

Australians at War Film Archive

George Logan (Jock) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:38 **If I could just ask you to give us a brief précis of your life?**

Alright. I was born in Edinburgh in Scotland and I believe it was a Thursday afternoon on the 4th December 1936. My Mum and Dad were ordinary working folk in Scotland. He was coal heaver. And

01:00 Mum just did things around the place. As I grew up I grew up in Scotland and of course I grew up in wartime Scotland because by the time I was three World War II started. And hence from 3 to 9 we were at war. Obviously I have little recall as a youngster but I do recall, one morning being on my Dad's shoulders looking at a back of a place called Dudley Terrace. And the back of

01:30 the building which had been bombed by the Germans. And this apparently was in 1940. And I was looking at this and I should recall a lone pipe with a loo hanging on the end of it. My Dad was then 35, and of course beyond the age where he was likely to be called up. However this, the fact that the Germans bombed our street rather incensed him. So he went off and joined up. And he went off and my uncles were away and so

02:00 during that period I - all my heroes were people who were off fighting the Germans. And I distinctly remember in our house - you weren't allowed to swear. But if every now and then you said "Bloody Germans" they were chastise you, but you could get away with it. And so when I was 9 he came back and not long after that he bought a shop. And we had that shop until we came to Australia

02:30 in 1955. And I went to school at a state primary school and then I went to a Grammar School, I suppose it's equivalent; called Leith Academy which coincidentally was the home of the first ever golf club house. Not St Andrew's but Leith, and it was established around about 1528. The rector was Doctor McKee. And I recall him wandering about and I often wondered if he was the original rector.

03:00 When I left school, I should have stayed on but I couldn't be bothered - I then worked in Dad's shop for a while and then became an apprentice, which I hated, Brendis Electrical Mechanical. And so when my Dad announced we were coming to Australia, I was able to get out of being an electrical mechanic. I in fact wanted to join the army.

03:30 So we arrived in Australia and I said I wanted to join up. I had attempted while we were in the UK [United Kingdom], I was just 18 at the time but somehow rather he managed to forestall that one. I arrived here, I said I wanted to join the army. Because my heroes had been soldiers. My Dad had been away, my uncles, all those sorts of things. My family demurred, you know.

04:00 "You're not going to join the army", and I was under 21 so I had to get their approval. So I took off and I went to Queensland and worked in a sugar mill for a while. Then I came back and said, "I want to join the army." They said, "No." I said, "Okay, goodbye." And they said, "Hang on a second, hang on a second. At least if you join the army we'll know where we you were." So I joined the army in, let's see, 1st March 1956 and

04:30 for a three year enlistment. Went to Malaya for 2 years during the Emergency, came back from then, got out of the army very briefly. In fact from about the 28th February 1959 until the 25th May 1959. In the interim I had come back, and I thought, "Now you've been in the uniform service, perhaps I should go in another one". So I went in the fire brigade. I did the recruit training at the fire brigade.

05:00 Topped the recruit training course I might add and, we were just about to have our graduation parade. And we were being briefed on what we had to wear and so forth. And this fellow said, "Pardon me, and you wear medals." And we didn't use the term dickhead in those days but he implied that that's what we were - "And none of you have got any medals." And of course I did. I had a

05:30 general service medal with class Malaya. So the next day I turned up with my medal on. And he said, "What's that?" And I said, "That's a GSM [General Service Medal] with class Malaya." He said, "Where'd you get that?" I said, "I just told you, Malaya." "What were you doing there?" I said, "I was a digger in an infantry battalion." And of course he said, "An Australian Infantry Battalion?" So I gave him

a nice burst and said, "Yes an Australian infantry battalion."

- 06:00 Promptly at the finish of that day went off, called in - I had the Monday off I think. On the Monday I went down to the recruiting office, re-enlisted and joined the army again. Where I served in the regular army from 25th May 1959 until about the 12th February 1979 leaving the regular army as a major. And then
- 06:30 my life unfolded slightly differently. I became secretary to the Lord Mayor of Melbourne for a couple of years and then I was director of training at Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, the Victorian Automobile Association. Then I ran my own business for a while. My last 10 years of working life was as a services' member of the Veteran's Review Board which hears cases on appeal against the
- 07:00 [Department of Veteran's Affairs] by veterans. And that was an interesting time. I resigned from the Veteran's Review Board about 5 years ago and from there to here, that's where I am now.
- Could you just give us a brief overview of the years between 1963 and 1979; where you served your time?**
- 1959 I went back in again and I went back to my old battalion
- 07:30 which was 2 RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] in fact back to the same company - B Company. And perhaps I should just go back a little. When I enlisted, they wanted me to join the intelligence corps and I wasn't very happy about joining the intelligence corps, I wanted to be an infantryman. And I recall they interviewed me for intelligence and deliberately being,
- 08:00 a little vague in my answers. And they didn't then want me for intelligence. Maybe that's a reflection on me but never mind. So I went off to the infantry and we did our training in Sydney and up in Canungra. And eventually went to Malaya in March of 1957 where I was in B Company 2RAR. When the battalion went home, we were on operations then - when the battalion went home we stayed
- 08:30 behind, continued operations and eventually were joined by the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment [3 RAR] and I stayed on with them until I came home in February 1959. And of course to be discharged. I then re-enlisted, went back to 2RAR and usual training again, by which time I had made lance corporal I think, maybe corporal. We went off to Malaya again 1961, 1963; The Far East Strategic
- 09:00 Reserve. Which for the main part, although it's eligible service under the Veteran's Entitlement Act, was really garrison service. We did have some six months in operations in the Malay-Thai border area and we also spent an interesting period up in Thailand itself in a place called Ubon Ratchathani which is a not far from the Laos- Cambodian border.
- 09:30 We came back from Malaya in 1963 and a number of things happened. I was selected for a thing called the ENTAC. Now ENTAC stands for Engin Téléguidé Anti-Char ['Char' meaning tank]. It's a French guided missile and we were introducing it into service. And I was selected from the trials team for that and later, after completion of that part of it became an instructor at the armed corps on this particular
- 10:00 weapon. By this time Vietnam was starting up and by 1965 the 1st Battalion went off. I tried to join them but I couldn't. And I was at Puckapunyal, first at the recruit training battalion as a sergeant and then back again armed centre as an instructor. At this time the 7th Battalion had been formed and was at Puckapunyal. And
- 10:30 I managed to wiggle my way in there. There was a fellow called John Barnes who will still not forgive me for that. John came over to armed centre, he was in the anti -tank platoon of the battalion, came over to armed centre to do the ENTAC Course, on the 106 RCL [Recoilless Rifle] course. Anyway I explained to John that if he did well on this course, he was a corporal at the time, he would get his third stripe and become a sergeant as I was
- 11:00 and he could come over there as an instructor. Well John did well and the next thing was he was posted in my place and I was posted as a sergeant in the 7 RAR [7th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment] and off I went to 7RAR where I became the company sergeant major, CSM of training company. My company commander was a fellow called Doug Clively. Dunc was an old soldier whom I'd met first when I was in the airborne platoon in 1960 at
- 11:30 Williamstown. I'd been in the airborne platoon for about 8 months then I broke my ankle so that finished that. And Dunc had been commissioned and as a lieutenant was the company commander, I was company sergeant major as a sergeant and we trained our blokes for Vietnam. In fact one of the nice things about all of that is that people in X Company, training company that went over there all came back alive.
- 12:00 Some of them with bits missing, but they all came back. They were distributed throughout the battalion, I was very proud of the way they - we trained them very very hard. Dunc had a saying. "A gallon of sweat is easier than a drop of blood". And so we worked their butts off day and night and it paid off. It paid off. So eventually the battalion went off to Vietnam.
- 12:30 And I was on the advance party, joined what was called Recon Platoon [reconnaissance platoon] , which was a 5 RAR's [5th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment] anti-tank platoon. Went out with them and in

fact within about 3 days was in contact. Which made things interesting. I thought to myself, "Hmm, going to be a long year". The battalion then came up and we commenced operations. Throughout the year

- 13:00 my platoon, my platoon, the fire assault platoon, worked in various roles, mostly under the direct command of the CO [Commanding Officer] who was Lieutenant Colonel Eric Smith. And we did tasks as directed by the CO. We did some reconnaissance tasks, mostly we went out and secured landing zones for flying of the battalion and specific individual tasks for the CO. I was with Fire Assault
- 13:30 platoon until about January 1968 when I went off to 5 platoon B Company to replace A.D. Browning by which time I'd had a platoon commander, several platoon commanders and they'd all moved onto other things. And then I got a fellow who looked like he was going to stay with the platoon until the end of the tour. And I must confess I was a bit peeved about all of that, because I'd commanded
- 14:00 the platoon for most of the time and as far as I was concerned this was my platoon. So anyway we had some disagreements and, off I went to B Company, just in time for the Tet Offensive which was to say the least a bit interesting. The completion of the Tet Offensive or our part therein, came back did a few operations and then came home. One thing that sticks in my mind because I had this bloke's name mentioned just the other day.
- 14:30 Frank Frigerio. Frank was one of my lance corporals. He was a national serviceman [compulsory military service scheme]. Good head, good head. And about 4 days, 3 days before we were due to come home Frank and I were coming in the advance party. We'd dug in outside, what was it, Baria. Dug in outside Baria and just at last light some shots were fired. And they came from inside the village,
- 15:00 inside the town. And I scuttled over to where Frank was and got in his pit beside him. And I said, "Hang on Frank I think I want us to draw - they want to draw our fire into the village". "And we're not going to get, just hang on." And a few more shots came, it got dark, settled down and off we went. I went back to my pit, we spent the night as we would. Anyway about 3 days later, 4 days later we were back home.
- 15:30 Frank came from Ballarat, oh Bendigo I think. Anyway he told me about walking into the pub on the Saturday after he got home. And one of his mates said, "G'day Frank haven't seen you for a while, where've you been?" Frank said, "Oh just got back from Vietnam." He said, "Oh yeah right", he said "Didn't see the footy team last week did you?" And Frank said, "No I've been in Vietnam." And he felt alienated, was not that they were being deliberately
- 16:00 wrong, deliberately spiteful or anything. It's just that most of us you only talk about the things you did last week and last month and the last few months. And Frank felt very alienated and I must say I felt for Frank. Because there he is one day in contact in Vietnam, the next day he's having a beer in his pub, difficult stuff. Different for us regulars because after leave, and I spent most of my time
- 16:30 with a bloke called Ron Seek with whom I'd served in Malaya and in Vietnam. And Ron and I heartedly got stuck into the booze, had a thoroughly splendid time, went back into the army, which was our life, where people understood and empathised with you. So got back from Vietnam that time and I was posted to the army apprentice school. I was still a sergeant.
- 17:00 Did that for about a year and thought, "Bugger this I'm going back to Vietnam". And there was a unit called The team, the Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam. Largely operating the length and the breadth of the country as advisors. I wanted to be one of the team. They were seeing as being the cream. So I volunteered for the cream. Accepted, did a bit of training and went back to Vietnam. Very interesting year there.
- 17:30 Quite a bit of action. Quite a bit of action. Up in the north at a place called Quang Tri, we operated out of Quang Tri, which is the province which is at the northern end of, what was then South Vietnam and had the demilitarised zone running across the top of it with North Vietnam on the other side. And I recall when we were up on the DMZ [Demilitarised Zone], you look across at the large flag they had, on the other side which was on a pole
- 18:00 I suppose in those terms, a hundred feet high, with this big flag. And you'd watch the rain storms coming in, from the west. And as they came in apparently the bloke who looked after the flag, the North Vietnamese, was under strict orders it wasn't to be got wet. And you'd see the storm coming in, down would come the flag, the storm would sweep through and then up it'd go again. During that time as I said
- 18:30 I had about 8 months with the 1st Battalion 4th. 4/ 1st or 4/ 1st. 1st Battalion, 1st ARVN, ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] Regiment. Working and living with Vietnamese on my own. And they were first class. It took away, it took away any racism or prejudice I had against Asians. Because these blokes were my mates. And when things were going bad, they looked
- 19:00 after me as much as I looked after them. And I'm very pleased about that because it really has made a difference. I still go to Vietnamese veteran's functions and I talk to them about the young Vietnamese that are here, the Australian Vietnamese and how young Australian Vietnamese should make sure they grasp what's come from their background, their strong family values and all the other skills. Vietnamese really are a very moral group and the family is very

- 19:30 very important. And so I still get a lot out of that. When I finished my tour, in fact I came home on R&R [rest and recreation] to attend my brother's wedding. And I was going back and some 2nd lieutenant was giving me a hard time because I'd jumped the queue in the wait to get on the plane. And my plane was going to Da Nang, everyone else was going to
- 20:00 Saigon. And he said, "Sergeant major, sergeant major." and tapped me on the shoulder and I said, "Yeah what do you want?" And he said, "Do you realise you've jumped the queue" blah blah blah. And I said, "For Christ's sake I've got to get to Da Nang, I've no time to stuff around here. You're all going to Saigon, that doesn't leave for 3 hours, Da Nang leaves in 20 minutes, I've got to be on it." And he gave me a little bit of a reprimand and I thought to myself, hang on a second, 'cause I was a warrant officer at the time. In my army I've got to do what that
- 20:30 bloke tells me 'cause he's a lieutenant and I'm a warrant officer. I thought, "Bugger this". And they'd just introduced a new scheme called the Admin Tech Officer's Scheme, where they would commission selected sergeants and warrant officers and the like. So I, I thought, "That's it, that's what I'm going to do". So I applied for that while I was in Vietnam, was
- 21:00 interviewed in Vietnam. And there's a little story there because, in the Australian army we use code words when we're talking on the radio. For example, the adjunct is "Seagull", and the medical corps is "Starlight". And up in I Corp where we were the Australians were largely "Zulu", that was the call sign, Zulu. Anyway I'm out in the scrub
- 21:30 and there was a call from - in at Quang Tri relayed through our headquarters and then to me. Now I could talk with our headquarters but I couldn't talk to Quang Tri. And I could hear what was going on. And this bloke said, "Eddy Baja" or whatever our call sign was, "I've got a message for your Zulu." He said, "Apparently
- 22:00 Starlight's been talking to a Seagull and the Seagull says the NT is a go." And the other man said, "What the hell does all that mean?" He said, "I don't know." He said, "I'm just passing on the information." He said, "Could you tell your Zulu." So he said, "Zulu this is..." whatever it was. I said, "Zulu over." He said, "Some guy's got a message from a Seagull and Starlight says the NT's a go. Over."
- 22:30 And I said, "This is Zulu, roger [OK], out." And just left it at that. And after a while he said, "For God's sake when you get out come and tell me what this is all about." And what had happened is our adjunct, the bloke who looked after the administration of the unit was Seagull. He'd spoke to a medic, warrant officer in Quang Tri, Ron Roney, saying, "Yeah they've checked it, and I can apply for the commission". But the Americans didn't understand all of this. It reminds me of one other time.
- 23:00 Barry Young who's sadly gone. And he was there and this American had been talking to him. And he said, "Mr Logan, I've just been speaking with Mr Young." I said, "Yeah." He said, "He said he'd see me in a fortnight." I said, "Yeah." "What the hell kind of vehicle's that?" He just didn't understand a fortnight meant two weeks yeah. So I was interviewed in Vietnam for a commission and I'll never forget because when I was in Malaya
- 23:30 the first time, I had been on guard, had just come back off stand down. We used to go to Penang for two days stand down. I'd just come back from stand down. I was half pissed. And this bloke said, "You're on guard tonight." Now if a bloke's been drinking you don't put them on guard. And I said, "No you can't put me on guard, I've
- 24:00 been on the piss." And he said, "Sorry about that Jock" because in those days it was Jock, "You're on guard." And I said, "All right." So I was on guard. Now very early in the peace in Malaya I had been involved in a riot. We - it was coming close to independence. And four of us - Buck, Timsy and another bloke whose name will come back to me. Slim,
- 24:30 Slim Callahan. We had gone into town into the Queen's Bar at Kuala Kangsar, and we were having a thoroughly splendid time. And there was a big crowd gathered outside. Mostly Malays, who were cross about something or rather. And I don't think Slim Callahan made it any better. He abused them or did something. So when we came out the bar there were all these people.
- 25:00 Waiting. And we walked through them and we got about 30 metres past and they're after us. We all had a beer bottle in hand and I remember we threw that and then went for the lick of our lives. And we beat them out of town and then this car came from town, several times and tried to run us over. And what they actually did was ambush us on a bridge because we went further. And I got a cracked skull. And a broken nose out of it.
- 25:30 Big Buck broke his ankle. Slim Callahan had something wrong with - Kevin Tims I think also got knocked around. Anyway there was an investigation into it and the soldiers had been drinking. Just before I left Malay on that tour, I was having a drink in what's called the arms corps where we kept all the weapons. And the duty officer came in and I was found to be in possession of alcohol so I got 14 days
- 26:00 stoppage of pay for that. So when I was up to be commissioned I was being interviewed. Now this is, 9 almost 10 years later. And he said, "Now I feel there's some problems with alcohol, Sergeant Major." And I said, "Well what do you mean sir?" He said, "Now when were you last drunk?" And I said, "Oh last

night." He said, "Oh yeah and before that?"

- 26:30 And I said, "Probably the night before. Yes" "And before that?" I said, "8 weeks ago." He said, "Why 8 weeks?" I said, "Because I've been out on an operation for 8 weeks, I came back and I've been on the piss for 2 nights." He said, "Oh, Oh right." I said, "But look. The last offence I had was somewhere about 1959, 1960. Here we are in 1969, actually 1970." I said, "It's 10 years."
- 27:00 I said "I was a private soldier now I'm a WO, Warrant Officer." He said, "Yes yes" he said, "We've still got it there." I said, "Well, you must recall it sir because you gave me the award." He said, "Did I?" I said, "Have a look." And he had been the 2IC [Second-in-command] of 3RAR and he said, "By God so I did." He said, "How are you?" And of course we, you know we were fine, it was square one. Anyway
- 27:30 I was commissioned, came home and was commissioned. And stayed a couple of years at the Jungle Training Centre training people for Vietnam and in fact I was there when our commitment finally pulled up which was on the 7th December 1972. Story about that one. When I'd been a very young digger in 1956 at the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra
- 28:00 there was a fellow called, Gil Lucas who had been, I think in World War II a Korean soldier. Oh and another one, Fred Lomas. Fred had been a commando in World War II, and he stood there when he had given me introductions to tropical warfare he said, "In the last show" and then went on. And that impressed me. So
- 28:30 after the 7th December, I think it was about the 9th December when, pull out in 1972, pull out was finally announced I was there giving the introduction to tropical warfare. And all of a sudden we're out of the Vietnam War. So I stood there with my arms folded and I said, "In the last show, the one that's just finished." And then went on from there pulling a Fred Lomas. I had two years at Canungra and they were good years. Then I wondered what we were going to do. And I had a feeling
- 29:00 then that by the end of the century many of the resources that we had were going to be gone. I had a feeling that, I think in the seventies many of us did or some of us did, a feeling that resources would be gone. And I saw that if that were the case then Japan would once again be a threat. Because Japan has got no resources of its own.
- 29:30 And they went to war in 1941 over resources. The ABDA agreement. Australia, Britain, Dutch, America had stopped sending Japan oil and stuff and I figured - and they went to war over it. And I figured, "If we're going to have the same situation at the turn of the century then I'd be in my sixties, what would I be able to do?" The short answer was nothing because of age. So I thought, "What if I learnt Japanese?"
- 30:00 And at least be a linguist. So I applied to attend the language school which was a year course and was by selection. I got through that. But then they determined to send me to do Thai, study Thai. And I've often wondered why and I suspect it was because I think we were thinking in those days, and of course this was before we pulled out of Vietnam. We were thinking of setting up some advisory teams in Thailand
- 30:30 to go across and help bring back downed US [United States] aircraft and stuff like that. And if you had a Thai speaker it's always much better. But of course by the time all of this unfolded the war had ended. But nonetheless off I went and did a year at Point Cook studying Thai. There I graduated with a credit, had a year taken up my life, because it was pretty intense. And was then promptly posted to
- 31:00 Papua New Guinea. Where you'd be astonished at the number of people that don't speak Thai. Including after about three years me. Had three good years in Papua New Guinea, loved that. Was mostly involved in training Papuan New Guinean officers who were good blokes, they were good blokes. Then I came back from there, had a year in a staff posting and then my last year in the regular army - by this time I was a major -
- 31:30 was the staff officer responsible amongst other things for ceremony and protocol. And for example, I organised Sir Robert Menzies' [former Australian Prime Minister] funeral. And that was an interesting year. And then I looked around and I thought, well hang on a second I'm a major. My form of commissioning meant that I couldn't go anywhere else and I think I was 41 at the time, maybe coming up for 42.
- 32:00 If I stayed on to the age of 55 I'd be a major for what, 15 years. I thought, "Oh bugger this". So I pulled the pin. And I got a job as secretary to the Lord Mayor of Melbourne. And then, they're the parts.

That's great. Perhaps we can go back to the beginning now. Can you tell us a bit more about your family?

Alright. My family.

- 32:30 There was Mum and Dad when I was born, I was born obviously in 1936 and Dad went off to the war. When he came back and during the war of course, it was an interesting time because there we were in conditions of some privation. Things, little things like lollies and so forth just weren't available. We didn't
- 33:00 notice it, we didn't notice it because, I was surrounded by love basically. My Mum and my grandma and

my aunties and all those people. So they gave us whatever it was they had. I never forget we used to get powdered egg. And this powdered egg, dehydrated egg came from the States. And my granny was making, I don't know an omelette or something. And she said to me, "Logie" 'cause that's my family name.

33:30 "Logie this is the egg the cowboy eats." And I remember thinking to myself, "Oh boy, cowboys eat this". I thought Hopalong Cassidy was worthwhile - if he has to eat this shit. And then Dad came back in 1945. He'd been badly burned in the desert. And when he came back he - he was an interesting man.

34:00 He was a man who never drank, never smoked and I never heard him swear in his life. But having said all that he wasn't a wowser [killjoy]. He wasn't a wowser. If you walked into my Dad's house he'd offer you a drink. And you shouldn't ask for a whisky because if you'd ask for a whisky you'd get a tumbler full. He'd say, "Oh you've got a decent drop of whisky." But that was his style, he just

34:30 a generous man but didn't do those things himself. I always - as time went by and I was on operations and things were going rough I could always hark back on the fact that my folks were who they were and I could always say to myself, well what I'm doing, would my folks be proud of it or not? And that sustained me a lot of times.

35:00 A lot of times that sustained me. Then as I say Dad came back and we were all hard workers. In fact I say, quite tongue in cheek, I say I started work at the age of 9 because when he came back and bought this little shop, cost him 400 pounds, amongst other things it had papers. And I used to deliver papers morning and night 7 days a week in Scotland. And Scotland

35:30 in the winter when you're delivering papers is not a great deal of fun. And I did that until I started work which was at the age of 15. So I reckoned I started work at the age of 9. And one of the reasons on reflection, one of the reasons I left school was because if I left school and got a job I wouldn't have to deliver those bloody papers. So I

36:00 left school, got a job as an apprentice. And started to live a little. And I was going out on a Saturday night at a place called the Palais and there would be a gentleman there called Big Tam. Big Tam Connery who we know as Sean Connery. And he would be up there and I saw him, I don't think I ever spoke to him but I saw him. He'd be up there with the

36:30 body builders and on the opposite side at the Palais there'd be the Americans who were stationed at the air force base outside Edinburgh. And I, I noticed reading his biography, this bloke says, "And Sean grew up in Edinburgh that had Coconut Tam, one of the eccentric characters." I have up on the wall here some photographs taken

37:00 in the 1860's in Edinburgh. I got them from the National Museum in Edinburgh when I was over in the UK not so long ago. And one of them's of Coconut Tam. And if he was taken in the 1860's he would've been somewhere like 120 by the time Sean Connery saw him. So there's a little bit of licence with the way they do it. I was enjoying it, the job I didn't like much being an apprentice electrical mechanic, or electrical engineer

37:30 as they said in those days. We belonged to a company called King and Company which was established in 1871. Which when you work it out was very early for electrical stuff to be in. They wired the first house in Scotland. And life just went on until my Dad determined that we'd come to Australia. He, like a number, like his brothers and my ...

38:00 Okay basically yeah. So Dad like many of his contemporaries and the people in the family, because they had been overseas they had seen what the world was like. And very sensibly they thought there were greater opportunities for their kids overseas.

38:30 And so they exploded, went everywhere. Johnny Murdoch, my aunt's sister, a Burma veteran, he went to Canada. Maggie and Dad went to New Zealand and then here. Bob and Pat both came to Australia and we followed them. And my Dad's other brother Bob, he came to Australia also. And so they went everywhere. And when I think

39:00 back on it, my Dad was 47 when he and Mum came here. For people of that age that was a very brave decision to make, to come all the way out here. And to come way out here and find their son didn't want to stay anywhere near them, wanted to get away.

Why did they all split up?

Oh. Because the opportunity - that was where the opportunities were you know. For example they went down and probably applied to a number of places and

39:30 you know I'd say - my wife's family were either going to be Rhodesia [Zimbabwe] or Australia, whichever came up first, that's the one you went to. And so that's how it went. And interestingly enough it took away the glass ceiling that there was of people of our social class if you like. 'Cause I think of my father now, an intelligent man he was.

40:00 And basically found it very difficult to get very far. His brother was a senior seaman and, once they came out here things opened up in their sons and daughters. You know most of them are university trained and the like. Except me, like General Vo Nguyen Giap I went only to the college of the bush.

Tape 2

00:30 **Alright I just want to ask you a bit more about your parents. Were they religious at all?**

Whilst they were not formerly religious, they didn't attend church, my father had quite strong beliefs. Interesting enough Mum had been Roman Catholic and Dad was a Scottish Presbyterian and when they got married they got married in the Presbyterian Kirk [church].

01:00 Which didn't go down too well with my Mum's side of the family but then they are not, they weren't dyed-in-the-wool [strict] Catholics. They sort of forgot about being Catholics. And my father when he was in the Middle East, and was a fellow who didn't drink alcohol used to go on, for want of a better word, pilgrimages to all the places where Jesus had been etcetera. But having said that he was

01:30 sceptical about the history of Jesus and things of that ilk. He believed in God but I don't think he believed in religion all that much. And all the way through I think in his life, that's probably how he was. He frequently would get all this information. And Dad was rendered a bit deaf

02:00 by the war and I remember the only times he and I could talk was when we were actually on a one-on-one and he said, "You know, George I sit here, I pick up all this information from the encyclopaedias and the television and the radio." He said, "And I've no way of passing it on to anyone, because I'm deaf." And that really made him feel a bit, a bit off. He didn't like that and I can understand.

02:30 Yeah so religion never played a big part in my life. I did the conventional things and went to Sunday School, to Lochend Kirk, where my Sunday School teacher was Miss Girwood and I was in love with Miss Girwood. And as a young man I used to go to the Kirk a bit. Particularly St. Giles and so forth.

03:00 Interestingly enough they - the first Kirk I went to, Lochend, I didn't realise it but, was - I just thought it was where you went to the Sunday School. But in fact the Logans had an awful lot, my surname - had an awful lot to do with it. There's a stained glass window dedicated to the Logan's and a little chapel called St. Tryduana's Chapel because of course it went from being Catholic to being Presbyterian. Which my family built.

03:30 And in the graveyard there are all the Logan's. I was over about 5 years ago and I went to have a look at it and there was a remarkably comforting feeling to be there in amongst all your past kinsmen. It's interesting. I've never been all that fussed about the name George. And I saw one poor bugger, he was called George, George Logan.

04:00 So yeah there was a belief in God but not a big belief in religion in my family.

And was your father a strict man?

No he wasn't strict insofar as he dealt with me. I firmly believe that my Dad loved me very dearly as I loved him. Being a Scottish family he didn't say that. He only ever once I recall said it. And we were in Papua New Guinea and he and

04:30 Mum had come up for a holiday and they were up for about 10 weeks. And one morning we were having a cup of tea on the little verandah we had which looked up into the mountains that were the start of the Kokoda Track actually and I said to him, "Dad I love you." He said, "And me too, son." And that was rather nice. We knew it and I knew that they loved me very dearly but it was sort of unspoken in a Scottish family.

05:00 No he wasn't strict. He didn't like, he didn't like excesses of any kind. He couldn't see why people needed to drink and get drunk. And of course when I started drinking he, wasn't all that fussed about it. Didn't give me a hard time though about it, didn't give me a hard time. But I don't think he was very happy about it all. And of course I started smoking as well. Interesting how I did start smoking. It was in Malaya

05:30 with 3 battalion, 3RAR. And we used to go out on 14 day ambushes and you'd do 24 hours on and 24 hours off. And you'd go forward, ambush for 24 hours, you'd come back about - yards in those days - about 500 yards, where you couldn't, you had to keep quiet of course, you couldn't cook but for some bizarre reason you could smoke. And I didn't smoke. It was boring, so boring because

06:00 you'd just lie there, have a bit of sleep and just lie there. And if there was a skerrick of sunlight came into the jungle you'd move so you copped it. And I was lying there watching a bloke one day with a fag and he blew a smoke ring. And I thought, "I wonder if I could do that?" And I had - we'd been resupplied. And in the resupply they used to come in a tin of 50. So I thought, "I wonder if I can do that?" And of course got some matches and opened this tin of 50

06:30 lit a fag to see if I could blow smoke rings. And by the end of that operation I was a smoker. Yeah. And I smoked substantially. I've got a diary of one of the operations I had in the Tet Offensive, the only diary I ever kept during the covert operations and I've got a little note there saying, "I'll have to cut down on smoking, I'm going through 3 packs a day". And that

07:00 was in operations. But I did stop.

When did you stop?

Oh I'm not too sure. I think it was midnight on the 7th December 1973. But I wouldn't be too accurate on that. In fact I think that's when I really first started smoking. I sort of took it up again in Papua New Guinea. But I met a bloke called Bill Rogers. Bill had been a regimental medical officer in

07:30 Malaya and the last time I'd run into him was when he was a lieutenant colonel, medical lieutenant colonel in Victoria Barracks. And he and I used to smoke outrageously and he was at my place in Papua New Guinea and he said, "You haven't got any cigars or pipes George?" And I said, "Plenty of fags, Bill." He said, "No no, fags are no good." I said, "Is that right, cigarettes?"

08:00 This was in 1974. He said, "The evidence is out, cigarettes are no good." He said, "Pipe and cigars are all right." I said, "Okay." And I thought now if you're going to give it up Bill, so am I. 'Cause I trusted him. So I gave up completely gave up cigarettes but I smoked cigars. And then when I next ran into Bill which was about 1978

08:30 around about the time of Menzies funeral 'cause he was down for that. And we were in the mess. And I said, "Cigar?" and he said, "No." I said, "Why not?" He said, "The evidence is too strong against it." So I said, "Fair enough Bill, if you believe that I believe it." So I stopped smoking entirely. Entirely. And I haven't smoked since. And then I had 10 years on the Veteran's Review Board and of the cases, the entitlement

09:00 cases that came before us, ninety something percent of them were related to the use of tobacco. Makes you think doesn't it.

Do you think your experience was - do you think you took up smoking directly because you were in the army?

I would - well I would not have been a smoker had I not been in Malaya and out in operations and bored and all

09:30 those other things. In part, I think it's the romance if you like of being a smoker. The allure of being a smoker for young people. You believe you're sophisticated, you believe in this and that. I took mine up primarily because of boredom but I found it, I enjoyed it, I loved smoking. If smoking didn't do me any harm and I knew that I'd be sitting here with a fag in my mouth.

10:00 I loved it.

Well I guess you had the tin in front of you?

Well the tin came out - there was a can, a tin of 50 came out with every resupply. And allegedly from Lord Nuffield who, whatever he, you know digger. And of course the culture was such that cigarettes were in demand. Mind you I had a role model who was not a smoker, which is probably why I stayed

10:30 away from it 'til I was about 21 or something. Yeah my old Dad being the role model.

Now tell me a bit more about the years during the war, the Second World War that is. I know you wouldn't have remembered being very young but, what sort of things did you do for fun as a child?

Right.

11:00 And I suppose my recollections in the main start from about, when I went to school. By which time that Dad - that'd be 1941 and my Dad had joined up. I recall it was largely a society that was peopled by women and the men were not around. All the teachers in the main were women. Mr Johnson our headmaster

11:30 he was the only man that I recall being a teacher. Things like we, we used to do fire drills.

Now we were talking about growing up during World War II?

Yeah during World War II. I had a lot of fun I think as

12:00 a youngster. When we went to school I remember we used to ARP. Air raid precautions. And you'd man the stirrup pump because we were expecting the German bombers. We lived opposite a Fort called Leith Fort. And of course there was lots of things going on. And I remember at one stage, seeing a group of soldiers marching up from the docks, we weren't far from the docks, to Leith Fort.

12:30 And I now believe they were the commanders returning from the raid on the Lofoten in Norway. And I remember at one stage being in Leith and seeing all these diggers march by. These great big men in their great coats and their slouch hats. And I thought, "Ooh I'd love to wear one of those". And down the road in the bombed out buildings I was talking about before the commandos used to practice

13:00 assaults and so forth. So we were involved in this war. And it was great fun, great fun for a kid. I had

this air gun and of course I couldn't get pellets for it. But you know, we were aware that the Germans might land and all this sort of thing. And I remember I used to get behind an easy chair with my air gun waiting for the German paratroopers to come. In a way it's pretty sad, you know I was probably six or seven.

13:30 That's not what youngsters should be doing. But that was part and parcel of it all.

You mentioned before the air raid precautions, you were manning a stirrup pump. Can you explain?

Yes yes. A little pump - a bucket with a pump and you'd put the hose and we'd hose milk bottles and things like that. And of course one of the interesting things is, because of the difficulties of getting supplies into the UK and the UK is dependent on

14:00 import, we didn't have unusual fruits. You'd see the odd apple. You'd get a mandarin from time to time at Christmas. Tangerine we called them. And I remember one day going to school, primary school and there was a fellow there called Robert Story and he had something in his hand. And I said, "That's a banana." And he said, "How did you know?" And I'd seen it in front page of a comic, this banana.

14:30 But I'd not - I didn't recall ever having one. And that was the way it was. There was none of those fruits like bananas or lemon. And after the war there was a fruit place called Rankin not far from us and I remember standing in there and looking at this thing in the window. And as a bunch of kids we had these expressions we used. And if something was ordinary or rotten or off we said it was "melon".

15:00 And this mate of mine looked and he said, "Melon." And this lady said, "How did you know that son? There haven't been any of those since before the war." And it was, it was a watermelon but none of us knew what the hell it was. So that was interesting. My Mum and grannies had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [chickens] and so we'd get the odd egg and so forth. The

15:30 there was, I'm sure a girth of things to eat but no-one noticed. Used to fill up on things and allegedly that period in the UK people were never quite as healthy 'cause they weren't eating fatty things and the like. Couldn't get lollies, couldn't get lollies. Or sweeties as we called them. Very rarely could you get it. Only one place that I knew of where you could get ice cream and that wasn't very often. And it was always vanilla.

16:00 So we, there were many things that we did without. During my Dad's service he was posted to a couple of places in England before he went to the Middle East, one of which was Lutterworth, which is about 20 miles, I believe from Coventry. Anyway we went down there and the story is, they tell me, some of which I remember, some of which I don't, are quite interesting.

16:30 At one stage Coventry was being bombed and Mum apparently got me up on the window at the sink to look out the window to see Coventry being bombed. And I remember all the convoys going by. My Dad was a military policeman [MP] so he used to direct the convoys and so forth. And I used to sit on the side of the road while he directed convoys and then he'd give me a ride on his motorbike. It was great fun. And there were all these people. I remember we went swimming

17:00 at one stage at this place. And little things just sort of stick out in your mind. I loved it. I thought it was great fun. Then he went off to the Middle East and I recall when he was on embarkation leave, he came there and he was going and he said goodbye in the house. He said, "Don't come up to the station." He was catching a train down to Southampton or somewhere I suppose.

17:30 "Don't come to the station." We all said, "No we'll say goodbye here." So we said goodbye to him. And he'd gone. And Mum sat around. She said, "We're going to the station." So up we went and, caught him before he was on the train and said goodbye again and off he went. And then when he came back he'd been you know, burned and so forth and I remember very distinctly we were sitting at the table.

18:00 Mum was there and I was here. And she read this letter which had been written by the matron of the Scottish hospital in Alexandria I suppose it was. Cairo or somewhere. He couldn't write. And I remember the tears coming down her cheeks. Sad. Very sad.

How badly was he burnt?

He, he had been topping up a generator. And

18:30 it - petrol driven generator and for some reason it caught fire and he turned, sort of away. And all down the left side he was burnt. Started from about his ear down his back to shoulder and all down the left hand side of his leg. He had third degree burns to - very close to the terminal amount you can get I think 20 or 30 percent. His left hand was sort of, frizzled, a bit like that. But it never seemed

19:00 to stop him doing anything. He just got on with things. He couldn't smell petrol. If he smelt petrol he would vomit just as I suppose a post traumatic symptom. Yeah that was very interesting about that. And he couldn't be too near engines. Because after the war he bought this old Lancaster and then an Austin 6 [cars].

19:30 And of course he was always repairing them. And if he got under them to repair he'd have to get out after a while and he'd vomit, and then he'd go back in and work again. Because it just had that effect on

him. Interesting stuff. And back to the war, at the time of the war, I remember just before D Day [allied invasion of France] or what turned out to be D Day - you know they were assembly areas all over the UK. And they had assembled all these vehicles

20:00 adjacent to the houses. And we lived in a two story tenement house. And I suppose because they - for concealment they'd be there and the shadows would be over the vehicles. All the vehicles were lined up, all along the roads and streets, right up adjacent to the houses and of course they were covered in grease and stuff because they were going on a sea voyage. And we used to feed the soldiers and give them cups of tea and stuff like that. Don't know that we fed them too much but we'd certainly give them hot water for their tea

20:30 and stuff like that. We kids had a wonderful time. All of this grease that was on these vehicles though. Oh covered in it, absolutely covered. So that was interesting and then they all disappeared. And then it was D Day and I used to, I was alert enough in those days to know what was going on. I remember reading about D Day and, "This is the news read by Frank Ford."

21:00 The BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] news at 9 o'clock. I think living with my Mum on our own as we were, there was sort of, I was treated differently. Insofar as I used to sit up and listen to the news with her. And we would sit and sing together and do things like that and it was very interesting. She

21:30 did all sorts of things. She was a bus conductress. She built Lancaster bombers. She built MTB - Motor Torpedo Boats. And did things that normally she would never have been able to do. She was very bright my Mum. She used to tell the story about when she - she comes up from way up the North of Scotland. When she was at school she topped the school but she couldn't be dux of the school because she wasn't a boy. Interesting stuff isn't it?

22:00 Yeah she was very bright Mum. And I think must've been desperately lonely. She'd often talk about Dad and Dad used to send things home. He'd send home, lollies, sweets. I remember he used to send home footballs. I was never allowed to use them because they came from my Dad in the Middle East. I remember when he came home he said, "I suppose all those footballs

22:30 I gave you have all been kicked to bits?" And I said, "No Dad, come with me." And I opened the drawer and there they were. She wouldn't let me use them because they were from him and she wanted to keep that memory. And he said, "Oh well that's enough of that." Got them out and blew them all up and we kicked them to bits, which was great fun. He was very generous with me my Dad, he used to give me 2 bob [twenty cents] a week pocket money. You know that was a lot

23:00 of money. Very generous with me. Good bloke.

How did you feel about when your dad came back so badly burned?

Oh it was great. You know my Dad was my hero and there he was back again. Twice as big as life. Looked good, great. And I'll never forget when he came back and it was April 1945.

23:30 I'd be 8 coming on 9. He, he came back, got discharged, invalided out of services. Came home and we went to see all my grannies. I had Granny Logan and Granny Lowth, that's my grandma's on both sides. And they were lovely, had a great relationship with grannies, it was great fun. And I remember Granny Logan particularly

24:00 hugging him. And I thought, that's funny, Granny doesn't hug men, sort of thing. It was lovely.

The Scottish reserve?

Yes. Yes.

Now did you have any - a grandfather or any other relatives involved in the First World War?

Yes my - well my grandfather on my Dad's side was dead by the time

24:30 I was born but he in fact was a soldier with the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. And was at places like the Relief of Khartoum and the Battle of Atbara, was in the Boer War. And the legend that we had in the family was that he came across here to Australia and was one of the, the guard at the first parliament. And I spoke with the

25:00 bloke about that, some time ago before the hundredth anniversary and he said, "Send me some stuff on it." And I did. And as a result my wife and I got an invitation to the hundredth anniversary of parliament which was rather nice. Except that since that time I've managed to obtain copies of his records from the war office. And there some doubt whether in fact he came here or not. Certainly he was in those other fights

25:30 I was talking about. The relief of General Gordon and so forth. But he was dead by the time I was born. On my mother's side, Grandad Lowth, he was still alive when I was about and he had served in World War I. Nothing much was ever said about that, certainly not to me. He died not long after the war ended and he wasn't all that old as I understand it.

26:00 **Did you learn anything about World War I at school?**

Fair bit about World War I which used to really give me the irrits [irritate me] because we were in the midst of World War II and no-one ever talked about it. I wanted to find out more, you know about what's happening and all the rest of it. Mind you my teacher was a lady called Miss Trummer. Trummer to me sounded like a German name.

- 26:30 So I used to sit there and think, "I wonder if she's a German spy/" Poor Miss Trummer, I used to sit there glaring at her. "She might be a German spy". We were always on the look out for fifth columnists [clandestine subversive agents] and German paratroopers and things like that. I'm not sure what we would have done if we'd actually found one but we were always on the lookout for one. Saturday afternoons we went to the
- 27:00 movies. Saturday afternoons. And whatever the movie was that would be who we were for the next, you know until the next movie. And I remember two things used to get me. One is I knew that Britain was desperately short of arms. I used to see these cowboy movies, I knew they were movies. And all these cowboys had guns. And I used to think, "Why don't they send these guns over, so that we can use them?"
- 27:30 Didn't realise they wouldn't be much chop but, that used to get up my nose a bit. And I remember once seeing Robin Hood with Errol Flynn. And they're all sitting having this giant feast and I thought, "Oh wouldn't it be nice to be able to sit and do those sorts of things". In fact after the war I was a young apprentice and we were talking about a hotel called the Royal North British. And this mate of mine
- 28:00 Tom Wilson said, "Wouldn't it be great to go up there and have a mixed grill." I said, "What's a mixed grill?" And he told and I thought, "God that's a lot of different stuff". Chops and steak - I didn't know what a mixed grill was, no idea what a mixed grill was. Now of course I wouldn't thank you for one.
- That'd be one way to stop your heart.**
- Oh yeah.
- 28:30 **I guess most of the people we speak to grow up in Australia. I'm interested to know from a Scottish point of view growing up in Scotland what you thought of the British Empire and what you felt to be part of it?**
- Interesting point because we believed, I believed that the King and Queen were the absolute end, they were the
- 29:00 epitome of all things worthwhile. And the British system per se was something I adhered to. I remember the King came somewhere along the way and we'd all line up and see him and I used to wear this kilt, God help me. I was a wee laddie. And when he came everyone was cheering but I didn't, I saluted. Because that was the King and that was the right thing to do, I thought. And we thought
- 29:30 naturally everyone else was supporting it. To the Brits. And of course, child's stuff. As far as we were concerned, Britain was the centre of the earth and the rest was all peripheral. No-one was as good as we were. We admired, you I admired these, these big Australians and yet what I'd seen as it turns out was the forestry brigade landing.
- 30:00 They had landed - went up to Scotland - cut down all these trees, you know for the war effort and so forth and so that most of them were timber cutters, so they were big brawny tough looking blokes. And we admired them enormously but we didn't think they were that good. The Americans, because they started to appear and everyone liked them but they weren't that good, not like my Dad. Lovely story.
- 30:30 One of my uncles married a lady called Smith, Bunty Smith. And her dad was PC [Police Constable] Smith, he had been a policeman and he was still called PC Smith. And PC Smith used to take a terrible rise out of me. He would say, "Hello George." I'd say, "Hello Mr Smith." He'd say, "Where's your dad?" And I'd say, "Oh my Dad's down at Latterworth in UK" or wherever he was. "Oh my Dad's in the desert."
- 31:00 He'd say, "What's he doing there?" "He's a soldier." "Your Dad's not a soldier." "My Dad's a soldier." And we had these things, sort of like, to look after the hearth on either side and they were called fireside soldiers. And he'd say, "Your Dad's a fireside soldier." And I used to get so angry and incensed about that. My Dad wasn't any fireside soldier. But I think back on it and I think, if I ever catch up with PC Smith I'm going to have a good laugh about that.
- 31:30 Because every time I saw him he'd take this rise out of me and he always got a rise. We had no concept that we were, not well looked after, not - that things were poor. They're just natural limitations that just didn't happen. We knew about ration books and we knew that if you used
- 32:00 up your rations that was it. I remember once, we were lying - my uncle and I - and he's about 18 months difference so we're basically like brothers. We're lying in the back yard looking up at the clouds and he said, "You know George some of those clouds might be over where your Dad is in the Middle East." And I was looking at these clouds and I thought, "Yeah yeah". And then
- 32:30 not long afterwards - we lived at the - the Firth of Forth was just across and I looked across to a place called Burnt Island on the other side which was about 15 miles away. And I thought to myself, "Those clouds we were looking at the other day didn't look to be any further away than Burn Island, how could

they be over the Middle East?" But I had no concept of where the Middle East was. I knew where it was but you know, the distance thing. And we went down to London for a holiday at one stage to see my uncle

33:00 Pat. And we sort of went out to see what the V1's and V2's [German 'vengeance' weapons; "Vergeltungswaffens"] had done. Very interesting being in the war as a little kid. And all these soldiers and so forth. My uncle came home, uncle Johnny. And he was in signals and he had a pistol. And he let me play with his pistol. Oh this was great fun. Of course obviously he made sure the thing was unloaded. But I was sitting out playing with this pistol.

33:30 Oh loved this. I was a bit cross that my Dad didn't seem to have too many guns. So we, we believed that Britain was the centre of the earth and everyone else revolved around it.

You mentioned the V2 - what did you actually see?

As I recall and I'd be about 8 at this stage, 1944 1945, somewhere around there.

34:00 All we saw was houses that had been hit. I had an uncle living in Surry and we went down there. Sutton in Surry. And we went down there and, he'd suffered some damage to his house and the other places in the street, they were - I didn't - we used - I think but I'm sure if I recall this or if someone told me that we had the V1's. And the V1's were the, the buzz bombs - used to come along on a jet engine then it would cut out and they'd

34:30 they'd descend and blow places up. I think I heard the V1's or a V1. The V2 of course was the rocket that was a precursor to the moon rockets basically and it just came straight down and went, "Whoomp". Interestingly enough when I read about this, if they'd started - if the Germans had started V2's particularly, V1's, V2's say a year earlier might well have changed the course of the war because it

35:00 would've destroyed morale. I think morale generally was pretty good, pretty good. Yeah. I don't recall anybody being defeatist. But you know I was only a wee tacker so I, I wasn't party to sort of serious discussion. But it was always "We're going to beat the Germans." No-one thought much about the Japanese, unlike Australia when the Japanese were the

35:30 major threat - we didn't think much about the Japanese.

Were many of your friend's dads soldiers as well?

Oh yeah yeah most of them were. And I remember Alec Fowler I think his name was, his dad was - no Alec Bethew, his dad had been killed at Dunkirk and Erica Brien's dad was a prisoner of the Japanese. And

36:00 sort of down the street you'd see, you know, "Oh there's Mr Anderson he's home on leave", and away he'd go again. And there was a fair bit of that. Fair bit of that. And it was accepted, this is what happened. Your dad went away to war like all the others.

So as kids how did you see it when other kids' dads had been killed?

I don't know. I can't recall.

36:30 What I remember for example, Alec Bethew's dad was killed. And we all said, oh you know "Your dad's dead." "Oh yes my dad's dead." And that was it, we didn't think a great deal more about it, it was just one of those things I think. That's interesting I've never been asked that before, yeah.

No I just wonder. I mean you know kids can often be very cruel.

Yeah poking at each other and "Your dad

37:00 got killed by the Germans" sort of thing.

Or whether that was something to be proud of.

I don't recall one way or other. As I recall it it was just a fact of life.

So did you think about that for your own father. Think he might get killed?

Yes yes, and of course every night we used to say prayers. When he was away - never had when he was home. I think we'd say

37:30 prayers, "God bless Mum and Dad. You know make sure Dad's safe", and that sort of stuff. But more by rote and ritual than real feelings because you know, my Dad was my Dad, and he was going to be fine all the time, yeah. I knew that.

38:00 **Now I was going to ask you before when we were talking about the Empire did you sing God Save the Queen when you were at school?**

Oh yes yes we sang God Save the Queen, or God Save the King as it was then. Yes. Not as much as I understand kids in Australia did. We didn't sing it on a daily basis. But we sang it from time to time and we all sort of knew it and that was part and parcel of life.

38:30 **Was yours a state school?**

Primary school was a state school and then my secondary school was a grammar - what they call a grammar school. Which was either founded in 1492 or 1510 or 1528, no-one's quite sure.

So when you started at high school ...

39:00 **did you have many mates?**

Oh yes yes. People - in fact I was thinking about one not so long ago because I got my school up on the net and it turns out my best mate there, Snoof, Ian Ireland became the dux of the school a couple of years after I left. I left at 15, he went on to 17 and he became the dux of the school. And I would

39:30 suspect Ian probably ended up a Don somewhere. He was a remarkably bright young bloke. I remember science, I hated science. A science teacher being all thingy about Ian because we'd, we'd done an experiment and he had to describe it and he said, "By means of a pipet we transferred 20cc of this liquid to something else." And she was wrapt

40:00 in that and thought, you know his use of English was really stunning. Yes I was - Snoof, and Bob Walker and various other's names - yeah old mates. One of the things that is true of people like me who left at about 17, 18 - our life starts from there. Because those people who were before that

40:30 you just don't have contact with. But it's since then. And most of my mates are of course army mates.

What about girls?

We talking about school? Heather Catanack. Heather Catanack, I'll never forget Heather Catanack, she was gorgeous. Oh and Lesley. Lesley in fact was an Australian lass from Geelong and she came to - joined us

41:00 at Leith Academy. Tall, slim, gorgeous girl. Looked to have a very Grecian, line, profile. Blonde, blue eyed, gorgeous creature. And we were all a bit in awe of this Australian lass who I remember was talking about going back to Australia and was really cross about it, didn't want to go back to Australia. And we were all thinking, "What's wrong with her?" Because she used to tell us about Australia and

41:30 you know how you got apples and oranges and bananas and pineapple and grapefruit - all these fabulous things. She didn't want to go back there, God help her, "what's wrong with this girl?"

With the knowledge you have now what do you think, what might have been so attractive to her about Scotland or unattractive about Australia?

I think in fact she liked Scotland insofar as I imagine

Tape 3

00:30 **Sir, we're recording now. We were talking about your days at high school and I was asking you about girls and girlfriends.**

I don't think I ever had a girlfriend at that stage. I don't think I had a girlfriend before I came to Australia, and that was about 18, I was 18 when I arrived. I liked them I just didn't have one. I had a

01:00 fair bit to do with them actually because when we were in the ship, when my Dad had that shop, we were always getting them in and out and so forth and a couple that I liked very much but that was it.

Now I'm interested, from your description, it sounds like almost the perfect conditions for making a soldier in that your father was a soldier and you grew up during World War II

01:30 **and you said that they were your heroes. Is that something that you continued throughout your teenage years that you always wanted to be a soldier?**

Yes, I would have happily joined the army at 15, it just had such an impression on me. These were all the people that I wanted to be like, they were all soldiers. They came

02:00 back of course and did other things but that was the exciting time, that was the time that grabbed a hold of me and eventually, of course, I did and it was great fun, fabulous. Yes, I always wanted to be a soldier, always.

Did you consider other careers?

No, I wanted to be a soldier. I did other things but I wanted to be a

02:30 soldier. I'll never forget when I first enlisted and after about a week or so, ten days, they sent us up to Kapooka, Kapooka was the recruit training battalion and the first morning, we'd over-nighted there, the

first morning they came around and woke us all up, it was about ten to six, and I woke up and thought to myself, "Oh God, I'm going to have to be up at ten to six in the morning for the

03:00 rest of my life", because I was committed in my mind to being a soldier. Interesting that one because in 1959 as I said I got out for I suppose 2 months but snuck back when I thought it was worthwhile.

You, did you say you left school at 15?

Yes, yes. I was in fact supposed to stay on to do the equivalent of

03:30 leaving but honestly I don't think my parents quite understood the value of education and they were of the view that if I wanted to come out and work in the shop then that would be all right. They just couldn't see beyond it. They were bright, as I said, very bright, they just couldn't see beyond it. And in fact, on reflection, they should have

04:00 forced me to stay on. It was at good school as I say and it would have been worthwhile.

Were you a good student?

In part, in part I was a good student but my folks didn't quite understand what was required. For example, I basically couldn't do homework because I came home and worked in the shop and then didn't feel like it in the evening.

04:30 I couldn't take part in school activities because I worked. Only once did I join the cricket, we had seven cricket teams in Leith Academy and only once did I join the cricket team and I tested out and I got three wickets for five I think it was. So they put me in the seconds, then I couldn't attend because I was doing work. So I couldn't be part and

05:00 parcel of the school and they couldn't quite grasp that. They thought, "Well, when they had gone to school you just went to school and you came home", so I think that was part of the problem. It was interesting later on when I had kids I would never allow them to work while they were at school, no, "You go to school that's your work, you don't have to do anything else".

So what sort of

05:30 **things did you have to do in the shop?**

It was a real corner shop with everything. We had newspapers, we had fruit and vegetables, not much fruit, we had cigarettes, we had all the other things that you would get in a local shop and we were open from about six in the morning

06:00 until six or seven in the evening. And the shop was manned by either Dad or Mum or me and we kept the thing going. It was hard work, very hard work. What did I get out of it? Great mental arithmetic and calculating and mental arithmetic, I'm battling to find something else that I got out of it that I would have

06:30 enjoyed. I didn't like it much, I didn't like it much.

Now growing up in the 1950s as a teenager. Can you describe what it was like in Scotland, what was the culture of the day?

In Scotland it was just starting to be I suppose Teddy Boy stuff [1950s' subculture], the big

07:00 aim of a young Scotsman was to get a brown suit, with a drape suit and a brown-coloured tie, a chocolate tie, and a yellow shirt and crepe-soled shoes.

Brothel creepers?

Brothel creepers [term for crepe-soled shoes], yes, because but we didn't go to brothels because we couldn't afford them. When I

07:30 first became an apprentice my salary was twenty-seven and sixpence a week which in today's terms is two dollars seventy-six but in real terms it was a little bit more but not much more. For example, I think a loaf of bread was roughly about sixpence at the time so let's say if you could buy 54 loaves of bread with your weekly salary that would equate to what I

08:00 got as an apprentice and it wasn't until almost before the week before we left to come here that I actually went up to three pounds one and seven a week - amazing I can still remember how much that was, my actual gross salary, because over three pounds you actually started paying income tax. Up to then you didn't pay income tax.

What sort of music did you listen to?

It was

08:30 the sounds of the early 1950s, it was before rock and roll and it was before the sort of Bill Hayley and the Comets stuff, Blackboard Jungle. In fact the first rock and roll song was "Shake, Rattle and Roll" and that didn't come out until 1954 and so that was just on when I was leaving, I left at the beginning of

1955. So the bands we listened to and we
- 09:00 went to on a Saturday night, they were a bit like the Stan Kenton type bands.
- Skiffle music?**
- No, not skiffle, that was Lonnie Donnegan and he was down south in England. We mostly followed the American style bands, it was the Stan Kenton's, Ted somebody or other who had a big orchestra, it sounded a bit like swing sort of advanced swing
- 09:30 and that was our music. Of course we started to listen to Guy Mitchell and Jo Stafford and Frankie Lane and those sort of people hoping we could emulate them in how we sung or looked and so forth. So that was it then, it wasn't until I was Australia in fact, until I was in the army, that the Blackboard Jungle came out and that of
- 10:00 course launched Bill Hayley and the Comets and that was the big thing then with Johnnie O'Keefe and what have you, when it all started up.
- Was there any kind of gang violence or anything with mods and rockers?**
- No, no, there was a gang in Edinburgh called the Valdar Boys and a bloke called Norman Hanlon ('Bocco') ran those but I
- 10:30 never really got involved with that and I don't know people that did. There was probably a fair level of violence in so far as Scots people are not what you'd call placid in many ways. So there was probably a fair level of violence but we just thought it was part and parcel of life and didn't seem to be of great moment.
- So you got into a few schoolyard scraps [fights]?**
- Oh, yes, the usual stuff schoolyard
- 11:00 scraps and what have you but other than that I don't think I was an aggressive youngster. I really don't think I was an aggressive youngster, I can't recall being that sort of way. Maybe my memory is very selective but I honestly can't recall that.
- If you got into a few scraps did you generally come off the better?**
- I think it was a bit mixed, I think it was a bit mixed.
- 11:30 I remember I got in a fight with a bloke who later became a good friend of mine, David Ramsay, and I didn't come out of that too well but neither did he as I recall. You know, it was interesting that things like schoolboy fights and that don't live large in my recall. I'd not thought of that before but they really don't, certainly not at Leith Academy. I never indulged in fisticuffs [fighting] there.
- 12:00 No, primary school a bit here and there but, no, I don't recall that.
- When your family came to Australia when you were 18; you mentioned that you didn't want to go?**
- No, I didn't, I'd just, it was at that time that I'd turned 18 and I turned 18 in December 1955, therefore I was lawfully allowed to go to a
- 12:30 pub and have a pint of beer at one [shilling] and threepence - I didn't tell my folks I was having a pint of beer at one and threepence although my Mum twigged, my Dad didn't. And all of a sudden there were young women and dancing and stuff like that and I didn't want to leave that and come to Australia, I tried to join the army. And I'm not quite sure what happened, that didn't quite work, I think my Dad went up and saw the recruiting sergeant and
- 13:00 slipped him a fiver [five pounds] or something because I had a deferment from National Service [compulsory military service] because I was an apprentice tradesman, otherwise I would have been in at the age of 18 but I had a deferment and then, of course, before that deferment expired we came to Australia. We arrived, left there January 17 1955,
- 13:30 arrived here February 18 '55.
- So how long did that take?**
- A month, it took a month to come over on the boat. We went by way of Malta, where we picked up quite a few Australian airmen, there was an Australian squadron in Malta, post war. And then we went through the Suez because it was before the 1956 thing, then
- 14:00 to what was then Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, it had been called Serendipity in days gone by, and then to Western Australia and then into Melbourne. Arrived in Melbourne on I think the Wednesday, met by my uncle and aunt and their son and daughter, and we came out, we lived in Moorabbin, at Worthing Road, in a
- 14:30 sleep-out they had behind the place which was a big sleep-out. And the next day my uncle took us into

Victoria Market where I was astonished to find I could buy five pounds of plums for two shillings. I remember it just amazed me and all this fruit and vegetables that were there. There was a thing on television about ten years ago, this Russian fellow came over and

15:00 they took him to the market and he saw the fruit and vegetables and started crying at the abundance of it. It's one of the things we don't sometimes appreciate is just how abundant and good quality our food is. It's fabulous.

And what other first impressions did you have of the new country?

Of Australia, it was so different. For example, the

15:30 few weeks before I came from Scotland it was one of the coldest winters they'd had for many years and I was cycling to work each day, freezing cold and going over slush and stuff like that. And I'd go to work and I'd come home and it was always bitterly cold. And when I arrived here it was nothing like that. I got a job - interestingly enough we arrived on the Wednesday I went for an

16:00 interview on the Friday, to a bloke called McLaughlin who actually had a little electrical business in Lonsdale Street, and I started on the Monday. So as soon as I arrived I was working and I didn't stop working until about 5 years ago - but as soon as we arrived and it was so much easier. And the money, I'd gone from three pounds one [shilling] and seven [pence] to nine pounds sixteen [shillings] and six [pence] -

16:30 now how about that for a 300% increase in your salary. And within a very short time, because Mum and Dad had a few bob, we bought a house down here at Parkdale and we moved into that, Mordialloc, Parkdale. So we were in a house and I had my own bedroom and it was just fine, it was just fabulous. My brother, I was 18 and my brother was 8, there's ten years between and

17:00 I started to thoroughly enjoy Australia - I wanted to join the army. As I mentioned before I tried to join and they wouldn't sign the papers so I shot through. I wasn't sure where I was going to go and at the time there was a birth of quads [quadruplets] up at Bundaberg called the Lookey quads and I thought, that's where I'll go, Bundaberg. I had no idea where Bundaberg

17:30 was but I got on a plane and flew to Bundaberg. I had money and I bought a plane ticket - I'd never been in a plane - and flew to Bundaberg, it was great.

Did you especially want to see the quads?

No, I didn't want anything to do with the quads. I just wanted somewhere to go and I didn't know where to go and this bloke had had quads there so that's the place I picked, Bundaberg. And when I got up

18:00 there, I'll never forget, we landed at Brisbane and then we got a train to Bundaberg. There was another bloke with me, Gordon someone or other, he didn't last very long he came back to Melbourne, this was, you know, the great adventure - we were going to leave and have the big adventure. He didn't last two long, he lasted about two or three months, two months and then back to Melbourne. We went from Brisbane got the train up to Bundaberg,

18:30 got out very early in the morning at Bundaberg and was approached by a gentleman wearing a suit and a hat, who turned out to be one of the local coppers, saying "What are you doing here son?" as they used to do in those days. And we said "We've come here for work". And he said "Well, make sure you've got a job". You've got the bus over three and you go out to Birregurra, Birregurra I think it was, and the sugar mill. So I went out there and got a job in the Sugar Mill. I had my first fight in

19:00 Australia about two days later. There were huge cane toads, and I'd never seen cane toads before. I remember the first one I saw - I lifted this plank and there was this huge thing in front of me, it was a cane toad. So I picked it up and of course it wee'd on me and I thought "God". And that night or the next night there was a bloke outside with a golf club and he was smacking them with this golf club and I said

19:30 "leave them alone" and he wouldn't so I beat the shit out of him. It was my first fight in Australia. When I think of it cane toads are not something that you should be defending but I just didn't like the way he was doing it. I worked in the sugar mill there, met a fellow who was part Aboriginal and formed a bit of a friendship with him and that was my

20:00 first meeting with, you know, people outside Scotland basically. Because, when I came to Australia, the people in Melbourne, they were all the same as me. He was a good bloke. Anyway, I stayed there until Christmas 1955, came back for Christmas and said to my folks, they said "What are you going to do, you've got that out of your system, what are you going to do now?" I said "I want to join the army". They said "No". I said "All right, good bye". They said "Where are you going?". I said

20:30 "I don't know" but I'm going. They said "Hold on". And that's when they said, "All right, we'll sign the papers". So they signed the papers in January, it was the 1st of March before I was able to enlist because they used to send it back to the UK [United Kingdom] and get a clearance done on you and send back. By the time they'd done the clearance I enlisted on the 1st of March and we went to Royal Park which is just out on the fringe of - toward Flemington, not toward Flemington just at the

- 21:00 fringe there of Melbourne, that was the personnel depot. And an interesting little story - we were waiting to go up to Kapooka to do a recruit training and they were battling to find things for us to do. So this day they sent me into Victoria Barracks which is in St Kilda Road in town and my job there was to be the dixie basher in the officers' mess for the day. You know, scrub all the dixies and pots and things. So I did that and I'm now one of the
- 21:30 Trustees of the Mess and the Chairman of the Trustees is Major General Jim Hughes, AO [Officer of the Order of Australia] DSO [Distinguished Service Order] MC [Military Cross], and he was a friend of mine.
- I'm interested to know, when you first arrived and you were working in Collins Street I think it was?**
- Lonsdale Street.
- Lonsdale Street, and from there up to Bundaberg, how did you settle into**
- 22:00 **Australia, did you have a lot of culture shock and did people accepted you. I mean you must have had a very strong Scottish accent, how did you fit in?**
- Fine, I didn't have a problem. People would say, "Where are you from?" They'd call me a Pom and of course I wasn't a Pom I was Scottish. I'd say, "No, I'm from Scotland" but it was fine, there was no - I didn't ever think there was any problem. It gave me freedom,
- 22:30 I had more money, I bought myself a motorbike. I started going round with the odd girl or two. It was fabulous, it was a great life, I loved it and everything was just free and easy. When I started working for a bloke called McLaughlin, I think it was J D McLaughlin but I'm not sure, he had this little electrical business and one of the tradesman I worked with was in the CMF [Citizen's Military Force]
- 23:00 of those times and used to tell me about it and I was always very interested and wanted to join the CMF but in fact I ended up joining the army. Not it was great, there were great opportunities, you could do anything you wanted. It was fabulous, great country - I still think it's a great country. Interestingly enough, you talked about accent and it varies my accent from time to time I suspect but I
- 23:30 remember when I first joined the army I used to wear with a great deal of pride my digger's uniform. And people would say, "G'day digger" and I'd say, "G'day, how are you going". And they say "Oh, a Pom". And I'd say "No, I'm not a Pom, I'm Scottish". And I think I hung onto my accent to show that I wasn't English I was Scottish to the stage where it's fixed and, you know, and now it doesn't matter. I still have little bits and pieces of it or big bits and pieces of it depending on your view.
- 24:00 No, I never saw Australia as anything other than in very positive terms. We had a decent house, a three-bedroom house, Dad had a car, mind you he'd had a car in the UK, and it was fabulous, great, freedom, great freedom here, great freedom.
- Tell me about when you finally did join up**
- 24:30 **what your first impressions were and your basic training?**
- I joined as I said and went out to Royal Park to await train shipment up to Kapooka which is outside Wagga Wagga for recruit training and I thought, "Mm, I don't know what this is going to be like" because we really weren't doing anything and they were battling to find something for us to do and because recruiting was relatively slow they would gather little groups all
- 25:00 over the Commonwealth basically and when they had enough they'd ship them up to Kapooka form a platoon of about 30 odd and start training. So that first few days, week or so, whatever it was, I couldn't quite work out what was going on. And then we got on the train and off we went to Wagga, to Kapooka. And of course in those days you had to change at Albury, get
- 25:30 across and then we got into Wagga in the middle of the night it seemed where this barking corporal grabbed us all and took us out to training. Settled in and then we had a day of "Hurry up and wait". Going to and fro, and here and there, getting kitted out, getting injections all those sorts of things that are part and parcel of just joining the army. It's an interesting philosophy I looked at it,
- 26:00 what basically you do, because later on I became one of those, those corporals and sergeants - you get them in there you basically bring them down to nothing and then rebuild them into what you want them to be, it's a bit confusing. And then we started and then once you start training you start to see the purpose of all this. I remember it was 3 weeks before we got rifles and we were really looking forward to it - so three weeks of
- 26:30 drill etc etc. Physically, whilst it was demanding it was never too demanding. I always managed to handle it, it was never really a problem. It was interesting, one of those things that up until basically I went on operations and until I'd been on operations for a while, I was always concerned I wasn't going to be able to hack it. I thought, "Maybe I won't be able to hack it" but I didn't have any
- 27:00 problems really, no real problems. So recruit training started, working very, very hard, eating anything that wasn't nailed down - about the only thing I wouldn't eat in those days, with four legs, was a table - and, you know, put on weight and became very fit and enjoyed it, thoroughly enjoyed it. I was entirely in my element. Here I was as a digger [soldier] I had a weapon, I had a rifle and a

- 27:30 bayonet and I could march and do all those things that was required on me. Go on the range and shoot and do night stalks and it was great fun and I thoroughly enjoyed it. And that lasted for 3 months and after 3 months they sent us the corps allocation and I'd mentioned that at one stage they'd wanted me to join the Intelligence Corps and I deliberately flunked that one because I didn't want to be in intelligence, I wanted to be an infantry man.
- 28:00 The role of the infantry is to close with and kill or capture the enemy by day or by night regardless of terrain, climate or weather and that's what I wanted to do. It sounds a bit boys on paper stuff but that's what I wanted to do. Then we went off to Sydney and that opened my eyes because here we were in the flesh pots of Sydney, they weren't really very good flesh pots but they were flesh pots as far as I was
- 28:30 concerned. I had a lovely time. One of the blokes that was there was Joe Bray, Joe Bray came from Hay in New South Wales and had never seen the sea. So the first - because we arrived and went into Liverpool, Holsworthy, we'd not actually been to Sydney itself. The first leave we had, we were stationed at Ingleburn, we got in a train and got into the city, got the Bondi
- 29:00 tram I think it was, got the Bondi tram down to Bondi and took Joe to see the sea. And he looked at it and he said "Geez, it's big". And then he went down and he tasted it and he said, "Geez, it's salty". So that describes the sea, it's big, it's salty. And during that time we were training, specifically training as infantrymen. Our NCOs [Non-Commissioned Officers] were
- 29:30 corporals and sergeants who had served in Korea, some of them in World War II, and so I rather liked them. I rather liked them, thought they were all right. I worked very hard - I used to love going to town and on weekends I'd go into town and I always had two bob left so that when I came through Central Station you could buy either a big bag of oranges or something like that.
- 30:00 Come back and on the Sunday - get back late on the Saturday night, and on the Sunday wouldn't go to the mess hall, I'd eat this fruit that I had because it was just fabulous. And then on the Monday of course we'd be back into it again - things that stick in your mind. River crossings, we learned to do river crossings where you get your gear off and wrap it up in your poncho, put it in the river and go across. The Georges River in
- 30:30 July at first light. There's a word in the crossword that you don't see very often called gelid which implies, "freeze your nuts off" but it's not icy, and it's not ice, but it is icy and you'd get into this and the water would slowly rise up your legs, it would hit you and over you'd go, I still recall that. Another time we were in
- 31:00 Sydney and you couldn't go over the arch in those days, well you weren't supposed to. We got up there, we climbed up, we climbed over the Sydney Harbour Bridge and down the other side and that was fabulous, that was just fabulous. We were young and we'd had a bit to drink I suppose but not much. You used to go into town and go to the Civic and get half whacked [drunk] because that's what everyone
- 31:30 else was doing but it wasn't a great thing in my life I don't think, not at that stage - and I thoroughly enjoyed that. Then we went off to, after about three months, we're now in about September/October 1956, went to Brisbane and to the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra. We were posted to the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment and detached down to Canungra. And Canungra was the,
- 32:00 you've probably heard about it, world - well certainly Australia famous Jungle Training Centre and it had been re-opened by a group of World War II veterans who were highly decorated and hard as nails and they trained us and we were there - I was there for about six months until I went to Malaya. And that was great we did things like the four-hour march and this was through the
- 32:30 scrub and the jungle - the four hour march, eight hour march, twelve hour march, twenty-four hour march. The twenty-four hour march, we went down by train to the Queensland/New South Wales border and were supposed to get a truck up to Wiangaree but it was so miserable and wet the trucks had given up so we marched for six hours up to the top of this ridge, settled down until midnight, midnight Monday we set off on our twenty-four hour
- 33:00 march, led by five second lieutenants who'd just graduated from Portsea. At two o'clock we'd been marching for 14 hours and at two o'clock the next day someone picked up his slouch hat which he'd lost at two o'clock that morning so we'd gone in a great big circle and we got lost. And the commandant at the Jungle Training Centre was one Ted Sarong, General Ted
- 33:30 Sarong, he was following us and after about two days, three days he appeared behind us and said "Do they know where they are?" And they said "No". And I remember he gave us a can of mixed fruits and we opened that and shared it in our last section. And then he disappeared again and he was just keeping an eye, making sure that we didn't disappear. It took us from Monday until Thursday. And back in we came
- 34:00 and then went to Canungra. And after four days of that we immediately walked down to the pub which is over the hill and down the other side about two or three miles I suppose, got on the grog and then walked back again. Talk about being fit, we were certainly that. We did that until February/March and then I had leave and went off to Malaya for the Malayan Emergency.

How did you adjust to

34:30 the discipline and authority of the army?

It never worried me very much - every now and then it used to get up my nose a bit. But I must say from what I hear now about being a youngster, there wasn't really bastardisation, there was the odd bloke who was a bastard but there wasn't really bastardisation. We were too busy, we had too many things to do and

35:00 too many things to learn and so the treatment we were given by the NCOs was pretty good. In fact, when I became an NCO myself and I went to recruit training and that sort of thing, I used the same approach to my diggers as those blokes had used toward me. That is that, you know, they might be new to the game and they don't know what the hell's going on and you've got to keep bashing them into shape,

35:30 not literally but figuratively get them into shape, but they'll be all right, they'll come good, they'll be fine. And they were and they do. It was great fun when I was running recruit training and I had 40 diggers. I'll never forget it. Checking them in the morning "Get on parade, get on parade" and they were always dragging late and "Get on parade, get them on parade". "Right dress, open order march, right dress". And you'd go along and you'd inspect them and all you're looking for is a

36:00 hat badge, belt buckle boots and make sure the boots are clean and that they'd had a shave, blah blah blah. So I'm checking, badge, belt, boots, badge, belt, boots. Come to this bloke, badge, belt - no boots. "Where are your boots, recruit so and so". He said "They're in the hut, Sarge". "Why are they in the hut, why are they not on your feet?" He said "Because you came into the hut and you said get on parade right now and I didn't have them

36:30 on". He was a bit slow and I remember I had to walk around behind him because I just about wet myself laughing. Then I said "Let's get clear, you get up at 6.30. You do this, you do this, you do this, you do this. By the time I come along at 7.45 you have your bloody boots on and they're laced up and they're clean, is that understood?" "Yes Sarge". "All right, now get out".

37:00 They're great fun. Another kid couldn't do left and right turns. He'd been a boxer and every time he turned he sort of swung around in a fighting pose. So I took him aside and I said "Now look, I get paid \$90 a week. The government are spending \$90 for me to give you tuition, you've got to pick this up". So he learned to do the

37:30 left and right turn. He said, I remember at Eddie's march out he said, "I think it was that special training, Sarge, I can do left and right turns can't I?" And I said "Yes, you can do left and right turns, on you go". Great fun - and that's what it was when I was at Canungra. At one stage we used to go up to Brisbane for leave or for the weekend when we weren't actually out in the scrub. And we used to drive these American deuce and a half,

38:00 two and a half tonners and the bloody drivers on those Brisbane roads and down toward the Gold Coast, Canungra which is on the way to the Gold Coast basically, were terribly drivers and these things used to go boom, boom and I went on one of them and clump, fractured my coccyx, you know, that little tailbone in your spine. So the next few weeks was out in the scrub with this fractured coccyx and an

38:30 orange ring cushion that I used to carry around with me. You know, we're getting all camouflaged and stuff and I've got this orange ring cushion. It was interesting, up until October I think, well, when the Olympics were on 1956, there was no television and there was no radio per se really. No one had radios, there were no transistors, I'm sure there were

39:00 transistors but we couldn't afford them and so we didn't have radios, the canteen, boozier, that was probably our main thing but we were out in the scrub a hell of a lot. Fit as fleas. We used to get to go to the Gold Coast - that was great, that was when I first found women "woof"- wonderful. These young ladies were up on holiday from Brisbane or whatever - fabulous time, yeah, great fun. And then we went off to

39:30 Malaya.

You said you deliberately flunked the intelligence exam because you wanted to be in the infantry. Why were you so keen, you're not a particularly aggressive person?

Well, that's just what I had always wanted to do and the role of the infantry, I wanted to be an infantry man. If there's going to be a war anywhere I didn't want to be sitting there marking maps I wanted to be shooting some bugger,

40:00 or poor bugger. And having done that it's not a great deal of fun. Having done that later it's not a great deal of fun.

All right, we're at the end of the tape.

Tape 4

- 00:38 **I'd like to ask more questions about your Malayan deployment. Now when you went to Malaya what understanding did you have about communism or even before you went for that matter?**
- Well I suppose I've always been interested in things that were going on in the world. And I had known about the Malayan
- 01:00 Emergency as a youngster because some of the slightly older boys in Scotland had been called up for National Service and went across to the Emergency. So I knew about the emergency and I knew roughly what was going on. I knew that it had started in 1948 at Sungei Siput and I knew about Templer being assassinated in 1951. So I had a fair idea about
- 01:30 that. I didn't sympathise or empathise with them in any way because I thought they were a pack of, you know communist terrorists. I have a slightly different view nowadays I must say. And I knew that 2 Battalion were up there and I wanted and whilst I was in training they'd had a contact and the pipeline ambush and they'd lost a few blokes. And I wanted to get up there and get
- 02:00 into it. So that was my understanding. Communism was the big bete noire as far as I concerned. I could see communism coming along and I thought it was pretty horrendous etcetera, etcetera. But you know the standard things a youngster sort of thought about, I was against them. So I was very keen to go amongst other things.
- So that would have been your first experience in combat?**
- 02:30 In operations yeah. Not much combat because we were doing an awful lot of work out there but, very few times did we actually come up against the CT's [Communist Terrorists]. It was interesting - when we left Australia to go and join the battalion we were flown up by Air India. And in those days international travel was a little more rare than it is
- 03:00 now. We flew in a Super G Constellation - that's that one with the 3 tails and 4 engines. And we were gathered together at Eastern Command personnel depot, about 6 of us I think for reinforcements. Taken down to Mascot, put in a little room where there were complimentary drinks and so forth and then joined the plane. Had a lovely flight over.
- 03:30 But no curries. No curries. I didn't get to taste a real curry until I was in Malaya. Anyway off we went and we flew into Singapore. And we were staying - we were put into the Nee Soon Transit Camp, ready for moving up country for joining our battalion. And of course this was the East and it was fabulous. We went into Singapore and the smells of cooking and curries
- 04:00 and that air of Asia, the warmness, the sultriness - it was just fabulous. All of a sudden I was part of all this. We aided the British camp for a couple of days and then got on the train and went up to Kuala Kangsar where our battalion was stationed in the state of Perak which is relatively high up in the Western side of what was then Malaya, the Malay Peninsular.
- 04:30 And one of my cobbles was a fellow called Ron Kerley. Ron Kerley is the brother of a very famous South Australian footballer called Neil Kerley, and Ron was a good footballer himself. And I remember we were given a No. 5 rifle which is a 303 rifle, 10 rounds of ammunition. And no-one said anything about what we were supposed to do with these 10 live rounds. And I said to Curl, I said, "What do you reckon Curl? What are we going to do?" He said
- 05:00 "Oh bugger it, in the magazine." So he slipped them in the magazine. And I said, "Well should we have one up the spout?" And he said, "Well we can't shoot any bugger if we haven't got one up the spout." So we threw one up the spout, put a safety on. Then when we got to the station we were addressed by the bloke running the training and he said, "Weapons will be carried unloaded blah blah blah..." So, slipping them out - amazing 'cause we didn't know, we thought the CT's might attack us.
- 05:30 Communist Terrorist we commonly called CT's - might attack us on the way through. And we had a very uneventful journey through Kuala Lumpur and into Kuala Kangsar where I went off and joined the battalion. And I joined the battalion at Kuala Kangsar and the battalion was spread over quite an area. There was head quarters and one of the companies at Kuala Kangsar, there was a company at Lintang there was a company at Lasah and there was a company at Sungei Siput. And
- 06:00 they were engaged in anti-terrorist operations. And I joined 4 Platoon B Company where my platoon commander was a bloke called Ian Campbell who is a mate of mine now, after all these years.
- Can I ask you why did they call them CT's?**
- Oh because they were described as Communist Terrorists, CT's.
- Right. I suppose**
- 06:30 **at the time the definition of a terrorist, is it different to what it is now?**
- Probably so. Although it was seen that they were terrorists because they blew up bridges, killed civilians. For example there were a great number of Chinese and Indians who had been brought over

from - roughly from the South India in that area to work the rubber plantations.

- 07:00 Now in order to ensure that they didn't work they would assassinate rubber workers. And so - who had bugger all to do with anything. And so in that regard they were terrorists. They would blow up buildings and police posts and things of that ilk, similar to what is happening in the Middle East now, but without the suicide effects. The suicide bomber effects.
- 07:30 So that was what it was seen - it started - Malaya became important to the Brits at the turn of the century when rubber which the Brits stole from South America - stole and brought the trees over and planted them in the Royal Gardens at Kensington and then transplanted them in Malaya and started the rubber industry. And that became very important because with - the rubber industry rose as did the car.
- 08:00 With the tyres. The - Malay of course was governed by - was a colony of the British. And when the Japanese invaded in 1941 1942, a group set up called the MPAJA, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army. Largely run by a group of people who were socialist/communist in their
- 08:30 outlook in life. So that is a way of breaking the thrall of the colonial stuff. And in 1945 when the war ended, World War II ended, they thought that Malaya would become self-governing and independent but in fact it didn't happen. And so in 1948 - around about May I think the first steps were taken when they massacred some rubber planters at Sungei Siput.
- 09:00 One of the areas where we were. And that started the Malayan Emergency and by the time we got there, the thing had largely been controlled and the only CT's that were left were hardened folks, the remainder sort of people. I must say they were bloody good soldiers, they were first class soldiers and they could live out in the jungle on the smell of an oily rag.
- 09:30 And they were good. And we were chasing down the remnants of them. Every now and then we met them but largely it was a time of operations ranging from 2 weeks to say 8 weeks. We'd go out in the scrub and we would, we'd chase them and hunt them down. Periodically from time to time we met them. In June 1957, I think it was about June
- 10:00 we had - up on the border there were some clashes and we had two killed and four wounded. The blokes that were killed were Jackie Potts and Benny Hallard. I've never known Jack and Bennie but I carried their coffins. And one of them had lay, well both of them in fact has lain in the jungle for quite a while. Several days. And I'll never forget carrying their coffin, I could smell what seemed to be like
- 10:30 wet blankets and it was the smell of Jackie Potts and Benny Hallard. And to this day now, the smell of wet blankets brings me right back to that time. Right back. We wandered about the jungle in small groups, sometimes three, sometimes four and we really were part of the jungle. It's where we picked up many of the
- 11:00 skills that became useful in Vietnam. Because when you are such a small group as that and you're operating several days just as a little group like that, you really don't disturb much of the jungle. You don't disturb the vegetation, you just slither about - and in the 2 years I got some fabulous glimpses of wildlife. Things like a troop of
- 11:30 gibbons, just lazily going from point A to point B. Through the trees I saw a tiger on several occasions. Wild elephants would come and wild elephants. And I'll never forget one time in about August 1957 we came upon an elephant, an aunty and a calf. You know normally there's the female and there's the aunty
- 12:00 and the calf. And we were, we came upon them and coincidentally they were going in the same direction as we wanted to go. And of course an elephant doesn't veer left or right but it's going in a straight line and it does over the crest of the mountains and down and it just - and we followed them for about - oh God knows how long, maybe 20,000 yards. And it kept looking back to see if we were following them.
- 12:30 Saw a black panther one day. We were moving through the scrub and I noticed the bloke in front of me pointing his weapon up at the tree and sort of covering as he went by. So I did the same thing and I didn't know what I was looking - and all of a sudden I looked up and there was a black leopard or a panther just lying on this branch, just looking down. Fabulous stuff. And so we got to see wildlife and we
- 13:00 were part of the jungle. It was an interesting time because we, we learned so much about living in the jungle that it was a great benefit when we went to Vietnam. Other things that stick in my mind. First time we went on leave we went on leave to Ipoh. And this bloke said, "Let's go and have some
- 13:30 curry." An Indian joint at the market. So we went there and I'd never really had curries. And about 4 of us and they brought out all these curries. And of course they were expecting me as a new one to try them and go, "Oh God that's hot". And I went, "Oh gee that's good." And I, I don't believe in reincarnation and so forth but if I was to - yet I've eaten this
- 14:00 before, in a previous life. I just got that feeling. I've done this before and I still love curries. And you know there were Indians, there were Chinese, there were Malays, it was a polyglot population, it was great to see all these people about. And I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was demanding because we'd - we'd go out for 14 days

- 14:30 it'd be the first 14 days carrying, up to 14 days rations. And we'd - always on the first day we'd climb and climb and get in to establish a base camp. And the sigs, the people, the signallers who used to carry, they'd always - you'd sort of think, oh I'd wish the sig would hurry up and collapse so we can have a break. Because he'd be carrying more than anyone else and finding it very difficult.
- 15:00 In terms of weight probably around about, ooh in kilos maybe 25, 30. Not as heavy as we were in Vietnam, not as heavy. Although sometimes very close. And we learned to be absolutely ruthless in how we cut down weight. People even cut their toothbrushes in half.
- 15:30 So they wouldn't have too much weight. We knew exactly what we had to carry and exactly what we didn't have to carry. It was there I found an interest in cooking, strangely enough because we'd have one man ration packs and there'd be a can of something in the morning, normally beans with a bit of bacon or something in the can. At lunchtime you'd have a Mars Bar, a block of chocolate, some chewing gum
- 16:00 an Oxo cube and some Thai Hong lollies. And then in the evening a can with some rice and you'd cook yourself an evening meal. And - I'd never cooked anything for myself before. And it was there that I started to enjoy cooking and quite often if we were moving out through the rubber plantations the Indian workers would commonly have a little patch where there were chilli bushes. And I would go through the chilli bushes and pick them and stick them in my basic pouches.
- 16:30 So that when I got out there I'd have chilli's with whatever I was eating. And developed a love of chillies. And so that went on basically for the two years. We had contact from time to time - the one that sticks in my mind most is I think around about February 1958. We were out in an ambush. There was a section of us, probably about 7.
- 17:00 And Fred Walland got hit. We had a contact and Fred Walland got hit. And the round went through his leg and actually meant that the bottom sort of part of his leg was waggling where the top wasn't. And was in a great deal of pain and screaming. And we'd given him some morphine which we carried and that didn't have any effect. And we were about 5 miles from a British camp.
- 17:30 And a bloke called Taffy Morgan and I said, "Well look, we'll go and get help from the Lincolns from the camp." So off we set. I remember I had an Owen gun and a magazine with about 30 rounds, 25 we carried even though they held 30. And I had another one in my hip pocket. I'd fired one in the fight that we'd been in. I don't know what happened - I had four magazines - I don't know what happened to the fourth one. But anyway out we out
- 18:00 and Taffy Morgan who was with me had a magazine, a rifle magazine plus the one on his weapon. And we got clear of the jungle - it was dark and we hit this slope going down and we tumbled down the slope. And when we came to, when we got at the bottom I had only one magazine that was on my weapon and Taffy had only one magazine too. And of course it was black as could be and there was no way we could do anything other than just keep going. So
- 18:30 we went on with one magazine and Taffy turned out, one round. And we went off through the scrub in the baluka [elephant grass] and eventually got to the Brit camp. Got in there and told them what happened and we went back again to rescue Fred and get him out. But I'll never forget I, I had a set of new greens, I'd just got them out of the store, Q store [quartermaster's store]
- 19:00 before we left. And then the ambush, I wasn't doing much, just sort of back and forward a little bit. And the next day when we'd finished they were, I'd had a pair of sort of like PT shorts on underneath and these greens and from there where the PT shorts were they were white and worn through. So in one night I'd absolutely ruined this set of greens because of the
- 19:30 the stuff we'd walked through. It was a tough night.

You were talking about the pipeline ambush before. What was the pipeline ambush?

Alright, it was before my time, I wasn't involved with it. But the reservoirs in Malaya, to satisfy they used to pipe the water in from the reservoirs into the towns and so they had these pipelines. And, my battalion before I arrived, A Company, my battalion

- 20:00 had been walking on one of these pipelines and were ambushed by a group of CT's. I think we lost a couple and three or four wounded before they cleared it up. That was one of the major contacts and that went up on the border when we lost Potts and Hallard and then we all flew in it and got involved in various bits and pieces. Peripheral things in terms of contact.
- 20:30 But we were out there looking, out there looking.

Have you actually been to the same location?

Since then?

Well I mean you said it was before your time...

Oh yeah yeah we, we you know, we came to that pipeline, we were on that pipeline and someone said, "Jesus this is where the ambush was." You reckon our eyes weren't open that day. Yeah yeah we went to

the same locations. Mmm.

21:00 And walked through it.

How did the CT's operate in Malaya?

Alright they started off, pretty much on - in regional areas. And they had, they broke up into small groups which gradually got smaller and they used to work - there was arms platoons and there was work cells and support cells and they used to try and live off the population. The main forces would engage in

21:30 military targets. And the others would support them. But of course, they came - the Brits came up with a plan called the Briggs' Plan which basically was to separate the guerrillas from the people. It's an old Mao Tse Tung [Chinese communist leader] thing that, "the guerrillas are the fish and the people are the water and the fish live in amongst the water. So if you take one away from the other they will die".

22:00 One will die. And that's what happened with the Brigs Plan. He moved the population in and re-centred it. Isolated the population from the jungle and hence isolated the guerrillas and they withered on the vine, largely. Mmm.

Sounds like the Boer War?

Well in fact people don't realise that in the Boer War that that despicable bastard...

Kitchener?

Kitchener started concentration

22:30 camps. In fact Australians were in the Boer War as you know and by the end of their tour, before they came up there's a story about this bloke, trooper Pennie, who said that when Kitchener passed by they refused to salute him. And they were on the point of mutinying because they didn't want to go there and you know, round up women and kids, they didn't want to do that. They didn't mind going after the Boers

23:00 but they didn't want to attack the women and kids and that's what was basically happening. A hundred thousand, hundred thousand women and kids died in those concentration camps. Yeah. Yeah that wasn't very nice. In Malaya conditions were much more humane. You know people were resettled and had basic foods and so forth. But it must've been very difficult for them, for the people.

23:30 Coincidentally I now play golf with, quite often with three Chinese blokes, two of whom come from Ipoh and the third one his name is Richard Ong and he comes from Penang. Now Chin Peng was the leader of the Communist Terrorists. Chin Peng's real name is Ong. And Richard is a relative of Chin Peng's. So I'm now playing golf with Richard who's a relative of Chin Peng's. Which I think is delightful.

24:00 **Extraordinary irony isn't there?**

I think it's delightful, I think it's just lovely. In fact the regiment have a dinner each year and next year I'm going to have Richard along at the dinner, so that those blokes who were in the Emergency can come and meet him. It'll be good fun, good fun, yep.

What about - now you said that people were cordoned off from the guerrillas. The intention was to make the, I suppose

24:30 **to push the weight of the insurgency into the jungle where they could find them?**

Well in fact the intention was to stop the supply to the CT's because the only supplies they could get were from the people. So if you isolate the guerrilla from the people they just can't get - they withered on the vine and that's what happened. And in one of the areas we were in, called the Sungei Teekis. Sungei meaning river,

25:00 Teekis meaning rat. The CT's were basically living off the rats in the river. In fact that was an area where a disease called leptospirosis was quite prevalent. Leptospirosis is caused by rat's urine getting into a cut or some - into one of the body systems. And when we were in there three of us got leptospirosis

25:30 one of whom died.

It sounds nasty.

It was horrendous stuff. I'll never forget.

You weren't one of them?

Yeah I was. I was one of the three. I wasn't the one that died. Johnny Tullock was the one.

Well thank God for that.

Yeah Johnny Tullock was the one who died. But I'll never forget the doctor we had - I bought ducks once and I called them after the doctor because he was a bloody quack. The doctor wouldn't send us to the

26:00 hospital. Kept us in this sick bay thing. And we had a raging fever and it was found out, just a year before we got there, the only way to defeat this disease was to lower the temperature and give them massive doses of streptomycin, which is a derivative of penicillin. But he wouldn't send us up there until it was almost too late. It was too late for John Tullock and it was almost too late for me. And I was in this little room which was called the cool room and it

26:30 was about, as big as this room here and it had two beds in it. It was air conditioned, the temperature was very low and I remember having what I now believe to be an "out of body" experience. I was in this room up in the corner and underneath me was what felt like a giant balloon but I couldn't see anything. And I could look down and I could see myself in

27:00 the bed lying there. And then I just gradually moved towards myself. Now at the time I thought, afterwards, not at the time but afterwards I thought I was hallucinating. But now people tell me about out of body experiences and if ever that was going to be one I suspect that was one. Isn't it strange. Very strange. And I saw Johnny Tullock at one stage. I was lying in this bed, very crook and

27:30 I could - John was standing beside me and he said, "What are you doing here Jock?" And I said, "Oh I don't know John." And then I don't recall anything else. But that was interesting. And I always put it down to the effects of fever but I'm now so sure nowadays. Not so sure. Anyway we, there were three of us that got that, three of us and John died. And it was

28:00 interesting 'cause we, we basically spent our life in the jungle, our time in the jungle. We had a couple of days off here and there but we were just, denizens of the jungle if you like. And as I've said before it provided great training for Vietnam in later times.

Sure. Now what about several military relations. Tell us how the Australian troops

28:30 **through your experience, intermingled with the population?**

Alright. In the main the population wanted nothing to do with us. I don't ascribe any blame at that. We were from a different culture, we were invaders, we were colonists, we were representative of

29:00 that regime. The only people we interacted with in the main, were bar girls. Prostitutes and the like. Because - that's certainly amongst the digger's perspective. Because the others didn't want anything to do with us. We didn't know what they were like, didn't interact with them.

29:30 You would see from time to time - you'd go in a village and be working around and sort of look of them and see - well they're just doing the things that folk do normally, but we just didn't have much contact with them.

So essentially you're saying through brothels or things like that, that was the only way you'd get into contact...

That's the only way you'd interact, you know, tri-shaw drivers, taxi

30:00 drivers, people in bars. That's the only time you met them. You certainly didn't, see families and things. When I was next back in Malaya - I went back again in 1961, 1963 I never forget, there was a hotel called The Long Beach and there was a gorgeous young Chinese lass and I invited her to the movies. She wasn't a prostitute

30:30 she was just a normal Chinese girl working in this place. And I invited her to go to the movies. So she said, "I'll have to ask my Mum and Dad." And I said, "Alright go ahead yeah." And she asked her mum and dad and she said, "I can go to the movies." I said, "Great." So we were going to go to the movies. And there's her brother. And I said, "He going into town?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Oh where's

31:00 he's going?" She said, "He's going to the movies too." He was there to make sure things were right. And I'll never forget I had a meal with them. And this was my only real contact with anyone, family sort of thing - I had a meal with them. And they produced this sausage which was special sausage which apparently had come, oh heavens, from communist China. But they said from Formosa but not really it came from China and they - normally they're very generous the

31:30 Chinese people, particularly if you're at their home. And they cut me off a little bit of this sausage which shows how wonderful it was. I remember eating it and thinking, "God that tastes bloody awful". But it was, they were sharing it with me. And sitting at their table it was quite interesting.

Do you think they were supporters of the communists when insurgency was at its peak?

No, no this was later on when things had quietened down. I doubt very much if they'd have been

32:00 great supporters of the communists. I suspect they were just people getting on with their lives. Like most people, you know. In any of those insurgencies, revolutions, call them what you will the large bulk of people want buggery all to do with it. They just want to get on with their life in peace and harmony and so forth and they find themselves caught up in it. Later when we're talking about Vietnam we might go into a

32:30 bit more detail, but that's largely the way it is. They are victims, rather than perpetrators, large bulk of people.

Now I would presume also that, you know from what I gather, you said the operations sounded quite boring most of the time?

No they weren't boring. From time to time. For example you're out on a 14 day ambush.

33:00 You'd go 24 hours you'd lie in ambush and then you'd come back and you'd have 24 hours rest, they call it rest. Still out in the jungle, still quiet. That was boring, that was boring. And then you'd go back out and do your 24 hours and the fact that you'd often be there and the little ruzak would come down, and the deer and so forth. Or you'd see other bits and pieces, that was interesting.

33:30 But seldom would you see any CT's, Communist Terrorists. Seldom would you see any of those because there weren't that many of them around. So I suppose in many ways it was boring but I found it in the main interesting.

In the areas you operated in did you see any relics of the Second World War?

I remember once we were up on the border and we

34:00 came down this bit of a ridge and there was a spur. And around the spur were what looked to me to be dug out positions. Now there were, you know trenches that had been filled in through time and debris and so forth. But if you looked carefully you could see the set up and you know, we would set up in the exactly the same way and I looked at this and I thought, "Well there's

34:30 a pit there, there should be one over there". So I walked over to where there was and there was a slight depression and you could see - and there should be one there and when you went over there there was another one. And that was all raised. And the rest had gone. Oh if you went to Singapore you would see, there were riots there in 1952 or something and there were bullet holes

35:00 in the lampposts and things like that. And every now and then you'd see that sort of thing. But most of the fighting was done out in the jungle in World War II so there wasn't that much, evidence and houses and so forth. Interestingly enough when I looked at - when I was in Singapore for example and I passed through there and came back - had a bit of leave. The people that were there at that time.

35:30 There were still old ladies going about with bound feet. And in fact as I look back over my life the place that's changed most is Singapore. The people are taller, they're much better dressed, the place has changed incredibly. It's a really hygienic worthwhile thriving metropolis. And it was always bustling in those days but it was

36:00 a pretty grotty place in comparison. And the people were not nearly as tall as they are now, you know the good food has made a world of difference to them. Mmm interesting that. In our area where we were operating, in Perak, we basically knew the people we were after. There was Ar Hon and Lan Po and people like that. And you would, you'd have a

36:30 briefing before you go out and you'd say, "Oh we're still after Lan Po. Is his wife still pregnant?" 'Cause Lan Po's wife was pregnant, always, always seemed for the two years I was there she was pregnant. I don't know if she ever actually was pregnant but you know, that was the sort of thing. It had got to the stage where we knew who our specific enemy were. And every now and then you'd get what was called a CEP. A CEP or SEP - Captured Enemy Personnel or Surrendered Enemy

37:00 Personnel and they would lead you back into where the CT's were. There were a couple of interesting things. Around the time of Malaya's independence, which was August 31st 1957 we were in CX Company and we were out in the bush on operations and we came upon a camp. And they had an Auster Spotter [bi-plane] and he'd spotted a camp, so we assaulted this camp

37:30 and destroyed it. And there was no-one in it. We did that, burned it and so forth. And went back up the hill. Next thing he came over and said, "Oh, you've just destroyed a camp, I've seen where the smoke coming down. That wasn't the one I meant, there's another one a thousand metres further down." So back we went down and we came off this ridge and we were down the side of the ridge and we came up the side of the ridge doing the

38:00 silent assault. And I'll never forget as I was going up there, it was as if I was shot twice. And I thought, "Christ and it was actually a couple of hornets that had stung me". And what really got up my nose was I couldn't say anything 'cause we were in the midst of this assault. And I ... and the bee stings are this side of the head. Up we went and cleared it and there was no-one there either.

38:30 And we had, what we call, "Willy Pete's" - white phosphorous grenades. And someone'd say, "Throw a Willy Pete in there and set this thing ablaze." So I pulled the pin, threw it in. We had these grenades for quite a while. The primary went off;- "Phoomf" but the main grenade didn't go off. So someone else threw in a grenade and it did go off and it started the thing burning. So then the sergeant

39:00 Alan Seal said to me, "Jock you go down there and act as sentry." So I went down the side, across this stream and was acting as sentry and then, when we'd finished all this he called me back and so I came back across the stream, and climbing back up pass this hut that was ablaze. And all of a sudden the

grenade I threw in exploded. Now the white phosphorous, you've seen those things in the movie when the white phosphorus explodes. I could

- 39:30 see this coming toward me. And I reckon I took a world shattering leap backwards into this creek. Because once you're out of oxygen you're right. Whilst all this phosphorous came down and just about got me. Fortunately it didn't. Little incidents. Oh and the same operation. We had - there were 18 of us on the operation, we had a firm base of 4 and 14 of us went out on the assault.
- 40:00 And there was a bloke called Teddy Ravensworth who was in the assault, who was in the firm base. And he was waiting there and Teddy carried a shot gun. He was a forward scout carried a shot gun. Anyway Ted told me about, he could hear this noise of something getting closer so he lined the shotgun up. And through the scrub from the scrub emerged this great big elephant. And Ted said, "I looked at the elephant and I looked at my shotgun.
- 40:30 The elephant looked at me and looked at the shotgun sort of twaaa, and turned and walked away." He said, "Thank God for that."

Tape 5

- 00:34 **Alright now we'll get to the juice now of the interview, Vietnam? Okay walk us through what happened after the Malay insurgency for you and how you came to Vietnam?**
- The second tour I had in Malaya which was 1961- 1963 - by this time the Emergency officially is over but we were still conducting operations up on the Malay-Thai Border. Not very often, not very
- 01:00 frequently. I think in the two years we were there we did six months on the Malay-Thai Border. And we in fact went up to Thailand near Ubon Ratchathani to conduct an exercise. Theoretically it was an exercise called Dhanarajata but in fact it was in response to the incidents that were going on in Laos and certainly the increase in action in Vietnam.
- 01:30 June 1963 we were up there and Ubon's about ooh, 40 k's from the Mekong which is the boundary between it and Laos and just at the south is Cambodia. By that time we had advisors in Vietnam, the team, training team originally starting off as - purely as advisors, they soon developed a combat role. But by this stage
- 02:00 we in the Australian Army were well aware of what was coming up in Vietnam and in fact were training for Vietnam in Malaya before there was ever any commitment. So when I came home in 1963 and of course missed out on confrontation which was in Borneo in 1964, 1965 which I was a bit cross about.
- 02:30 We had not long been back when National Service started. Now National Service contrary to common belief was initiated in order to counter confrontation which was Indonesia-Australia, as the buying of the F111's was. However once National Service started there emerged the fact that we were going to commit troops to Vietnam.
- 03:00 And Australian combat troops particularly and in 1965 the first battalion went up there, working with the American 173 Airborne Brigade. By 1966 it was determined Australia would have its own area of operations and Phuoc Tuy province was selected for a number of reasons. One is I believe that it wasn't that far from Vung Tau. Vung Tau which you'll commonly hear referred to as Vung Tau was a port
- 03:30 facility. And should Australia, which was only about 15 kilometres from the edge of Phuoc Tuy province, and should Australia run into difficulties then there would be a ready egress from Vietnam through Vung Tau. And I suspect that's why Phuoc Tuy province was selected. It was a very dangerous province, it was controlled by the Vietcong 5th [VC] Division. With 274 and 275 regiment and each of those regiments had
- 04:00 three battalions plus heavy weapons. There was in addition D445, a local battalion as with D440, supporting all of those. Where C Company, C123, C120, C119 and various other nominations. In fact, in that province which had been a hot bed of Vietminh insurrection first in - during World War II and then later when General Gracie and the 99th India Division
- 04:30 went there in 1946, 1947 was still a hot bed of insurrection. The VC had a very strong hold. 5th VC Division controlled that province and in came the Australians. They established themselves at a place called Nui Dat. Nui Dat is an old volcanic feature as much of the terrain in Nui Dat is.
- 05:00 And soon had the 5th and 6th Battalion there operating as a task force. Early in the piece their primary task was to establish the base and to gradually, on the spreading ink blot system, establish control throughout the province. They had not long been there when the VC decided to take them on. VC and North Vietnamese by this stage decided to take
- 05:30 them on. And so we had the Battle of Long Tan in which Harry Smith and the 122 blokes or whatever it was of D Company took on a very substantial number of VC and NVA [North Vietnamese Army] and, not to put it, more than plainly beat the shit out of them. We lost something like 19 people and they lost

somewhere in the vicinity of 250. And it showed

- 06:00 the Vietcong that we were in their province and we were going to stay and it also made them very wary of travelling through the province because in fact, not long before the Australians arrived, in about 1964. the South Vietnamese army suffered one of their heaviest defeats in Phuoc Tuy Province when at a place called La Gom not far from task force and a Vietnamese airborne regiment was absolutely decimated. And then all
- 06:30 of a sudden the Australians had entered the situation and things changed. Now tactically whilst there were some problems we used the skills that we had, that we gained in the Emergency and Confrontation to apply them to that situation. To beat any insurrection you need three things. You need a reform of the government
- 07:00 and allowance of those demands to be accepted where they can be. The second thing is you need a sound civil administration backed up by a good police force. And the third thing you need is a military arm to carry out your policies. There were not enough concessions
- 07:30 given to the VC and NVA. There was not a sound civil administration and the only thing - with a good police force and the only thing that really worked was the heavy military arm aka the Australians. I think many of us recognised this, but the people running the war didn't appear to. For example in Malay as we talked about before we separated the guerrillas from the population. They tried that in Vietnam with the
- 08:00 strategic hamlets program. And sadly often Americans, it seems to me, think if a program's going to work at X figure, X times 10 will make it work ten times better. And that's not so, that's not so. Often. And so they tried that with the Vietnamese in the strategic hamlets and it didn't work, it just didn't work. So anyway back
- 08:30 to Phuoc Tuy province where the Australians are. We're in there and we're establishing some sort of control over the province. Our operations in the main were designed to tackle main force and keep us away from the civilian population. When I first went in there in 1967, we started conducting
- 09:00 operations around villages and the like. And what we did was cordon and search. We'd - my platoon, we'd go forward, secure a perimeter, guide the battalion in, they would - overnight - the next day they'd move in and check the, the particular village. There was a very famous photograph up in - which sort of is the theme of Vietnam of the bloke calling in the
- 09:30 helicopters and half a dozen diggers squatting on the side of the road waiting for the choppers to come in. That in fact was Operation Omara and those troops were in my platoon, from 5 Platoon B Company. It was a one day cordon and search operation. We went out that morning did our cordon and search and we were back in Nui Dat that evening. And all in all it was a successful operation, a bit like going to the office and back again.
- 10:00 Two things that come out of that I think are worth mentioning. One is that it was quite carefully planned and each platoon and section, that's roughly 30 odd in a section, roughly 10 were given an area that they must search. Now they did that and then they regrouped and moved on. And 2 A Company fellows were doing their little search and they came upon a "shop". Now when I use the term shop
- 10:30 it's a bit loose because it was about a metre square and it was about 5 shelves and a little bit of cardboard in front of it. But that was the shop. And in the shop there were some bottles of Ba Muoi Ba. Ba Muoi Ba is the Vietnamese beer. 33 Ba Moui Ba. So the diggers decided this was a good thing and I'll give them their due, they plonked some money on the little piece of board that represented the counter and heartedly got stuck into the Ba Muoi Ba.
- 11:00 As the battalion cleared it became obvious there were a couple of A Company blokes missing and so they went back through to see where they were. Eventually they found these diggers quite pissed. They had got into the Ba Muoi Ba. So they, they loaded them onto the chopper, threw them onto the chopper in the evacuation and they spent the night in the dug out slammer [jail]. And after the next day they were fronted before the commanding officer and he gave them both 14
- 11:30 days stoppage of pay. And when they got outside the battalion orderly room, the Regimental Sergeant Major, Alec Thompson said to them, "Well you understand the punishment?" They said, "Yes Sir." He said, "Now what do you think about all that?" And this digger said, "It's worth it sir, we're going out in the bush for the next two weeks." And the other photograph I think you missed is, Lang Phuoc Hai was a fishing village. And the fishing fleet was out and came in at 11 that day. And as they were
- 12:00 unloading the thing, they brought off this fish which was about ooh, three quarters of a metre long, gorgeous big fish. So I bought it for about the equivalent of 80 cents. I bought this thing. So when they took the photograph of these helicopters coming down to land they didn't take the photograph of me running towards a helicopter with a large fish, which we took back to Nui Dat, the cook stuffed and baked and it was just delicious for our supper that evening.
- 12:30 But back to the war. Throughout 1967 the task force got a bigger grip on things. We had a reasonable fight at Suoi Chou Pha in August of 1967 and that was an interesting fight because A Company of our battalion came upon a VC/NVA Company.

- 13:00 And the first platoon in contact made up against this VC platoon. And Jake O'Donnell being a smart operator thought to himself, ah ha this fight's engaged here, I'll slip a platoon around the right flank, to get around the VC. Coincidentally the VC commander faced with his position, which was exactly the same, thought, "Ah I'll slip a platoon around the left flank". So they - the next thing we've got two Australian platoons in contact.
- 13:30 So Jake then decided, "Alright, I won't let them get away with it. I'll slip a platoon around my other flank". Just coincidentally at the same time as the VC commander and so you had two well trained forces engaging each other. And, the result of that fight was, we think we cleaned them up a bit. But it was just an example of how main force, enemy main force troops were starting to skirt the province and
- 14:00 only coming in from time to time, not very often. Where once upon a time Phuoc Tuy province belonged to the VC.

Now this was before Long Tan?

No this was after Long Tan. Long Tan was in August 1966. There was another big fight in 'Bribie' in March 1967 and then Suoi Chou Pha in August 1967. There were a couple of other fights and of course Tet [the Tet Offensive] came along by which time the bulk of the Australian force was in Phuoc Tuy - is out of Phuoc Tuy province in Bien Hoa.

- 14:30 **Right. Now I'm curious to ask you. It seems like - basically a high intensity guerrilla war - where you've got battalions engaging in bigger ops sometimes.**

Yeah from time to time, yes.

But where would you sort of draw the line. Is it more like a company level sort of engagement?

Well in the main, in the main most of our engagements were at platoon level. But periodically the enemy would come in incursions into the province in reasonably

- 15:00 large numbers. Hence the big battles. But most of the time and my feeling of Phuoc Tuy province was that we were beating them in terms of their guerrilla warfare. We were ambushing their supply lines. We were stopping the civilian population interacting with the main force people. And in the main we were making it very very difficult for them. They
- 15:30 had a couple of areas where they regarded as safe holes. The Long Hais. And they were okay when they were up in the Long Hais but if they come down from the Long Hais we tended to get them down there and pick them off. There's a belief that, the guerrillas were highly trained etcetera and the old thing of farmer by day, fighter by night.
- 16:00 Well I'm here to tell you send me more farmers by day and fighters by night, because if they work on their farms during the day they're bugged at night and they haven't got the skill, the endurance and all those other things to allow them to fight well. And every time our young diggers were quite frankly winning. Quite frankly winning. And in a man-to-man situation they were overpowering them.
- 16:30 Every now and then we'd get the North Vietnamese in. And they were well trained, good hard tough fighters. And that fight that Jake O'Donnell and A Company had at Sui Chai Phau, that was a bit like one of those. And we were up to, meeting people who were our equal I'd say.

Now give me an example ...

- 17:00 **Now having said that about the NVA, can you walk us through**

- 17:30 **an example where you experienced or you heard of, where the NVA were as you say tough, man to man.**

Yeah I reckon in fact most of the real NVA experience I had was when I was on the training team. And that jumps a bit but I'm happy to go into that if you want. When I - in 1969-1970 I was an advisor to the 4th Battalion 1st ARVN Regiment, operating out of Quang Tri

- 18:00 which is in the very north of Vietnam. There we were engaged with an NVA Regiment called the 7th Front I think. They had 4 battalions, largely 7th Front. Now from time to time we met them and fought them. And I must say they were good fighters, they were tough, they were strong, they were resilient. They had good fire control. They had all the good qualities that I used to see in an Australian infantry battalion
- 18:30 in Vietnam. And they were first class. The difference between the North Vietnamese and an Australian battalion for example is that, quite frankly our diggers were better. We had about 50% Nasho's [National Servicemen], where 50% of the people who had originally been called up. 50% of them were knocked back on a number of grounds so you had the top 50%.
- 19:00 They were well trained, they were intelligent, they were resourceful, they were first class, those Nasho's. And so as fighters the Nasho's were as good as anyone. As good as the North Vietnamese if not better. But I wouldn't take anything away from the North Vietnamese, they were good fighters and they

had well organised skills and good battle experience.

Where did they get most of their battle experience from?

Oh they'd been fighting the war for

- 19:30 a number of years. Unlike Australians and Americans who went there for a year and then went home, they stayed and fought. We mentioned Vo Nguyen Giap before. He had fought the French as part of the Vietminh. And of course created a resounding defeat on them in Dien Bien Phu , which was tactically a very stupid move on the French part but that's by the by. And of course they had lots of
- 20:00 experience. I suspect, I suspect that after Tet it took them four years to regroup because they suffered terribly in the Tet Offensive despite the fact they won the media war, they really did suffer really badly and they weren't able to regroup until somewhere around 1972-1973. And that's when of course they started swinging down into the south again. When we were fighting them in
- 20:30 1969- 1970 the only thing that saved them in many cases was that whilst we relied on US air power and air power is a great deterrent - often the weather would suck us in and so we didn't get a chance to utilise that American air power. When it did happen, the American air power was able to be used it made a hell of a difference.
- 21:00 Swung things over quite dramatically. But often if we weren't able to use air power the NVA did very well, fought us man-for-man.

Now another thing I'm curious is that on the surface I would think that the NVA and the VC would have an advantage fighting on their own turf, having the local links to people, having sympathisers, being Vietnamese. Seeing it as a national war of liberation on their part.

21:30 **How did the Australians kerb that advantage?**

I think and there's no getting away from it, they had that advantage not so much the NVA because, whilst it was a war of liberation, some in the South weren't sure they wanted to be liberated quite so dramatically. Certainly amongst the Vietcong they had a great advantage because it was their culture etcetera etcetera. The - and those advantages

- 22:00 were very clear. There are number of books been written one of which is allegedly critical of Australia's involvement and there was a bloke who fought in the battle of Long Tan and he talks about going back there and saying how things were done and etcetera etcetera. And one of the things he mentions is the local families in Phuoc Tuy province had all lost a son in the fighting. And what he says
- 22:30 without meaning to, is he said, that the effect of the Australians in there was such that the local VC infrastructure was knocked around very badly and those youngsters from families who wanted to go off and fight against the invaders, came back in body bags. Yeah.

What he's saying is correct?

Oh what he's saying, what he's trying to say is that

- 23:00 the VC were against us all the way and the local people were against us all the way. And what he's really saying is that those amongst families who went against us, ended up in body bags and didn't achieve very much. By which time, for example in Phuoc Tuy province - now I'm not here as a propagandist for the Australian forces, I'm only here to let you know how I perceive it as a professional - there was - Xuan Moc was over in the west
- 23:30 of the - east of the province and the road between Xuan Moc and the capital had been cut since 1964. We opened that up in 1967 and people were once again able to move back and forward through the province. By day the Vietnamese were able to go back into their fields and work. By night of course there was curfews on and the like. And so we opened that part up and allowed that to go on. And
- 24:00 from those perspectives we did a pretty fair job. It's interesting to see the effect political influences have. For example the Prime Minister of Australia in 1971 announced to parliament that the Australians would be pulling out of Phuoc Tuy province.
- 24:30 The 5th VC Division which had - used to control the province and had effectively been banished elsewhere, started to come back in the province and the 33rd Regiment came back in and Jim Hughes' battalion, now General Jim Hughes' battalion in a fight in September of 1971, fought the 33rd NVA Regiment. Now they only came into the province that they had heard through the grapevine, through their
- 25:00 sources that the Australians were withdrawing and so they pushed them in. And we lost a few blokes there, only because some politician opened his mouth in parliament.

Now on the subject of politics, tell us about the ARVN. Now did you have any ARVN troops in your platoons as advisors or whatever?

- 25:30 In Phuoc Tuy province, once the Australians came into that province the ARVN in fact used it as a rest centre. Because here were the Australians taking the fight to the enemy and doing well so rather than

waste good units fighting, what they did was used it as a rest area. And of course you would then get the approach from Australians who saw the ARVNs in

- 26:00 Phuoc Tuy and said, "They were bloody useless." They were resting. I fought with the ARVN up in I Corp, up in the North and they were a different kettle of fish to the ARVN we saw in Phuoc Tuy province. The ARVN used to rotate their troops through Phuoc Tuy so they can give them a rest. Nominally they were still out on operations but they weren't really. And of course there was also the business of local forces
- 26:30 LF [local forces] battalions and regional force battalions who were nominally there for security but didn't have the training, didn't the equipment. The last four months I was in Vietnam on my second tour I was back in Phuoc Tuy province. A battalion called Ba-Le-Hai which means 302, 302 RF battalion, regional force battalion. Good young colts but their training
- 27:00 wasn't up to it. And they couldn't mount offensive operations - we went up into the Long Hais [hills], hit a mine and within an hour we had five dead, thirty wounded. That was just too much for them. We then pulled back out. They just weren't up to it, hadn't had the training. And like everything else, it depended on leadership. Now the commander of the battalion, had been a bit of a hot shot but I suspect he was there
- 27:30 because it was a rest area. And that's why they gave him that particular area. We carried, we the Australians carried the fight in Phuoc Tuy province.

Now the ARVN were notoriously for political infiltration and nepotism and all those other things that can decay a military structure.

Indeed I think that is so sadly of many armies of regimes like that. In the 1st ARVN Regiment

- 28:00 I was there one day out in the field and my resupply had come in. And I used to always get a Time magazine sent in so I could keep abreast of what was going on. And I passed an ARVN soldier, Abinchi, Private. And he said, "Excuse me sir when you've finished with your Time could I have it please?" And I stopped, and he was a bloke, he was in his thirties. And I said to him, "Certainly, it's not often I hear
- 28:30 someone speaking such good English." And he said, "Yes, I was in fact at university in Saigon and my family have fallen foul of Truong and they've got me sent up here." And it was obviously politically his family had fallen foul of General Truong or Minh [South Vietnamese Generals] or one of those others. So they sent up to 1st ARVN Regiment 'cause the turnover there was very high
- 29:00 with a fair chance he'd get killed. He wouldn't be murdered he'd just get killed. And that happened from time to time. I remember one stage we were in a fight and it was pretty quiet. I was standing, just standing opposite my Vietnamese counterpart and there was the odd round coming in but going way over our head and then one came in right between us with this distinctive crack and neither of us said anything but we both sat down.
- 29:30 And afterwards I said to him, "Where did that round come from?" And he said, "I will find out." And I said to him a little bit later, "Did you find out?" He said, "Yes, he won't do it again." Now someone within the unit had fired a shot at us so he'd had him bumped off. Fair enough from where I stood. Yeah so it was certainly, there were political elements and so forth, and that's always
- 30:00 difficult in any civil war. It's brother against brother. I understand, and I didn't understand this when I was with our forces down in Phuoc Tuy province but I understood it when I was up there with the Vietnamese, that in a family there might be 5 sons. One might on the Government side, one might be on the Vietcong side, one might be a draft dodger [avoiding compulsory military service]. And - but they all belonged to the family and when they walked into the family house, no matter
- 30:30 where they came from the war wasn't there. It wasn't there with their family. And when you look at that that's fair enough as far as I can see. Must have been heartbreaking for a mother to know her sons are out there. One might well be fighting his brother. It must be absolutely heartbreaking stuff, dreadful.

What was the composition of Phuoc Tuy province as far as religious leaning was concerned?

- 31:00 Largely Buddhist with some Catholic enclaves. Lo Gom which I spoke about before, I think was a Catholic enclave. There might be another name, might be Nghe Gio. One of those. Catholic enclave - they'd come down after the partition in '54 they came down from the North and established it. Yeah
- 31:30 it was Pin Jau. And so - but in the main the people were Buddhist. With a few you know as I say enclaves of Catholics.

Do you think that the people in Phuoc Tuy supported the Australians?

Hard to say, hard to say. I think they supported the fact that they were able to get access to their properties and they were able to do that. And some of them genuinely saw us as being reasonable.

- 32:00 But in the main they preferred not to have foreigners in their land. And I can well understand that. One of the nice things I can say about it all is that there was an interview recently in the Royal Australian Regiment magazine about talking to a commander, a North Vietnamese or Vietcong commander in

Phuoc Tuy province. And he said,

32:30 "Whilst I abhor the fact that Australians were in my province they didn't harm the women, they treated our dead with respect, they left the villagers alone." And I feel quite proud of that. We didn't mistreat people. There's no malice in Phuoc Tuy province, none of that.

Were there any atrocities committed by Australian troops?

33:00 Not to my knowledge. Now I'm not suggesting that the odd bloke got shot that shouldn't have got shot. For example you have a day curfew, you have a day area where they can go, nighttime curfew. People have got to be in. If someone was too late getting in and walked in an ambush, probably knocked over. I don't think there was many - much of it. But there was no

33:30 no systematic, no philosophical view that we should treat them other than ordinary. I remember when the American movie Platoon came out. And that was horrendous stuff. And what I did is I got five people, one of whom had been a platoon commander, one who'd been platoons, two had been section commanders, there must've been six. And two who'd been National Servicemen.

34:00 And I took them to my unit which was Melbourne University Regiment and we gave a resume of what happened in Vietnam from our perspective. And then I threw the thing open to questions. And I had said before that to my soldiers I had said, they were largely students from Melbourne University Regiment. I said, "Ask any questions you wish of them, any at all, there are no questions that are off limits." And I said to the blokes

34:30 "This is what I've done. No prompting from me, you answer them however you see them being done, however you call it." And it was interesting, particularly the National Servicemen, to hear their perspective of the war. And in the main I think they treated the people alright. Sure we killed them but you know, that was the ones that were shooting at us, we shot back.

What about when you saw

35:00 **Platoon? There's been a lot of Vietnam films of course since then. You probably remember John Wayne's ill-fated attack at - I forget I think it's called "Green Beret". You've probably seen that.**

Well what really gets up my nose about that is, he was an advisor and of course I too was an advisor and we wore a green beret. Thank God it wasn't quite like John portrayed it. Although there were certain elements that surely were.

35:30 But yeah I've seen a number of films. The one that comes closest to my way of thinking, are actually two. One is the Odd Angry Shot where it appeared like they were the blokes that I knew. And the other is, Heaven and Earth. Heaven and Earth is about the Vietnamese.

36:00 And it shows how - by day one the government troops had come in, day two the NVA had come in, day three the government had come back and the difficulties they faced. Because let's be realistic the people that fought the Vietnam were the Vietnamese, they fought the Vietnam War.

Have you seen any Vietnamese movies about the war?

I've seen a couple of documentaries on SBS. There was one about

36:30 their photographers, their combat photographers which was quite fascinating. I had an interesting conversation in Indonesia with a commander of North Vietnamese troops. Friend of mine was the military attaché in Jakarta and I went up to visit him, he and me and my daughter. Or my daughter and I as it were. And one of the things he did was put on a dinner and he had the military attachés from all the other countries. And he had included the Vietnamese.

37:00 And so I was talking to this fellow. We were standing in the garden looking up, it was a moonlit night and looking up at the moon and I said, "The moon is always bright in Asia." And he said, "Yes". And we just very cagily edged around each other and he said, "We didn't see much of the Australians." And I said, "No I was down at Phuoc Tuy province." I said, "Where I was in Quang Tri and Tui Tien I said we fought

37:30 7th Front." And he sort of stopped and looked at me and he said, "7th Front?" and I said, "Yes". And listed the battalions. He said, "Oh." I said, "You were up that way?" He said, "I could've been." And we talked about it. And at the end he said to me, "You must come and visit us some day." And I thought, "Yeah I'd like to do that", although I've got no ghost to lay. I still am reasonably active with the South Vietnamese veterans.

38:00 And I go to their functions and so forth. They have, when they go to school they also had prizes that they award of their own volition because you know, like most Asians they really treasure education. And it's interesting when you hand out the prizes. Almost invariably they go to girls. I think it was last year I said, "It's unusual handing out the prizes this year, only 11 went to girls, one went to a bloke".

38:30 Yeah.

Now I'd like to focus on some of the operations that took place. Now say for instance in Iraq it seems to me that when you're an occupying force you also have to disarm, that's a part of that process and that means going into people's houses and being intrusive. Cordon and search operations. Tell us how this was conducted in Vietnam and how the Vietnamese people reacted to this.

Alright.

- 39:00 We conducted a number of, particularly late 1967, mid to late 1967 a number of search and destroy operations. Now the results, I'm not sure of. I'm not sure of results. What it did to was let the people know that we were sort of human I think. Every now and then there would be some incident like the two blokes drinking all the grog at Lang Phuoc Hai.
- 39:30 But it seemed to me in the main they didn't achieve a great deal, they didn't achieve a great deal. They, I remember once and it was an interesting thing. We were in Dat Do, and you'd commonly they call it Dai Do but it's Dat Do and Dat Do, and we finished our search in the village and we were just hanging around. And I'd taken my gear off
- 40:00 equipment and I put it down beside this verandah if you like. And there was an old woman inside. And she was chopping and her grandson it was obviously was running about inside the little tacker. Anyway he came out and was looking at our gear and he went over - I didn't mind that - but he went over and he put his hand on the equipment and of course I had a pistol there. And I had hand grenades
- 40:30 and all those things so I said, (VIETNAMESE), "Go away" sort of thing. (VIETNAMESE) And his grandma spotted this. And so she got him inside and he was looking up and I could see, it was just like my granny looking at me. And she said, "Listen here I've told you to keep away from these big foreign buggers, you'll only get yourself in trouble." And you know, I couldn't understand a word of what she was saying but it sounded like this. "So you
- 41:00 don't want me to cut your hands off do you?" And he said, "No granny." And you could see this was what was happening. "Well alright." Then, hold on, then she gave him something of what he was eating. And I thought, "A granny and a grandson, anywhere in the world that was exactly how they'd be". And I thought "Yeah, yeah". Another thing I found interesting is that Asians will giggle in embarrassment. Had a platoon commander who sadly got killed not long after we got home in a road accident.
- 41:30 And we were checking everything. There was a grave in the backyard. And he said, "Check the grave because notoriously they put things under...". And I had my blokes probing it and so forth. And the Vietnamese who were there were giggling. And he said, "They're bloody laughing." And I said, "No they're not, not they're not, they're not laughing at all, they're embarrassed by what we're doing." Because we are
- 42:00 desecrating their grave, their forebear's grave. And I said, "Leave it alone, just leave it alone." And he said, "Alright" and he did. But he just didn't understand that they were embarrassed by this and that was one of the way, sort of nervous laugh type thing. And it was embarrassment.

Tape 6

- 00:33 **Now, I'd like to ask you a question on the topic of casualties, Australia lost 500, 501 or something like that and about 2,000 something wounded. Can you break down the actual composition of the casualties in terms of like you were talking about booby traps before in terms of specifically as in booby traps and land mines and bullets etc?**
- 01:00 In my battalion, the large bulk of dead and wounded were a result of small arms fire, enemy's small arms fire. We had, to my knowledge, no deaths from booby traps and I'm not sure that we had many wounded from booby traps. We all know about this thing is, "The Vietcong do this and the Vietcong do that". We came
- 01:30 upon, in areas we came upon booby traps but mostly they were diffused, mostly we diffused them. So in terms of booby traps I don't think, well, others in another company might say differently, I don't think we had many of those I really don't.
- What was different about the American way of operation to the Australian. They suffered horrendous deaths, 60,000?**
- They did indeed, they did indeed
- 02:00 and a large number of those were the marines up in the North. It was a different philosophy; they did not have the benefit of the Emergency and Confrontation. The last time they'd had a big fight was in Korea and that was against, you know, Chinese attacks and so forth. And the Americans thought that they would be able to win the battle by massive firepower and piling on
- 02:30 and it didn't work. It meant that whenever they met the Vietcong it was largely, or the NVA, it was

largely on the terms of the NVA, not of the Americans. Now, you've got to go back to 1966 to the la Drang Valley, they made a movie of it, Once were Warriors or something with Mel Gibson.

We were soldiers That's right, yes.

We were soldiers, yes. What happened there was that the North Vietnamese deliberately set themselves the

03:00 task of finding out how they should combat the Americans. Now the first air came in at la Drang and piled on. The North Vietnamese fought them and they fought them well and the end result was they thought, "Yes, we can beat the Americans despite their air power". And so they determined that's how they would fight them. And the difference between them and between

03:30 us in Phuoc Tuy was that we fought the Vietcong mainly on our terms not on their terms. You will read, from time to time, papers produced by the VC and they say they lay in swamps and mud and stuff like that, they ambushed our tracks, of course we did. You know, the best way to deal with an enemy

04:00 and the best shot you'll ever have is if he's got his back turned to you and he's having a crap. You want to be close enough so that you're sure you won't miss and far enough away so that when he does fall over the shit doesn't get on you. And that's how you're deal with them. And you get him with his back to you and you zap him. You don't want to face them man to man, bayonet to bayonet stuff. That's crap it's out of movies and stuff. You want to get them when they're least expecting

04:30 it so you ambush them so you get them when they're not expecting it. You let them think that they've got control of the ground and in fact they can't go from one place to another where there's some mongrel Australian shooting them and that way you beat them.

Now you said the Americans were piling on. Do you mean that literally massive numbers, massive force?

More troops, more

05:00 firepower, probably more towards the firepower actually. More firepower, more artillery, more air power, more helicopter gun ships and once again, contact; they would hope to hold them whilst they could utilise all the massive air support to beat them. Worked sometimes, it didn't work at others.

Now considering that you'd be familiar with low intensity conflict, the term, why

05:30 **did the VC and the NVA apply small unit attacks, things like that, that potentially could be more affective than large unit actions?**

In the main, yes, and the VC always had an infrastructure which was their government, if you like, underneath the existing government so it was always a political agenda because

06:00 whilst power comes out the end of a gun, or the barrel of a gun, as Mao says, you've always got to remember that the guerrillas are the fish and the people are the sea and they've got to swim, the fish have got to swim in the sea and so they were aware of their political agenda always, the political agenda. And from time to time they would amass their forces and take on the Americans but not very often. Mostly what would happen was

06:30 they would try and get the Americans to fall into what they wanted, what the NVA wanted, and beat them that way because if they were to fight on American terms they would just get trampled and get beaten to death. It's interesting if you look at that in comparison to what's going on in Iraq at the moment. The Brits have got quite a few troops up there and you don't hear much about the Brits getting done

07:00 and part of that is because the Brits have had an internal security difficulty since the late 1960s and that's in Northern Ireland so they are applying what they have learned over 30 years of Northern Ireland, they're applying that to Baghdad and to Iraq and so they are not running into the same difficulties. The Americans want to fight on their terms, it

07:30 doesn't always work, you can't make them fight on your terms what you've got to do is find out his terms and to devise better terms to beat it, not try to get them to fight on your terms and that's what's happening up there, well it appears to me.

Now in Phuoc Tui province how many attacks during your tenure did you have a day?

A day?

Yeah.

I don't think you could say there was one a day.

08:00 **If you average it out over?**

There would be little incidents maybe once or twice a month in the province, not against us but in the province and there were several incursions one of which was Suoi Chou Pha and I've spoken about that. Other than that, no.

So not every day?

No, no. You could go out in the jungle and you could patrol around the

08:30 jungle for a long time and not see anything and not come into any contact. It's the old story in a battalion you get this company who as contact every day for two weeks and this other company who's in exactly the same operation, doing exactly the same thing, don't have a contact during the two weeks just because it so happens that the enemy go that way rather than that way and you'll get that sort of thing. For example during the Tet Offensive, Operation Coburg,

09:00 a diary out there which talks about - and we had fights that lasted most of the day which was unusual for our experience in Vietnam. "We had three contacts before breakfast and we didn't get any bloody breakfast", that sort of thing. But it was a different fight there, it was a different fight, there were better trained NVA and when we, as we did in Phuoc Tui province, we

09:30 bowled over a few and they'd take off; these blokes didn't - they fought back. A Company, again I've mentioned A Company a few times and the bloke who had been in command of my platoon ambushed a North Vietnamese platoon and the North Vietnamese platoon turned and went through them, assaulted through the Australian position and reformed and assaulted back again. That's good tough stuff because they got the shit knocked out of them,

10:00 our blokes. In fact big Tom Bourke who was later to lose his legs in the second term in Vietnam, he grabbed a Mossin, Mossin-Negant [machine gun] and turned it against them and actually shot some of the enemy with their own weapons. But they came through us, we were in Phuoc Tui province, we'd ambushed them, we'd knock a few over and the others would take off.

So you're saying that that shows tremendous professionalism on their part?

On their part it showed guts and

10:30 determination, yes.

Where did they receive their training from?

Well it largely came down through the Vietmen of days gone by and certainly before we came into the province they had large training areas particularly in the Mai Tow mountains in the north eastern corner. They used to have big training areas there and they would train quite regularly and

11:00 train well. They had good, for example, at Suoi Chou Pha whenever we had a fight, we'd have the CO would get the senior NCOs and the officers together and we'd go through the battle, through the fight to see what we'd done right, what we'd done wrong, what they'd done right and what they'd done right to see how we could counter it. And I remember after Sui Chow Far, the CO was

11:30 talking about how "We have to rely less on verbal orders and more on whistle to attract attention" because you yell and if they're a well-trained enemy the bloke who's yelling is a target because he's a leader. And they were doing it well because they were whistling to each other and, you know, whistle to attract attention and you turn and you perhaps give them a hand signal about what you wanted them to do. And that was good

12:00 thinking, it was good thinking. The other thing that we noticed is that they had good fire discipline. They'd fire bursts of two and they'd fire three bursts and then they'd collect their empty cases and put them in their pocket - hangover from the days when they were in Vietminh and they used to reload their own ammunition, but a good fire control method. It meant that they didn't fire long bursts, they only fired bursts of two to three rounds and they're the ones that are more likely to be more accurate and they

12:30 gathered them as soon as they'd fired several bursts which gave them more control over the way that they fired. Good thinking, good stuff.

What, they'd re-use their shells?

Well, in days gone by they used to reload them and re-use them. By the time we were there they didn't have to do that because there was there was the supply line down the Ho Chi Minh trail. But it was an old folklore thing that they'd picked up.

13:00 It's just like you'll hear World War II people talk about contact drill [how to react to the sudden appearance of an enemy force]. When they were going through the jungle and they met the Japs they immediately did what they called a contact drill which they did in Vietnam. Now the Australians learned that from the Japanese in World War II and we continued it through. It's been the basis of our minor tactics ever since, contact drills.

So a lot of this knowledge was passed on from New Guinea

13:30 **operations?**

Yes, New Guinea through Korea, Malaya, Borneo to Vietnam.

That's very interesting. Was there any Russian or Chinese military advisory present that you know of?

Not that I ever saw, not that I ever saw.

But you knew that was the case though?

Well, it was alleged to be the case. I don't know if it was true or not.

Where did they get that sort of weaponry from?

Oh, they got the weaponry from the

14:00 Russians, the weaponry from the Russians. People thought the Chinese were supporting them. Quite frankly I don't think the Chinese were because I remember in 1979/80 the Chinese put an incursion into North Vietnam and the North Vietnam kicked the shit out of them because, you know, all those well-trained divisions that had

14:30 been fighting since 1950 were still going and the old Chinese didn't do very well in that fight at all.

When was that again?

That was 1979, yes, that was 1979 the year I went to China. You see people think that the Chinese and the Vietnamese are together but they're not really because the Trum Sisters, the Trum Sisters were

15:00 16th Century Vietnamese women who fought the Chinese and did a job on them. It's interesting that the operations, don't know if you'll recall this but in Australia there used to be a radio serial called Blue Hills. Now Blue Hills was the one soap opera which went through the radio for many years. In Vietnam our operations were called Blue Hills -

15:30 it was interesting. It's like there's a beach in Sydney called Wanda Beach and in Phuoc Tuy periodically I'd go for a swim, with a truckload of binchies to escort me, and Eric and I we'd go for a swim and we swam at a beach called Wanda Beach. It was quite different because you'd be careful of the Russian land mines that were there, anti tank mine that the NVA had left behind and stuff like

16:00 that.

So to put into contrast what you'd said before about Phuoc Tui province and the number of attacks you said that it wasn't every day that the attacks would take place and it wouldn't average every day either?

No, I don't think so.

Right. Now this is during your period there of course?

It may have been, because remember I was a sergeant in an infantry battalion, so I didn't know all the things that were going on but in the main

16:30 a lot of the activity was pretty minor in Phuoc Tui province because of the work that had been done by the battalions prior to us coming in there. We were just expanding, spreading the ink blot, expanding our influence and control.

Now, if you contrast that, I mean it already seemed like a fairly well organised insurgent infrastructure and you look at their arc now and see that

17:00 **attacks have gone up from 5 to 15 per day in the Suni Triangle day to 30 or 40 a day are we talking about a very highly organised resistance?**

I frankly don't think it's a highly organised resistance, I think it's a resistance of opportunity in so far as the Americans have come in, they're unassailable, and then people start picking on them and say, "They're not that unassailable". So more people are

17:30 joining in. Where once upon a time they wouldn't have dared to do it now they're saying, "Well let's have a go" because now they're getting away with a fair bit of it.

But does it show that if attacks can escalate to such a level that it is nonetheless an organised or highly organised?

I wouldn't say it's highly organised I think it's opportunistic rather than organised. I don't think there

18:00 is a central theme of "How we do this and gradually expand", you know, "Stage one into stage two into stage three", a la the classic Mao stuff. I don't think it's as organised as that, as detailed as that. I think it's as people are saying that, you know, they're able to kill the infidel so they're coming on board and creating more incidents. Quite frankly, I can't see how the Americans are going to beat

18:30 it.

Now recently the other day they showed a guy on a donkey cart with rockets destroy the Iraqi Oil Ministry. Did this sort of thing happen in Vietnam?

It's interesting you say that. I think certainly in the early days the pushbike was the main method of supply and people wheeled push bikes down the Ho Chi Minh trail. And, for example if you were going to fire, you'd get

19:00 four or five 122 mil rockets, you set up a framework, a bamboo framework and fire them that way because you've got no other way of firing them. And they're still not all that accurate because unless you have to aim them dead in the right way. I remember we used to get rockets fired at us when we were up at the DMZ [demilitarised zone] and by Christ if they hit anywhere near you were in terrible trouble because you had bits and pieces everywhere,

19:30 of blokes that is. But their firing devices and their launch pads weren't all that great or the launch platforms weren't all that great.

But what does it say about resistance - basically, what I'm trying to say is the resistance you're facing say, or what you did face in Vietnam that these sort of

20:00 **basically the same principles Iraqi resistance is now applying in part is quite similar?**

Oh yes, it's a kind of insurgency war again. "Low intensity operations", as is currently the phrase, yes, same sort of thing. But again I go back to the way to beat it, it's political in the main. See if you take away the political

20:30 obstructions, if you acquiesce to some of the demands, if you make it more democratic if you make it more whatever is needed then the large bulk of the population will follow you. The only people you've got to handle is the recalcitrants on the edges and they'll always be there, they will always be there. But you're not facing them, the large bulk of the population, you've got them divided and you're facing bits

21:00 and you're better able to knock them over.

Now for questions regarding the Australian Force in Vietnam - fragging. Now that did take place in Australian ranks as well though not as prolific as in American ranks, tell us about fragging?

My experience about fragging [assassination of an officer by his own troops] actually came from when I was up at the DMZ with the ARVN. We had an

21:30 American brigade called the 5th Mechanised Brigade and I had - we'd been out on an operation and we had evacuated our casualties and the American dust offs [medical evacuation by helicopter] were very good. And when we came back into Quon Tri we went to see dust off, the people that had helped our casualties and in fact I took a weapon across and presented it to them from my Vietnamese to say thanks etc. etc. And we were having a few drinks in the bar and this guy said to me he said "George"

22:00 he said "one of the really great things is that your casualties are battle casualties" I said "well, what the hell else would you expect?" He said "Well, 50% of the casualties I pick up from the 5th Mech are not battle casualties, they're own casualties and they're running at 3 murders a week. And I thought "Christ, Christ".

22:30 Now I take that back to Australia - now I've forgotten about this one, fragging, 1967, a young lieutenant was fragged by a gunner and that was the first and only case that I saw, or knew of, in my first tour. And what had happened is that we were alongside route 15 and my

23:00 platoon was providing security in some tracts for a battery of guns, an artillery battery and just after last light that evening there was a, "Woomph" from behind us, we were on the perimeter. And they came up on the net and they said "61", I was India. "India 61 to Europa, what was that?" And I said

23:30 "This is 61, it sounded awful like a grenade to me, check your blokes". And the next thing there was a thing coming up saying it was mortars from the South East and I was saying "Bullshit". So I thought, "What the Christ is going on?" And it wasn't a terribly dangerous area really. So I moved in to the Sea Peak mine post and I struck their

24:00 [Squadron Sergeant Major], and I said "What the fuck's going on?" And he said, "Someone's just thrown a grenade in an officers' pit". I said "What, one of our blokes?" He said "Yeah". I said "Jesus Christ". I said, "Give me them". He said "What for?" I said "I'll take them out to the perimeter and I'll shoot them and we'll call it a contact". He said "I can't do that". And I said "Why not?" He said "It's just going a bit far". And I said "If you want them,

24:30 bring them out here and I'll fucking shoot them". And I would have, I would have quite easily because there are enough people outside trying to shoot you. So that was the thing - and what had happened I'm not sure but alcohol was involved and the Vietnamese were coming up the road and selling alcohol as my understanding was, the name will come to me later the young bloke that was killed in a pretty ordinary way. So there was that one, now that was

25:00 I think it was a terrible mistake on the part of the gunner. What in fact he thought was that the grenade he used would act like a blast grenade and not like a high explosive grenade, I think, because the arty [artillery] didn't have grenades, I think that was what it was. But in fact the grenade he threw - we used

to sleep in what we called coffins, we'd dig a hole deep enough that you could lie in it full length and turn on your

25:30 side and be below the ground level, just below the ground level so that if a Charlie [the enemy] fired a RPG [rocket propelled grenade] rocket or a pair of grenades and you're below the ground you'd be pretty right. And he threw it and into the coffin and I think that's what happened but of course it worked badly for him, badly for the bloke that did it and very badly for the bloke that got hit and it killed him. Now, I don't think that was a general dissatisfaction with the war

26:00 I think that was an individual, a half-pissed individual.

So you're saying it's a personal dispute rather than a political?

Yes, it wasn't a political statement.

What about political fragging. I mean you know about the moratorium of course and all those things that took place?

Yeah, yeah, but in Vietnam, and I can only talk from where I stand, for example there was that bloke that went into the sergeants' mess and fired up at the sergeants' mess and killed a couple.

26:30 It's a bit like the 1977 test; there was probably about 150,000 at the 1977 Centenary Test but if you ask about Australia now there were about 3 million at it. It's the same at that sergeant's mess there were probably about 40 blokes but now if you ask everybody and his brother was there - now that was again a personal dispute as far as I could see. They were on the piss and that's what's happened. And it brings me to a couple of

27:00 interesting things - looking at my year with the battalion any problems I had came from alcohol - not out in the field but in base. We'd come back from operations, you'd have the night off, sit around and get very pissed, let off a bit of steam and "You, you mongrel bastard", you know and there'd be a punch up.

27:30 And I didn't mind things like this, it settled things out. If you take alcohol out of the equation you didn't have a problem. People ask me about grass [marijuana] and stuff like that - I remember I went to a digger's tent and he was talking to me and he'd been on a day's R & R down in Vung Tau and he said "Come and have a look at this, Sarge" He said " It's a denkadow cigarette which is grass, you know marijuana".

28:00 I said, "Now what the Christ are you going to do with that, dig". "I don't know, a Yank gave it to me". I said "Throw it in the bloody big hole or throw it in the fire or do something like that". He said "All right". I now know what grass smells like and I never smelled grass in Vietnam in my push. So, you know, grass wasn't a problem. Alcohol was a problem but only in base, it wasn't a problem out in the

28:30 field, no problem out in the field. The diggers pretty much as you told them to do, did it all right.

I'm curious about also what you were telling about the fragging taking place in the 3rd Mech Infantry was it?

Yeah, 3rd Mechanised Infantry - No, 5th Mech, 5th Mech.

Now, did you actually go to these camps?

No, I would see them not far from where we

29:00 were and my source was the medivac [medical evacuation] helicopter's pilots so, you know, whether they were bullshitting me I don't know but that's what I remember one of them telling me "3 murders a week in the 5th Mech" and I thought "Jesus" and this was in 1970. "Jesus Christ". Because morale amongst the Americans seemed to be not dazzling, it seemed to be not dazzling, you'd see them wandering about and you'd say "Mmm". You could

29:30 tell what they looked like, you know, it doesn't matter if their greens are crumpled or whatever but he's made an attempt to clean his boots, he's shaven, his weapon's in a good state, his eyes are looking about. You can just get a glimpse of them and you can say, "Yes he's all right, he's spot on". You'd see the other turkey and the weapon's not right and the boots are scruffy and he hasn't quite shaved that day and that sort of thing and he's not looking about, you think

30:00 "Mmm, no, he's not going to make it, he's not got the right stuff".

I suppose you'd developed that stuff?

I'd been in the army, let's see, 13 or 14 years, you'd want to pick up something by then wouldn't you.

But it would be universal. Could you look at any soldier in a field

30:30 **situation with that sort of experience?**

Oh most senior NCOS, that's sergeant and above, from an infantry battalion would have that, look at them and say "Gee, what do you reckon there?" "They're turkeys, them". I don't think we said turkey in

those days.

You could look at an NVA soldier just by looks and see whether he's good, you could see "Mmm, he's got potential?"

Well if I looked at an NVA soldier it was normally over the sights

31:00 of my rifle but afterwards what you'd do is look at them and say "Ah, he's in good shape". Look at his gear, look at his Ho Chi Minh sandals, see what his weapons looked like and how they were maintained. I remember one poor bugger, it was during the Tet Offensive - I was walking down the track and the NVA didn't have very many

31:30 radios so transmission was often by runner, what we called runner, a bloke going from Point A to Point B, and this bloke was strolling down the track, obviously you know a youngster, thinking about things and -

This was an Aussie guy?

No, no, he's a North Vietnamese and sadly for him sneaking down the track the other way comes an Australian infantry platoon and the forward scout spots him, calls up the gunner and they

32:00 blow him away. I was clearing his gear and he was 36, he was married with 4 kids because there was a photograph of him and his wife and 4 kids. He was the equivalent of a staff sergeant, the weapon he had the AK47 still had some of the packing

32:30 grease on it so it obviously was a new weapon etc. and he hadn't cleaned it and I thought, "Here's a rear echelon bloke", what we used to call "pogos"; personnel and garrison operators, "Here's a rear echelon bloke" and all of a sudden he's in the front line, "Send us more of them, send us more of them and shoot the bastards, they're easy meat". Every now and then you get some bloke and you look at him and you think

33:00 "Oh shit, I'm glad we got him because he looks like he was all right"

Have you ever been in an encounter with hand to hand sort of combat?

No, never sort of grabbing anyone and all that sort of stuff, no. I suppose the closest I ever was to shooting anyone was about this close.

Don't shoot me.

33:30 Not any guns now. I've got a photograph there and someone said "You look sort of relaxed and nonchalant". And I said "Yes, but you want to make sure" (and that was taken during Operation Coburg which was the Tet offensive, I got it from my one of my diggers a few years ago), "You want to make sure in Vietnam, you want to make sure if you're an enemy that you saw those eyes before those eyes saw you because if those eyes saw you, you're history"

34:00 and vice versa.

They used to operate also using certain techniques like building bridges under water, foot bridges - tell us about those things they used to do?

I never saw much of it because where we were operating was in fact up in the mountains and you don't find many bridges under water up in the mountains but I know of that

34:30 and they'd do it so that the Americans couldn't see what was going on etc. etc. and that seemed to be working. Undoubtedly when you get a chance and you go over to Adelaide you'll talk to Len Opey, he was a trail watcher, and he'd be able to tell you a bit more about those things than I could. The subterfuges, you know, you hear about booby traps and panji stakes and all that sort of things, the subterfuges and booby

35:00 traps - by the time I was involved in it, out when you're wandering around the jungle you don't see them because they'll be prepared and there didn't seem to be much of it around Phuoc Tuy, there didn't appear to be much of it. Occasionally you'd hear of it but I did have one interesting occasion where we were going out - this was when I was with the

35:30 Vietnamese and we'd just got out into the Piedmont area, the foothills, and we stopped roughly for the evening, we stopped at an area where a unit had overnight harboured up. And I was sitting on the pack, just starting to write my Sit Rep [situation report] for the day to send out on the radio and all of sudden the Vietnamese said "Chun mi, chun mi, min, min, min". "Mines", I thought. "Oh shit" and there were

36:00 booby traps around where I was. So I sat there and I thought "Oh well" so I wrote to my Mum and Dad and I said, "Now, this is what might happen blah blah blah, hopefully this'll come to you." Anyway, they cleared into where I was, I folded it and stuck it into my pocket and I stood up and I thought "I don't give a rat's ass if I do blow up, I'm not leaving my pack". I picked my pack up

36:30 and then walked out where they'd marked and then I tore the note up but it was interesting for a little while I can tell you, interesting, yeah, yeah.

What about improvised explosive devices like they're using in Iraq now to blow up convoys?

Interesting that you say that, during my time with the battalion we swept through a CT camp, sorry not a CT camp, a VC camp

- 37:00 and they had a US GP bomb the 750 pound GP bomb which had obviously landed and not gone off and they we're sawing through it to take a bit out, take the explosive out and make improvised explosive devices. So we had a mini team of engineers came in with us and I said, "All right, we're going to blow that". They said "OK we're going to blow it". The difficulty was
- 37:30 the safety distance for a 750 pound bomb or a 500 bomb I forget which it was, probably a 500 pound, was I think if you were dug in, it was 125 metres. Now I had sentries out and I never knew whether these blokes were coming back in again to come back to this camp. I said "How are we going to get out of this?" Because if I've got
- 38:00 sentries out and this thing goes up about ground it's 250 metres and I thought, "I'm going to blow my blokes up". So I said to the engineer because there were all these dug-outs and bunkers around and I said, "Select one that we can get into that's as far as away as we can be but at the same time give us some security". So he cast around and he said "I've got one over here" (what they were doing was blowing these bunkers and levelling them basically and filling them up).
- 38:30 He says, "There's one over here" and I said, "All right". What that meant was that we could set a charge on this bomb, I could call my sentries in, into the bunker, meanwhile I'd disperse my other diggers, into the bunker and we'd only have the very minimal time when we were underground and no one above ground so that if anyone comes in we're not going to get sprung. So we did this and we're sitting there in this bunker, waiting.
- 39:00 And he said "I'm fucked if I know". I said "About what?" He said "I think we might be a bit close". I said "Shit" I said "It's a bit late now". And this thing went off and honest to God I'll swear the earth moved. And you know the bits and pieces and stuff and I said "Oh Christ". And anyway, out we went, we were all reeling, we'd been pretty
- 39:30 close to the blast and I thought to myself, "Thank Christ we're not under one of those that are being dropped, it must be the worst hell on earth". To be under a B52 [bomber] strike or something, God help them. Anyway, this thing went off and honest to God the earth went "Bang". We were a bit too close and you know our ears are ringing "Oh, thanks a million, sapper".
- 40:00 **What was the blast radius?**
- 150 metres if you were dug in so it's 300 metres, 250 metres if you're above ground so it's 500 metres. We were about 60ft or 50 metres away. And you'd see where they'd create a crater of about 30 or 40 ft across. So we were very lucky that day I think something was on our side.
- 40:30 We'll stop, we've run out of tape again.

Tape 7

- 00:30 **Alright I just want to go back now. Back to your first tour in Malaya and ask a few general questions over your three tours in Asia. But in Malaya what sort of things would you do on leave?**
- On leave,]; get drunk and root.
- Now we talked about the first time that you smoked, but when did you start drinking?**
- 01:00 Oh I had started drinking before then when I sort of became roughly of age. I started drinking. I think - I think I didn't drink very much but as time went by and I was in the army and when you were not on operations for example, you went down to the canteen. And this was what the big boys did. And I think I rather fell into that and quite enjoyed it.
- Are you talking about an army canteen?**
- 01:30 Yes yes.
- Did you ever go into the local villages for a drink?**
- In Malaya we would go into the towns because the villagers, the Kampongs didn't have alcohol because they were Muslim. But in towns like Kuala Kangsar or KK as it was called. Ipoh, Penang, Georgetown you would go on leave to those places. Or the second time you'd go to KL, Malacca, places like that. And there'd be bars
- 02:00 and what have you.
- And the other activity where would you go for that?**

You'd go into the bar and go from there to wherever the nearest brothel was.

Well look we've heard a lot about the brothels in the Middle East. Tell us what the brothels are like in Malaya?

Generally tidy, little places. With quite gorgeous women in them from time to time. Sometimes not quite gorgeous but quite nice.

- 02:30 An interesting story - I knew one lady and I won't mention any names or anything in the state here because this story is true and this person is alive - who was a Muslim and had been divorced by her husband because she couldn't have children. Maybe it was his fault, maybe it wasn't. Her family had then abandoned her and she became a bar girl, which was a nice way of saying prostitute. And she was a nice lady.
- 03:00 And I met her once and she had a wad of notes tucked in her bra and I said, "What's that for?" And she said, "Maybe I buy watch, maybe I buy a baby." I said, "Why do you want a baby for?" Well she said, "If I get old I'll need someone to look after me" etcetera etcetera. Anyway I didn't see her for some months. And the next time I saw her she had a little baby. And
- 03:30 I went home. She married an Australian, she came back here and that little baby is a doctor in Australia. Which I think is rather nice. A little baby that she had bought for three hundred dollars Malay.

Which would be how much Australian?

Would be, it was then pounds so it (UNCLEAR)

- 04:00 it would be about fifty quid. Yes she bought the baby. And obviously loved it and cared for it and looked after it and the baby's a doctor.

Now you've mentioned that when on leave you would drink and everyone would go for a drink.

04:30 Was it binge drinking?

Yes, yes it was binge drinking. We'd all get pissed as parrots. Have a thoroughly splendid time. And then a couple of days of that and then we'd go back to camp and go out the bush. It, did alcohol affect my performance in life? Certainly later it did. After Vietnam

- 05:00 I found that I was drinking too much. Got away with it for quite a long time because I was in an environment where alcohol was part and parcel of the life. Every now and then I reckon that alcohol grossly affected what I was doing. And in fact, let's see 1984, I just started running my own business so I thought, "What can I do that's different?"
- 05:30 "I know". "I won't drink for a year". So I didn't drink for a year and I hated it, absolutely hated it. So soon as the year was finished I got back into the turps [alcohol]. And then about 8 years ago I was finding that all these things that you've done in your life were starting to crowd in on me. And assuming that there's that much of weight on your system by memories and the like and things you've done
- 06:00 with alcohol it becomes that much. And alcohol doesn't help you. So I decided I would stop drinking alcohol. And I thought, "How am I going to do this?" So I'd heard about a doctor - Philip Mac, Mac, Mac - it'll come to me. So I went to see him. And he hypnotised me. And I stopped drinking alcohol. Haven't had any alcohol for 8 years.
- 06:30 Really completely dry?**
- Completely dry. I used to - when I went to lunches and you go to those lunches you know and the waiter coming around, - I'd have him put a little wine in my glass because if you've got a little wine in your glass no-one ever bothers you but if you haven't got wine in your glass they say, "Why don't you have a drink?" So I'd get a little wine. And I remember once I was talking and I picked up my water glass and had a sip. And as it came into my mouth and filled my mouth. I thought
- 07:00 "Oh that's wine". And I spat it back in my glass and put it down. And I just used alcohol since. And the really sad part about it all is I feel so much better. If for example someone invites me to Werribee for dinner tonight I can go there, have dinner and drive home and not think, "God am I going to run into the booze bus?"
- 07:30 Around about, ten or eleven years ago, all of a sudden the things that I'd done in my life came back on me. And I, I was up in Bright and it was Good Friday. And I was playing golf with my brother-in-law and we were walking down the street and up in the
- 08:00 hills - 'cause Bright's in a valley as you know and up in the hills the clouds were on top of the mountains just like it was when I was in Vietnam in 1970. And it all came back to me and I found I was walking down the sixth with the tears running down my eyes. And I got pissed that day and unduly pissed. And I desperately wanted to get away from the place and it caused a lot of hiatus and herney - not herney
- 08:30 a lot of hiatus and a lot of trouble. And that was on the weekend and the following week I went to my quack and said, "Look things are getting a bit much for me, what do you recommend?" And he said, "Oh, I'll get you onto a shrink." And I went and saw a shrink and he and Prozac saved my life I reckon.

Mmm. Because if you've carried a rifle for your country in whatever war it happens to be, and you've engaged in combat operations

09:00 it has a residual effect. For some the effect is relatively minimal. For others it's minimal for some of the time and then it peaks and when it peaks you have a trough. And when you have a trough things are not working and you turn to things like alcohol for solace and it doesn't work. For others it affects them grossly and it stays with them.

09:30 I think I'm a bit lucky. With me I was pretty right and then it came back a bit to haunt me if you like. And, I was able, while I went through some several years of really horrendous stuff I was able thereafter to get a hold of it and bring it back in. And there's a little beast that stays in a box and hopefully Christ it'll bloody well always stay in the box and never escape. It was pretty ordinary because much as I talk and laugh about

10:00 some of these things, at the time you're doing them and thereafter - not so bad when you're doing them - it's thereafter when you're thinking about what you've done. That's difficult, yeah taking human lives. That notebook I have there - there's one little entry there - "23 enemy KIA" [killed in action]. I killed them by artillery fire, by direction of artillery fire. And what I didn't know was where I was directing my fire was

10:30 in fact an NVA hospital. And many of the people I killed were in fact patients. They were NVA soldiers who were being looked after. And we came on them and there were only a group of them and there was this terrible fight. And I thought, "Jesus, they're really fighting". So I called in this artillery and I called it close and I walked along the ridge and I did everything I could to make sure that whatever it is we were fighting was absolutely obliterated. When we got in there, here are these blokes that

11:00 clearly had been on stretchers. Yeah. It's not very nice, not very nice. Mmm. To do that sort of thing. And that happened pretty frequently.

And is that something that's weighed heavily on you?

Oh yeah yeah. Mostly I can live with it. Every now and then it sort of builds up a bit.

11:30 That's life.

What about the times that you may have met soldiers, you know in genuine combat but you actually - you were at close quarters with the person right and saw who they were, does that kind of thing weigh heavily to actually see the man that you're killing?

12:00 It's interesting you say that. There are a couple of things that stick in my mind. In the main when you're on operations despite what you see in the movies you actually don't see very much. I used to say, "You see bugger all and fire at it." You don't see very much. And you'll get little fleeting glimpses of people. And I don't know what some of the, you know maybe in World War I fellows saw them all advancing and so forth but tropical warfare

12:30 is a different kettle of fish. I remember once I was in an ambush and a bloke came along and there's a certain, heightened sense when you're on operations and you can, you can call it a sixth sense for want of a better word but, I think it's just a way that your normal senses are exacerbated or

13:00 more sensitive. And this bloke was coming along and I could see that he had perspiration - it was actually that side - perspiration running down the side of his face there. And I had my weapon there and I was going to spring the ambush. And I was going to wait and then nudge my bloke next to me to fire a Claymore mine to start off 'cause it's the best way.

13:30 And all of a sudden he twigged I was there. I could, I could just see the tension - all of a sudden it just tensed and of course I shot him. And I thought, "Yeah and you could actually see the perspiration running down the side of his cheek". And that was the way he went. It's an interesting thing in ambush. You can detach yourself a bit.

14:00 If you are tensed or excited ... There is a certain tension we all generate I think. And one of the things I've noticed is that if you can calm yourself down and separate your thoughts from your physical sort of being it's very helpful.

14:30 Particularly if you're in an area where there's lots of mosquitoes. Mosquitoes will tend to leave you alone if you're not excited. And I remember on ambush I used to try and put myself in this - I don't know for want of a better word, alpha state. To separate myself from what was going on so that I'm not transmitting any buzzes of energy if you like. At the same time

15:00 remaining alert so that if anyone comes by you're able to zap them without them twigging you. Because people in those combat situations are very, very sensitive. Like you'll be going through the scrub and all of a sudden you'll say, "Shit, they're near." And you won't go much further and you'll have a contact. There is something, now whether it's the sound you pick up or something which

15:30 impinges on you, which registers. And the more you have of that the less likely it is that someone's going to zap you 'cause you're aware of what's going on. Now that's only the local theory on it, I don't

know if it's true or not but that's how I feel about it. Mmm, and like that fellow going by you know - he all of a sudden twigged or it seemed he did. Yeah.

Early we were talking about actually seeing the man

16:00 **that you kill and when that weighed heavily on you and you went into the example of this guy that walked past.**

Well I still remember him. But I'm not sure if that weighs as heavily as calling in the artillery fire on those blokes who were on stretchers. For example I knocked over

16:30 a battalion commander and his executive officer, a North Vietnamese battalion commander and his executive officer. We were in an operation and we'd just had a resupply and then the fit hit the shan [shit hit the fan] and it, it was an absolutely horrendous day. And at one stage I said look I'll call in a dust off helicopter but I need that ridge secured which was about 250 metres away. They sent troops down to secure it, down

17:00 the re-entry and then up the other side and as they got to the re-entry, they got in a big fight because there was an NVA battalion in there. And as they did that, they - obviously the headquarters group decided to make a break for it. And they were on the other side of the ridge - opposite us and I spotted them. And I, I fired at them and I was the only one firing at them and knocked over two of them.

17:30 And it turned out to be the battalion commander and his executive officer. Now that was fine. You know I knocked them over but that didn't, or hasn't worried me. And I - part and parcel of the deal. Some worry you, some don't. Yeah. Got some very interesting information. There's a real story in that. We then, when we knocked those blokes over the fight was still going down in the re-entry.

18:00 We continued on with that. By the end of the fight it was about 9 o'clock at night. The original two people that I'd called the dust off for, and I wasn't going to call until I got - had in fact died and we had 8 other dead I think and some casualties. And I was trying to evacuate them

18:30 and the weather was coming down. The cloud was coming in at night. I had them fire flares from one of the bases, not far away to illuminate the ground for the helicopters. The dust off were coming in to pick up the casualties. And they were trying to get up the valley and as they were the cloud was coming down. And I had a strobe light which flashes you know and I used to carry it as part of my

19:00 escape navigation gear. And I had that sitting on my head and I had the radio handset and a compass. And I was shooting bearings on these helicopters to direct them in, you know. They're 180 [degrees] so it's "360, 360 keep coming, keep coming". And the weather just socked in we couldn't do anything. And we couldn't get them out until the next day and I think a couple had died by then. And that was

19:30 heartbreaking stuff. You know they were my little binchies.

What's a binchy sorry?

Oh, a binchy is an ARVN soldier. Yeah, an ARVN soldier - private binchy. Private.

You must have lost a few mates. People who were close. Some were closer than others? How did you feel when you lost a mate?

Well it's interesting that

20:00 somehow rather you put up with that I think. If they've gone out in a fight somewhere well, that's what they were doing, it was their job, that's what they were doing. I, I - when I was with the Vietnamese we lost many more than when I was with the Australians, many, many more. And that used to be just

20:30 horrendous. These poor little buggers because they were not well paid, they were not well equipped. They were fighting an enemy that was - had shorter supply lines. All we had was American air and that was fine provided it wasn't cloudy. As soon as it was cloudy we had nothing. And it was these poor little buggers, I used to feel so sorry for them. And we'd wrap them up and put them in ponchos and carry them until we could get

21:00 get them out by helicopter. Heart rending stuff. We had one bloke up in the DMZ. We had a 106 recoilless rifle, 106 RCL it's called. It's a thing about 8 foot long, maybe 11 foot long or something. And it has what's called a BBD - a back blast danger area. If you load this thing and fire it, and the reason it recoils is because all this power goes out the back as well as out the front. We had one of our

21:30 binchies cleaning this thing. And there's a safety called the breach, operating lever safety and this thing was on safe. And he closed the breach, which means that the thing's armed. And there's an auxiliary firing device on it and he was rubbing and cleaning it and he obviously got the little lanyard that was on it and tugged it and it went off. "Whoomp!" And it shredded him, it absolutely shredded

22:00 him. In fact we put him in a ration box 'bout yay big, what was left of him. And the Vietnamese said to me, "Oh Chunwai, we get one rocket." I said, "No we didn't get a rocket." "You get rocket." I said, "Why we get rocket." Meaning an NVA enemy action. I said, "Why do we get rocket?" He said, "Well if we say it's an accident his wife gets nothing, if we say it's a rocket or an enemy action

- 22:30 she gets a year's salary immediately paid to her". "Then she gets one month's salary a year to live on and a ration card." And I said, "Sure you know." So I called in, "Budgie this is budgie Zulu, we've just worn a 120 Tumo rocket and we've got 1 KIA, 1 friendly KIA". "Pull out". And reported, and called it in. But you know
- 23:00 that poor little bugger, his family got bugger all. That was tough, tough, yeah. I remember once when I - second time I was in Vietnam and I'd gone down to Vung Tau to see a mate of mine. Paddy Ford who was in hospital, who'd been hit with a mortar. Paddy was in fact a World War II Burma veteran. And I went to see Paddy and
- 23:30 I was walking into see him. Some young diggers came walking out and there's a bloke in a wheelchair with, a drip into him and a leg - part of a leg missing, part of an arm missing. A red headed, a young red headed bloke. And as he came out I thought, "Yeah - no".
- 24:00 "We shouldn't be doing that to young Australians". Mmm. Yeah. So from time to time and you know like now it comes back to you and gets you.

Did it make you think about your own mortality?

Fortunately I was immortal. It's interesting you ask that question because - and I've looked back over it. There are sometimes

- 24:30 when - there was a time once when we were going to evacuate some people and as the helicopter was coming in, in came a mortar round which - there were about six of us and it killed two and wounded three. I wore a tiny little bit of shrapnel in my shoulder which I didn't even know about and I never reported it. I'm really cross about that - it should've been reported as WIA [wounded in action].
- 25:00 And it blew me over and I had my pack on and it got caught on a stump of a bush, I was lying there. And this helicopter just landed and the tail rotor came along. And it was buzzing just, you know incredibly noisy and I thought I was going to be cut in two by this thing. That was a wee bit twitchy, I was a wee bit twitchy then. And I remember one other time this bastard was firing a 12.7 machine, gun equivalent of 50 cal [calibre]. And
- 25:30 it was knocking down the scrub and there was a little binchy and I - and we're sort of lying there and the stuff's throwing dirt and trees and branches and all sorts of things. Being hit by the round. And I thought, "Shit if we don't move we're gone, we're absolutely gone". And I rolled left and I think he rolled right, I don't know. I never did see him again. And that was a couple of times. And every now and then you think, "Oh this is it". But generally no,
- 26:00 generally no. Now I think if you think too much about your own mortality you wouldn't do the job.

Well you weren't much of a religious man. Did you ever think of God in those times?

No not really, not really. If things were really getting tough I used to think about my folks and how they would, would handle it and what they'd expect me to - yeah and that sustained me. No I didn't become religious. You know, "no atheists in fox holes".

26:30 **What about comedians?**

Fortunately there are a few of those and I think that, that takes things, makes things so much better, during a fight. Tet Offensive fight. Bloke on one of the companies - they're attacking a position. Half way through it the fit hits the shan [shit hits the fan] and this bloke goes to ground. And he goes to ground in the camp's shit pit.

- 27:00 And he's there in it. And one of them said, "What's it like?" And he said, "Fucking lovely." After the fight they got him out and two days later they had to evacuate him. Because no-one would go near him because he stunk so much. They, oh - "Make him forward scout, make him tail end Charlie, just don't put him anywhere near me". They had to get him out, he just stunk so much.

And they couldn't clean him?

- 27:30 Well there was no way of cleaning himself. How was he going to clean himself? What's he going to clean himself with? He's got his water bottle and that's it. You're not going to waste them on cleaning yourself, you waste them on drinking. Yeah.

That's terrible cruel. Were you a fatalist then? Did you - ever think of the idea of a bullet

28:00 **has your name on it?**

No. No I never did, I never did. I thought that way - in Australia - remember I went back to Vietnam someone said to me, "You're going back there to be killed, aren't you?" And soon as the first round went off and I was in contact, no I wasn't there to be killed. I was there to kill some other poor bugger, I wasn't there to be killed myself. Pretty strong survival instincts right through our family.

- 28:30 Yeah so no I wasn't fatalist, I never thought - there were times when you'd become so tired that you'd become frail I suspect. But having said that, no no I don't think there was any time I thought, "Now in this next operation I'm going to wear it", that sort of thing.

Well having said that, I mean after your first tour in Malay, it was fairly lively?

Not many contacts.

29:00 Not many contacts with the bad guys but a lot of bush time. Lot of bush time.

I mean altogether you've got three tours there.

Two tours in Malaya.

Yeah. And two tours in Vietnam sorry, four altogether. You weren't not keen were you?

Oh no no, well that was my job, that's what I did. When you work it out, longer than World War II on operations. World War II lasted what, five years and ten months or something.

29:30 Eleven months. Longer in operations. Yeah yeah, longer than World War II. I in fact volunteered for a third tour of Vietnam but - once I was commissioned. But they wouldn't send me back. Probably just as well.

When was that?

Well now that was 1970 so I could have gone back in 1971, late 1971 and still had a bit of time on operations.

30:00 I have a real theory about this and an example was Johnny Pettit, Spider Pettit. John and I had served in Malaya together and he'd then gone to SAS [Special Air Service] and served in Borneo. And he'd served in Vietnam and he'd been blinded once when a battery exploded and partially blinded him temporarily. He'd been hit in the guts once.

30:30 And he was leading an attack on the 10th April 1970 when he was hit and killed. Yeah wore one through the head. And yet if you expose yourself enough eventually it will catch up with you. That's just the law of chance, you know if you expose yourself enough eventually it'll catch up with you.

31:00 Yeah and it caught up with John.

In that sense by comparison do you see yourself as a cautious person?

No.

By comparison with other soldiers?

No. No. I did my job. I didn't think about - "Oh should we do this or should we do that", in terms of security and safety. I thought about it in terms of getting the job done. But no. No.

31:30 I wouldn't, I wouldn't do stupid things you know. I'd use my brains. Because you know the idea of being in a war is to kill the other bloke, not get killed yourself.

Not stupid but did you do anything reckless perhaps?

From time to time I probably did. You've got, you've got to show your diggers that you can handle what's going on.

32:00 I remember a couple of times that I, I perhaps should've been a little more cautious in, in taking out a clearing patrol. As soon as we had a contact with a battalion in Vietnam you would then take out a clearing patrol and you'd clear, sweep the battlefield. And a couple of times I did that and it was probably a wee bit quick. And the diggers you know, all said, "Jesus Christ this bloke's not dead." "Whack whack." "He is now."

32:30 "Now keep going". That sort of stuff. Yeah. It was interesting, I had one of my diggers talk to me, oh some little time ago. And he said, "I'll never forget you Jock." He said, "When Imrak, Imrak ... He said, "When Hennie was nearly killed, you laughed." What had happened, we'd had a half patrol out. Ray.

33:00 And he'd spotted the VC and the VC spotted him and they both fired a burst and the VC's burst went through his bush hat, tore it off him, knocked him on his back but didn't hurt him. And he came to me - I was the sergeant at the time and he said, "I think I need to put in an L and D report on this. L and D - Loss and damage. And I said, "No I don't think you need. Hang on to it I'll get you a fresh one." And he said, "Oh I should." He was a New South

33:30 Welshman and he said, "I should take a ticket in the lottery," And I said, "Ray, Ray, don't bother." He said, "Why not?" I said, "You've just had all the luck you're going to get". "On your way." And yet as I said to Blue when I was talking about it some years later he said, "And you laughed." And I said, "What was I supposed to do?" "What would you have rather I did, when he came and told me he nearly got killed". "What was I supposed to

34:00 say?" The short answer is you're not. That's the way to go, otherwise it gets too much, it gets too much. It's like if you've got to bag the bodies. Don't - your diggers will see you like that and that'll just destroy them. You've got to balance out a wee bit. Yeah.

34:30 **I wanted to ask you a little bit more about Malaya. One of the things I heard about Malaya because of the nature of the jungle it's very, very quiet.**

Whisper to each other.

And did you have signals at all?

We

35:00 used hand signals. And ... you don't want that one, that's the enemy. That's one alright, it's friendly. And I remember when we came back from Malaya a bloke called Bill Diggy and I we were sitting on a settee at home. And my brother was sitting in between us, my younger brother and he couldn't understand what was going on. Because as soon as we

35:30 it was interesting, when we were in Malaya as soon as we came back and had a few tubes we would start whispering again because that's what we did when we were in the jungle. So we'd be sitting there whispering. Yeah, and the jungle despite what you see is very quiet and particularly by day it's remarkably quiet. And you can hear what's going on. I regard Malaya as being very fortunate to be in Malaya so much and out in the jungle so much.

36:00 I got to see so much of nature undisturbed without the influence of anything else. We'd be in a very small patrol and we wouldn't disturb the jungle. And we didn't walk on tracks and things like that. And so I took that as a real benefit, a real bonus seeing all the wildlife and things like that. And oh every now and then, "Oh Christ another bloody hill". That sort of stuff.

36:30 **Yeah it's a strange irony that often gets used in films and books and so on that, mankind at its worst is often thrust up against nature at its best.**

Yes it is isn't it. Yes that's true. I remember once we were back in - they have these, I think they're howling monkeys, "Whoop whoop whoop whoop whoop". We were back in Sydney and it'd be

37:00 1959, 1960. And - at a pub and there were all these engineers there who'd been in Malaya at the same time. And one started at one end of the pub doing this "Whoop whoop". And the other started the other. And they took it up and they did it very cleverly and you'd swear to God you were in the midst of a troop of howling monkeys just as they're settling down at night. It brought the hairs up on the back of my neck. I thought, "God!"

37:30 **Are there any other sounds or visions, you mentioned the clouds, but are there any other things that have such strong associations that you feel like you're back there?**

There's one - God help me I was only 19, and why is it that the chopper brings out - we're not far from Moorabbin Aerodrome and I always know when an Iroquois's going. I always

38:00 know. Like ah, an Iroquois. And I always know that, the sound of the choppers sticks with you. A good sound.

It's a good sound?

Good sound yeah. 'Cause generally it meant they're coming to pick up you wounded, they're coming to get you, they're bringing in fire support. Good sound. Yeah like that. Choppers are alright.

It's funny that 'cause I would've thought that as well. 'Cause generally it was like, thank God.

"Yoo hoo, here they come".

38:30 And don't stand in the way of a digger who's trying to get in a chopper I tell you. And that great feeling when you come into a chopper and you're heading back to base and quite often what they'd do is they'd fly low as come into contour. Great feeling, great feeling. In fact the most exciting thing you can do I think is, is if you're in a helicopter assault.

39:00 Tet Offensive - we went in there and we'd 2 AMC's - 2 Australian Mobile Companies, 20 choppers in each company. So 40 choppers land. We've got gun ships on either side, firing suppressive fire. All this sort of thing, rockets going on. Talk about exciting, woo hoo. It beats a good shot at golf I tell you, but not by much.

39:30 **Okay look I'll ask you a bit more about Tet in a little bit but are there any other things that have strong associations. Maybe smells?**

Yes smell, I mentioned smell about Jackie Potts and Bennie Hallard and they were the two blokes I buried. I was on the burial party for them in Malaya, June 1967, 1957 sorry, June 1957. 'Cause they'd lain out in the bush for quite a while and the coffin there was a smell of wet blankets.

40:00 Whenever I smell something similar to that it just goes "Bonk" - and it's straight back. I think it's the most evocative of our senses. There's a movie called Private Ryan and there's a horrendous scene when they land on Omaha [landing beach for D-Day offensive] and they, the blood and all the rest of it. The only thing that's missing is the smell, the smell of the fresh blood and the smell of the explosives. Because that's all part and parcel of it

40:30 but that's missing, that's the only thing that's missing.

And fresh dirt too?

Yeah. Yeah that sort of dirt and earth and mixed up with explosives and fresh blood that sort of stuff. Yeah.

Tape 8

00:34 **In Malay did you have much contact or did you ever work with the British?**

Yes, in fact in the brigade there was a British Battalion, a Kiwi Battalion and an Australian Battalion. We largely had our own areas of operation but periodically you'd come close together just during an emergency. Afterwards in the second tour of Malaya when we were not on operations we'd work together on

01:00 exercises and it was all right. The Brits helped us out once when Fred Wallen was wounded, the Lincolnshire's. In fact Fred, I think it was the 11th of February, actually Tet, it was Tet, Chinese New Year, about 10 years before the big one. And Fred got wounded and Taffy and I went out and got help and they were

01:30 just about to go home, The Brits, and they got together a platoon and they came back with us and we got Fred out which was pretty good of them.

Now a lot of Malaya from my understanding was searching and I guess counter insurgency, controlling the villages. Did you have a lot of

02:00 **difficulty with villages?**

No, not really, our contact with them was relatively infrequent, we'd do the odd co-ordinated search. I remember a co-ordinated search of Salak North and we were up to our thighs in water standing there most of the night and inside the village the lights were on and there was

02:30 some sort of juke box or something and Teacher's Pet was being played. Doris Day singing Teacher's Pet. I know every word to that still. But most of our operations in Malaya were out in the scrub. Very few were around the towns, very few. I think earlier on there had been but for us in our particular areas we were out in the weeds.

03:00 **We were talking before about nature but what sort of wildlife did you see in Malaya?**

Oh, monkeys of course and particularly the gibbons. They were just beautiful they way they would just go through the trees casually reaching out, 30 or 40 ft casually reaching out grabbing a little branch and then springing off and going further. Quite a few elephants in those days, the odd tiger,

03:30 a black leopard as I said. A couple of interesting stories - at night we used to put our weapon - we'd cut four sticks and put them in the ground and slip our weapon on there. And a mate of mine was there and it was night time, pitch black because it is, it really literally is, you cannot see that in front of you in the jungle, and then there was this noise nearby so he put his hand out to his weapon and put it over a little furry paw.

04:00 Apparently this monkey had come down through curiosity and was feeling his way around. There were two enormous screams and the monkey went up the tree and he's got his poncho over his head. Another time, the second tour of Vietnam, I had a new forward scout, a nice bloke, Gary Johns, and we were coming down off this ridge and this bit of creek, quiet creek, and there was a

04:30 splash and he said "It's a crocodile". And I said "No, Gary, it's one of the very large lizards they have here". And of course we used to push them around in the jungle. "It's one of the very large lizards you have out here, blah blah blah". And I said "Just keep going". And I said "I think they're monitor lizards etc. etc.". And we went across this creek and up the other side. And some years later we were talking, we were at a reunion, he said

05:00 "I'll never forget once Jock, we were coming down there and I swore it was a crocodile and you told me it was a big lizard blah blah blah". He said "What was it?" I said "A crocodile". He said "Jesus Christ". I said "If I'd have told you it was a crocodile would you have gone over". "No way". I said "There you are we got across and we're fine". I remember there were these little

05:30 squirrels and Spider Pettit, the bloke who was later killed in Vietnam, he got this little squirrel type thing and he used to take it out in the bush and everywhere. And very sadly, he woke up one morning and he had rolled on it during the night and the poor little buggger got killed. But it was a gorgeous little thing, he used to take it down the canteen and feed it stuff and so forth, lovely it was. Yes, so elephants

06:00 were around, you know, the mother, the aunty and the baby and they'd go through the jungle. Oh God,

you don't get in their way, you don't get in their way.

You had a dog in Malaya as well?

Yes, yes, Snoopy. I somehow or other acquired Snoopy. Snoopy was destined for horrible things, I suspect Snoopy would have been eaten had I not rescued him. And he lived with us, he lived in my hutch and he was

06:30 gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous. And I'd go down, when we were in the scrub, not in the scrub when we were in the canteen and I'd sit there with a can of beer for example and he would sit with his nose in between my feet with his head sticking out and I'd have a sip of beer there and the drops would come down and they'd drop on his nose and he'd go "Brrrrrr". So I'd push him to the side and I'd say "Now stay there". So he'd stay there

07:00 and as soon as I took my eyes off him he'd wheel back into the centre and "Brrrrrr", push. And when it came time for me to come home I thought now, "All right, I'll pass Snoopy on", so I gave him to a family, an Australian family that were going to be living there, and he ran away and came back twice. Then I gave him to a bar girl I knew and he bit her.

07:30 For some reason he had turned against Asians. For example we used to have "Smiley", the ice cream man used to come around the camp, a Magnolia man, and he was there one day and I was sitting just outside my hutch and he was sitting beside me and Smiley came by and he was a good bloke and all of a sudden the dog takes off and runs over and goes "bonk" and bites Smiley. And in the end I had to take him down and get him put away and it broke my heart. Still does

08:00 and that's 40 years.

A good dog is a good dog?

Oh yes he was lovely and he absolutely adored me and I him, I him.

That reminds me because you mentioned that when you actually worked with some of the locals in Malaya that it changed your own views of Asians?

More in Vietnam, more in Vietnam, because when I was with the

08:30 Vietnamese we went out on operations together, we did everything together, we were under the same dangers, I was mostly on my own the only round eye with them and they were stunning, they looked after me and I looked after them and it took away any prejudice I had against, with Asians. I'd see them in exactly the same light that I see anybody else, good, bad, indifferent, you know. There are goodies, there are

09:00 baddies there are all sorts of things.

Prior to that what were your thoughts?

Prior to that I probably had some - when I was down in Phuoc Tuy province and I saw that we were doing most of the work and the Vietnamese weren't doing as much work, you know, in terms of going out in the bush and so forth, I probably thought, "Pack of lazy bastards". Now, I probably would have still had that view

09:30 had I not worked with the Vietnamese. There's probably a little bit of racism in most of us, it's a tribal thing isn't it, different tribes.

Well you come from a very white country, moved to a very white country, you would have had very little contact with people of different races?

No, and in Australia in those days, with the policies that they had, however despicable they might have been that was the policies.

10:00 It's interesting, I find that since World War II, well including World War II, our enemies have been Asians. There was the islands, the Japanese. There's Korea, the Chinese. There's Malaya, the Chinese. There's Borneo, the Indos. There's Vietnam, the Vietnamese.

10:30 And so there is this long pattern of fighting Asians. I was fortunate because I actually worked with the Asians I got it in a different perspective and you find that the training team blokes are like that. Most of the others are not, the training team blokes are particularly like that.

All right, now, let's get on to

11:00 **Vietnam and I'm not quite sure where we got up to, but let me just ask you about the Tet Offensive, build it up a little bit and tell us about the time?**

The Tet Offensive of course was in January/February 1968. We were there and we had just finished an operation called Operation Duntroon which I think finished around about the

11:30 20th of January and the word was that we were going to have a break in camp which mean that we were going to be filling sand bags and digging things but we were going to have a break. And all of a

sudden the CSM said to me, Company Sergeant Major said, "I'll need a strength, stat" (the strength of your platoon for operations) "I'll need it

- 12:00 by this afternoon". I thought, "What the Christ is going on? I thought we were going to have a break?" Anyway, at Battalion briefing at Porkie 7, Porkie 7 was a landing zone, a helicopter landing zone, and it was called Porkie 7 because we were the 7th Battalion and we were the pigs (that's another story). So we got there and we got a briefing from a bloke called Roger Peditt, you've heard me talk about Johnny Peditt, Roger was his
- 12:30 brother and he was a captain in the intelligence corps and Roger gave us the briefing on what was to be the Tet Offensive. And I thought when I heard this briefing I thought, "Shit" we're up against 273 Regiment, NVA Regiment, 274 and maybe 275, 88 Alpha which was an artillery regiment and ancillary troops and bigger than anything we'd tackled
- 13:00 before and we were going up to Bien Hoa province to fight them. So I decided I would keep a diary of that operation and that diary is now in the War Memorial in Canberra. But it was an interesting operation we started on - I think they sent up a ground convoy on the 23rd and we flew in on the 24th,
- 13:30 26th something like that, it might have been a little bit later because we were on the ground before the Tet Offensive actually started and it appears that what happened is that the NVA had come in and they had swept past where we landed so we weren't there in time to intercept them, just some stuff still coming through and we had several days of fighting there. And then
- 14:00 we got a bit of a lull for a day or so and then we got them on the way out and that was very intensive and we were fighting every day, most of the day. We were up against the NVA and they were good, they were good. The couple of things that come to mind, I was a platoon sergeant at this time and I had a platoon
- 14:30 commander called Wally, Wally - anyway, Wally and I were sweeping in an assault and Wally had been carrying an M79 grenade launcher and we'd knocked this bloke over who had an AK47 and I said to Wally, I said "Wally, for Christ sake stop carrying that grenade launcher because it doesn't arm for about 40 ft". I said "You want
- 15:00 something you can fire" and I gave him the AK47 and I said "Use that". And so he did and anyway we were having this attack and we got separate and I heard the burst of AKs and I went "Bang, bang, bang" and it was Wally, fortunately I missed him. Wally Harris - I didn't tell him that until some years later. He said "You rotten bastard". So at one stage we're
- 15:30 attacking these bunkers and I pulled the grenade and the pin and I'm trying to throw it in the bunker and of course it's very deep, I couldn't get it in so I check that side and I couldn't get it in there and the other side and I said, "Now what the hell are we going to do with this"", and there was this burst of fire and it went "Crackle, crackle" right past me and I thought, bugger it, and hurled it in and off it went. Anyway, someone said "There's someone in that bunker, I
- 16:00 saw them go in". And I said, "Well, we'll grenade buggery out of it". And Wally said "No, no, I'll might go in and see if I can get them". I said "Wally, for Christ's sake, blah blah". So anyway, Wally went in and I take my hat off to Wally, to get this bloke and I said, "Hang on a minute, Here's my 9 mil" because he didn't have a pistol. And in he went and there was a
- 16:30 bloke in there. He said "I can see a bloke", and Peter Stokes who's a mate of mine, he was a company commander and he said, "Save him if you can, Wally". And I said "Shoot him if you can, Wally". He said, "I can see his leg sticking out". So I said "Lean around the corner and shoot him up the ass". Anyway, Stokes is saying "Save him if you can" and Wally jumps on this bloke and dragged him out, he was an NVA soldier, with a little nick in his chin. Oh that's right, before that
- 17:00 Wally had said "Throw in a smoke grenade". I said "Wally, if we throw in a smoke grenade it will take ages to clear blah blah blah". "Oh, throw it in". "All right then" so I threw it, it went off and this poor bloke when we dragged him out, still alive of course, had yellow where the smoke was around his lips and he'd been breathing it in and he had a little nick on his chin, I reckon that was my grenade. Dragged him out and sent him on his way,
- 17:30 got him out on the chopper and apparently he blabbed and said we were in the midst of 275 Regiment which we knew very well by that time. There were a couple of really sad things happened there. One of our blokes had gone on R & R, you know, you'd get five days R & R when you were in Vietnam, one of our blokes had gone on R & R and he came back and there was no LZ [Landing Zone] so the chopper was above the trees and they winched him in
- 18:00 and as they winched him in, the winch snapped, the cable snapped and down he came. And if he'd gone a little left or a little right he'd have been all right but he landed right on the edge of a pit. And Charlie Murdoch he was a medic, Charlie Murdoch was our medic, he was a good medic and Charlie's saying, "We've got to save him, we've got to save him". And Wally's saying "No, he's gone". The poor bastard was gone, you know, he had blood coming out of his eyes and all the rest of it and Charlie's saying, "No, we can save him".
- 18:30 "No, Charlie he's gone". And he was poor bugger, it was very sad, very sad. And then we had a - it was

a tough old day this - we had a patrol clash. 4 Platoon and 6 Platoon were out, and we were 5 Platoon and we were manning the company perimeter and 4 Platoon came up unexpectedly on our perimeter and I had just got word,

- 19:00 "Zero Alpha this is 2/1", which is 4 Platoon, "We are 600 metres from your position". Zero Alpha said "Roger 2/2 echo over". And I was 2/2 you see, I said "2/2 echo". I put the handset down, I had a brew, had a sip and just got up to go to brief my blokes and what had happened was that they were actually on the edge of the perimeter, now we'd had the NVA walking in on
- 19:30 us throughout the previous few days. 4 Platoon had come right up on us and they could see movement, some movement, which of course was us. So what happened was the forward section, he spread his section out into an assault formation. My blokes, which there was 3 of them, saw they'd moved into assault formation and thought, "Shit, here they come again". So they opened up with a
- 20:00 Claymore. The next thing it was "2/2 contact we're out, 2/1 contact we're out". And I thought, "Oh shit" and I go "Check fire", and the firing petered out on both sides and we'd hit six of 4 Platoon, we didn't kill any but we hit 6 of 4 Platoon. Out of the first 7 we hit six of them and there was a
- 20:30 young bloke, Mad Tag, the machine gunner and he'd been hit in the mouth and blood was trickling down his chin and he was still manning his machine gun and I said "How're you doing" and he managed to say "All right, sir" and I said "Good work", because you know he'd got stuck in and he was on the other -what was then the other side briefly and he got stuck in and the volume of fire that came in; I thought
- 21:00 "Shit" that's what it must be like fighting us, because we put up quite a significant volume of fire. Quite often the volume of fire that came back would be heavy but often it wasn't really low because it's the low shots that get you, but this fire came back and it was ground stuff, you know. That's why I slithered in the hole; "Contact we're down". And it was our blokes and I thought, shit, no wonder they don't like us, our fire is very deadly.
- 21:30 And you know we knocked over 6 of 4 Platoon. And this young Mad Tag, a Western Australian bloke he is, I met him and his wife many years afterwards and she was talking to me. She said (I think his name is Graham) "He's still very concerned that he fired on his own blokes". So I had a word to him and I said "Look, you acted in the best way a digger could, you did a first class job".
- 22:00 **There's probably a lot of things that people dwell on over the years and they felt they didn't quite act in the right way?**
- Yes, he felt guilty about it but in fact he did a very good job, I said to him, "You should have been proud of yourself, it wasn't your fault". It wasn't his fault, it wasn't.
- So that was a tough old day?**
- 22:30 Yes, yes.
- So what happened after that?**
- All right. It was good then we just had a lot of fights and we kept punching on for about another week and then we pulled in and then 3 Battalion came up and relieved us which was very, very good. I think
- 23:00 on reflection we were getting very, very tired. We'd been in the country about nine months and we were starting to get a bit tired in terms of combat and so forth. Yes, and we came back and I'm pleased we did because I feel we would have had a few more casualties had we not. We came back and we did another couple of
- 23:30 operations and that went through until about the - I came home on the 20th of March 1968, when I mentioned earlier about Frank Frigerio one of my diggers how he and I were in contact and three days later he's in a pub in Bendigo and the contrast was just bizarre. I remember when I came home I'd meet with this mate of mine, Ron Siggs, that we'd go to Pub X, Pub A and Pub B.
- 24:00 And we'd be leaving Pub A and I'd stop and I'd be looking around and he'd say, "For Christ's sake, Jock, you don't have your rifle with you". And what it was, in Vietnam your weapon is never further away than that, and I was looking for it. We'd go to the pub and I'd stand up and the first thing, being a Scotsman, I'd tap my wallet to make sure that was all right, "Oh, that's OK" and it was always worrying me and that's what it was, I was looking for my rifle.
- 24:30 It's hard to make those adjustments. They're little adjustments but it's hard to make them.
- But it is one of the things that characterises the Vietnam War that it was only a plane ride away and you could be back in complete normality and the whole nation wasn't at war so most people wouldn't have any idea what was going on?**
- In fact the army are facing this sort of thing right at the moment. We've got troops in East Timor who are now on their third
- 25:00 tour - all right there's no great combat going on there but it's very tough work and families are being

disrupted. We were having the same thing, Vietnam in the main lasted about six years. It was actually a bit longer but the bulk of our deployment was over six years and most ranks had done two tours and the chance of a third coming up. It was destroying families and things. My first tour, my

25:30 wife shot through and probably a good thing in many ways, the best thing that happened to both of us, but I know lots of others where the same thing happened. I know of one case where a bloke I suspect topped himself because of that, pretty horrendous stuff.

Because his wife left him?

Yes. He was due home, I remember, I won't mention any names because he's got kids and stuff that are still alive, and I came back from the

26:00 Tet Offensive and I said, I went up to - because I knew he was going home and I said, "Where's so and so?" and I said, "I can't see so and so tonight where is he?" There was a pause and I said, "No, don't tell me". "Yeah". And I said, "But he was going home he shouldn't have been out on ops [operations]". They said, "No, he wasn't". It reminds me of when I was with the

26:30 Vietnamese in Quang Tri. We used to go down to the officers' club in Quang Tri and there'd be pilots and so forth who flew the forward air controller planes [FACs] and a young bloke called 'Skip' Klug - and I'd come home and the Americans used to play darts, this is the first time I've ever seen Americans play darts and the only time and I'd come home here to Melbourne and I took back a dozen sets of

27:00 darts. And when I got back I said "this is a special set for Skip", because you know darts are various weights the big heavy ones are called bombers. Now Skip had been a jet jockey [jet pilot] before he took over as a FAC and he hated bombers, and they said "Skip's no longer with us" and I said, "Christ, what happened?" And they said "We don't know, he just disappeared". And he was taking a plane down to Da Nang and, you know, he had been up in the DMZ and he'd been in all sorts of

27:30 shit when things were happening and here he was taking a plane down to Da Nang and just flew into the cliff. They didn't find his body until some time later, horrendous stuff, poor bugger.

Why do you think that was, was it an accident or?

No idea, absolutely no idea.

Did you know any guys that cracked it or just couldn't take it any more?

We had, during,

28:00 during the Tet Offensive, we had one of our blokes basically break down and it's interesting no one in the platoon said a word against him because he might have broken, we were all that far. And we got back to Nui Dat and he was there

28:30 and he just was reabsorbed into the platoon and no one, never mentioned it, it was just not because we were all there, we were all that close.

Well how did it happen, what did he do?

It was just when he was just about to stand to and I could hear this noise in the platoon and I thought, "What the Christ is going on there?" It's got to take something pretty unusual for there to be noise because the one thing we are is quiet in the scrub and this

29:00 bloke, I could hear what sounded like laughing and crying. And I got Charlie Murdoch to hit him with something and it seemed to settle him down and we evacuated him the next morning. He'd just had enough, had enough, it got to him. You used to find the odd Vietnamese would break up because they had years of

29:30 combat and he'd be talking to you and all of a sudden something would twig and the tears would just roll down and of course they had nothing, they just went back and kept on going and going, very tough.

Now I wanted to ask you, when you came upon enemy soldiers or camps that you'd captured I know that

30:00 **often you would take the weapons and so on but did you ever take souvenirs or?**

No, I didn't, interestingly enough, what I'd do is just gather all the stuff, throw it in a sand bag with a tag of where it came from and so forth and the next time we got a chopper in I'd throw it on board and back it would go. And a young bloke called Jim Wall, a good young bloke,

30:30 he became, I promoted him and made him a Lance Jack and we were in an ambush and these blokes came down, instead of walking down the track like they were supposed to so we could easily knock them over, they were, he said, "Like the demo platoon at Canungra", they were walking down one on the track and one on 20 metres either side searching their arcs, and Jim said "I could hear noises from the sound of our ambush" and he thought if

31:00 I could hear noises they could hear noises. And he was sitting there and Jim used to have a tremble, a tremor, just normally, just tension, nothing else, and he said "I just put my hand on my weapon, brought

it up and went whack, whack, and dropped this bloke". And I said "Any sign of a tremor there, Jim?" And he said "No". I said "That's interesting". So, one of them went by me and I thought I'd got him but I missed the mongrel.

31:30 And we did a sweep and I was searching him and he had about 1100 piastas on him so I said to Jim "Here you are". He said "What's that?" I said, "That's payment for killing this bloke". He said "Oh, shit". I said "Hang on to it, it's a souvenir, it's money". Yeah, yeah, but I'm sure people did collect souvenirs I never did. We had a Vietcong flag that we'd got out of one of the places

32:00 but they never had anything worthwhile, I'm sure if they'd had something. When I was with the Vietnamese, the 122 millimetre rockets that they used to fire at us from time to time, I got a sight, which is this beautiful box with all these little optical things. So I sent it in to Quong Tri and I said, "Send that south it should go to the War Memorial" and of course it disappeared on route, bastards,

32:30 it disappeared.

Now did you have much contact with the hospitals in Vietnam?

Not on my first tour, no. Not much at all, I never was in hospital. The second tour I only had contact with a Medical Evacuation Hospital which is a bit like M*A*S*H [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital; also a US television program], that was great. There were 100,000

33:00 Americans in ICOR [infantry combat regiment] and there were 13 Australians and about 16 nurses and it was very nice.

How did you get on with the nurses?

Very well, very well, they were charming ladies, delightful.

And what about the Americans, did you ever have contact with them?

Well when I was on the team, yes, yes, we had

33:30 Americans, we worked with Americans a team, an advisory group for a battalion was four people, it was a captain, a lieutenant and two sergeants usually and they would be Americans. Now with Australians it would be - sorry, in that team if there was an Australian there, there would be a captain, an Australian warrant officer, and two sergeants and so we worked. And the blokes I worked with in the main were

34:00 first class, not all that professional in many ways. A lovely bloke from Sandstone in Minnesota called John Jackson, very brave young man, geez he wasn't a very good soldier but he was very brave, he'd do the right thing all the time and he'd put himself in harm's way. Sometimes I had to call the artillery for him because he didn't know how to call the artillery, that sort of thing.

34:30 Americans I found to be incredibly brave but didn't seem to have a grasp of counter insurgency. We had one bloke, gunnie Pete, was a marine gunnery sergeant, and I was talking to him one day and he said, "God dammit sir, they're held up with small arms fire". I said, "Yeah, gunnie, I've been held up with small arms fire". He said, "Small arms fire don't hold you up, sir". I thought "Shit, It's held me up a few times" but he was a real marine this bloke.

35:00 But in the main they were all right, the pilots were first class. I got on well with the doctors and nurses. The FAC, forward air controllers, they were all fine, the blokes I worked with they were OK just a bit bizarre in some ways. And I used to shit stir them, you know, the term catholic; there's

35:30 two, the term catholic, liberal minded, and catholic, Roman Catholic, and I was talking about Major Kaufman who was a really good bloke and I said to these Americans, I said, "A very catholic man". And this bloke said "Catholic, Catholic, he's not god damn Catholic". I said dae wee, that's captain, I said "Dae wee, you misunderstand me, I said "I don't mean Roman Catholic, I mean liberal, broad minded".

36:00 "Where do you get that god damn sophistry from, Mr Logan?" I said "Hang on a second". We had in this little office in this place Webster's Dictionary in two volumes. So I got the first volume out and, we were at a place called River View just on the edge of the Quang Tri River. And I said "Here you are: catholic; (1) liberal, broad minded, (2) a member of the Roman Catholic Church" and slammed it shut. "God damn sophistry"; took it out and he threw it into the river and it went "Splish".

36:30 And I said, "Shit you won that argument dae wee".

Now you mentioned to us off camera before about the tiger, can you tell us again for the camera?

Yes, yes. At one stage there I was with the Vietnamese and we were protecting a US land clearing team, a

37:00 company of US engineers and they had these long ploughs and they were clearing the jungle, making trails throughout the jungle and so forth. And they were clearing this area and as they cleared of course the wildlife in there was getting trapped. And we knocked over the odd deer and one day this tiger came bounding out and bounded towards two of my diggers, my binchies, and they shot him. One shot just in here (cheek) and one under here. And they

37:30 killed him and they brought him in on the dozer [bulldozer] and put him down and he was just beautiful, he really was and as I watched him his eyes clouded over and I thought, "What a bloody shame, you know, that we killed him". The skin - an American got up there and cut a bit out of the skin about yay big and

38:00 didn't I go up him for that. I said, "Look, that will feed my company for three months and you've done that as a souvenir" and I was very unhappy about it that they had attacked it. And they had a captain and he said, "Yeah, these things happen, Mr Logan". And I said, "Not in my fucking army they don't".

What do you mean it could feed your company?

Well, what they could do is they could sell that skin, and the money that we'd get for that they could supplement their own rations because they were pretty sparse, the Vietnamese rations,

38:30 they could supplement it for three months and the diggers, you know, the binchies, would get some benefit out of it. Anyway, as it was, we ate the tiger, and I must tell you those tigers must have muscles in their shit because no matter what the Vietnamese did with it, it was as tough as buggery. They could cook anything the Vietnamese, the deer was beautiful, we killed a couple of

39:00 deer there but this thing was so tough. But an interesting little side level to that; we were defending the Americans and each night they'd push up this bank with a bulldozer blade to sort of surround themselves, a bit like the covered wagons [protective measure used during frontier era in the US]. Now if you're going to defend any position what you've got to do is defend it in depth and you start out with listening posts a thousand metres out then they detect the first thing.

39:30 As soon as they detect something, you pull back and you bring the artillery in and you gradually thicken up your artillery, you supplement it with your troops so that by the time the enemy actually get to your perimeter they're rat shit. So I said to the Americans - to slow them you need various things like barbed wire fences and that. I said to the Americans, "I'll need some defence stores". And of course, "What do you want defence stores for?" I said "Our

40:00 task is to defend you so I will need defence stores so I can put a barbed wire field that they've got to come through and all these other things". He said, "It's not the way we do it, Mr Logan, what we do is we put up the bank and he said we fight them off at the bank and if they get through here". He said, "I get my 45 or my trusty knife". And I said "You won't call in stores?" He said "No". I said "OK,

40:30 You don't mind if I adjust fire" "No, that's a great idea, yeah". I said to the Vietnamese I said "Look, the waakies, (that's the Americans), "the waakies won't give us this, what I want is fire in on the bank, artillery fire". You adjust your task so that when you call for it you might say "Tango 1/2/3 direction 6400, fire". And then it comes that it's previously registered in the rounds of fire where you want.

41:00 So I started, before we went out listening post [LPs], I started this fire and I said I wanted it danger close, that means within 200 metres, and I said, "First off, it's got to be a round of fire for a man" that means the entire battery fires and we had 24 guns in support. So they registered silently and then I gave them the nod and in came this artillery, "Woof" and I said "Repeat". And the dead shrapnel is coming whizzing

41:30 through the place and, you know if you didn't know what it was you'd swear you were under attack. Anyway they sent this bloke to get me and he's crawling through the trenches to me. "Sir, sir, the company commander wants you, sir, sir!" I said, "Yes, when the fire mission's over". So I waited until the fire mission finished then I went back and I said "What's up dae wee" "God damn it, Mr Logan, what the hell was that". I said "I registered fire". "God damn it, you nearly killed my men". And I said

42:00 "Well, if you won't get in store..."

Tape 9

00:32 This guy came wriggling through the trenching "sir, sir, the Captain wants you". And so I said, "Yeah, I'll be there as soon as this is finished". So once it settled down and all the dead shrapnel and so forth I went to see him and he said, "Mr Logan, what the hell was that?" And I said, "Well, if I'm going to protect you I've got to have fire" (and that's one of the things we do, we bring fire in). I said "If you won't give me

01:00 defence stores we'll do it more often". He said, "All right, all right, all right". And the next day in came all these defence stores and we had enough wire and star pickets. Not only did it do that job but we took some back with us when we left and did a few more jobs back at the unit, it was first class.

What did you find about the Americans generally, what about their special forces?

I didn't see much of those. My blokes, we would have, it's a while since I've thought this -

01:30 with us, alongside us was the 101st Airborne Division which we used to called the "101 Worst", and they

used to send one of their officers often with us on an operation just to have a look and see how we did things. So I got to know some of them. And they were all right blokes but they're stuck in this policy of search and destroy in large scale operations which didn't always work.

02:00 As I've said before, the Americans are very brave as individuals and often didn't seem to know quite what was going on in terms of how you should fight one of these wars.

So the fact that they lost about 60,000 men and over 200,000 wounded - what were they doing wrong overall?

There were a number of things that they were doing wrong. One of them is that they were trying to fight an

02:30 enemy and get the enemy to fight on their terms, and of course the sensible enemy doesn't fight on the terms of his opponent, he fights on his own terms. The marines particularly, and many of their casualties were marines, the marines up in ICOR were just straight at assault positions, incredibly brave, but it's not really how you should be doing that sort of stuff. There's an example, when in 1972

03:00 I was at the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra and we got a US platoon that came over. And this US platoon in the main had - their sergeant and all their non commissioned officers had all served in Vietnam and they came to us for a week to see how we did it, in our way. And I said, "All right, I want to see how you do it". and one of the things that they did I thought, "Christ, no wonder you get casualties".

03:30 Whenever we move, we are covered by fire and it's minor operations, you put down a base of fire and then you move. They didn't do it. They would move without covering fire and if you haven't got covering fire to keep the enemy's head down you're just going to get killed. And they were brave enough, very brave, but not quite how you should do it, not the way we do it. And that I think was

04:00 typical of what they did and of course in any war, in any war a large number of your casualties are accidental casualties from "Friendly fire", from people calling in fire on themselves, from people making mistakes, just sheer accidents. It's the old story, you get groups of young men in death- like

04:30 situations and they're very aggressive and all keyed up, sure something's going to happen every now and again. The enemy doesn't have a little sign saying, "Here I am, shoot me", and sure as guns if you have a patrol clash you'll do better than if you're actually shooting at the enemy. It's bizarre but it's a fact of life. So they had a bit of that too. Of the, I think it was 5,400 helicopters they lost, half of them were in accidents as you would expect.

05:00 It's the same in World War II; if you have a look at bomber command you'll find that about half our losses in bomber command was in training because if you're going to have 1,000 bomber raids they've got to be trained to do it. And if they're trained to do it they're going to have accidents, the same sort of thing applies.

And with the Tet Offensive what was the outcome in Phuoc Tuy province?

In Phuoc Tuy province it meant that in the main,

05:30 in the main the province was pretty subdued in terms of enemy activity. It was more noticeable up in ICOR because the Vietcong infrastructure, that's the clandestine government that were there, they emerged and came forward and instead of the people rising up to support them they went against them and then when the allied troops

06:00 retook that area they were exposed and so they got their heads knocked off, literally in many cases. So they really had a tough battle then the VC infrastructure. And in fact one of the things that happened with me, I'd mentioned that we got into a fight and we knocked over the battalion commander and his executive officer, they were new NVA at the time who'd just come in there, and one of the blokes had in his pocket a list of

06:30 all the Vietcong infrastructure in Quang Tri. When the Vietnamese told me this I said "Right, don't broadcast it, I'll get a chopper out and we'll get it back into Quang Tri", because the radio communications weren't secure. Anyway, I rang up and I said, "I need a chopper". "What do you want it for?" I said "I've got some information which must come in and it's urgent". He said "what sort of information?" I said "I cannot tell you over the

07:00 air but it must come in". He said, "If you can't tell us we can't send you a chopper". I thought, "or Christ's sake". Anyway, Ron Looney who was a medical warrant officer heard it and he said "Zulu, starlight, zulu" and I said "Go ahead, over" and he said "What's the matter?" And I told him what had gone on and he said "All right, you will get some medical supplies delivered at first light tomorrow".

07:30 A dust off helicopter was going to come in - a medical helicopter is not supposed to carry any war-like stores. First light, in came this chopper, they kicked off two stretchers, I jumped on board with this book in my hand. In we went and it absolutely - it just told where all the Vietcong infrastructure was in Quang Tri and they executed them.

What were the losses in Phuoc Tuy?

The NVA losses?

All together.

08:00 I would expect they lost somewhere in the vicinity of 3 - 5,000 I would say. Our losses in Phuoc Tuy province were probably about 400 I suppose, take out the other bits and pieces.

You're saying that means killed, 400 killed?

Yes, yes.

Australians?

Yes.

So most of the Australians were killed?

In Phuoc Tuy.

Right but this was during Tet I'm

08:30 **talking about?**

No, I'm sorry, not during Tet - I'm sorry not during Tet. I really don't know because we were in Bien Hoa province, 3 Battalion was down there and they cleaned up quite substantially but I don't know what the losses would have been down at Phuoc Tuy. It certainly made them lie low for a long time. The losses that

09:00 Charlie suffered in the Tet Offensive were devastating, absolutely devastating and they had to replenish quite substantially from up in the North and it took them a long time to recover.

Do you think it was a wasteful exercise on their behalf?

Oh yeah, no, well, yes and no. Yes, because technically and strategically, whilst technically they had a few wins,

09:30 strategically they got the crap knocked out of them but in the long run it actually was good because they won the media round that started the Americans to pull back the troops, that started them coming home because the Tet and those graphic shots of young dead marines on the tanks coming back from Wei, places like that. I remember when I got home my Dad said to me "I'm awfully glad you're home, son". I said "So am I,

10:00 dad" He said, "Yeah, your Mum has been seeing these on these tanks every day. Every time she saw a shot of Vietnam she'd say that looks awfully like George". And it must have been very difficult for them, very difficult.

What about the other battles that took place like Khe Sahn?

Interesting battle Khe Sahn in so far as there was no real reason

10:30 for it. The Americans did it to show that they were capable of undertaking a Dien Bien Phu operation without the Vietcong taking over or NVA. An awful lot of wasted lives there and the marines didn't do Khe Sahn well because they never dug in properly. If they'd dug in properly, got themselves right down it would have been much better. When the air cover came in and

11:00 took over from the marines they were down to 6 foot within a day and things were much better. The marines are gung ho warriors and, "We don't dig, we don't dig foxholes - we fight we get the enemy, we turn the enemies into their graveyard". That's true but if you're going to go into a defensive location you've got to do the thing properly. And as I was talking about defence before, you start your defence

11:30 far out and you thicken it as it comes in. And I think it was a great waste of energy and effort but it certainly distracted the Vietcong, I think it was 881 or one of those organisations, I'm not sure. I forget which division it was but it certainly took up a lot of their time and effort and energy. Flying over that area,

12:00 I remember I went up to ICOR, and I'd not flown up to those areas before and I flew up with a FAC on an orientation flight and we were talking about this place and that place and we flew over this area and I said "What the God's this?" "You know, that's Khe Sahn". You should have seen the pock marks of craters all around Khe Sahn where they'd call in the B52s and all the

12:30 bombers and so forth and then that sort of went in a corridor and up onto the DMZ and the DMZ looked like photographs of the moon where the ground had been pounded and pounded and pounded and the earth had been reduced to a silt powder, horrendous stuff.

Did you think that the war was winnable when you were there?

When I first went there I thought,

13:00 "Yeah, we can win that", and if everybody had adopted our tactics I suspect we would have. When I got there the second time I thought, "No, I doubt this very much". And then I got to the stage where I

thought, "No, we shouldn't have young Australians in here"; different for blokes like me, I'm a professional. And I still have this feeling like "If we were going to go into Vietnam why are we not still in Vietnam?" If we'd made a

13:30 commitment, we didn't we honour it and see it out.

When did you start to become like I suppose confused with events?

Disillusioned.

That's a good way of putting it - when the Prime Minister or President Diem was assassinated at the hands of the Americans?

That was early in the piece, very early in the piece. That was about 1964 or something and we all thought, "Oh yeah, that's probably not a bad idea" because we firmly believed in the

14:00 domino theory, we firmly believed in it. I think it probably would have worked had we not stopped them- the domino theory would have worked all the way down. And in fact someone said, "You can say what you like about Vietnam what it did was help stem communism" and I thought "That's interesting, that's interesting" because it certainly slowed it down.

14:30 . But getting back to disenchanted or disillusioned I thought our efforts, I'm talking military efforts, in Vietnam were pretty good. I could see that we needed to have a political opportunity to win and we weren't getting that. We weren't interacting with the South Vietnamese government,

15:00 we weren't insuring that we cut out corruption, that we had administration that were good. Those things you need, having experienced it in Malaya, those things you need to win counter-revolutionary war but certainly militarily we were winning. But what's the point, towards the end I thought, "What's the point of all this?", And when I saw that young Australian that had lost the odd limb or two I thought, "No, not worth it, just not worth it".

So retrospectively you're saying that the

15:30 **war was a waste?**

Yes, I think so, it created schisms in society that are only now healed, or healing, probably healed now. Vietnam veterans are given good recognition but it certainly created a lot of schisms that we really didn't need. And you had this nation at peace with just a little part of it at war, it's bizarre, a bit like East Timor today.

16:00 **What do you have to say about World War II veterans - well, they've looked at Vietnam vets critically which you are probably aware of, of course, they've said that they're whingers, or they've suggested that. What have you got to say about that?**

It's interesting that the World War II people say this because in the main the people that went to Vietnam, the nashos [national servicemen] and the like were the sons of World War II veterans and the World War

16:30 II veterans said to them, "Look, whatever you do, make sure that you report everything that went wrong, that you let the authorities know because when you get back home, unless you've got it on your records, unless you tell them, they won't pay any attention to you". And the Vietnam veterans actually did that and they had things recorded and they fought for their blokes so that when they came back they got

17:00 concessions which went across to all veterans, but the Vietnam veterans got it. When we had the National President of the RSL [Returned and Services League], Alf Garland, who was in my battalion, attacking the government constantly and there were a couple of blokes, John Prince and John Methvin were moving in there and they were presenting Vietnam veterans' cases and getting recognition and getting victories there and the RSL wasn't getting it

17:30 but the Vietnam veterans were and that then moved across and all those benefits automatically flowed on to all other veterans. And the other thing is, you know, we think World War II was so much longer than Vietnam in many cases. No it wasn't, take for example the 2/25 Battalion, Bruce Ruxton's [later state president of the RSL] battalion, he wasn't with them in the Islands or New Guinea.

18:00 I spent all but the same time except for 11 days in Vietnam as they spent in the Middle East and New Guinea. They spent just on 2 years away as did I.

Do you think their experience would have been harder or equal or lesser?

18:30 It varies from case to case. I think an infantry battalion was probably harder in terms of time spent on operations but often not as hard in terms of fighting because there was more continuous fighting in World War II. The differences, for example, is that we were better trained,

19:00 we were better equipped, we had a far superior casualty evacuation system - the most efficient, effective hospital the world has ever seen was the Australian hospital in Vung Tau. It was the best hospital - the results were if you arrived there alive the chances of you dying were 1 in 100 as a

casualty,

19:30 now that's fabulous stuff. For example, in our A Company we had an incident where the Charlie detonated a DH10 Claymore mine and a bloke called Ian Gay was hit in the femoral artery - in any war up until Vietnam he was a dead duck. They managed to plug it, within 20 minutes he was in hospital - it wouldn't have happened anywhere else.

20:00 And so our casualties were minimised in that regard and that was great. And there was a finite term that you were away. In practical terms in World War II what they tried to do was make it about a year away in operations and then bring them back to Australia, they tried to make it about a year. Obviously some did and some didn't and when you look at the prisoners of war and so forth it was a different kettle of fish.

20:30 Because a year's about as much as you can put up with in operations, in any operations, in any war and you'll find if you read the research material on it that's probably pretty accurate.

So even very experienced veterans can only handle a year?

Oh yeah, yeah.

What happens to experienced veterans who can take, you know, the hardships of battle consistently?

I think the more experienced you are the more likely you are to be a

21:00 leader and the more likely it is that you are to be stressed. I think in terms of endurance and courage you start with, we'll call it a jar of courage, and each time you're involved in something you tip a little out. If you have some rest, the jar gets replenished if you have no rest it gets expended. Now it varies for

21:30 individuals but it seems to me there's an amount of, call it courage for want of a better word, that every individual has and provided they get sufficient rest and it gets topped up they can keep going. If it's too demanding it expends and once it's expended then they break down. Look at World War I and those horrendous things that went on there. So many men found it so difficult because

22:00 their jar was tipped out in two or three operations - two or three days of fighting because they were just so horrendous. And when it came to the next time they couldn't hack it, they just couldn't hack it because of the way it was. And I think it's true for every individual - that's the Logan Theory on courage.

I'll definitely be taking that with me. Now, what about the anti war

22:30 **movement? How did that affect you at the time and now?**

It's difficult now to think back to what it was like then. In the main then, it didn't worry me all that much I thought, "What a bunch of wankers" and it didn't actually impact on me - only once. I was in the Melbourne University Hotel and I was standing talking with a mate of mine, I was in

23:00 uniform, I was a sergeant, and this bloke came up and he looked at me and he could obviously tell I was a Vietnam veteran, I had the ribbons on and so forth. He said to me, "You've been to Vietnam, sarge". And I said "Yes". He said, "Who did you kill over there?" I said, "Only women and kids" and turned my back and had a drink. And I didn't of course but I treat them with disdain, you know, because we didn't kill women and kids, bullshit,

23:30 no one killed women and kids - but I treated it with disdain. And you know that big, 1970 I think, that big march, the Cairns Moratorium, I thought, "Well, yeah, they've got their point of view, that's fine, that's fine". In fact in 1973 I met Jim Cairns and had a chat to him about those very things and I

24:00 found it interesting, I quite enjoyed my chat with him. He, Jim Cairns, was actually a friend of Blamey, Field Marshal Blamey, or General Blamey, because he'd been in the Victorian Police Force as a runner and then got the flick basically because of his political views. He went and saw Blamey and then finished the war as an Education Course sergeant at Morotai. Not many people know that - Blamey and Cairns,

24:30 mates.

Blamey's a controversial figure in his own right isn't he?

He is indeed, yes, he's not one of my favourite characters either.

I'm hard pressed to find people that like him really. It's a very interesting thing you're saying about the courage, tipping, you put a soldier under strain for a protracted period, he exhausts himself, mentally and physically and therefore he's not thinking straight because he's under constant pressure of death?

25:00 Yes.

So under those circumstances can a soldier then fall into a category of killing people, innocent people, because he is not scientifically, he can't function in the normal way?

I suspect yes, I suspect yes. It depends on his leadership and who's leading him and I'll take for example Vietnam.

25:30 There were a couple of scenes there where the Americans killed these people and I thought, "If that had been in my platoons, my diggers would have killed the digger that killed the woman". They would have shot him, no qualms. I'm not trying to gild the lily [embellish] in anyway and I suspect from time to time people got shot in Vietnam that shouldn't have got shot. You know, I told you about people

26:00 breaking curfew and so forth and coming in, I'm sure some innocent villagers got shot.

What about deliberate acts?

No, not to my knowledge, and I would have a pretty fair idea because when I came back from Vietnam I sat on the Veterans' Review Board for 10 years and every day I heard cases ranging from World War II right through and I'd have picked it up.

26:30 There's one of the units, one of the battalions where something happened and I don't know what it was but I think that they shot up a fishing boat and frankly I think there were fishermen in it, not Vietcong, and I've an idea that that happened. Now that's not perhaps a deliberate act, it's not an

27:00 atrocity per se, or it is depending how you look at it, but I've heard that story twice and I think there's probably something in that, that they shot up this boat and they shouldn't have shot up the boat so that might be something.

Do you feel like you're in a hostile territory- that probably sounds like a stupid question, what I'm trying to say is that even though you were in Vietnam even though you got accustomed to the culture, the land and the people and the fighting etc.

27:30 **did you still feel like you'd get shot here at any time, did you feel like that, the tension?**

There was certainly tension, certainly tension. For example, when I was an advisor I would go into the Vietnam towns, I lived and worked around Vietnamese towns and I'd go into town, always armed of course, and if I was going to have a hair cut, I'd sit there and I'd pull out my 45 [gun]

28:00 and I'd sit with it in my lap and you'd always have two of you go for a hair cut because one could be very vulnerable, get the razor, zip.

Has that happened?

No, no, no. You know, some of the folklore about Vietnam bears very little relationship to the truth, very little relationship and

28:30 I recall some cases where blokes would say they'd seen atrocities. I remember a bloke saying that he had seen these dead bodies and it had affected him very badly. And when we checked, yes, and the date that he'd been there these people had been killed and the bodies had been put in the village square but he was in Saigon and the village was down in Phuoc Tuy province and as the historian said he must have had good

29:00 eyes to see 100ks. Every now and again you get someone who pretends that he did see something. Mind you, a lot of it is in the eye of the beholder. I spoke with a bloke once who was there during Tet as I was and he was saying it was terrible and my ears pricked up and I thought, "I know where this bloke was and what he was

29:30 doing". I said, "What was the problem?" He said, "Those bloody Vietnamese" he said, "they were crapping everywhere, they were on the beach crapping". I said, "Charlie, they were refugees, they'd come from Saigon, there was nowhere else for them to go" and he said, "Well they shouldn't have been crapping on the beach". And it really affected him that these people were crapping on the beach. What else were they going to

30:00 do? There were no toilets per se, they were grossly - everything was grossly over used - nothing. But it got to him and I thought to myself he wasn't saying it because of anything other than how it affected him. And I thought well different things affect different people in different ways.

So how could you explain it from a soldier's perspective, that is militarily speaking, why would a thing like My Lai happen, what would cause them to do that?

30:30 All right. There's a wee bit more to My Lai than meets the eye. For example that was the 48th VC Battalion which lived and came out of that area and the mortar platoon of 48th Battalion was comprised of women and kids so in part they were getting back at the women and kids who were part of the mortar platoon. Horrendous stuff, you know, horrendous stuff. If you lose it you lose it,

31:00 but rather than lose it why do you kill all these people? It's just horrendous. I think Cally was operating under orders. They said, "Clean them out" and he did. Horrendous stuff.

But he's a scapegoat you're saying for someone higher up?

In part, yes. I think there was a fellow called Henderson involved in it and he later got killed in a chopper, his chopper got shot down, and he might have been the bloke who

31:30 really should have been pinned on it. So much depends on how it's perceived afterwards - we'll take for example World War II. Yamashita, the tiger of Malaya, Yamashita was hung, he was tried and hanged. One of the things he was tried and hanged for was an atrocity that took place in Hong Kong. The Japanese went through this hospital and raped the women and killed all the patients

32:00 and did all those things. Yamashita got the Japanese commander of the unit, tried him, found him guilty and had him beheaded. It wasn't good enough in 1945 that he did that and his defence said, "Yamashita did this - you're still responsible". So that was one of the

32:30 reasons he was hanged himself.

Do you think he was also hanged because he defeated the British in Singapore?

Of course he was and, more importantly, the Americans in the Philippines, he was responsible for the Philippines at the end, he tried to get out of it.

The defence of the Philippines from the Americans?

The defence of the Philippines, he tried to get away from it, got away from it and then the atrocities occurred, the Japanese committed atrocities so he was held responsible. You've got to be on the winning

33:00 side, it helps to be on the winning side.

So he was considered to be the best Japanese General wasn't he?

Probably one of the best, yes, Yamashita.

That's very interesting. Now, on the topic of terrorism today I suppose I would like to try and link it to Vietnam. Do you see it as terrorism what you were fighting or was it just rebels?

In Vietnam?

Yes.

I saw it as a civil war and I saw it as the

33:30 breakout of communism. I believed in the domino theory in those days and I thought, "If it comes down, it will come through Thailand and Malaya and it will come off. And I saw that as being part of it, not terrorism, but as a civil war which had counter-revolutionary aspects and that had conventional war aspects, that mix up of the various stages. And that's how I saw it until later on

34:00 I thought, "Well, we should keep fighting it", and there's a part of me that says we should still keep fighting it because if we commit ourselves to it why haven't we kept on doing it? Having said that, I'm pleased in a way that we're out of the hell hole and it's gone behind us.

How do you think Vietnam has affected Australian society in its after effects?

I think it alerted Australian society to the

34:30 fact that you've got to keep your eye on your government and not let them do things that are going to cause irreparable damage in your nation. You've got to keep a firm eye on governments and make sure that they are responsible to you, the people, and the government got a way with a fair bit in Vietnam. One of the real problems we face in any

35:00 nation is our xenophobia, our fear of strangers, and political people are taking advantage of this, the boat people and the like, they are saying "We are keeping Australia safe and you're not allowed in etc. etc. unless you come in the right way" and that wins votes, sadly, that wins votes. It doesn't matter that

35:30 some of them are really people that are in desperate need, it wins votes.

What about I suppose you'd know that first hand in a way because you've seen refugees from Vietnam itself so you'd know how desperate this situation would have been, certainly at that time. What about the psychological affect on Australia for instance, what I'm trying to get at is, I'll give you an example - World War I, the

36:00 **diggers come back, there's a lot of suicides as we all know, undiagnosed illnesses etc., social ostracism etc. and you know domestic violence and then so on and so on, World War II and so on, Vietnam and so on. Tell us from a Vietnam vet's point of view how you think all this has affected from Vietnam as well now?**

There is obviously a flow through. However, I believe that the

36:30 recognition of, call it what you will, call it PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, there's a new one that

the Veterans, the Australian Peacekeepers' Union, called Operational Stress Syndrome and it's not PTSD because PTSD has this terrible name, it's Operational Stress Syndrome and that comes back into society and I

37:00 think in many cases has flowed through and the children of veterans are affected and the like. As they have been, as they have been in other wars because you do the same thing to generally the males of the population and they react in the same way and it's no different a la Vietnam than it was in anywhere else except the numbers are so much smaller. One of the interesting things though, when you look at the

37:30 50,000 or so that served in Vietnam, a much greater proportion of those were in actual combat than there was in World War II because there wasn't a big administrative logistic tail, that was provided by the Americans. So a higher percentage were actually in combat roles whereas in World War II for example 50,000 combat soldiers were probably supported by 200,000 or 250,000

38:00 admin soldiers -Vietnam was much different.

Why was that?

Because we didn't have to provide the logistics ourselves, we picked up the logistics and the force wasn't that big, it was only a brigade size, three battalion size and so it was much easier, much easier.

Now we're getting closer to the end of the tape so I'll ask you a couple more questions and then we can

38:30 **wind it up. What's your view now I suppose having had all these experience and seeing all these things on Iraq, terrorism, Afghanistan and Indonesia for that matter - Jamah Islamia and the Bali bombings, just generically speaking.**

I'm not sure that they are linked to anything other than economic circumstances and

39:00 religion. The richer people are the less likely it is that they are going to indulge themselves in acts of terrorism and so forth, it seems to me. Take for example those Middle Eastern states that are very, very wealthy, the little oil places and the names escape me, those, you don't see them much in the terrorist world. They

39:30 might do a bit of proclaiming but the people who are actually doing the work and the terrorism are the disenfranchised, the underprivileged and the people who don't have representation and whilst ever there are those sort of people that will be an element. More importantly is the perception of the West as being some sort of a demon probably in the hands of Satan or whoever it is who is currently the

40:00 bloke you're not supposed to be in the hands of and the all pervading cultural imperialism of the West. No matter where you are you turn on a television set and you get Neighbours or the equivalent, not in your own culture but in the culture of the West. Computers are all in English, computers are Americanised, everything is linked to America and it is seen by

40:30 many Asian countries as being decadent. And so whilst ever they are on a lower socio-economic scale they'll try to do something to (A) get them up and (B) destroy them, that's part of life. Life's rich tapestry except if you get blown up it's, life's, rich smithereens.

Well, we're going to have to end on that lively note. Thank you very much, George, it's a great pleasure.

I enjoyed it.