered and when we knocked on the door, the door opened and as the door opened in like that we saw down right down the end of the hootch this man doing chin ups on a like a bar thing that they'd made for themselves

12:30 and he was kind of stopped in mid air because he said, his name was Scotty, we and he said he thought that he was having an hallucination because the door had opened and here were two beautiful women, a blonde and a red head and he said he thought he was in heaven. So he was just kind of suspended there and he said, "Come in" and we came in and they were playing Hugh Masekela [the father of African jazz], who was a fabulous

13:00 musician, and we sat around and chatted and we didn't feel unsafe there you know. because there was a well I suppose a just another girl. I don't know. I don't know why I didn't feel unsafe among the majority of the time but there were times when you weren't frightened of the Americans you know, you were frightened of the war the other side of it. Like one time we were coming back from a gig and we were driving

- 13:30 and they had a guy walking in front of the car in the front of the truck with a mine detector and nobody was allowed to smoke. normally the guys who were our guards were really happy and jovial and chatting away but this time no, everybody was really quiet you know. Like you could cut the air with a knife. It was so scary 'cause they were expecting snipers and so on. So some of the times were
- 14:00 really, really scary and then some of the times were really light and fun. It was the children were terrified that was a freak out for me. I did I did a little song and dance routines for the 'Save the Children' and because one time I was lying on the beach. I I'm not sure what that beach was. That might have been
- 14:30 Na Trang. I might not sure about that though. Could have been Cam Ran Bay and I was on my own but we weren't in a it was like not a military area, if what I mean, and this little boy came up and started talking to me and it turned out he was with 'Save the Children' and when I sat up half the children had missing limbs. Like one child had a plastic skull 'cause you know
- 15:00 and it was just amazing and arms missing, legs missing. Some children with no legs some this little boy had had his penis blown off and two and an English and an American lady were running that thing called 'Save the Children' and they'd take the kids down to the beach for a swim that day and that's how I met them and then I got a couple people out of our band to come and we did a little show for the kids at the orphanage at the place and that was

- 15:30 you know like that was so devastating because also there were many little children that were born of mixed blood and nobody wanted them. So that was that's another terrible thing from war. that these new breed of human beings are raised but nobody wants them. They're in I think it's much better now of course 'cause we're evolving a little bit in that way but there are still no winners in war.

Well I just wonder in that final month in Vietnam for the on the first show, just how you kept going and kept performing after you'd been raped.

You had to put it away. I had to put it away. I couldn't have it at there. It wasn't there. It wasn't, I tucked it away for twenty years, love. Twenty years I didn't talk about

- 16:30 it and then I started vomiting it out. Everywhere and if you met me, five minutes after you met me you knew I was raped in Vietnam and then finally I did go to Vietnam Veterans' counselling and I went out there for ten months and then I performed it and I painted it and I told the story and I told the story and I told the story. So it's a I'm okay today. I'm not crying today. I have felt a bit emotional today but
- 17:00 you know last week if you'd asked me I might have been in tears about it. So it's a very interesting emotional journey.

I wonder how you were you mentioned that you went to Vietnam veterans' counselling. I just wonder how they reacted to you and your story.

Well the counsellor was a very charming man. Very nice but that counsellor had not been to Vietnam and

- 17:30 I don't know, I feel like I've still got a lot of work to do there. I feel like I need I will find somebody one day who I can communicate with. Wait a minute. I didn't want that to happen. I will find somebody one day that I can communicate with and who'll understand where I'm coming from and he was a lovely guy but that wasn't the right person for me to speak to.
- 18:00 I did give myself permission to cry though and that was very important to go out there and blurt it out and it was almost like it was like a sight act I saw once when I was a young woman where this guy swallowed razor blades and sorry, I didn't want to do that. I wanted to be tough today
- 18:30 and when he swallowed the razor blades they were connected with fishing line and he'd go and pull a razor blade out and pull a razor blade out. Well when I went to the counselling that's how it felt for me. Like it's easier for me to talk to you today than then because it was like I'd talk to him about, the rape was the thing that was so big in my head, but then other
- 19:00 things came out you know. So it was cathartic but it's not over.

Well Liz it's painful but there's just I guess a few more things to say about your rape. So I'd like to stay there

Mm.

Because that's where we finished. Just going back to that day, you mentioned

- 19:30 **that you went down to the water and washed yourself out and were asking for forgiveness but I'm must wondering what did you, who did you talk to? Where did you go after that? What did you do?**

I got on the bus and came back to the Da Nang Hotel you know. Like it was the Vietnamese bus that I was on. I wasn't doing the military thing that day. I was kinda doing the civilian thing and I got myself together and cried a lot on the beach first of all and

- 20:00 then I came back to the Da Nang Hotel and I started talking to the girls and telling them what had happened and that was when the girls said, "Don't talk about it. It's over." You know, "You'll never know those guys. you wouldn't be able to recognise those guys in all the thousands of men that are here and they'll only blame you and and say that you were provoking them and it was your fault. You were in an area where you shouldn't have been." So that was what happened. After that I
- 20:30 talked about with the girls and then I didn't talk about it. I tried I actually put it out of my mind. I didn't put it out of my mind, I tucked it somewhere really really far back because I didn't want to have to deal with that. So that's how that went and I probably I've I didn't talk about it for twenty years.

Well I can imagine

- 21:00 **that would have been a very isolating moment and a few hours for you.**

Well you do know that you're on your own. You that really makes me made you aware that you're here on your own. Nobody is going to help you and I didn't want to make it worse for myself, so that's why I didn't discuss it. only with the girls and then the girls didn't want to know about it and certainly the boys in the band didn't want to

- 21:30 know about it. So I didn't talk about it.

Why did you think that the boys in the band

Look, the boys in the band were just lovely boys who were doing their, you know, their little rock and roll gig and everybody was struggling being in the war and the heat and all the travelling and all of that kind of thing. So like ad the advice from the girls was

- 22:00 "Don't discuss it with anybody because it's gonna you're gonna be blamed and it will get it'll be worse for you if you talk about it." So that's why I didn't talk about, 'cause I didn't want it to be worse for me. It was already bad enough and fortunately I wasn't bleeding or I wasn't cut. I wasn't physically really damaged. I was mentally damaged you know. my vagina obviously was that's what a vagina is for, to put a penis in so, or have

- 22:30 a baby out of. That's what they think anyway. so I wasn't physically damaged. Just mentally.

I'm just wondering if you can tell us a bit more about I guess your relationship to your body after that day and

Well I am so lucky, because I believe that I am a goddess. I believe that all the women are goddess. I love my body. My body has been strong and

- 23:00 firm for me you know. that's the really wonderful strong thing that's gotten me around the earth. I've and I love to dance. I've always loved to dance and I love my body. I'm really lucky. I 'cause what love? I'm not gonna get another turn at another body. I might as well be happy with what I've got and that's a part of my message to the women when I give them any class. You are perfect for you. You can't jump out of you and be somebody else so you really

- 23:30 need to learn to like who you are and what you've got and that's how I feel about it. I'm I love my body and I'm not saying it's perfect but it's a good strong piece of equipment baby. See I believe your body is your home, your transportation, your instrument, your sexuality and the temple of your god. So it's a lot of things and it's worked really well for me so far. I'm really lucky.

- 24:00 **I'm just wondering at the time whether your relationship or your feelings towards your body changed and whether perhaps you felt a sense of shame.**

Nah. Um, probably shame. Ah, no, not shame, hurt. Heart hurt. Emotional pain. Isolation

- 24:30 but not shame. I don't think. I became a striptease dancer and travelled around the world exposing my body, so I don't know, maybe that even opened me up to not being shameful of my body. I don't remember feeling shame and I don't know looking, it's thirty years ago we're talking about, so I can't really remember how I actually coped with that if on a daily basis but

- 25:00 I know I put it to the back of my mind. 'Cause I didn't want to have to deal with it and I was raised with that Catholic thing about your sexuality you know. It wasn't it wasn't a fabulous thing that I see it as now you know. It was a rude and dirty thing and how sad that we're raised like that. So and I think that that's how the men see it too you know. I don't I cannot comprehend a group of men taking

- 25:30 turns having sex with a person because here's their penis, their most fabulously prized possession, yet this is what they're doing with it. It's I can't comprehend that. I don't understand the all of that it's like animal base in a way and so I don't comprehend it but as far as my body, I don't think it's a rude and dirty

- 26:00 thing. I think that we are it's a magnificent thing and I believe that I am a goddess. Not in a religious sense of the word and when I say 'goddess' the fabulous thing that every woman do you know. Like from the moment they get up with the organising of their lives and often their husband's and their children's lives and being a psychiatrist and a lover and a cook and a blah. Everything that they do to me that's the

goddess you know. Not something that's out there away from you but that

- 26:30 magnificent thing that is actually in you that you are and I call men all handsome. I can't say that they're gods because god is a religious thing to me but handsome you know. They aren't all really handsome but there's got to be something handsome about them. So if you call somebody that's distinctly unattractive 'handsome' it just so brightens their day and I love to do that and I love it when you call a woman 'goddess' and they go "ho ho ho" and go all girly on you you know. I mean
- 27:00 to me that's a little bit of good thing that you're putting in every day and that's what I endeavour now and as I said to you earlier I live like the alcoholic people, on a day to day basis. I manage this day today and yesterday's history, tomorrow's the mystery, today's a gift. I'm enjoying my present. So I endeavour to do it. So
- 27:30 **Well I'm just wondering you've mentioned that you felt like you had an outer body experience. I'm just wondering whether you were able to determine whether they were actually soldiers or whether they were**
- Oh totally they were soldiers and I wasn't out of my body when they were dragging me up to the hut you know. it was I was when I was laying on the beach and they were dragging me by my arms up to the hut I wasn't out of my body then. I was "Please don't
- 28:00 do this. Why are you doing this?" You know, "I'm begging you." That kind of vocabulary. I can't remember exactly what all I said but when I got to the hut and I knew what it was gonna happen, "Whht" I was outta there. That was me going out and I was sitting up there looking at the girl thinking, "Oh you poor thing," and then of course came back after they left. So what was your question?
- 28:30 **I'm just wondering if you knew that they were soldiers?**
- Ye they were soldiers. They had guns. They had machine guns and another gun and I was kind of like that with my legs and my arms spread out like that and my head back like that and the gun was there and the guns were there and it was a multicultural group of allied soldiers. Funny that the multicultural group happened to be together there wasn't it? How they segregated
- 29:00 themselves but on that day it must have just been a group of people that worked together or something, I don't know.
- Well that's kind it's I guess you given the circumstances and the time and your age you took the advice that you received from the girls around you but I'm just wondering what have you been to do with your anger that might have**
- I think I'm still dealing with my anger darling.
- 29:30 I dancing, dancing, dancing. I've danced my a lot of my frustration and my I've danced I love it and I just danced it out I think. I think that's been a major help in my life because and I paint now. Now I paint it out and the rape, I've performed it.
- 30:00 I've painted it. Actually the painting about the rape is going around in Australia in an exhibition called 'Vietnam Voices' and that's an exhibition of paintings by many people who were in Vietnam. Vietnamese people, Australian people, civilians and soldiers and all kinds of people and I painted that rape picture and it turned out, when I was painting the picture I did a little drawing and
- 30:30 I had the soldiers and all of that kind of thing. When I did the picture it's about this big. I can't remember quite the size of it, it's quite big, but I've put shiny pink sequinned material and that's what I've painted on and all the men's penises became guns and their heads became penises in my painting. That's not how I'd actually planned it but when I was actually painting it onto the canvas, the pink sequinned material, that's how it came out. A bunch
- 31:00 of dickheads and really that's how I see them now. A bunch of dickheads. Poor things. I feel sad for them. I really do because I wonder if they suffer you know. Like I wonder if they remember that poor girl or whether that was just something that happened in war. That's why it's so important that this kind of conversation happens, because rape is such a terrible thing and it happens in war all the time.
- 31:30 So have I finished that sentence?
- And I guess many women have argued that, particularly back then there was a I guess a male conspiracy around keeping women silent about being raped.**
- Not only men, the women too. Everybody didn't talk about it.
- 32:00 The girls didn't want you to be more tortured than you already were and the men probably thought that they should expect it. because of my chosen field, because I chose to be a striptease dancer and travel around the world I've had many people think that I'm that's okay to rape me you know. That's okay to call me a slut, which is one word that
- 32:30 I hate because do what slut means? It's a slovenly person. It's got nothing to do with your sexuality. So when somebody calls me a slut, my anger nature really flares because I'm not slovenly. You can call me

a root rat if you like, but don't call me a slut. So like my anger goes in different crazy places you know. I that's how I probably take it out. I didn't I wasn't a beater of my child or anything like that

33:00 though. when I was a child I got beaten a lot and I didn't do that to my child. So at least I've learned as I've gone along and I I'm pretty calm. today I'm emotional. I was emotional just thinking about you girls coming because it's not something that I really talk about every day. So and I have talked about it so much you'd think that I'd be over the bloody emotion wouldn't you but it's still so not far from

33:30 the brim.

Well I guess in your after reaction or post rape kind of reaction and responses, I'm wondering whether you were fearful about it happening again.

Um, I don't really think so. I don't I didn't put myself in that position again really

34:00 but one day when I talk to somebody that I can actually really let that part of my brain really open up, it's gonna be again if what 'cause that when I went to that counselling and it was like that sight act. It was something else came out after that piece of information and so eventually I did go and try and find some people that had been to Vietnam

34:30 but I haven't found anybody that's really appropriate that I can talk to yet.

Well I guess one of the other things that I've been wondering is whether you had a lover and if you did, whether you told that person.

At the time I did not have a lover. Actually I only had one lover in the entire time that I was in Vietnam and he was in Chu Lai and he was an older

35:00 he was a lieutenant colonel and he was somebody that I would fly back to. I'd sneak or if I had days off I'd sneak on an aeroplane and get a lift back to visit him and I maybe saw him six or eight times in that whole period of time and I think he was probably freaked out that I did that you know. Like it was all very well, when I was in Chu Lai to have a bit of a fling with that go-go dancer but when she kept flying back in, I think it really freaked him out you know. I think he thought, "Oh my god."

35:30 like that some movie that's been made recently over the years where the woman just kept chasing the guy and chasing the guy. I think he got freaked out by me because that was the only person that I actually gave my body to in that period of time and no, I didn't discuss it probably [properly] with him. I have talked to my lovers over the years about it though. Mm probably not right then

36:00 but as the years went by. my last boyfriend, I had my last boyfriend was in my life for eight years and every Anzac Day I used to sit in front of the television and just cry my eyes out and that went on for about, oh probably five years or something and then finally I thought, "This is ridiculous." So I would go now I go to the dawn service and cry my eyes out, but it seems appropriate and I just deal with my

36:30 war madness on that one day, but now that war's on television every day the war madness is there and it's very frightening 'cause you just can't understand how people can keep doing this to each other you know. Like why? Here we are, such intelligent incredibly evolved animals yet we're still hurting each other like this. I just can't work it out

37:00 and there aren't any winners in war. Nobody's winning. Nobody wins. So why they keep doing it, I'll just never comprehend.

And I guess well you've mentioned that your feelings have changed over the years, but on those Anzac Days when you were crying your eyes out

Don't know. I it's I suppose it's something that you need

37:30 to have counselling for to find out what that deep deep thing is but it was just it's just the whole war thing. Like I believe the army the military is a magnificent it's amazing what they can do. You should see them go into a place and create a little village for themselves. I believe they could be great construction companies as opposed to great destruction companies and look at the earth. my goodness

38:00 there's so much ecological work that could be done by this huge company of people instead of all the destruction. I why are they trying to destroy the earth? I don't get it. obviously I'm a very unintelligent human being 'cause there's a lot of things about that part that I don't get. Mm. So what else? Where am I up to now?

Well I'm just wondering, still staying with the healing process I guess

38:30 Buddhism. Buddhism's given me Buddhism, okay, what happened was I left Vietnam and I went to Hong Kong and I ran into I fell in lust with a guy in Hong Kong. That was after, let me go back. I worked with the 'Rainbow Show.' I got asked to leave because I was a race riot risk they said and a nigger lover. Then I came back with, "Whatever is a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" I danced

39:00 with Lola McDonald for a couple of months and then when Robert Riviera saw that I was back in the country he had conniptions. You should have seen his face. It was almost like it was gonna explode. He was red and so angry. So Lola couldn't use me as a dancer so she sent me out as the booker. Now the

guys the who were in the clubs, they expected you to suck their penis to get a job and I was I mean.

- 39:30 I'm a little Catholic girl. I really was so green. I had no concept of all of that, I'm telling you. So I was not very good as a booker because I wasn't into sucking their penises. I hadn't even sucked a penis yet, you know. I was very green and anyway so finally, I wasn't successful as a booker and I left and I went to Hong Kong and I was gonna be a hostess in one of these clubs
- 40:00 and I had gone out go dancing to a like a disco and the Chin and all the Vietnamese all the GIs a lot of them had seen me in Vietnam so they were coming up and saying, "Oh we saw you in 'The Rainbow Show' and let's have a dance." Well the prostitutes in that venue they bumped me off the dance floor. They really turned on me you know. Like we were on the dance floor and they were coming and bumping me and pushing me and so I thought, "Oh I'd better get out of here."
- 40:30 I didn't feel safe and as I was leaving they pushed me down an escalator and crushed my glasses under their feet and they said, "If you don't get out of this town, you're you're gonna end up like these glasses" because they thought that I was in their business, which I was not and

Tape 3

- 00:31 **Ah**
- Okay, so we're in Hong Kong and the Chinese girls have pushed me down the escalator and crushed my glasses and said that they were going to crush my head if I didn't get out. I was waiting on a job too. One of the girls, the Australian girls was leaving, and I was gonna take over her job but I had met an American man and I fell had fallen in lust as I mentioned and he said come to America with him.
- 01:00 Well on the way to the airport he gave me a package and said would I hide this package. He said it was a diamond watch for his mother but he didn't want declare it. So in those days we used to wear hair pieces and I put the diamond watch under my hair and wore it. Well when we got to New York he put me in a hotel at LaGuardia Airport and introduced me to two fellows
- 01:30 and it turned out that I had carried drugs into America. I had no money and that guy left me in that hotel on my own, not knowing a soul except for these two fellows that he had introduced me to. So I called one of those fellows Solomon and asked Solomon, "Can you please help me? I have no money and the hotel are asking me for payment and I have no money to do that." So he came and we did a midnight
- 02:00 flit out of the LaGuardia Hotel and he took me a place called Lake Louise in New Jersey. Now here we are in 1969. I'm a white girl and this is a black family and I became a maid to the black family and they had bus picnics come where we, this venue was called Lake Louise and they had a big house on the hill, you walked down the hill and there was this lovely natural
- 02:30 spring lake, a little swimming area. Over that area they had a big recreation cement recreation area with barbecue and then they had six kind of motel rooms and another big kitchen area that was like a room and the lady who owned she had a girlfriend and Lillian. Lillian, I can't remember the girlfriend's name, but the girlfriend ran a whorehouse in Washington DC
- 03:00 and Lillian basically lived at Lake Louise but they would have bus picnics come from New York on the weekend and sometimes it would be all the pimps and whores or the next week it'd be all the gay girls or all the gay boys or the next week it'd be a church group. So each weekend it would be a different totally different group of people but and they used to call me, "Miss Ann" and they would go, "Where how where'd you find Miss Ann?" like how come you got
- 03:30 this white girl working for you and remember it's 1969. It was so not what was happening in that country. So I worked there for about three or four months and I was getting forty dollars a week but at the end of every week there'd be ten dollars for cigarettes, ten dollars for this, ten dollars that and I never got any cash. They would like they would give me say, "You're getting forty dollars" but I never saw any of the money and I thought "Am I
- 04:00 gonna be in, you know, just being a maid in this little out backwater for the rest of my time in America?" So I contacted Solomon, who was the other man that Walter had introduced me to and Solomon was a pimp and so when I got to New York, Solomon introduced me to cocaine and also to the whorehouses and for almost a year I worked as a
- 04:30 whore in the whorehouses, ranging from ten dollar whorehouses to five hundred dollar whorehouses and I used heroin and cocaine snorting thing snorting them. I never injected my body but I snorted a lot of drugs and then I met a man named Edgar Keat and he introduced me to Buddhism and actually what
- 05:00 happened was I was one of the my pimp's friends asked me to sit on a load of drugs for him and they locked me in a room in Harlem and I was to be there eight days and I got so sick, 'cause I didn't realise that I was a drug addict by then, and I had all that drugs but I couldn't touch any of those drugs that were in that room and I think it was probably six and a half, seven days before

- 05:30 No came and got me out of that room and I just thought, "Something's gotta change." So I went to the Roosevelt Hospital and I'm sitting in the hospital and I'm thinking "They're going to ask me for my green card or bl bl bl insurance." I didn't have anything like that. So I got up and I left that hospital and I went to a place called Soul On Ice which was on I think Broadway and 70-somewhere. 93rd
- 06:00 maybe. Somewhere like that. It was on the corner and it sold chicken, fish and chips and that kind of thing and this man, Edgar Keat, worked there and I just I thought he would get me drugs. That's what I was asking for. I was kind of trying to get some drugs but instead he gave me Buddhism and I stayed there for many many hours just talking to him and in and then at the end of that night at the end of his shift he invited me back to his house and he I stayed with him
- 06:30 and he became my lover and I was with him for oh probably about a year and I stopped using heroin and cocaine and started chanting (UNCLEAR) which basically that means, "By sound I devote my mind and body as one to the mystic law of the universe, which is cause and effect," and I create my causes and I get my effects and when I'm snorting heroin or cocaine
- 07:00 or speed balls as they called them I was feeling fabulous for awhile but then you go so down and you feel so sick and all you can think about is getting those drugs and so it's not it's no life you know. it's really pathetic. So I was very lucky that I got Buddhism and I stopped taking the drugs and then I didn't have any work and so I went and auditioned and I became a striptease dancer
- 07:30 in New York city and then I went and got an agent and he started sending me all over the world and I loved dancing. So I was just a lucky duck that I got Buddhism and dancing and I never I haven't if I had have been a prostitute while I was stripping, I could have made huge money but I just couldn't do that because I I believe that we are created in the image
- 08:00 of god and this was me my art form and every time I did a strip it was like painting a picture or this is all a wank in my head, right? Like the people out there are masturbating and thinking, "Oh look at that girl's vagina" or whatever they're they are but in my head I was a beautiful painting. So one when I was working at the 42nd Street Playhouse in New York City this really
- 08:30 rainy rainy day, the Playhouse was falling apart, and in those days you wore platform shoes, which was really quite high and fortunately did because we had this much water in the dressing room. Everybody had their platforms on, so they wouldn't get their feet wet but there was electrics everywhere. Like heaters and dryers and so on. So it was so dangerous and our shows were twelve, three, six, nine and twelve and when I went on to do
- 09:00 my twelve o'clock show, here was this man with a a red bandanna tied around his penis. His penis was black and white. I call this my pinto penis story, because his penis was like a pinto horse and he had a Jack Daniels in one hand and his penis in the other hand all day and by twelve o'clock when I went on to do my show and here was this man still
- 09:30 drinking and masturbating, I burst into tears. Here was I creating a piece of art and that man is sitting there still masturbating all day you know. It was so but in a way it was a really positive thing to happen because I looked at that man and I felt compassion for him and I realised that I don't have to buy into that. So any time I saw people masturbating in the future I would just go look over their head. I wouldn't give them the pleasure of looking at their penis,
- 10:00 or their face, I would always look over their head, and if that was where their heads were coming from I'd prefer that they masturbate in my audience than go out and put their penis in some bother somebody else. So that's how I chose to look at it from then on but it was it's all a journey. It all of a it is a journey and we're just getting through it the best way we can. Mm.

Well that's an interesting

- 10:30 **kind of story of what happened after your time in Vietnam and some of it was a little bit circumstance by the sound of it**

Mm.

But I'm wondering were you or did you were you exposed to drugs while you were in Vietnam?

Yeah. That was the first time I ever smoked marijuana or took any pills or anything like that. I didn't have heroin or cocaine in Vietnam. That was Neville that introduced me to that area

- 11:00 but in a way it was kind of like a progression because I tried to visit some of the GIs that I had met in Vietnam when I went to America and it was three guys that I actually...

Ye Liz you were just telling me about being exposed to drugs in Vietnam I guess and what you

well a lot of the GIs were using heroin in Vietnam and I think that was

- 11:30 one of the Vietnam measures you know. Like a way of demising the enemy. I think that by introducing those heavy drugs to those young men they did get a lot of people got hooked and I, as I was saying, I when I went to America I only visited three of the GIs and all of them were on heroin and in a very bad way. So

12:00 I didn't want to visit anybody else 'cause I didn't want to be there in that place.

Well I was going to ask you whether you saw any kind of drug use amongst the Aussie diggers?

Well what, the I only worked twice for the Aussie diggers because mostly we worked for Americans. I think Vung Tau and Nui Dat I think they were two places that we

12:30 worked for the Australians and we didn't spend a lot of time with them you know. the fact that they had their VB in a half drum with their ice and they were just such lovely jolly fellows, so typical Australian, and I don't know they're so manly but lovely very kind and happy to see our show and we weren't there very long

13:00 you know. It wasn't like we spent any time there with the Australians so I only twice worked for the Australians. I don't know whether they used drugs or I I wasn't with them enough to find out any of that. So just the twice. Vung Tau and Nui Dat. I think they were the names of the places but don't take me for sure because they're it is thirty years ago and those names are just rolling around my head now.

13:30 Well I'm wondering if you were aware of any difference in appreciation I guess between the Americans and the Aussies?

Well I think the Americans were kind of if you can be spoiled in war. they got I think well they get more money. They get a different treatment in a way but I don't know, I think the Australian guys were just as delighted to see us

14:00 you know. Of course they were delighted to see us. They loved the shows and but I think that the Australian they did it harder. I think it was tougher in as far as material things were concerned but I could be wrong. it just seems that the Americans throw so much money into their war thing and I don't think the Australians had as much as

14:30 the Americans. That's the only difference I think.

Well perhaps we could just get some of the details. If you could describe 'The Rainbow Show' and

Okay, 'The Rainbow Show' had I think it had a drummer, lead and bass guitar and then Ione, who played the vibes and the trumpet. Now

15:00 Ione was an amazing woman. She was I think in her thirties at that period and she had been married to a trumpet player and I think he had died and she was from New Zealand and then there was a young girl named Cathy, who was from Canberra, who was a singer and another lady and I just don't know why I can't remember this lady's name, I can remember her costume so well. It was a red fringe costume and the top part

15:30 tore off but she still had a bra on and the middle part tore off. I think it came off from the bottom, the middle, so you know. So I remember that so clearly about her but I don't remember her name and she kept kind of to herself that lady. She was a more private person and we all went on and did our show together and then and we all travelled together and those kind of things but I'm just a different person you know. I always go out and look and

16:00 I look for adventures and you know. Like I had one friend who had a motorbike and he used to drive me out to the paddy fields and we'd drive in between the paddy fields just because, not for any reason, and we'd go eating ice-cream together and this was not a lover this was just a friend and so I think even in those days I was a bit of a solo person. Even though

16:30 I worked in a with a team of people and when the Seebes threw the mud on our hootch because I had been sitting with the black guys and I was called a nigger [African American] lover, those thespians turned on me very smartly. They didn't want to know me at all. So I don't think they were really my friends. They were just my work partners. Mm.

Well I'm just wondering what kind of venue you

17:00 performed in?

Well they were military clubs and all over the country they had military bases and when they built the military base, that's what I'm saying the military can go in and build themselves a little town in no time at all and they had well for example Cam Ran Bay was a rest and recreation area for in-country military, but that was American.

17:30 Also we did work like there were lots of Korean and Philippino performers but they also had their different little shows but often like when you were in Cam Ran Bay you might share the accommodation with the Philippino performers or something like that. So we did have a little bit of contact, but not very much, and the clubs were just well like a regular say RSL [Returned and Services League] club or something like that. made of wood and had a stage and a bar and toilets and tables and

18:00 chairs and the whole thing. sometimes they were less, depending upon where they were, sometimes they would might be quite posh you know. Depending upon where you were. Mostly the officers' clubs

were all very nice and usually the enlisted men the clubs were okay but they were it was the hierarchy you know. The enlisted men, the NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] and the officer and so the clubs

18:30 probably reflected that and in one camp there might be three clubs. Heaven forbid that an enlisted man and an officer drink in the same club love. You know, hello. How stupid. So anyway that was the kind of venues that we worked in and as I've told you earlier, sometimes it would be out in the boondocks where you, they'd

19:00 throw a steel girder up and make a thing. In Da Nang we worked in this place once and the Da Nang ammunition dump got blown up and where we were working was kind of an outside venue and everybody that was up high got blown off their perch because the ammunition dump was a really long way away but this thing that's like a vibration came and knocked everybody. The boy in the who was the drummer of the show broke his leg and you know

19:30 it was kind of like that. That was one venue and then when you go out to the field, well the the GIs were so excited to see you that they always really tried to make you as comfortable as possible, particularly the girls. So that's that.

And how would they do that?

Well they'd get food for you or stand guard while you went to the toilet. As I said there might be

20:00 six loos and six guys there sitting there having a poo. You didn't really want to sit next to them and have your poo if what I mean. So just little things that really meant a lot at that time. Excuse me, Muffin [her cat?].

Well Liz I'm just wondering you mentioned earlier that you did a few rehearsals before you went overseas but I'm wondering how you put your routine together

20:30 **and**

Well go-go dancing doesn't really require a routine. The only rehearsal we really had, 'cause everybody was an individual performer. The stripping kind of lady had her act. The singing girl had her act, and I had my act and go-go dancing was what it was like. It was just jumping up and it was you just being an individual dancer and lots of fringe cossies [costumes] and you know

21:00 lots of motion and movement. So I had my songs that the boys played for me. I think, as I was saying to you earlier, the only person that from that group is Peter Power now and he would remember the song that I danced to, but I remember that they always played 'We've Got To Get Out of This Place' 'cause the GIs absolutely ro[w] that would rock they everybody wanted to get out of that place, so that was one of the songs that was a major song

21:30 you know and of course all lots of soul music and rock and roll from that era and the boys worked together because they were the musicians and just before we were getting ready to go well we got together several times and you know. "This is how the show is going to run and these are the songs you're going to dance to" and bl bl and so it wasn't really like a rehearsal where every step and you couldn't possibly do that

22:00 anyway because every stage was a different stage you know. Like every as I say, there were each of the clubs but then you might be working in a steel girder or you might be working in that big helicopter area or you might work in that airport over there or you know. It might be a big outdoor area that you're working on, so you couldn't really have anything actually choreographed. You just went for it when you got there. So it was

22:30 vaguely rehearsed what I mean? when I say 'vaguely' well it's like everybody doing the individual thing and then we came together and made it happen. Mm.

Well I'm just wondering if you modelled yourself on or who did you look to for some tips about go-go dancing?

Well the girl who introduced me to go-go dancing was my, my Dad went to school with his father, Uncle Owen out at Bondi, and

23:00 Robyn probably was the girl. she was a ballet dancer, she worked at 'Tivoli', she did the hootenanny [Hootenanny can best be described as a roots, rockabilly, blues, punk lifestyle event [dance]]. all of that fabulous stuff that I as I was growing up and her Mum, Auntie Norma, was always took me along to things and so probably her, if I modelled myself on anybody, but she would die because what? She is such a professional kind of dancer and I was the wild girl and I used to

23:30 bug them. Auntie Norma used to make her take me out with her when she went to 'Stomps' and there was Robyn, and Robyn and Jacqueline the three they went to high school at Dover Heights together and they always went out together and when I came on the weekends Auntie Norma would say, "Take Lesley with you," and so Lesley Margaret Elizabeth would get to be taken and those girls weren't too happy about it but and I, as I said, I always went wild. I would dance wild and they would

24:00 kind of be embarrassed by me I think but if anybody I modelled myself on I suppose, I'd have to say her

but I don't think I modelled myself on anybody. I think I just took the go-going and ran with it, 'cause I loved to dance. Still love to dance. It's, you know, a passion.

Well I'm also wondering for those two shows that you worked on in Vietnam what or how did what to do for a costume?

Well costumes were

24:30 go-go costumes were fringe and like if you move a little bit then the fringe actually goes wild. So that's very smart to have fringe because you don't have to work quite that hard you know. you just do a bit of shake and everything's happening for you and it was a bikini and boots and high heels or something like that you know. It was what was happening at the time. So you just got your

25:00 cossies [costume] together. Everybody had their own cossies and I've actually got a cossie.

[Describing the costume.] This is actually not one of the costumes that I wore over there but it's a similar, very very similar to what I did actually somebody gave this to me on my fortieth birthday as a reminiscing thing but this was the idea. So you as you can

25:30 see, you just move a little bit and that fringe goes, goes, goes. So go-go dancing and away we go. So that's an idea of what the costumes were like.

That's fantastic.

And you've got a couple of there's some pictures, one picture of me in costume. Actually a lot of my memorabilia my Mum threw out because they were moving from one house to another house and I wasn't in the country and my box of pictures

26:00 and Vietnam stuff was one of the boxes that actually got thrown out. So fortunately I've I do have a couple of pictures that have a couple of pictures that Peter Power had in his book, so I've got the copies of those. So that's

Well I'm just wondering how, and this may apply to post-Vietnam as well, but I guess in the early days when you were learning

26:30 **how to be a go-go dancer before you started stripping I'm wondering what you would do to keep fit and**

Well I never learnt how to be a go-go dancer. I just did it. like I worked at the Redfern RSL that one gig and then I loved it and I thought, "I'm gonna do this." So I went off and got gigs. I made the costumes. Some of them were hysterical. You've got a picture of one of them there, which had just a swimming an old black swimming costume and then I

27:00 put flowers I sewed white flowers all over it so it was just '60s, '70s, it was very camp and the big bouffant hairdos and all of that and the big high ponytail and all of that kind of and hairpieces. Well when you're working in the clubs that's where you learn all that. That's where you get all your stuff. like your confidence and all of that kind of thing, you pick it up on the way. there's no

27:30 maybe nowadays I think there is go-go dancing classes but in my day there weren't go-go dancing classes. Not that of. I just think people loved it and they got on there and if you can make that fringe shake in that little tiny space that you were working and like that's that was another thing, you were often in a cage. So you were in a little space and moving it all. That was really jelly in on a plate basically

28:00 and I think that the more you dance and the more you perform to an audience the more confidence you end up getting basically. That was where it all came from I think and my adventurous nature. I just wanted adventure. I wanted wasn't going to be just another ordinary little Catholic girl, I'm telling you that right now. I was gonna go and make my mark. I think I've made my mark on me. I don't know about the rest of the world though.

28:30 I am infamous in my world. Many people have seen me perform and they do know that I had that attitude that we are goddesses and and we're created in the image of god and this is something special that we've all got. If you believe in god you know. So I think that it's a progression. You learn as you go, if that's what you really want to do. My husband used to say, "Fake it 'til you

29:00 make it" and he did that so well and I think I did that too. I think that's like I always pretended I was brave. I wasn't brave at all but I just pretended. 'Cause my Dad always said, "You're the big lady, no crying" and I would want to cry a lot but I would never cry because I was the big lady and I wasn't crying you know. I was to set an example for my brothers and sisters and they weren't to see that I was a weak person in any possible way. So I pretended bravery all

29:30 of my childhood and that stood me in good stead for pretending bravery as I grew older and chose that really profession that you have to be brave because when you're travelling the world as a striptease dancer and in Finland they were going, "There she is. There she is." Now I'm in a town, I don't know anybody, and they know that the stripper's arrived and they're they're saying, "There she is" in not a very

- 30:00 positive way and the women turned their backs on me during Finland while I when I went on stage and the men were afraid to applaud and when I was in Norway, they refused me accommodation in the hotel because I was a striptease dancer because the girl who had worked in that club before me had been turning tricks and but they're passing judgment on me by somebody else. As you can probably gather by now, I don't like that. You meet me and you
- 30:30 pass judgment on me as me, you don't put me in a category anywhere because I am not in a category. I am an individual. So I went to the most prestigious reporter in Oslo, Norway, and I got front page, 'Discrimination against striptease dancer' and mentioned that hotel and why that was happening because you can't pass you can't judge everybody by one person and I don't like if you're going
- 31:00 to judge me, judge me on me not somebody else's actions. So it was hard when you were travelling on your own. You had to be very brave and you had to pretend if you weren't. Let's go back to Vietnam. Okay in Vietnam I met a lovely Avon Troop and that was
- 31:30 he was in the Vietnamese military, on the our side, and he didn't speak much English and I didn't speak much Vietnamese, but he invited me home to his house to meet his wife and children and she, who didn't speak any English either, took me to the markets where the Vietnamese people went to go to market, right, and they were just so kind
- 32:00 and so open-hearted without verbal communication we did manage to communicate but what happened was, I got stuck in their village after curfew. So I couldn't go home and there was only one bed so all of us, the five of us, the Mum and the Dad and the two children and me all slept in the one bed. Now I have to tell you I was really really nervous about that, but they were very kind and very lovely
- 32:30 and here we are. I'm a foreign person and the husband is bringing me home to meet the wife and and not speaking the language but their food and their hospitality, it was very special for me. I can't remember that man's name and I can't remember her name either but they were just lovely, lovely people. They were a very gentle race of people and the country was absolutely beautiful. Being destroyed by war mind you but
- 33:00 just a tropical country with beautiful foliage and fauna and flora and it was and lovely people and who had been raped and pillaged and warred upon for so many years. The poor people you know. they haven't had much of a go that group. So
- 33:30 what else about Vietnam? The huge French influence. All the [things] you know, like in the major cities the buildings were very French and big and lush and lovely. That was a huge French influence because they had apparently been there for the forty years before the American moved in so the Vietnamese people had been in war for probably nearly the last hundred years or something. So they were in a special
- 34:00 headspace too.

And I'm wondering about your contact with locals and just the culture I guess and whether there were any shocks for you or surprises?

Well it was all surprise because I'd never experienced anything, anything out of Australia. So all the, as I was saying to you earlier, the smells of the food and particularly when the Vietnamese lady took

- 34:30 me to the market and all the ladies sitting down on the in their little hunch position and all the different fruits and vegetables and and again smells. There was this fruit called a durian and oh god it smelt like rotten feet or something like that but they really loved it and oh they were just a gentle people and lovely. I found them very lovely
- 35:00 but also like they were in a position where their country was being overrun by all us foreign people and they were earning money. There was money because there were lots of people working for the foreigners. So I think probably by the Americans being there the Vietnamese got extremely corrupted in many ways I would
- 35:30 say from their natural way. from their traditional way and then seeing how the Westerners come in and do their stuff and I think it would have been quite corrupting in a lot of ways. They were lovely though the Vietnamese. Very gentle souls. I think Buddhism might be a very big religion over there as well. Some kind of Buddhism. Christianity as well I suppose because of the French connection
- 36:00 but I didn't get that involved you know. really you're just working in your job and basically that was it.

And I'm wondering if you saw any evidence or of the black market?

Oh yes. the black market's on the street. Everybody's selling cigarettes and chocolates and all kinds. it wasn't hidden. It was right there. So yes, it was very prevalent. every day. you could buy things

- 36:30 from the black market. Although what we would try to do was get the GIs to take us to the PX [American canteen unit]. That was the military supermarket, the PX is the military supermarket. The American military supermarket and if you could get them to take you there you could get all your shampoo and conditioner and cooking, everything from a supermarket very reasonably. So if you were lucky

37:00 one of the GIs'd do that, take you to the PX.

Well I'm wondering just about those GIs in uniform. If you could just share with us your impressions of I guess some of the characters or personalities.

Oh well look. Just a bunch of men really. There was one there were lots of characters. We did

37:30 run into one American Indian guy and he still had his tomahawk. He carried that was his trip and he used to we saw him quite a few times that guy I remember and if we were hungry late at night he'd go and break into the kitchen and get us food. So we really liked him particularly because like it wasn't like you could just wake up and go and make yourself something or

38:00 you know go to the shop or something like that. It was usually you were in a camp where the PX or the mess hall was where you got food you know. So if you were hungry in the middle of the night, unless you had been smart enough to save something to eat, there was no way of getting anything and that guy used to go and with his tomahawk would knock off

38:30 the locks on things and get us food. Look there were lots of characters. As I told you about Scottie, the boy who was doing the chin ups when Ione and I walked in the door. Well we saw him a few times. He came to visit. One time he came and he was off limits and he was at the airport. He I think he was came from Na Trang, I'm not sure but I think so, and he came to Da Nang

39:00 and he phoned me and he said, "Look I'm coming. I'll meet you." Left a message or something. So we were sitting on the edge of the Da Nang river just being with each other and the MPs came along and Scottie was in and he shouldn't have been there. He wasn't supposed to have left the airport. So the MPs took him and so in that country they had motorbikes. In front of the motorbike there was a seat. So the guy

39:30 the driver was there and then there was a seat there and that was where the passengers rode. I think I can't remember what they're called now but it was a very scary thing 'cause sometimes they'd go real close up behind a truck and they were behind you, they weren't in front of you, so you were very but anyway this day Scottie got taken by the MPs so I jumped in, jitney [Jitney (the title means 'taxi')] I think it was called, and I jumped in this little thing and I was being outrageous and I said, "They're taking my boyfriend. The

40:00 police are taking my boyfriend. Go after them." So all these little jitney guys who were driving who weren't didn't have any passengers I ended up having a whole team of jitneys all driving around the jeep just aggravating the MPs and they took him to this one section and we were all sitting outside. All the jitney guys and I, they were we were just having a game now, and then Scottie got into the car again

40:30 and was taken to the airport and I was standing up in front of the jitney going, "Follow that car." it was just madness and they were all having fun and we were laughing. The MPs weren't too happy about it and they were driving around the jeep. Well when we got to the Da Nang airport there was incoming rockets like the siren came and every and by this time now the MPs [military police] had to[ld] put Scottie out 'cause he was out back at the airport and I jumped out of the jitneys and Scottie and I were walking

41:00 and as soon as the sirens came, Scottie just threw me down on the ground and laid on top of me. Like not a sexual way but laid over me and then over there a rocket went off and there was a big hole and dust and all that kind of thing and so as soon as that rocket went off Scottie dragged me over and we were laying on the side of the crater that had just been created and he said that would have been the safest place for us to be because when people drop

41:30 are doing rockets they change the destination every like millimetres or centimetres or maybe feet, I don't exactly know, but they change it so that the next bomb isn't going to drop on the same place because they fell like they've already done that damage in that one, so the next bomb should go somewhere else. So really we were in the safest place being in the crater and I'll tell you it was one a very romantic moment because it was like fireworks you know. There you were, the hole

42:00 was had been made so big that there was water in the bottom of the hole so we...

Tape 4

00:31 **Well Elizabeth I was wondering if I could ask you we've talked a lot about both times in Vietnam, but I guess about being asked to leave Vietnam that first time, what maybe your reaction was to it?**

I was devastated. I just was so hurt, not only by Robert Riviera, who was really the instigator of that because he thought that I was a major troublemaker, I couldn't understand the racist

01:00 things and I also was terribly hurt by my the thespians you know, the other people who worked with me and then what happened was we went back to Saigon. I don't know where we were, we were working

for Seebees when that particular thing happened where I, did I tell you that story about how I came and sat where the black people were? I came in. I was watching a show and I sat on the black side of the

01:30 room, which I didn't realise 'cause it was dark, and when I it was finished when I went home we were living in one of those hootches that was round like a corrugated iron like a half a drum kind of thing and the men threw mud on the hootch and called "Nigger lover, nigger lover" and then the people who were inside the hootch were afraid and they I was the one that brought that danger on them and so they turned. Then I went back to

02:00 Saigon where we were gonna be departing from and the young girl, Cathy, who was the singer, she came back with me and we got a we were put on a plane in Saigon by Robert Riviera and we were told we would go to Sydney, like we would get a connecting flight to Sydney, but when we arrived in Singapore there wasn't a connecting flight for eleven days and Cathy and I didn't have any finances but fortunately there was a an Australian reporter

02:30 on the plane and we had been talking to him and he was with us when we went to try and get the other plane and he let us stay at his house. Now I wish I could remember the name of that reporter. I don't know his name to this day but he was very very kind to us and we stayed in his flat in Singapore for the eleven days and he actually took us out once to a place called 'The Tropicana'. That was the first time I ever saw a lady twist tapples on tassles on her nipples and I wanted to be that lady.

03:00 So interestingly, years later I did get to work at 'The Tropicana' twice but anyway we stayed there at that man's house and then we finally got a plane back to Australia and I got a job on William Street as a bunny at 'The Bunny Club' and then I was only working there a short time when Lola McDonald came into that venue and asked were there any people interested in going to

03:30 Vietnam as a go-go dancer. Well of course I jumped on the bandwagon while and as I said to you earlier, somebody asked me why would I want to go back to Vietnam after I had been raped but I don't believe I remembered I'd been raped until a long time later. I honestly believe I put that out of my mind like in the back of my mind and I was just furious that somebody would tell me I have to leave a country because I'm saying hello to Mr Puerto

04:00 Rico or Mr Mexico or Mr Africa you know. I was so angry about that. So the opportunity when Lola McDonald presented it was great. I thought, "Yes, I'm going back" and I went back.

I wonder during that time that you were in Australia after coming back from Vietnam the first time, maybe what you noticed of either the anti-war movement or moves against the Vietnam War?

There were moratoriums [anti-war demonstrations against the Vietnam War]. 'Cause when I went to Vietnam

04:30 um from Vietnam to America, at that period I was standing on a balcony once and watching a sea of millions of people with their candles all marching against Vietnam. So yes, I was very aware of all of that that was going on. There were many, many, many millions of people did not want their children or sons and daughters and everybody to be in that country fighting for a ridiculous reason you know. it was pathetic.

05:00 **I just I wonder if you remember maybe if you've if you've told us some quite or spoken to us with some quite anti-war views today**

Oh totally. I am totally anti-war. There are definitely no winners in war. At that time I had no opinion. I didn't know about war. Had never even thought about it and honestly when I went to Vietnam I went there very green not knowing anything but of course anybody who's lived through a

05:30 war or anything to do with a war knows that it's not the answer and there are no winners. There aren't any winners.

Had you sort of started to really think that just when you came back to Australia that first time? Was that

No. Took me years. I had to grow up. I was still young and dumb. No, no, no. It took me many years. Probably over the last twenty years I've started to think about those things because I didn't want to think about those

06:00 things. I didn't want to confront anything as far as political or none of that. I never I didn't deal with it. it wasn't on my agenda. so I didn't really I am totally anti-war now. I just know even disagreements in the courtyard I don't want to be a part of it you know. There's got to be a way to eventually if you step back long enough you can talk things

06:30 out but just going in there willy-nilly all emotional doesn't work and I don't like it. my father was very violent and drank and things like that in my childhood and I never liked it. So that pushy rough angry thing and I'm not excluding myself from being an angry person. I'm totally an angry person

07:00 and I endeavour to deal with my anger through chanting and saying my prayers and breathing and that's how I deal with my madness from Vietnam as well. If I absolutely have to go into an elevator for some reason or other, I breathe and pray and that's how I get through it.

Well I just wonder going back the second time even without consciousness of the rape, you

07:30 **still had had quite a frightening experience just as a civilian.**

Yes, but it wasn't as frightening as it was exciting darling. there you are, you are queen of bloody the world. Here you don't have to move at all. You can just get on the stage and the audience are screaming for you, you know. You're getting huge amount of attention and being the eldest of eight children and not getting much attention, I adored getting all that attention you know. It's I think it's a part of that psychological

08:00 thing too so and I didn't have any money. See money I wasn't raised with any money. We never had any money education. We never were some children got twenty cents every week to put in the bank and that gave them a saving ethic but my parents didn't have twenty cents to give us, so we never had and we my parents never discussed politics in front of us or as some families do you know. We never read the newspaper together

08:30 or any my mother was busy trying to look after eight children and my father worked in the mines and quite often the mines were on strike, so they'd go away and work on the Snowy River scheme and so we didn't have that kind of education and it took me quite a long time to actually catch up. even to be interested or affected by it. Like for years I didn't even want to watch the news, and even now I'd really prefer not to watch the news

09:00 because there's no good news. they it's about scary, getting blown up and even I see our politicians going on the news and giving the terrorists targets to hit. like saying, "Oh if they hit there, such and such is going to happen," and I'm thinking, "Well why would you tell the terrorists where the best place is to blow up?" I don't understand any of that. I find it all I am passionate about it. I just don't want us to be fighting. I don't want

09:30 our young men to be at war. I don't want this country to be led by a person who is led by somebody else you know. I want our country to be standing on its own two feet. I would like to see us be totally self-sufficient. even though we could be that and I've observed what's happened over the years. Like the prisons used to totally make all their own clothes and their own bread and do all of those things. Well they don't do that

10:00 anymore. We had a huge shoe business in this country but they've taken everything offshore because its cheaper and well I don't I think that's just crazy you know. Why not support your people in your country and give all of those people work you know. Let the shoe companies come here and make their shoes and give people work and let the prisoners work because sitting around creating more havoc just by talking among themselves isn't a healthy thing you know. It

10:30 as far as work is concerned also, I am fifty five, fifty six now, and I don't have a regular job and if I keep going for hospitality work but people don't want an old boiler like me. They want young nubile things behind the counter. Apart from the fact that I'm a really good worker and I can communicate with people and things like that doesn't matter. They'd rather have a slack little scrubber that looks twenty

11:00 than a good worker who looks fifty six. So I don't know how I got off on that tangent.

That's okay. You mentioned something though I guess about not wanting more young men to be affected by war and I just wonder what you saw when you

Young men and women, 'cause the women, human beings. I just don't want people to be affected by the way it affects people. If you talk to people, number one not too many people want to really talk about their war experiences until well down

11:30 the track and it's because it is affecting them all so very personally and it affects everybody that's there at the moment. Like September 11th affected the entire world simply because it was America and that publicity. and also we were watching it on television, the planes actually

12:00 go in. that was an act of war. There was war and all of those poor New York people were in a war zone and it has affected them 'til today. So anybody who is in the First World War, the Second World War, Korea, you know, over there in poor Palestinians, the poor people, but the Israelis also they went through a whole bunch of stuff. Now how come they want to do those horrible terrible things to somebody else? So

12:30 I don't understand it and I don't think there are any winners in war and I just am definitely anti-war. Let's instead let's have the leaders have a fencing match or something like that you know. Like let's not bring all the people let's not go over to Iraq and those poor people don't have a toilet to poo in. no running water. Here it's months since supposedly "the war" and what have they done about that infrastructure? I don't see that happening.

13:00 Any wonder those people are feeling frustrated and angry you know. Like the Americans can go in and build themselves a military village in no time at all. How come they haven't been able to go there and put water on and electricity for those people? they bombed it and destroyed it. I don't think that should be right. like our poor earth. How much more can it take? Not only the human beings but the earth and also they've got alternatives for

13:30 power. They can use water. They can use the sun. They haven't even tapped into the sun as far as power is concerned. They're sucking all the guts out of the earth by taking all the oil out of it, what's going to happen when there is actually no oil left in the earth? does it all crumble in or what is actually gonna happen then you know? Sorry but I get very passionate about it.

No, you're right. Well I wonder you mention the suffering of people in Iraq but I just wonder what you saw of the suffering

14:00 **of the local Vietnamese?**

Oh well it was terrifying look, number one I was not as aware in when I was twenty one as I am aware when I'm fifty six. I didn't have any of that information but the people the Vietnamese people just were just amazing you know. Like they have so used to living through war

14:30 I suppose that they managed to live, life was cheap. The little biker boys, they were called the cowboys the motorbike cowboys, you could probably get somebody murdered for ten dollars if you know. life in a war it's cheap. So almost everybody's living on the edge. certainly everybody would be living on the edge, but they're still living their life because what else can they do?

15:00 You know they did the best they could for the moment.

I wonder if the soldiers that you met would talk to you about what they were going through and what they were seeing out in the field when you had a chance to talk to them?

No. We didn't talk about war. We listened to music, talked about what was happening in the world. "What's going on in the world?" they would say and the world was anywhere else on earth but that war area and

15:30 we just talked about other we didn't talk about war, no. There were no war conversations with those boys.

I just wonder what you saw maybe as your role by being there and especially not necessarily the dancing but the

Oh that's all I was there for. I didn't comprehend that sitting around in an airport and talking to people was like doing social work in a way

16:00 or that didn't enter my head. I just was there to do my shows and I felt like what I was there for was light entertainment. To take those people's minds who were in killing mode off killing mode for a moment on even if it was onto a sexual mode because of course they're thinking sex when they see the round-eyed girls, but as I've said before, the majority of them were extremely charming gentlemanly young men. They were young.

16:30 Very young. Very very young. Like me. I was young too. Young and dumb.

Would they call you a round-eyed girl?

Yeah, oh yes. Yes. They said it was so great to talk to a round-eyed girl. That's where I get you get the expression because they just wanted something from home. Mm.

17:00 Where am I up to?

Oh no, it's just fascinating that I guess the dancing's one thing but ye just that contact being such a an important part of I guess them coping with what they were doing.

Mm. Well I don't I can't you'd have to ask one of those guys how we affected them but that's how I saw it. I saw it that we were a bit of light relief in you know

17:30 in the madness that was going on.

Well I wonder what you sought out as maybe normal or light relief in because you are in a war zone too and what you could do to find something normal and relaxing and

Go to the beach and no, well there wasn't any relief. when you were at home in your room and you were with your just your group and stuff like that you could close your door and fortunately

18:00 keep the people out but the majority of the time you were pretty well on, if what I mean. Mm. You didn't think about all of that. See even in those days, stress wasn't even a part of our vocabulary, was it?

Well I wonder given that you weren't you had no training or no briefing on what to expect in Vietnam, did were there people performers who just couldn't cope with it?

18:30 Not that I met. everybody just seemed to be getting on with it. Not that I, I didn't meet anybody that lost the plot or flipped. a few people got hurt and that one girl was killed but I wasn't involved with all of I wasn't a part of that but that one girl, I think a GI actually killed her, but I'm I don't know that whole story and I know

19:00 that one of the boys when Da Nang ammunition dump got blown up, he got knocked off his drum stool

and broke his leg and thing accidents happened and stuff but I hurt my ankle one time but I just think everybody got on with it love you know. They didn't think about it while it was happening. It's not until after the the act or the time do you realise that you have been affected

19:30 by that and I tell you, it wasn't until well after I was forty and or thirty five, forty before I really realised that I was affected by that and then lots of things started bubbling up. coming from my inside and I had to deal with those things. So those things I can't pinpoint one thing either. the fact that when I would go into a elevator I'd just be immediately back in the bunker

20:00 at Vietnam and I even when I would chant "num ya horingay" [Buddist Chant] really loud and try and breathe myself away from it, it was so there. So I realised that I was flashing back to an unpleasant time in my life and my temperature goes up. I get the hot flush and oooh it's a horrible feeling but that wasn't then. That this is now. So I don't I think I was just living my daily life daily

20:30 and not buying into it all until much later in my life and I'm sure that those young men if if they knowing you're gonna get up and go out and shoot some more people today often they probably didn't have anywhere to sleep they'd be out on bivouack and that kind of thing. So if you've spoken to lots of people about this you would know that it was like you're in a bit of a madness. The whole vibe of a war zone. The air,

21:00 everything about it isn't like you're in a normal place. It's just not and it's I can't explain exactly what it is that's not, but that's how it is. There's this thing this feeling, zzzzzzzzz, all the time. 'Cause you never know when there's gonna be a rocket attack or somebody's gonna throw a hand grenade or there's gonna be a sniper or somebody loses the plot

21:30 and shoots somebody. if you go and look at the history of any war I bet you'll find lots of allied people shot their own men and flipped out and bl bl bl you know. Lots of that would have gone on, but you don't ever not until this period in our lives now have we even heard the stories about the women being raped or lots of things about war that you don't hear about and now as time goes on people are starting

22:00 to talk about it and do what you're doing.

It's just fascinating hearing it from somebody who's not who's a civilian in the middle a foreign civilian in the middle of all of this.

Mm. Ye well see when you're the actual person being there it it's not abnormal. That's where you are, that's what you're doing and this is how I'm earning my living and having an adventure. every time I go on stage and it's an adventure so that kind of kept

22:30 me going I suppose, the dancing.

Well I wonder how the all girl show differed from the or the female the female-run show differed to the Robert Riviera one that you initially went to Vietnam with.

Well

Where's the second show?

Well the first show was 'The Rainbow Show' and the second show was 'Whatever is a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?' It was run by a woman,

23:00 which was Lola McDonald. We were based in Saigon as opposed to Da Nang, which were different parts of the country. Lola had been there and been quite established and she did all of the bookings and all of that kind of thing, so I think she might have had a couple of singers. I just can't remember

23:30 that show. I think there were four musicians and two singers and a couple of dancers in Lola's show but all of them were very much the same. Based on what worked.

I wondered it didn't sound like Riviera really cared for the performers particularly.

No no, he didn't. He just wanted the money and what happened to Riviera? He fined not only me, many people for many things. People got fined all the time. So he what he did was he

24:00 bought himself a boat with the money that he made from Vietnam and that boat blew up underneath him. So he actually got his karma and fortunately his wife and sons weren't on the boat. So who they were the lovely people. I didn't know his son Tommy very well but his wife and little boy, Bobby. Bobby actually when the drummer got his leg broken, Bobby took over drums and he was a lovely young man at eleven years old. extremely bright because of his lifestyle.

24:30 You know it was just like having another big person around and his mother, she was lovely too, but I just can't remember her name but they didn't die. Riviera got blown up. Serves himself right, see. Everybody gets their karma in the end. So he was not a very nice man and now he's not here.

I just wondered just from a performing point of view I guess maybe working in an environment that kind of

25:00 **was looking after you a bit more with the second show.**

Yes, well Lola was just a nice lady and she was a good businesswoman and she did everything by the book basically but we had a really nice French-style home in Saigon and we had a couple of people who did our washing and cooking you know. All of that was wonderful you know. how spoiled

25:30 and we would go off to do our shows and it was pretty laid back. It was okay, although at night time the cockroaches were this big in Vietnam. They were so huge and if you went down to the kitchen area at night time it would be a carpet of cockroaches and so there were those kind of little creepy things but it was

26:00 nice. Nice house and fairly easy to work for her and then of course, as I said Robert Riviera saw me and I had to be a booker and I didn't do well at being a booker.

Did Lola have any idea you'd been to Vietnam before and

Yep. Yeah. I told her that. I'm a pretty open book you know. Like I if you ask me something I'll tell you, you know. I don't see well I think

26:30 that lying is a very you create bad causes you know. It's bad karma and unless you're very clever you can't always remember. So it's better that you just tell the truth and or your truth. See your truth is different you know. What my truth was in when I was twenty one is probably very different than what my truth is at fifty six and even from moment to moment. I might be feeling this way about something now and then I might see another angle from another angle and 'cause my Libra

27:00 nature I'm a bit of a person who's gonna weigh these things up and then I might change it. So everybody's truth to my way of thinking is different. like you and I might both see that there and I see it a certain way and that's the truth to me and you might see it a totally different way and that's your truth. So that's how all that works. Where am I up to?

Oh we were just talking a bit more about the show

27:30 **with Lola but yeah, I was just interested 'cause it was quite I guess alarming when you were talking this morning about just how little care you were shown in that first tour with the travel at having to hitchhike**

Well you really you've got to look yeah, Lola expected us to do that too. That was a part of it you know. you looked after yourself and with Lola of course, having the house in Saigon

28:00 and that as a base that was really good because you didn't have to carry all of your luggage all of the time. you could if you were just going out on a short trip you could leave the bulk of your luggage and just take a little short trip bag and so on. So that was much more convenient than lugging everything around all of the time and but you still had to hitchhike on planes and buses with Lola. on trucks and it was still

28:30 a show, the same as The Rainbow Show, but I don't know, saying it was run by a woman it was a bit different. It was more genteel I suppose.

I wonder, there were a lot of other shows touring around Vietnam, if you got a chance to go and see any of them?

No we didn't because we were working when they were working. if we were working in the officers' club they'd be in the NCO club or the enlisted men's club and then we might

29:00 go to those other clubs while they were working. We did meet each other in the dress accommodation sometimes. As I said, I've stayed with Philippino and Korean shows. They were always lovely, kind you know. We were all in the same boat. So the people that were the nastiest probably were the American female military people. They could be quite nasty to you

29:30 because they had that attitude like we were a bunch of low lives you know. If you're a performer and you're out there go-go dancing or something like that well people have that attitude about you. particularly when I became a stripper.

I wonder if people did confuse go-go dancers in Vietnam with being prostitutes or

Mm. Probably. I don't like but that's probably how well even to today that's how people look at

30:00 them isn't it? like anybody that's in that kind of world is immoral. Fortunately it's getting better but still generally I would say that's their attitude. Instead of it's free and happy and we're enjoying ourselves and taking charge of our own destiny and la la la.

Well I wonder if the audiences you performed to if they would ever approach you, you know

30:30 **if**

Many times I've been asked, "How much?" Many many times and I my answer is, "You can't afford me darling." So no, yes. Lots of people thought that but and I told you about the young guys that I said, "If I can't fuck you all, let me make my choice," and they were okay with that and so like there wasn't

harassment in that area.

Who would you prefer to

31:00 **perform to out of the three different sorts of clubs that you could go to? Like the NCOs and the enlisted men? The officers?**

Probably the enlisted men. Yeah. They were all very very young and did all the hardest work. All the dirty work. They had very hard jobs and they really appreciated it and the officers got lots

31:30 and so did the NCOs. So I enjoyed the enlisted men the best.

How would the audience maybe how would you notice that the audiences were different amongst the three?

Well age to begin with. 'Cause the en the enlisted men were all the young boys and of course the officers would probably be more like people who were career military people and I suppose the NCOs also. 'Cause that's non-commissioned

32:00 officer and I believe they're the people that actually go from being an enlisted man and can work their way up to that position. So oh, this is gonna sound terrible, but they were usually round and quite drunk, a lot of alcohol and red. That's how I must say I can see them. I that's a terrible thing to say. It's so plopping

32:30 people in a place and I'm sure there are some not round red alcoholic people who are NCOs but I think I met a lot of those types. So ah, when you think about it, and that's a long time ago, probably the audiences just appreciated you for what you were and they enjoyed the moment and we enjoyed

33:00 the moment.

Ye I just wondered if there was maybe a if the officers were a more sedate crowd or they were a

Oh well, they were older. So, not saying that they were necessarily more in control, but they yes, and they also were officers, so they're under that kind of thing where they've gotta behave. They've got a 'position' whereas

33:30 an enlisted man, well a lot of those people were bloody there instead of going to jail or they're I think that might conscripts maybe. I'm not sure if that was a conscript time but they didn't want, they weren't war mongers those young boys. they were just doing what they were told. So age was really the difference, 'cause the officers usually, well the NCOs were also quite mature, 'cause those men were in had been in the business a long

34:00 time. Mm. They were the toughest of them all I'd say. Out of everybody. The NCOs were very tough guys.

How would they how would you have seen that? Or how would they display that to you?

Displayed it the way they treated the other people and be well once in awhile you would have in depth conversations with people, but not really. It was a pretty shallow

34:30 place and in far as conversation and things like that are concerned, but the NCO guys they worked they came from being an enlisted guy up to being a non-commissioned officer and they probably were lifers [job for life] or had been in already a long time and seen a lot more and often the officers might go

35:00 to officers' cadet school but they never had any real life experience, whereas the NCO people, the non-commissioned officers, were well-experienced people. That's what I mean.

I've lost my question. It's yeah, no I just I did wonder and I wonder while you were performing what you would be able to see of the audience and I guess how you would connect with them?

Oh well,

35:30 some of the clubs had lighting, like a regular club. Sometimes it would be outside in daylight. so you could you could see them. Like I can see you. it was just like a regular stage sometimes where the light was too bright and you couldn't really see them, only the few front people. You'd often go after the show and talk to the people and have a glass of water with them or something you know.

36:00 Have a cup of tea or as I said, that one place they made us a big vanilla cake and we went and had the cake with all the guys, so you know, everywhere was different but everywhere was the same, 'cause they were all in war and it was always that vibe. That h(UNCLEAR) vibe of you never knew what was gonna happen next. I suppose that's in life, isn't it?

36:30 **I wonder would you just from a performance point of view would you be con, would you concentrate on one person? Would you pick a person out of the crowd or**

Oh no, no, no, no, no. No! I'm an eye contact girl and I would try to contact every eye that I could possibly see, so no, no, I wouldn't pick out anybody. I'd be running there, running there, shaking those

fringe and run moving that booty in his face and up and down. No.

37:00 No, it would be all the audience. I I'm an eye contact girl and when I'm out there I smile and I'm having fun and I'm looking at all of those people. 'Cause they all wanted to think that you were performing just for them anyway. So if you caught their eye that was big deal you know. They liked that. The audience liked that and if you were up there and Frankie Sinatra's singing and he catches your eye you go, "Oh." what I mean?

37:30 It's saying Frankie. Poor old Frankie.

Ye no I was wondering too, from what you mentioned, how close to the crowd would you be? Like would they be able to grab at you and

Oh, with sometimes. Like the day we did with the girder, the guys were all on their truck, top of their trucks, on the back of the trucks all the nozzles [cannons] really were this huge of the tanks, right, and all the people were sitting all along the nose of

38:00 the tank on all on the nozzle and all over it and everything so it wasn't that far away. We were on our steel girder and then of course you might be on a stage or you might be in a club. So normal club or stage distance. So if I wanted to jump up and attack you, they certainly could. It's amazing how disciplined they were. I can't believe it.

38:30 I mean military people are disciplined. They aren't thinking for themselves. They're following orders. Imagine somebody dickhead up there saying you know, "Okay you go off and bomb this place now," and in your heart of hearts you don't want to be doing that but gee I think that's incredibly disciplined to then go ahead and do it. I really do. So it's the way men run life.

39:00 Not too cool is it? I'd rather see them out giving each other a hug. Wouldn't you? Fuck the gun off baby. Come and give me a hug. That's how I'd rather see it.

Well I wonder at the shows was drinking or violence in the crowd a problem? not toward you, but just

No, not that I remember.

39:30 Drinking, I think they don't didn't drink. in the clubs they had all kinds of alcohol and stuff like that. I think beer was readily available to them but I think they drink kind of a light beer, the Americans. I'm not quite sure about all that but I don't remember any drunkenness or, certainly there was drunkenness. I'm not saying there wasn't, but it didn't affect me and I didn't see fights or anything like that. So I'm sure all that happened but not I didn't see it

40:00 because remember we were only there mil momentarily. We whip in, do the show. Have a bit of conversation with the people. Bl bl blah. Maybe stay a night or maybe two at the most and then whoop, you're off somewhere else. So it's not like you've got time to really settle in and get to know everybody and see how it all works on every base. Mm.

Tape 5

00:31 **Well Elizabeth there's been a lot of films made about the Vietnam War and it's really quite well-known that it was a helicopter war. I'm wondering, you've mentioned or very touched very briefly on the fact that you maybe rode in a helicopter**

Oh, I lot lots of times and the heli the jockeys, helicopter jockeys, pilots, they used to love to scare us.

01:00 So you would be flying along and they would drop really quickly as if you were, you know, like on a roller coaster or I remember one time we were flying and the boys in the band got to sit on the gunner's little seat. There was a little seat on the side of the helicopter and they got to sit on the gunner's seat and shoot at things in the water. No, I wasn't interested in doing that. I didn't I was pretty scared, I have to tell you, in the helicopters. Going up

01:30 and down like that really freaked me out and sometimes you'd be flying along and there would be big herd of buffalo. So the chopper pilot'd just go 'dooooiiiing' and fall down and so the buffalo would all spread out and everybody would get freaked out and they would ho, ho, ho, think it was a really big joke. So yes, we did. 'Cause you could get a lift in a helicopter. Usually two little ones or one large one would fit us.

02:00 So they had very mini helicopters and then they had larger ones. I think they all had names but I can't remember them now off hand. They had quite large ones though that we could fit all our equipment in, or if we were flying in the little ones, that'd have to be two. So yes, it was we did get to experience that and we also experienced those big duck belly planes [Caribou] and well they looked like

02:30 a duck. They were huge and I think that they had propellers and they were big transport aeroplanes. So you came in from the back and there weren't actual seats like a regular plane. They had rope kind of

seats on the edge of the plane and it would often be filled with different huge equipment and stuff like that. So those planes and trucks. How we would travel.

03:00 **'Cause I guess one of the things that really stands out in all the films that you see about Vietnam is I guess the sounds. The sounds of the helicopter, the sounds of the sirens and**

And the earth. See the earth moves all the time because the outgoing rockets make the earth move, and they're very loud, and as much as the incoming rockets make the earth move but the all that outgoing military hardware that

03:30 it was incredible. The, and the smell. like what do they make all of that stuff out of? I suppose there's some kind of sulphur or something in it as but there was all that gunpowder smell and there was that smell and sound and vibe. The vibration of everything moving. Mm, that happened all the time. Probably not so much if you were in the cities as when you were out in the different camps.

04:00 I mean the cities had the Vietnam smell about them. like the spices and the open sewers and so on. That kind of city smell. Mm.

Well I'm just wondering, going back to the shows again and your work that you were doing in Vietnam, you were

04:30 **describing your audiences and the men in the audiences and the troops but I'm wondering were you ever tipped as a go-go dancer?**

No. No, no. No money ever changed hands. No. As a striptease dancer I was, but not as a go-go dancer. Not in those days. No. you got tipped maybe the vanilla cake or somebody'd

05:00 bring you some food late at night or something like that but there was no money. I don't even know if the GI's had money. They might have had their own American kind of military money I think. Can't remember about that.

Well I guess I'm just wondering how the troops and the men, the NCOs, would show their respect I guess.

Well just like any other audience you know,

05:30 with applause and the, rah, r that you get as a showgirl. That was it. and the fact that they didn't all attack you and when in a way it was, you were in war. You never knew what was gonna happen. So as long as they were kind to you and didn't hurt you and applauded you when you did your shows, and they absolutely adored the shows you know. All those long headed [legged] red headed blonde girls. They just thought that was fabulous. So

06:00 I guess they just showed their respect in that way. They were happy that we were there.

And I guess I'm also wondering in, even in spite of your own rape, did you feel or in what way did you feel respected?

Well that was that wasn't when I was doing my shows. That wasn't a part of my performance. That was

06:30 me putting myself in danger, even though those men had no right to do that to me, I placed myself in danger because I went to a place where I wasn't supposed to be. So when I was where I was supposed to be, nothing like that ever happened to me you know. they were they showed you that much they were very kind. As I said, they were young. They were just cute young boys

07:00 who if you sat and talked to them for a half an hour thought all their Christmases had come at once. So really I don't even know if we thought about respect or disrespect or anything like that. In where I if I stayed where I was supposed to be, I was fairly safe. Well I was safe. Here I am to tell you the tale.

Well one of the things we haven't talked about too much is I guess

07:30 **the broader sort of social context of the times. This it was the '60s and a lot of social reform started to**

Well in America everything was happening, wasn't it? They were trying to bus the little black children into the white schools. The Martin Luther King was killed and so was Robert Kennedy killed. It was all in about racism. Not so prior long before then they had shot John F Kennedy.

08:00 So you there was huge reform in America. They really had no place being in Vietnam. They should have been in their own country looking after themselves you know. That's how I feel about now and that's what that's what the most of the American people thought at the time.

And what I was going to lead onto was censorship and I'm wondering if, given I guess the morals

08:30 **and the moral codes of the time, whether your shows were considered too rude and**

No, our shows weren't considered too rude because as I said, when we first came to Vietnam on the very first day we arrived there we did a show for the American Military Entertainment Bureau who, if

the show was too rude for them, they wouldn't let it go. So like as I said, we did have a semi-striptease dancing lady who

09:00 started out with a long fringe dress and this part came off, that part came off, that part came off, that part came off and that part came off but she had a bikini, full bikini, underneath and that was what the go-go dancers were wearing. So there was no nudity or, ah, anything like that and we were censored before we went out into the field by doing that show

09:30 for the American military entertainment bureau. They were the censors. If we if that wasn't acceptable to what they thought was okay, we wouldn't have gotten to do to take the show on. So that was the censorship right there at the very beginning.

And I'm wondering in that time between your first show and coming back to Australia and then the second show, was there ever a time around then that you

10:00 **experienced censorship or**

Not really. I think I've only ever experienced censorship when I was stripping. Oh, I got arrested four times in America and that was every time they were having an election in that town, if you were, if they were having an election they would come and arrest all the striptease dancers and say that they were cleaning up

10:30 the city, which I just also don't understand. Here are people they've got to be eighteen, or twenty one in America, is the age of drinking and going into clubs and stuff and they've gotta be, you know, that old to get into the venues, so already they're their own person and to my way of thinking, when you should be able to make your own choices but of course the sheriff would come and take us all to

11:00 you know away and then only once did I have to go to court. One time I was in a theatre in Cleveland, Ohio, and we had got we got busted but what happened, the police paid their way into the theatre. So we all did our performance and then when we were doing the finale, this police stood in the audience and said, "You're all under arrest for

11:30 nudity or obscenity." I can't remember what the charge was but either nudity, I think it might have been nudity, and so we said, "Well can we get dressed?" 'Cause they had the black Mariah, the car outside waiting to take us all to the police station and that day the drug dealer had been by, so all the girls were holding and so they threw all of their drugs into the ladies' garbage bin and the light man collected them later on and gave it all back to

12:00 them but one girl kept some drugs and it was white powder and we were all in the back of the car, in the paddy wagon, and she told us that she had these drugs and we all freaked out, because if one girl, one girl's got something then everybody's got something. Nobody comes to you individually and says, "Are you doing this or are you doing that?" You're all bunched in together. So we

12:30 said, "You've got to get rid of it." So she threw it out the back of the there's this little tiny window and there was a step and it got caught on the step and we were thinking, "Oh my god, we're all busted now," because here's the proof that there was drugs there. So here we were all jumping up and down in the back of the paddy wagon trying to make it bounce off and the people who were driving the paddy wagon said, "What are you doing?" and we're all going, "Oh we're getting

13:00 pretty for you boys." Just jumping up and down and lo and behold, as we're going into the police station, the back of the thing hit a bump and off it came. Oh were we, we were so relieved because we like we weren't the powder users you know. It was that other girl and we didn't all want to be lotted in with her and we were so glad that that happened because they searched us internally as well and

13:30 they really kept us there for about a couple of hours and then the boss of the theatre arranged for our bail and we came out and started doing our shows and finished that week and then we had to come back about six weeks or so later to go to court and I was the only person that actually came back, but that got thrown out of court. So I think on, I don't know why. I really

14:00 suppose should have more information about all of those things, but I don't, and then I got arrested for lewd and lascivious conduct in Hawaii. Also that every time it was they were having an election and the politicians were cleaning up the city. So they came and I suppose arrested all the prostitutes and all the striptease dancers and you know. Didn't do anything about the corrupt judges, or illicit

14:30 police, or paedophilia, or anything like that. Just the poor old strippers and the workers. So but in in Vietnam, I nothing like that ever happened.

And yet I guess on some level go-go dancing and wearing very small amounts of clothes on stage

15:00 **was still a fairly new form of entertainment.**

I think they had had go-go dancers for quite a few years by that time. I think they might have started in the early '60s maybe. I don't know the history of go-go dancing, but actually I've just been reading up on the history of striptease and according to some sources, it came from burlesque and striptease was well and truly a happening thing

- 15:30 before go-go dancing. So go-go dancing, you didn't take your clothes off and there was a look. the fringe and the in the they were white plastic boots that we used to wear, like to knee, and that kind of a look. So yes, here we are in a war zone with all these thousands and thousands of fellows and we're just
- 16:00 wearing a little bit of a skimpy costume. I suppose it was quite impressive but it was just part of the show, so you didn't really think about it. me wearing that little striped number on the back of the truck caused as much havoc as going on stage in a go-go costume. and my Mum, as I told you, I would send all these R&R boys home to visit Mum and she would send me back a fruit cake
- 16:30 with the R&R boys. 'Cause I loved my fruit my home Mum's home made fruit cake, and once she 'cause it was very expensive to post things and once in the parcel she sent me this lovely little yellow dress and I wrote back and said, "Thank you so much for the little yellow dress," and she wrote back and said, "That was a nightie darling." So I I was wearing the little yellow dress around. Any wonder the GIs were goin' nutty. what I mean? But they appreciated all the pretty
- 17:00 girly stuff that you wore, 'cause they were all in their greens and we did actually get into camouflage things and stuff at times but I always didn't want to. because I just thought "Well they don't get to look at girls very often so you might as well look like a girl as opposed to becoming like them." Mm.

And when would you get into camou as a part of your stage you would get

No, no.

- 17:30 As a walking around you know. Like the little yellow dress would be something that I would wear to and from the gig or something. Well some of the other performers would get into the camouflage and just wear camouflage or you're the or the GI greens just as their regular clothes, but I didn't like I never did that. I didn't I always wanted to be the girl, not pretend like I was a soldier. So I always wore my little yellow dress and my stripy numbers and
- 18:00 stuff like that. I like being a girl. It's good fun.

Well I'm wondering you've told us quite a few stories about your time in New York after Vietnam, I'm just wondering in what way do you think now looking back with some time for reflection do you think that your

- 18:30 **time in New York I guess was a an offshoot or a reaction I guess to having been in a war zone.**

Oh the using the drugs and just going nutty? Yes, I think it was just well it was about being in Vietnam and seeing the war and feeling like you know, "What is the point in it's all so mad," and being a totally out of your comfort zone

- 19:00 and taking all those drugs and getting sucked into that environment that was so unhealthy for me and then getting Buddhism and being able to fight my way out of it you know. Did I answer you?

Well I'm just wondering if you felt like you in one way were being kind of I guess swept up in the social times or if you feel like there was some personal

- 19:30 **kind of issues?**

Oh look, I was just living the day. Getting involved in all kinds of things that I definitely wouldn't been involved in if I had've stayed at home and been a good little Catholic hairdresser and my Mum has this funny saying, "She left Australia a Catholic hairdresser and came home a Buddhist stripper," and like that's how it was. So if I'd a stayed at home I would have stayed the little Catholic hairdresser and possibly married

- 20:00 somebody and done that thing, but that wasn't in my nature. I was just an adventurous girl and I went out there finding adventure and even in America you know, after I had been in Vietnam, I was still in that adventurous mode, I presume, and I was going out there trying everything that was available to me and I'm not sorry I did any of that you know. That just makes me the person that I am. I never physically harmed anybody you know. I've never stolen from anybody.

- 20:30 I've been sexually extremely out there and explicit and that's what the way it was. That was then. This is now. I haven't had sex since 1998 so things change. Immensely.

Well I'm just wondering what do you think was the key to your success as a go-go dancer in Vietnam?

- 21:00 My passion for it. I love it. I still love dancing. It's my passion for performance. I that's my success, if I've ever had any success in that world, but I it comes from my heart and I love it. So and I'd still be doing it if I wasn't an old boiler. As I said, I get to do it occasionally but not nearly enough. Certainly couldn't make a living of it now but I did make I

- 21:30 supported myself, paid my hotel bills and all of those things. Always had huge phone bills 'cause I'd be ringing Australia and everything and I don't owe anybody anything. I've never left a debt. Didn't walk away leaving anything behind and that like when I worked in Japan for six months and I worked behind people that weren't very nice to the Japanese and then you had to earn your right for respect that I always earned that and I

22:00 know that's got to do with my passion for my work 'cause my work being dancing. So I think it's the passion really.

Well I'm wondering what maybe if any things did you learn from your time as a go-go dancer that then you were able to take into your striptease work?

I think pretending to be brave. I

22:30 think that brave nature you know. I think I learnt that as a child and that's like just being on your own too you know. Like being able to enjoy your own company, have fun on your own. like be able to go someplace you who the where the people don't speak your language and make endeavour to communicate with them verbally as well as through

23:00 my performance and and courage and life's ex just experience of going on stage. when you're going on stage that can be an extremely scary thing for some people but the passion for my performance and then just being able to do it you know. It's great and I and I I've been doing that since I was go-go dancing and I never thought really when when I

23:30 worked at Redfern RSL that very first time I was just excited to get out there girl. You know, "Wow, I'm going to be workin' on stage" and I was excited and each time I perform, even to today, I'm still excited.

Well I'm just wondering perhaps later when you I understand you met a husband and got married.

24:00 **I'm wondering I guess what you were able to talk to him about.**

Everything. Everything. I'm I don't tell lies and I don't hold back. So he knew everything. He was an amazing, he's dead, but he was an amazing guy. A very good friend. So he was somebody that you could talk to and tell everything but I tell everybody everything anyway.

24:30 You know I just don't hold back. Even my Mum and Dad. like if they want to know. My mother, Mum often says, "Oh no, I don't want to know. I don't want to know." I go, "Okay. I won't tell you." So I'm open.

And I guess in some respects being a go-go dancer and then moving on to strip and then prostitution work, you would have

Well

25:00 let me clear this up. I was a prostitute be in for one year and that was between '70, '69 and '70. The end of '69 through '70 and this was when I was using drugs, heavy drugs. Heroin and cocaine. I was snorting them and then I took myself off, I 've already told you this story about going off to Roosevelt Hospital. Well after that I got

25:30 Buddhism and then I got stripping. I never turned a trick when I was a stripper. I only ever worked in that period in New York City and that was when I was introduced by Solomon after I had arrived, worked as a white maid to a black family, already started using coke and then and Neville took me to New York and introduced me to the whorehouses. Now I think that was a part of me just

26:00 playing out the next chapter that was coming my way and that's what it was and then when I got Buddhism, Buddhism teaches you, you create your causes and you get your effects and that was a very good message for me. So I you know, also I wasn't a very good prostitute because I didn't like the men. I was very cruel to the men towards the end. I used to leave marks

26:30 on their backs and I'd say, "Oh it was from passion," but it was because I couldn't stand the smell of them or anything. I hated them and I knew that I wasn't gonna stay in that business because I couldn't be unkind to those people and I couldn't continue it. So it was towards the end and then I got Buddhism. Actually what they call gotchaki, when you actually get tapped on the shoulder by the Buddhist guy who came from Japan. The priest kinda dude

27:00 and you get tapped with your little rolled up piece of paper which is called a gohonzon [Gohonzon: Treasure Map of Life]. I was actually working in a whore house on that day, so I took time off and when I came back, as I was washing the men's penis, I would be trying to talk them into Buddhism and the madam of the whore-house said, "Baby, baby, baby. None of that. You can't, the guy's come to get his rocks off. He doesn't want to get turned on to religion you know." So you know

27:30 that was the end of that and it's really I never turned a trick when I was a stripper because now I was above it and I have great respect for the working women. I just think that they deserve so much respect in our lives. The working women meaning the prostitutes of our world. They do the incredible job. It's a hard job 'cause those women put up with a lot from the men and things that they

28:00 would never inflict upon their wives. So the women of this world really should support the prostitutes when they're giving them a very, very hard time. That's how I see it. Did I answer you?

Completely forgotten what I was gonna say now but that's okay. well you've mentioned that

you when you were working in your shows you didn't really get time

28:30 **to go off and see other shows.**

No.

But I'm wondering if I guess there was competition to entertain. did you

Well there was competition to get the work. that because there were lots of shows out and about and as I said, with the booking, like the people wanted you to suck their penis to give you a job and obviously a lot of the bookers did that and they did get work. So I don't know.

29:00 Excuse me.

Well this might not have affected perhaps your go-go work so much as maybe your striptease work, but I'm just wondering given that in some respects even morally you were positioned I suppose by others as pretty out there, I'm wondering if there was any discrimination or stigma that

29:30 **you felt.**

Um as a go-go dancer I don't remember. As a stripper, totally. Many many times but as a go-go dancer I don't really think, I don't remember that happening. Although what, I was in my own world. As I still live in my own world. I tend to live in my own bubble and when things come in that are gonna hurt me, I

30:00 tend not to let them do that. I kind of put this thing, this shield of, "Oh well, here we go again." In stripping, lots of that went down but not as a go-go dancer. I don't remember anything like that happening. yes, I am the Catholic hairdresser going off to be a go-go dancer and like my Dad would have liked me

30:30 to have a glory box and marry one of the rugby league players, but I think they just let me be and do my thing and they didn't really pass judgment on me. Fortunately. I've only got one brother that passes judgment on me about my work, my performance, and that's my brother who's underneath me [younger], Kenny, and I don't think he's actually ever seen me perform because he doesn't agree with that you know. I think he thinks I'm an immoral person for doing that

31:00 but I think every human being's got their moral standards and I think my moral standard is extremely high and I'm happy with me and to me that's all that's important. As long as I'm happy with me, I'm the one that's got to live with me and that's where my head's at.

Yeah, no, I'm just wondering if maybe at times in Vietnam or even later there were there might have been the odd snigger or two.

31:30 Nah. Vietnam wasn't like that at all but definitely in the strip world it was. Like as I said, when I arrived in Finland they refused me accommodation in a hotel and in, in ah, that was in Norway, and in Finland the women turned their backs on me and in New York one guy invited me to his fiftieth birthday and when we got there his sister was furious that he had brought a striptease dancer, because he told

32:00 her them that I was, and I probably had a top on like this or something and she gave me this dirty scarf and told me, "Cover yourself" and it was like that kind of discrimination. That hurt a lot and I she was in the bedroom screaming at her brother for bringing calling me a slut and you know, "Bringing that slut into our home and bl bl blah," and she didn't know me from a bar of soap, but she was passing judgment on

32:30 me and I left of course and he was really, really hurt you know. He came back and apologised and bought me a bunch of flowers and all that kind of thing but that wasn't his fault. It was it wasn't his image, it was somebody else's. So there have been different occasions like that over the years. People passing judgment because of your performance or your profession, but usually it's people who haven't seen you perform.

33:00 'Cause I've had an eighty five year old lady came up and hold my hands and say, "Oh that was so beautiful. I've you have given me great joy tonight," you know. So here's this person who in all her really straight life would never have seen a stripper and here for some reason or other she was at my show and she had to wait and tell me that I delighted her. Well to me that was worth a million bucks and wiped out all those

33:30 silly bitches that couldn't cope with her brother having a stripper as a girlfriend. what I mean? So what? Life is like that. It tends to even out if you let it. There's a lot of crap there but there's a lot of wonderful stuff too.

Well early on in the day you were describing quite a romantic scene

34:00 **was the words that you used when**

Yeah, yeah.

When a bomb went off.

Yeah.

And the sky lit up like firecrackers?

Yeah. You want me to tell you that story? Have I already?

No. No I guess I'm just wondering why perhaps Vietnam stands out for you.

Ah, because I got raped in Vietnam. Because we got bombs dropped on us.

- 34:30 Because we're sitting in a restaurant, food place, eating and then ten of the boys that you ate with are dead just with one little claw hanging out of the hole and lots those kind of things. and here we are in 2003 and what have they learned? How to drop a bigger bomb,
- 35:00 it seems to me. Now, the day that that was a romantic I said because it was the whole day. Scottie had been taken away. Us on the jitneys driving and aggravating the MPs because they didn't like all the jitneys and I'm saying, "Yay," and acting like I don't know who standing up in the jitney. Then getting there to the gate. Scottie being allowed to go by the MP's and then all of a sudden the
- 35:30 incoming [rockets or motar bombs] and Scottie throwing me down on the ground and then we run to the hole that's just been bombed out and as he said, they move the little thing every time they make another bomb they move it a little bit more. So that we were safe and there we were lying, there was a big pool of water at the bottom of the hole, but we were kind of on the edge of the hole and we were laying holding hands and looking up at the sky and now it's dark and there are stars but all the fireworks are going on because that
- 36:00 is the Americans, or the allies blowing, the bombs out and the other people blowing the bombs in. So but us, we were there in this little quiet hole. So it was all going on and there we were, just laying there holding hands and looking at heaven and for some reason or other, it was a romantic moment. not that we had sex or you know.
- 36:30 He got on a plane in little few hours after that and went off and I did go and visit him in America in Washington. DC. and he was a heroin addict and in, it was very sad. I couldn't cope with that very much when I as I said, I only visited about three guys that I had known in Vietnam when I went to America and all of them were junkies and I couldn't didn't cope very well. 'Cause I was dancing by that time and I didn't use drugs and didn't want to be around them.
- 37:00 So dancing, in some places where you danced as a stripper you had to drink alcohol with the customers. You had to sell champagne to the tune of your wages. So if I was earning five hundred dollars a week, I would have to sell five hundred dollars worth of champagne. Even though I was doing my shows, which I thought I should be paid for, just without selling champagne,
- 37:30 they still wanted you to do consummation, which was sit with the audience and sell champagne. So oh that's why I'm sure that's why I don't drink alcohol. It was horrible and you learnt a lot of tricks, how to get rid of the champagne. Threw it on the floor, in the plants. Some girl she had a big bag and a sponge in the bottom of her bag and she'd tip the champagne into the bag and then go to the ladies room and rinse and,
- 38:00 you know, get rid of it and come back and pretend like because who could drink all that champagne? Some girls had incredibly clever ways of getting rid of it and also the waiters would come along and turn the bottle of champagne upside down in the bucket and say, "Oh would you like another one?" We'd only be half finished but they'd help you a little bit sometimes. So that was called consummation and in Europe and in the strip clubs around the world they expect that of the
- 38:30 performers.

Well early on in the day before we started you mentioned that in some ways you felt like women's libbers, I'm gonna use that word, turned your back on turned their backs on you during the '60s and '70s.

Oh totally because they thought I was encouraging rape and they said that

- 39:00 to me many times. In Norway what happened, after I went to the newspaper and got that big front page 'cause I'd been refused accommodation, I got an apartment and the female the feminists spray painted on the apar on the apartment block, "We don't want you in this country." 'Cause they had I was it was in the paper. I was working at the Rosenkeller and then because I had been dismissed from that hotel
- 39:30 and where I was staying, well that was in the paper and so the feminists there didn't want me there and then years later I worked in Melbourne and we got busted. I don't know what for, nudity on stage or something like that but the police came six weeks every day to make sure we weren't doing anything rude. So I just think the police loved the show so much. I didn't stay for the entire six weeks but these women from The Age [Melbourne newspaper] came
- 40:00 and asked for an interview and she didn't come on her own. She came along with about four or five feminist women, who really tried to bring me down you know. Like they tried to insinuate that I was inciting men to go out and rape people and you've got no idea how that rubs me the wrong way. Number one, I'm not responsible for any man raping anybody and if you see my performance, it's not

- 40:30 that sexy. Their dicks don't get hard. They laugh. So it's not about that. It's entertainment you know. It's light entertainment as far as I can see, and I'm telling you, you could go to a strip club and I don't think that many of the guys would be that excited that they were going to go out and hurt somebody else. That's how I felt about it. Well these women really tried to I don't know, just
- 41:00 make out that I was being a bad person because I was in my art form and I said to those women, "Ladies, here you are, you're feminists. You're saying women be free and yet you're telling me, or trying to tell me what I can and cannot do. You're saying go ahead be free. Have a free life but don't be a stripper 'cause that's a bad thing but that's my art form and you're telling me I can't do my art form.
- 41:30 Yet, be free love. So you're giving me the double standard here you know," and that's I think that women eventually worked out that they were giving me the double standard because now the women really are into their own bodies and their sexuality is quite a fabulous thing darling and I'm so happy to hear it because they have evolved and when I worked, I worked with Michael Mullins...

Tape 6

What I wanted to ask, I guess something that we haven't dealt with a lot was you've told us about your rape but I

- 01:00 **wonder at that point you said it was twenty years after that you started talking about it, at what point if you could tell me the point when you did start I guess consciously remembering it and telling people?**
- Um what happened? There was a man, I can't remember his name either, he was a New Zealand guy and he contacted me some way and he said that some
- 01:30 some performer had actually saved his life because what happened, he was in hospital in Vietnam in one of the military hospitals and the some entertainers came and they started talking to him and I don't know if they wrote letters for him or they did something for him and they saved his life if he believed and he was looking for that person and there was kind of a meeting arranged for some people to go to an RSL somewhere. I can't quite remember
- 02:00 all of the details but it was about that period. So that I that this guy, Clarrie I think the guy's name was that got in touch with me. I can't remember if that was right either, but after he got in touch with me it kind of opened the door and I presume that would have been somewhere in the 80's. could be early 80's maybe. I don't quite
- 02:30 ah, I can't really put a finger or a date or anything on it but when he got in touch with me, then it like he was searching for his Vietnam issues and my Vietnam issues started to come to the fore, but I was crying every Anzac Day for years and didn't deal with any of it and then after Clarrie, after that fellow contacted me and I did go to the meeting and I met him and only one other person
- 03:00 showed up and it wasn't a very successful night for some reason or other. I don't but that was the beginning of me starting to deal with the Vietnam issues I think. So it might have been early 80's or something and then I started I started losing the plot you know. Getting really sad and not understanding why and then I went to the Vietnam Veterans' counselling and that took ten, I went there ten months for ten months,
- 03:30 and then I didn't go back again. Did I answer you?
- Well you mentioned that I guess the door had been opened but before, before that when you were crying on the Anzac days, what did you think you were crying or what were you crying about or what did you think you were crying about?**
- The war? They're still doing it. like and all those poor people that had been to war and hurt themselves and the ones that were dead and you know
- 04:00 the families that were suffering and the families that suffered because the people had been to war and they came back fucked up and really made their families suffer. Lots a stuff. So like you don't consciously sit there crying in front of the TV saying, "Oh I'm gonna analyse myself now," but you I guess it happens as time goes on. there are no winners in war honey,
- 04:30 none, and that's how I feel about it. I just feel so very very strongly that that's just not the answer and none of the like Jesus, or who's the Koran guy? Mohammad, or the Jewish dude, or none of the big bosses would want war. They didn't advocate it, so I just wish that people wouldn't do
- 05:00 it.

Well I wonder when that door was opened to to reliving and remembering a lot of those experiences in Vietnam, what was it that began coming up first or what began to come

flooding back to you?

well I don't know. I just remember that I it wasn't anything that came flooding back. It was just like I was highly emotional and

05:30 and I felt like I had to deal with my Vietnam issues, which I still have I believe, and I I don't really know how you deal with those issues. I think you just manage to keep them all in place on a daily basis and something comes along and triggers your mind and you go into there, and sometimes it's so murky you don't want to go into there so you jump back out and put the lid back on and don't deal with it, but as I said, I went to the counselling and

06:00 all that happened and lots of stuff came to the fore and then I go into a as I got older it got worse. Like the tunnel thing and the elevators and that kind of thing. That got worse as I got older. So I felt like I had to deal with it and I knew that I was going to Vietnam every time I went into an elevator. So that was part of the thing you know. Like if you're flashing back there that that's got something to do with why your

06:30 temperature's going up and why your mouth is getting dry and why you can't breathe and you've really got to make a conscious effort to do it. it's a whole physical thing, like a panic attack, and so you just start to begin to deal with I suppose and that was probably 80's but I had fifty people die of AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome] between '85 and '95 in my life. So that was also a bit like being at war.

07:00 People dying all the time and you're dealing with mortality and stuff like that. So I think that was probably also it was all mixed in together and I believe probably mid 80, early 80's to mid 80's I started dealing with it all.

Well I wonder, you mention that after you were raped you told one of the girls in the show. I just remember if I just wonder if you remember the second time you told anybody.

07:30 **I mean I guess it would have been like twenty years later but just that I guess that the next retelling so it's**

I don't remember who that was. That, as I've said, I've performed it. Like Jasmine, maybe that could have been a trigger as well 'cause that was probably around that period when Jasmine Hurst had that show called 'Women and Violent Crime' and I actually taped the story and then I danced it. So that was like

08:00 cathartic but also bringing it all to the fore. So that was a bit of healing too and the painting that I've got going around Australia. That was healing too. So did I answer you?

Oh, I I'm just intrigued about the, I guess for so long having suppressed such a hideous thing, just the releasing of that. just of that story if nothing else.

Yeah. Going to counselling I talked to the

08:30 that story out but I don't I don't remember I can't remember when I actually, [well] all started talking about it after all that time. I don't remember who the first person was that I spoke to or you know. I just know that everybody that met me, within the first five minutes knew that I'd been raped in Vietnam. After a certain period of time. Where I hadn't spoken about it all. So but then also Gina wrote about it in the book and

09:00 so did Siobhan McHugh. Gina Lennox wrote in 'People of the Cross' and Siobhan McHugh in 'Minefields and Mini Skirts.' So all of those things being cathartic but dealing with it.

I wonder at telling your family, either brothers and sisters or your parents.

I think they might read it in the book. I don't I wouldn't have talked to my mother

09:30 about anything like that. Yeah, they probably read it in the book. They know the story so I don't remember telling them so. I don't remember talking to my family particularly about it.

I wonder if they if they talked to you about it I guess after once they knew the story.

Nah. No, no, no. Actually my cousin, Julie, did ring me up when I when that

10:00 'Minefields and Mini Skirts' book came out and went, "Oh, you know, I didn't realise you had been through all this" and bl bl blah. So but that was the only person I remember actually discussing it with me.

It's just amazing from, from, what you've told us about your family that it's, it's, such a huge thing yet it's not discussed.

Mm. Well I think in a lot of families the huge things don't get discussed. I think a

10:30 lot of times you know, our huge family, we are pretty superficial with each other in that once in a while a big drama comes to the fore, but mostly everybody keeps their stuff to themselves. So you know, superficial meaning that you get together and, "How are you?" and if they're sick you'll ring them up

and ask them if they're alright and bl bl but they don't get very involved in your personal

11:00 life and like how you're feeling or really.

Have you talked to Liberty about what happened and

Oh, my poor darling daughter. What? She has dealt with my madness so ye she knows everything but I don't know if I've actually sat down and she's lived with it, as I've lived with you know, and she was seeing me crying in front of the television

11:30 and she'd come along and give me a pat on the shoulder but that would they couldn't help me. So no, I it's not something that I've really, you know, I don't discuss that with her but she knows all about it you know. So I don't know how she knows. Probably I've told her or she read the book or something happened but she knows like as I say, I'm an open book and any they all know everything. 'Cause I've talked about it all.

12:00 **Well I wonder from such a, I mean, such a hideous and violent act, how you, I mean, you've spoken with such compassion toward not only towards servicemen in general but even you were saying that you feel sorry for these men.**

Mm.

I just wonder how you get to that point and you let go of anger and hatred.

Mm. I do feel sorry for those men because I'm sure that you know

12:30 doing such a horrible thing, it's got to have affected their lives eventually and I might not be the only person that they did that to because war's like that you know. So I don't know if they can just cut that off out of their brain and not deal with it but they shot people and so I suppose fucking somebody isn't as bad. I do feel how do I feel about them? I feel sad for them and I hope

13:00 that they can forgive themselves. 'Cause it's a really low act. It's such a weak act. It's not a strong thing and it's an unmanly thing, even though they are using their penises you know. I just don't think it's a manly thing. I think it's a very weak pathetic thing for them to do and I feel sad for them. God love them. They

13:30 all just need that's what they need. A bit of love and attention and not a gun in their hand. A hug instead. Oh dear.

I just think it's amazing that you didn't from that point just hate servicemen and hate it's

Oh, but what? Hate is such a so time consuming and oh it's so it takes your energy and sucks the good stuff out of you, you know.

14:00 It's not a good space to be in and I'm not saying I'm not this little perfect lovel, oh, brown rice and peas you know. I do get angry but I get angry because of what's happening now and what people are doing to each other now. Then, well they wee doing idiotic things then and we're still doing idiotic things and it just angers me that we aren't evolved. what? We can communicate to the nearly to Mars and

14:30 go to the moon and communicate with each other by email all over the world. Are we actually speaking to each other? I don't think so. are we saying, "Okay you're a Muslim and you're a Buddhist and you're a Christian and we all love to eat and we all go to the toilet. We all cry. We all laugh." You know. All of us like sex whether you say you do or not, it's a part of our life. Let's just try and live

15:00 together you know. Like, you can pray to Allah, and you can pray to Jesus, and you can go to Buddha, and you can go to the Hindu guy, and whichever guy makes you happy. We don't have to bomb each other to have permission to and if that's what it's all about it's about oil. It's about America wanting oil is what's happening now. So what did America want from the Vietnamese? I don't know and

15:30 I don't know why they were there and why we were there was because the Americans were there and that really bothers me. Why do we, this little tiny country over here, have to go following Americans into war? I don't is it because we're frightened of America, that they're going to hurt us if we aren't on their side? why can't we be 'cause the way we are situated on earth is on our own. Well we're big kids now.

16:00 We could stand up on our own without war and have a peaceful earth. That's what I hope for. That's what I pray for and everybody says I am so idealistic.

Great. I wonder I don't want this to sound like an odd question, but I wonder why your story and especially the story of your rape is should be considered a war story.

Well I was in war

16:30 and they've been using rape as a war weapon since the year dot and I want the people to know that that is not the answer. That that [rape] is really a low act. It's lower than low. as you as I've already said, there are no winners in war but why are you include why do you want to go and rape the women? like see they don't have the whole thing set up anyway. In the old days they took the whores

17:00 with them. They had their wives even sometimes with the soldiers travelling and the war you know. Like it was a whole war thing that went on and that's if they want to do that then they should take their women with them and not just go and rape everybody that's about and they do do that. There's a lot of rape goes on in war. You have no idea how many Vietnamese were raped, or how many Japanese were raped, or Chinese women, or our women

17:30 were treated abominably in and they don't come out and talk about it you know. You I reckon a lot of those nurses and those ladies got raped but they they're it's too frightening for them to confront and rape has been a part of war since the year dot and it's been accepted and I don't think it's right.

Well I wonder I'm sure you've done a lot of thinking about these sorts of things, but

18:00 **I just wonder why you think it is that maybe rape isn't talked about as a part of war. it seems fine to talk about death and killing and brutality but yet rape seems to be something that's quite overlooked in the history.**

Ask the boys. Ask some of the men that question. I'd like to know myself because what? The men wouldn't want to talk about it too much because they probably did it themselves. I don't know why it is a part of war, but it

18:30 is and it has been all through history. they've raped and stolen the women and well they just raped me and left me for dead and I'm not the only girl that got raped in Vietnam, I'm sure of that. So I don't know. I don't have any answers to that.

Well I wonder, you spoke during the break and a little bit on tape about

19:00 **I guess seeking out parts of the Vietnam veteran community to try and I guess find some kind of bond with**

Ye I thought that if I could find somebody and talk to then about Vietnam and even their experience as well as my own experiences that I would be able to get some kind of closure and when I went to the Vietnam Veterans' counselling that was what I was seeking, but

19:30 it really wasn't what I found and I did talk to Vietnam Veterans, the bikers group, but and I did go to Vietnam Veterans' counsel no the Vietnam Veterans' association out in Granville was it? Anyway but I didn't I didn't feel welcomed. That's what the word would be. I didn't feel they didn't embrace me

20:00 and want to talk to me really or I felt like I was an out on the outside. So I didn't stay. I didn't pursue but I do believe that one day I'll find the right people that I can talk to. That have experienced that same experience and maybe get some kind of closure eventually but who knows? I'm not being totally tortured on a regular basis, on a daily basis, about this.

20:30 It's something I wanted to speak to you about because I do believe that it's important that rape in war is brought to the front you know. War. Just why? And it's not something that's there on a daily basis. It's something that comes and goes or comes and I close the lid on it and it's pretty well good that the lid's

21:00 closed on it for most of the time. When I do my art or if I'm doing a performance and now I'm talking to you, that's really positive and you vomit it out one more time and it's less painful than the last time. So I think talking about it is a positive thing because it does get it out of your brain. how it rolls around? Well instead of it rolling around it's right out there now and that's good. I suppose another

21:30 time every time I tell it, it gets less hurtful.

I wonder how the servicemen that returned servicemen from Vietnam that you might have spoken to reacted to the story.

They didn't really want to know. It's that simple. They said, "Oh yeah, those guys did that stuff." So I left it at that. I knew that I wasn't gonna be getting any conversation

22:00 or closure in that venue or from those people. So it was better that I didn't go there.

I wonder that you've mentioned that you were in a book that was about the minefields and mini skirts and I

A lady named Siobhan McHugh wrote that book and that book was about women who had been to Vietnam

22:30 in different capacities. There was nurses and me and some military ladies and then also women who had dealt with men who had been in Vietnam. So when the boys, some of those husbands, came back from Vietnam, they didn't act like normal people anymore and their wives and children really dealt with their behaviour and lots of wives got beaten up and bl bl blah

23:00 and at that book launch 'Minefields and Mini Skirts' one lady came up to me and told me that she had also been raped in Vietnam but she couldn't talk about it. So a lot of women have been raped and they just can't talk about it. That's why I think it's important that the ones who can talk about it, do.

Well I wonder if there is any kind of I guess network of women or support network of

23:30 **women who have had a similar experience to yours that you might have met through that or**

Nah. Not that they would talk about. I don't know. I don't know (UNCLEAR). that lady that I met that day, but I don't even remember that lady's name and it was very casual brief meeting you know. Like she quickly kind of came up and quietly told me and it wasn't as if we were there having a conversation. She just said, "Thank you for talking about it." That it was very brave of me. See?

24:00 Brave again. So that there are women out there that have had this happen to them but they can't they don't have it inside them to bring it out and talk about it.

I just wonder if there's

24:30 **ever been any desire to kind of seek some justice in terms of legal justice or**

I'll tell you what happened. Oh, I was probably about fifty and I felt like I needed help. So found this person who was an art therapist. Now she was ninety dollars for a visit. So I went for one visit and when I

25:00 saw her, I almost jumped on her. She looked so like I knew her. She was almost like one of my best friends and I had never met her before. So there was this thing but that lady spent the entire period working out how we were going to get money to pay for my ongoing therapy that she felt I needed. So we wrote to the Vietnam Veterans' counsellor and we also wrote to victims'

25:30 counselling. The Vietnam, now she wouldn't see me again until I got the money. I never got the money and I never went back to her but I did get a letter back from Vietnam Veterans saying that they were perfectly happy to let me go to their counsellors but no they wouldn't support me in going to this art therapist and the victims' counsel ooh. I got a letter, I've still got that letter in my letters somewhere, that said

26:00 um they wanted police reports from 1955 when the priest put his penis between my legs and rocked to a climax, which we didn't have because my mother was too scared to go to the police. She was scared to tell my father. He would have shot that goddamn priest right? So there was fear there and I was the dirty little liar according to the nuns. So there was no police record and because I was raped in Vietnam they couldn't help me. Now I get

26:30 so angry when I think about that. How dare those people, victims' counsellors you know. Here that was I felt more like a victim after that letter than I felt when I got raped. Terrible. That was a terrible thing for me to go through. So I wouldn't put myself in that position ever again. No way. I wasn't asking for a pay out or compensation or anything but, "Please

27:00 can you give me some help here?" and they that's how they treated me. They treated me more like a victim I felt than I had ever been treated in my life. So I'm very passionate about that. I'm very I just think they are a bunch of no-hopers who do not deal with people's reality you know. they're called, 'victims' counsel.' Well they make you feel more like a victim than anybody. It was really terrible. Really terrible. That was one of the worst

27:30 things. the rape and everything seemed like nothing because I was so emotional. I got so upset by that. I thought, "How dare you!" you know. Like here you are, you're already half way through your life and you're trying to deal with your madness and these people are asking for proof you know. Like I suppose some people pretend they get raped. Do you think that would happen? I don't think so.

28:00 I mean you just you wouldn't pretend something like that to get something from the victims' counsel. You know. So they didn't help me. I hope I answered your question.

Well I'm wondering I guess in both traumatic events with the priest and in Vietnam, both times you were kind of I guess it was pushed as if you were told by people to

28:30 **put it aside, push it down**

Mm. Mm.

And I just I just wonder how maybe how different things would be if that wasn't the advice (UNCLEAR)?

Oh well, who knows? that was then, this is now babe. life would have been very different possibly if those things didn't happen to me and if I hadn't done that or if I hadn't done that but it all happened. It all and that and I think I've turned out to be a pretty amazing

29:00 human being and I don't hate the people. You know, I love the men and I love the women and I don't hate the clergy. I feel very, very sorry for them because I think they're misled but I tell you, I hate the people who are sending [?] making war. I just don't like I hate them. Those I just find it terrible and that's how our life is at this very moment you know.

29:30 **Well I wonder how much harder I guess with that suppression and the and really enforced suppression, especially as a child, how much harder the healing process is?**

Well what? I think I thought I was a dirty little girl 'til I was forty. I really do. I think those words from the nuns really stuck in my head and in a way when I was forty I just was so after that personal development

- 30:00 course, and that particular piece of paper, was really a big yay you know. Something came off me then you know. So what we say to our children and how we educate them and when they're little people it really does affect them when they're old. It really does.

I wonder why if you've thought about it why especially in both cases that people

- 30:30 **sought to suppress your stories. especially the one from your childhood, why anyone would say that to a child.**

Well they were frightened weren't they? The nuns weren't going to say but I did I tell you that when I was forty and I told this story and my Mum said when I was thirteen and we left the Captain's Flat that Sister Mary Martin had come up to Mum and said, "Father whatever his name asked god's forgiveness." So in fact he was telling my Mum

- 31:00 he did that but I didn't know any of that until I was forty of course. So none of all of that had to be suppressed because like the nuns didn't want you to be going out making a big deal about this priest doing this, and now look what has happened. Thousands of people have been molested by those clergy. So it's quite interesting

- 31:30 that they're coming out now and talking about it and being and it still affects them. They're very, very upset by it and those people were paedophilic for years obviously you know. not all of those people and you don't want to say every priest and every nun were a bad person you know. There's a lot of really wonderful good human beings there who did good work but there are a lot of fucked up ones too baby, I'm tellin' ya right now. Sister

- 32:00 Dorothea used to cane me very day for eating at lunch time eating my little lunch before we got to little lunch you know. There were some fucked up people in those religious orders and now many many people in the world are coming out and saying just that. So I feel sorry for them all you know. I that that guy's probably dead now anyway.

- 32:30 **Well I wonder, looking back over I guess your time in Vietnam for from both times when you were there, I wonder how it I don't know I guess I don't even know how to phrase this question sorry. I guess how it changed you? Or developed**

- 33:00 **you?**

I don't know what to say to you there. just by going to Vietnam it was, apart from the rape, just being there in the war zone and dealing with that massive audience and all of that you know. Well that was a huge learning curve there and then getting raped and having to put it under into my head into the box

- 33:30 under the bed, that was another thing as well but just going there and go-go dancing for all the audience and travelling from one place to another and securing rides in buses and trains, and pla and planes and in helicopters and things like that that all develops your outgoing personality because you're in a position where you actually have to do that you know. If you're you can't just sit there and wait for somebody, you've got to go out there

- 34:00 and do it. So it's apart of the learning process and you develop as you go I suppose but being the eldest of eight children and told that I'm the big lady and that I'm not allowed to cry, that to be brave, that all held me in very good stead because I was brave and I didn't cry and I just moved onto the next thing and I'm glad I

- 34:30 you know I'm not ashamed of any of the things that I've done in my life you know. I just feel like that was my lot and now everybody has their steps to take and I had my journey and I'm still on it and enjoying it and it's all new. Every day. So

I wonder do you regret having gone to Vietnam?

No. I don't regret anything.

- 35:00 I'm not sorry any of it happened, even the way it did. if you lived in the ideal world, you would ideally have ideal things but it wasn't ideal but it was okay. No I don't regret anything. I think I'm a fortunate woman. after all the things that have happened in my life I'm still sitting able to sit here and have a conversation, make you a cup of tea. Walk around, breathe

- 35:30 and dance you know. So I'm lucky and I'm so lucky to be in this country. Really. We are so fortunate. That's why I'm very passionate. I don't want this I don't want our government to muck up our country you know. We've been doing very nicely and we need to go introvert, not extrovert, if you ask me. Just look after the people that are here already and take care of them.

- 36:00 **Well I wonder after so many years away and travelling why you came back to Australia?**

Oh, there's no place like Australia darling. This is the country on earth. Really. we have everything here and we have freedom and peace and that's so that's the riches that makes us so rich and if we could

possibly be the multicultural diverse country of the world

36:30 if people just gave it a go. nowadays we're much more segregated than it's still it's happening even worse, I believe, because of all the things that are happening everywhere else. and I believe that if and particularly with the Prime Minister [John Howard] that we have at this time, who's leading us into war. So I believe that we've got such a multicultural group of people here and we could be learning so much and we have learned so much and we've grown

37:00 in this country so much with food and with the swapping of cultural things, dances and so on. So we are learning from each other and I think that that's what it could be all about. just learning from each other and getting all the lovely things that we all know.

37:30 I was wondering Elizabeth, I guess if a young woman came to you and said she wanted to do I guess what you did, which was go overseas dancing in a war zone, I just wonder what you'd say to her?

Go for it. Now that sounds totally peculiar and totally wild. If she is with a good group of people and I would

38:00 go. I would go and entertain the troops again. I definitely would. Even though I am so adamant against war, because those people in that situation so need to look at something that's not war. They so need a break from that madness that I think it's a really positive thing to do and if you're with a group I'd say, "Yes. Go have an adventure."

38:30 **Well we're at the end of our session today.**

Well thank you very much goddesses for everything.

Well I was gonna say, is there any thing that we that you wanted to say that you hadn't or anything to sum it final words?

There are no winners in war is really my message. That's all. I don't really I as far as all this is concerned. I've got lots of opinions about everything darling but no, basically

39:00 I just don't think there are winners in war and I believe that as clever as we are as human beings it's time we started communicating with each other on a real basis and being able to agree to disagree on some things you know. That's how I feel about it. We don't always have to agree but we don't have to shoot each other or drop bombs or destroy people's infrastructure. I just that's not the answer.

39:30 I'll start crying again now so you'd better stop.

Thank you Elizabeth.

Thank you.

It's been a great day.

INTERVIEW ENDS